

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Guy A. Travaglio (D)

11th District

Butler County

1995-2004

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Transcribed by: Heather Deppen Hillard

Simon Bronner (SB): Good morning.

The Honorable Guy A. Travaglio (GAT): Good morning.

SB: I'm very happy to be here with you. We're going to be asking you questions about your legacy and your reflection upon your service. I want to begin by asking you what events or experiences in your childhood prepared you for what you are doing today?

GAT: Well, I think one of the things was, you know, going to the movies back in the [19]30s; that was the thing to be doing (*laugh*). And we used to go every Saturday, and one of the movies was about lawyers and I thought that would be kind-of neat. I thought that's what I wanted to do, and I did. I used to buy the books of law and read them and I kept that thought in mind up until the time I went to the Army; came back from the Army, went to college and realized that I didn't have the time to devote to being a good lawyer, having a family and trying to make ends meet. So, I gave it up and never even gave it a second thought, about furthering that thought, and I ended up running for [Butler] City Council for four years. And back then they had the equal time rule. So, if I was on the air and you were my opponent, you could ask for equal time. You could talk about whatever you wanted to talk about, as far as your candidacy was concerned, but I couldn't. I could only talk – I was doing a phone party at that time. So, I did the one term and then I got out of it and that was back in [19]65 when I ran, [19]66 through [19]69. And then the closest I got to being political was attending meetings for the radio station and being a reporter for them. And it kind of tweaked my thoughts all over again

and up until [19]94 – I retired from the radio station in [19]93 – in [19]94, I got a call from a fellow and he said, “In our conversations over the year, you led me to believe that you would consider running for a State Office,” and I said, “Oh, yeah, sure I would.” But I said, “I have to talk to my family first.” Well, then I talked to them – the story is that my first wife got killed in an automobile accident and I had five children. And the woman I’m married to now – we’re in our 39th year – was good friends with my first wife and she helped take care of my youngsters. Well, that was at the time I was running for [Butler] City Council, and whenever I retired from [Butler] City Council, the first thing she said to me was, “If you ever do that again, I’m outta here.” (*laugh*) So, I had to ask her. And when I asked her, and asked the family, she said, “Let’s go for it.” So, then we went into campaign mode and she has been a tremendous help to me. During the campaign, she did the running of it and I shook the hands and kissed the babies, and was fortunate enough to win five times. And I’ve enjoyed every minute of it. One of the things that I think made it easier for me – every one said that because of my age – I was 68 whenever I was running – “You’re going to hate that trip. It’s four hours; you’re going to hate it.” Well, I put it in the back of my mind; I’m not even going to think about it. I’m not going to dwell on, “Boy oh boy, another four hours.” So, it never dawned on me that it was something terrible and I got used to it. Well, then in my first term – I took over in January of [19]95 – in that first term in September, I had nothing wrong with me; I was healthy. The doctor and my wife kept pounding at me, “Get a physical. Get a physical.” Finally, one day I said, “Set it up; I’ll go.” So, I walked across the parking lot to the doctor’s office and then I was escorted into Saint Francis in Pittsburgh, because I took a stress test and I guess it wasn’t very good (*laugh*), and they operated on me – a

triple bypass. I've been fine ever since that. That was in late September. I was back to work on October the 15th. I went back to work and I took care of myself. I mean I didn't run up the steps or do any jumping or anything like that. And by the end of the year, I was in tip-top shape again. So, it was an eventful year with learning a new business; learning what you have to do and where you have to go; picking out the people that I could go to and get answers from, and get advice from. And, in that regard, I worked pretty much within the Leadership. I figured that they had been here longer than I have. They knew the ropes and they could tell me what I needed to know. And they had been very helpful. When I came in, Bill DeWeese [H. William; State Representative, Fayette, Greene and Washington Counties, 1976-present; Speaker, 1994-1995] [and] Ivan Itkin [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1973-1998] were the Leaders at the time. And Frank Gigliotti [State Representative, Allegheny County 1989-2000] was a Representative who helped me tremendously and led me along the way, and told me where to go, when to go, and what to say. I have so many friendships started and the one thing that worries me now is, "Can I keep those friendships up for the rest of my life?" because they did a great deal in molding me. I hope I was an effective Legislator. I wasn't flamboyant, but I worked a steady pace. I did the things that people asked me to do. If they had a problem, I tried to solve it for them. Proof of the pudding is they elected me five times, so (*laugh*) I must have done something right.

SB: Were there surprises for you when you first came to the House?

GAT: Yeah, there were. I think some of the things that surprised me were the procedures that you have to go through. I'm a movie fan; I like to watch movies. And the political scenarios that they have in the movies are not anything like what it is in real life. So I have to divorce my mind from wishing what it would be like and really get down to knowing what it is all about, and then following the rules without causing any problems. I never had any violent debates. Conversations and questions and things like that, but nothing like the *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* type-thing where he filibustered for three days. I never went through any of that stuff.

SB: Were there particular issues that were very important to you?

GAT: Yeah. When I first came in, one of the issues that I was really concerned about was the Capital Stock and Franchise Fee – 300 dollar minimum. I felt that that was a real burden on small corporations and small partnerships, and I tried to get that eliminated. I put a bill in; it didn't go anywhere that first year. The second year, a Republican put the bill in and they reduced it from 300 to 200 [dollars], and then the following year I got it eliminated completely. And at just about that time healthcare was becoming really a burden on everybody; nobody was exempt from that and I thought that we should be able to do something to help those people who were in low-income – who didn't have the money to have healthcare. And we fought, I think, valiantly and successfully. We didn't win all the battles, but I think we won enough of them to make a change. And I was interested in PACE [Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly] and PACENET [Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly Needs Enhancement Tier], and I

think we've done a good job with that. We still have a lot more to go. There are probably a 150,000 people who still don't have insurance. The Adult Basic is going to take care of some of that and I'm sure that my colleagues will keep on top of that to where we get a healthcare that every Pennsylvanian will be able to afford.

SB: I want to ask you about your Swearing-In at your first term. What do you remember about your Swearing-In?

GAT: Well, you know, when I walked into the hall of the Assembly – it's got to be the most beautiful anywhere, in the different States that I've gone to and visited the Capitols, Pennsylvania has the most beautiful Capitol. I was just astonished and of course, I was just very proud because my mom was with us. She operated the store back home until she died in [September 2001, at the age of 95]. She wouldn't close that store. In 60-some years she never closed it, and when I asked her to come down for my Swearing-In she said, "Yeah, I'll go down." The paper made a big issue out of it; "Grandma Goes to Harrisburg," and the fact that 30 of my family came down from Butler to be here. It was quite a Ceremony, with the flowers in the Hall and the other legislators with their families there. It was hold back the tears time; I really enjoyed it. And I think whenever they did the actual Swearing-In Ceremonies, it was quite touching.

SB: I see that you're wearing an Italian-American pin. I'm wondering if you can speak about the significance of your identity to you?

GAT: Well, I'm very proud of my heritage. My father was born in Italy and [when] he came to this country, he was about eight or nine years old. He was a self-taught individual and probably – and not because he was my father, but as an individual – [was] one of the smartest men I ever knew. His common-sense approach to life was something that I tried to pattern after him. And he had a mind that was like a steel trap. If you gave him chewing gum and thread he'd build you an airplane. He could do all those things. My middle brother has his traits. He can repair – I don't care what it is – he can fix it. And so, dad was a great impression on me. The sad thing about it – he died when he was 83 years old and he did not get to see me Sworn-In as a state legislator. He would have been very proud, because on Sunday[s] we had our meals at home; the whole family had to be there – no girlfriend's house, no football game. Well, dad and I used to get into some really great debates; religion and government. I think he would have been proud that I was able to do something that I had always said I would do. And one of the things that he always told me; "Never promise something that you can't deliver." So, whenever I was campaigning, I never promised anything but two things: that I would be honest and I would be hard working. And I think I've lived up to those things. And the friendships that I had made back home in the 60-some-thousand people that were my constituents, not all of them loved me, but the majority of them, we got along real well. I was able to work across the age groups, with the young as well as with the elderly. And I think that had to do a lot with my father's teaching me of the things that I needed to know.

SB: Did you enjoy campaigning?

GAT: Yeah, I did because it's meeting people. I think that being on the radio for as many years as I was and talking to people everyday about different things, it was easy for me to go out and shake hands, and talk to them about, "What do they want in Government?" I would make a note, either write it down – today I have to write it, but then I had a good memory (*laugh*); then, I didn't have to – I could write it down and I would actually look into those things. And I had an office staff both back home and here in Harrisburg that was the envy of everybody. They were absolutely fantastic. I would take a problem to them; I could forget about it. They would get me the answer. I would go over it with them and then I would proceed down here either getting a bill made up, or talking with someone that would be more adept at moving it along. And, I think I was a fairly successful at that.

SB: Was it a challenge having your home office and your District being four to five hours away from Harrisburg?

GAT: Not really because, you know, when I came in in [19]95 they started with computers; with fax machines. And with the computer, if I needed to know something about a bill, in seconds I have the information that I need. So it made it – I think the three days that I spent down here, Mondays, Tuesday, and Wednesdays gave me the time to delve into some stuff that I could take back home with me. And my Chief of Staff was a tremendous help to me. He had worked for the fellow who had my job before, Joe Steighner [State Representative, Butler County, 1979-1994]. Fred Vero was his Chief of Staff and he was my Chief of Staff for the past 10 years, and we worked very well

together. We had a good office staff. I'm going to miss that; that I will miss. And the driving back and forth, now that I'm 78, I think it's starting to get to me a little bit. So, this was a good time for me to retire and let somebody else come in and take hold of the reins. And I'm sure that they'll do just as well.

SB: Did you receive comments or challenges as a result of being a 68 year old, first-time Representative?

GAT: No, not really. They treated me very, very, very nicely. I used to tease them by saying, "I'm your elder, so be nice to me." But, they never put me in a position where I would think, "Jeez, I wish I was 20 years younger." They accepted me as, "Here I am. I'm Guy Travaglio." And they've just been wonderful.

SB: Well, who have been your mentors?

GAT: Well, Bill DeWeese and Ivan Itkin, and now it's Bill and Mike Veon [Michael; State Representative, Beaver County, 1985-2006]. I've talked to several of the Representatives on different levels – Bill Lloyd [William; State Representative, Somerset County, 1981-1998], who used to be a Representative – is no longer a Representative; he went into a different field. He was probably one of the smartest politicians you'd ever want to meet. He knew every bill and every word of every bill. I spent many of hours with him going over bills. He was a true mentor.

SB: In terms of some of your issues, I noticed that you were against the Department of Community Affairs being abolished. Could you describe your reasons and the background of that effort?

GAT: Well, Community Affairs was the smaller municipality's method of getting State money to have programs for their constituents. It was working; it was doing a good job. We knew everybody in the Community Affairs Department and were able to pick up a telephone and get action. Maybe not immediately, but we would get action. I felt the program wasn't broke, so why change it? Why do anything with it? And I told them so, but they still changed it. The community development and economic program that they have now is working. It's larger than I think it should be, but it's doing a good job. And, I guess, mainly I'm like everybody else; change comes tough. And I was comfortable with Community Affairs, and it was tough for me to get changed over. I eventually did change over and realize that the DCED [Department of Community and Economic Development] is a good program and it's working. It just took me a little while to give in. *(laugh)*

SB: Well, one of the advocacy issues that you are credited with is trying to help during a state of deindustrialization and there [are] notes on how you tried to keep jobs in Pennsylvania. And you mentioned that that might help the local steel Industry, which had suffered. Can you mention that campaign and whether it worked or not?

GAT: One of the things in Butler County, we have a Community Development Corporation. It's a non-profit organization and their job is to bring in industry and create jobs. And they work very effectively. There back a few years, there were some rocky times, but the Director of that has been very good in bringing new jobs into Butler County – putting people to work. And, of course, you know government doesn't hire people; businesses hire people, and you have to have a business climate that is comfortable for the stockholders – that makes money for the stockholders. No one is going to work if you don't do that. And I think the state should spend more time in taking care of the things that benefit all the constituency – sewer authorities, water, the clean air – and let industry and businesses do their thing, and make it more profitable for them. Right now, we keep adding fees to everything. This is a tax. You can put any name you want on it; it's a tax. Who pays for that? You and me. And the more that we tax the businesses, the more they're going to move out. We've got to make this a business-friendly Pennsylvania. Until we do that, that we're going to have the problems that we have now – being 45th and 47th out of 51 states – it's not going to get any better until we do that.

SB: Well, how did your experience as a small businessman influence your approach to some of these issues as a Representative?

GAT: Well, in small business we had the same problem. We had to figure out a budget. We had to figure out how to get the money. We had a payroll we had to meet, whether it was for three people, 10 people, or 100 people; same formula, just more money in one

place and the other. So, I felt that you have to give business people the feeling that they're wanted and they're needed. And you're going to be helping to – that you'll help them. And until we do that, it's going to be a tough couple of years coming up.

SB: And how about your work in radio?

GAT: I loved it. I went to work every day looking forward to going to work. I started out as a salesman and that part I didn't like. Selling wasn't my cup of tea. But, shortly after I became a salesman for them I had a chance to – one of the fellows that was doing the program that I took over that was finally named after me, *Guy's Phone Party*, he had a habit of sleeping in and I happened to be in the studio one day and Gus Gore was Chief Engineer. He always had to fill in for him and he was always moaning and groaning about it. And, of course, you know I said, "Hey Gus, you show me what to do, I'll do it." So, he took me up on it and we had about 20 minutes of laughing, and people talking, and music all at one time going over the air. Well, when I went back to my office, my boss called me in and said, "What was that?" And I said, "I don't know." He said, "The telephone's been ringing off the hook. Everybody wants to know – you know, they're laughing with you, but they don't know what they're laughing about." And I said, "Well?" So, I told him the story and that was the start of my career, back in [19]62. And then I got into being a reporter, and being a salesman [and] being an on-air person. And I liked it and I enjoyed every minute of it. [I] didn't make much money, but I was very fortunate that my wife didn't make many demands on me that I had to leave what I loved so much. And, when I retired in [19]93, I gave it a lot of thought before I finally decided

to hang it up. It was 35 or 37 years – I don't remember now – that I had been at it and I enjoyed it.

SB: So, what's the connection between being a Representative and being a radio personality?

GAT: Well, I get to see people in person being a Representative; on the air I only knew them by their voice. But, I was dealing with people and that's what I liked. We used to – my little program – we would take five or six bus trips to different areas: to Fallingwater¹ and Ohiopyle². We came to Harrisburg several times. And, you know, each bus held 50 people and they'd have five or six busses that would leave from Butler to come over here. And these were all my listeners. My listeners were responsible for me having four cookbooks of *their* recipes put together and we sold them and donated the money to "Make-A-Wish [Foundation]" and Children's Hospital [of Pittsburgh]. It was that family type thing that I liked. And now as a Representative, I feel that it's even more personable than what it was when I was on the radio. Because now, I'm shaking hands with you flesh-to-flesh, not voice-to-voice. And I am probably one of the few luckiest people in the world; I've had two careers that I've loved very, very much.

SB: You also had a military career and as a Representative, you were involved in Veteran's affairs. Can you speak to some of those issues?

¹ Western Pennsylvania home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

² Western Pennsylvania State Park.

GAT: Well, you know, whenever I was in the service – and that was back in [19]45 to [19]47 – the veterans needed help, not only the ones that were still over seas, but the ones who unfortunately were injured and went back home. There was nothing for them and I was interested in making certain that veterans would never be forgotten for what they gave to our country. We wouldn't have the country we have today if it wouldn't have been for the veterans of yesteryear. And we should be so proud of the people that we have today. And whether you like the war or don't like the war, those are our boys over there and we should be doing everything we can do to make them safe and bring them back home. And when you bring them back home, give them the things they need to get a good, quality life. And that's why I enjoyed the Veterans Affairs Committee. It was a good committee; we did a lot of things.

SB: Were you frustrated, however, with some of the legislation you introduced, such as the one where veterans can apply for loans to PHEAA [Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency] that did not get passed?

GAT: Yeah, I was upset. And there were several of us on that committee that worked together and kept trying to bring it back and get something done. You know, I think you find out in politics especially – usually you're between [the ages of] 27 to 35 before you realize there's a government; and that government is you. So, that age group from 18 to 27, they don't vote. They still don't vote. They have a right to vote, but they don't take it up. And until they get involved—until they realize that they're the ones that are driving the bus, we're going to always have a problem because we don't relate from one

age group to another age group. And we have to do that. I think we're getting there; this last election I think a lot of young people voted that never voted before. And that's good. But let's wait till next election when it's not a Presidential election and see how that works out – and see if they come out to vote. And see if they – you know, the one thing that upsets me about this job – if a bill is passed and I vote for it and you disagreed with it, that's your prerogative. I object when you call and tell me, "You're a clown. What did you do that for? You only take care of yourself." That's not why I took this job; that's not why I want to do it. We may have a difference of opinion; we should be intelligent enough to sit down and you tell me what you think, and I'll tell you what I think and why I voted the way I voted, because I have to take a look not just at what you think, but I have 66,000 people that I have to mesh with. And I think I've done that. At least, I hope I've done that.

SB: Well, what's the key in your mind to getting Legislation passed?

GAT: Well, the first thing is to research it. And they have a great research department here. They research it to make sure there isn't a law already in force. Then you have to take it [and] present it to a committee. And the Republicans for the last 10 years have been in charge; they refer it to the committees – the committee goes over it; they study it; they make recommendations; they make amendments, bring it back on the Floor and then you have your debate – and then you try and get it passed. And, you know, I remember the first time that I voted I was so bewildered because (*laugh*) I saw lights going on – red lights, green lights going on. I thought for a moment, my mind just quit working. And I

had the bill in front of me, but I thought, “Am I a ‘yes’ vote, or a ‘no’ vote?” So, I had to go back and talk with one of my friends who had been here quite awhile and I said, “I’m stymied. It looks like a 50/50 deal here.” He said, “Well, you have to vote your district.” I said, “If I knew what my district was, I would vote it,” (*laughs*) however, this bill was confusing. So, fortunately, I went back to my desk – and they were debating it – and I read through the bill again and I realized it was a good bill. The sad part about it was it was a fee that was attached to it and I really wasn’t happy about that. But then I looked at – this will benefit the majority of the people, so I voted for it. And you take your knocks. You know, you can’t take it personal. It bothers me – because I’m kind of a sensitive person, I guess – that I did something that someone disliked. And I like people to like me because I like them. And I give a lot of thought to the bills when they come up for a vote. And we’ve got some tough votes (*laughs*) coming up in the next day or so.

SB: What was the toughest issue you faced as a Legislator?

GAT: I would say probably – there’s so many of them – but the toughest one would probably have been the Gaming Bill, when it came up. I voted for it because I felt that it would help reduce property tax. And when the bill was first talked about, I was understanding that whatever money came in on the Gaming Bill would go towards reduction of property tax, maybe not eliminate it entirely, but it would lower it. And then the political machine started working and took a slice out for this and a slice out for that. Now we’re down to maybe 20, 30 percent reduction. But if anyone doesn’t want their 20

percent, I'll gladly take it (*laughs*) [and] take it off of my tax bill. That was a tough vote for me. And [legislative] pay raises was another tough vote for me. I got into a lot of problems because I voted against one of the pay raises and then I took it. The only thing I could say in my defense was that my parents didn't raise an idiot. Why should I take less money than you take and I'm doing the same job, hopefully better than you're doing? So, if you're taking it, I'm going to take it. So, I took it. And that was in my second term. I guess the people realize that I'm allowed to make one mistake (*laughs*), and so I did.

SB: Did voting “nay” get you into trouble with Leadership?

GAT: No. Usually, when I was going to be opposite of Leadership, I went to them and talked to them about it and told them, “This is why I’m against this.” And they would tell me why they thought I should vote for it. And then after our conversation they would always say, “Vote your conscience, Guy.” As far as I know (*laugh*) I’m in good shape with leadership.

SB: You were also in the legislature at the time of 9/11 [September 11, 2001]³. Could you describe where were you and your reactions to that event?

GAT: Well, when that happened, I was at my mom’s bedside; she was dying. And I was devastated that anybody would have the nerve to do what they did on that date. Three

³ Series of terrorists attacks on the United States resulting in planes crashing in Washington D.C. and New York City and Somerset, Pennsylvania.

days afterwards my mom died. And then the full force of it hit me. First you get angry, and then you think, “What can we do to prevent it from happening again?” And I think we’re working towards it, but I don’t think we’re there yet. I think we’ll always be – we’re like the “king of the mountain.” Everybody wants to knock the king off of the mountain. And we’re the greatest country in the whole universe. The things we have other countries are dying for. I guess maybe I’m getting mellow in my old age (*laugh*), but I appreciate what we have and I think I want my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren to have the same kind of life I’ve had.

SB: Do you think the Legislature has changed as a result of that event?

GAT: Yes, I think so. I think it’s made it more aware of things that could be done. And I hope that the next four years we’ll see even greater changes as far as our safety and our way life, our quality of life. We have younger people coming in as legislators and they’ve got good heads on their shoulders. They’ve got dreams and those dreams are what make our quality of life great.

SB: What are the major changes that you’ve sensed in your ten years service in the legislature?

GAT: Well, you know, I think probably if I got to know each individual legislator better, I learned to respect their thoughts on things and to take into consideration some of the things that they thought about a particular bill. And sometimes I changed my mind on

some things. Today that'd be a bad thing, because they'd call you a flip-flopper. But, I never thought that in the past 10 years that I flip-flopped. I always felt I got more knowledgeable about a particular bill, and I have a right to change my mind. If the person I'm talking to convinced me that I was wrong, then I would vote accordingly. And I think that's something that everybody has to do. You know, one of the things that I've said this many times. When I got Sworn-In I ran as a Democrat. When I got Sworn-In I did not say, "I, Guy Travaglio, a Democrat will uphold the Constitution of the United States and of Pennsylvania." I didn't say, "Democrat." I, Guy Travaglio will uphold those which are most dear to us. So, if you put a bill out there and you're a Republican and it's a good bill, you've got my vote; if it's a bad bill, you don't have my vote. And you tell me why it's a good bill, and I try to keep an open mind.

SB: How about your district? How has that changed in the time that you've been serving?

GAT: Well, we went through a redistricting back a couple of years ago and very fortunately they didn't change my district at all. It stayed the same and I liked it that way because I had already had two elections held (*laugh*) that I had won with the district the way it was. And today it's the same as it was in [19]94 whenever I ran. We have pockets that are predominantly Democratic and pockets which are predominantly Republican. They're very, very close. It's, you know, like 51/49 [percent] and I think it's leaning towards Republicans. Fortunately, it stayed the same; they didn't wheel me out of it, you

know, when they made it. But we'll see what happens in another couple of years when they do the redistricting again.

SB: Now, you mentioned that it had been a long-time Democratic stronghold.

GAT: Yes.

SB: How do you explain, as you mentioned, the move toward Republican?

GAT: Well, I think this election, because of the national Presidential election – what happened was, a lot of people voted straight ticket. And traditionally, Republicans get the voters out; Democrats don't get as many voters out. And if every Democrat voted straight Democrat and every Republican voted straight Republican, they would get 100, we would have like 25 (*laugh*), and I think that had something to do with the fact that straight ticket voting gave the Republicans a stronghold. Not to take anything away from the young man that was running in that election; he worked very hard at it and he deserves a shot.

SB: I noticed that you made a campaign pledge to make state government more “accessible.” Could you explain that?

GAT: (*laugh*) Yeah, I think I can. I answer my own phone. I go to meetings myself, so that when people are talking they're talking to a legislator. And I get a chance to

converse with them, to find out, “What are they thinking?” And, if I’m thinking the same way, we don’t have a problem. But if I’m not, I want you to tell me why I’m not thinking that way and why I should think your way. And I’ve had a few people mad at me. I mean that’s human nature; that goes with the territory. But on the whole, mostly, people were pretty nice; we got along real well. I don’t think if I would have run another term – I don’t know if I would have won. That kind-of scared me a little bit. I decided I was going to get out while I was a winner, while my health was pretty good, and give someone else the chance. And that’s what I did. But I’m not going away (*laugh*). I’ll be here. I’ll be watching and expressing my views on things. If they don’t want it, that’s fine, but I’m going to express them.

SB: Why do you not think you would not have won?

GAT: Well, I’d won five times and the law of average, you know, as I look back I think maybe I probably would have won – close – but I probably would have won. Because, since the election, so many people have made mention that they’re sorry that I didn’t run. But, I think I did the right thing, for my family’s sake, for my sake and for the Commonwealth’s sake. I think I did the right thing.

SB: You mention that you answer your own phone and you like to meet people directly. Does that come out of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*?

GAT: Yes (*laugh*). Yes, I think so.

SB: That's the way the movie has influenced you.

GAT: Yeah, yeah.

SB: How about your influence in music?

GAT: Oh, that started way back – back in 1941, [19]42. They had the old 78s. And every song that came out – I used to fancy myself as a singer, so I bought every record that I could buy with the money that I had. And the larger my collection got – the things that you couldn't do during the war. A friend of mine had a garage and his parents were away for the summer and there was nothing in the garage; their cars were gone and everything like that. So, us guys would go up Main Street and just walk the streets; we never caused any problems, you know, caused any trouble to anybody. And one day, I said, "You know, I don't want to do this. I'm going to go down home and play some records." "Well, we'll go with you." Well, I'm sure my mother would really appreciate it – about 10 guys going into the house and listening to records. And a fellow said, "Why don't you come over to the garage?" So, we went over to the garage and I played the records there and kids started to come in – these were my friends, now – I'd play the records and they were charging the kids 10 cents to get in (*laugh*). I wasn't getting any of that money; they got it all. And finally, in [19]43, I joined a CUBS athletic organization; they had a football team and I wanted to play football. And they wanted to raise money, so I started with doing dances at the Hall. And then I went into the service and came out, and then started doing dances again for sock-hops and record-hops and

things like that – I’m still doing it by the way; I do a lot of Christmas parties, weddings, class reunions and things like that. Not as many as I used to. I used to do it pretty heavily, but now I kind-of pick my time, because my equipment has gained weight over the years (*laugh*). So, I don’t relish lugging it around. My wife helps me, and I have a friend of mine who is very devoted and he helps me. And between the two of them I don’t carry very heavy stuff; they do it. But I’ve always loved music and when I was younger I had a pretty fair voice. I can’t sing now, but you know in the showers I sound great; that water really makes it resonate (*laugh*). But, I have a real extensive collection of records and now I probably have about 1,800 to 2,500 CDs. Of course, it’s anywhere from 12 to 20 songs on each CD, so I have a pretty extensive selection. I probably, after I retire at the end of this month, maybe do about three or four dances a month just to keep active, because I don’t want to become a couch potato.

SB: Well, who are your favorites, or what really moves you?

GAT: Oh, well, naturally Frank Sinatra; I have all his stuff. Bing Crosby, Al Jolson – I used to imitate him when I was younger – Dean Martin, Perry Como, Julie London, Doris Day, Peggy Lee, [and] Sammy Davis, Jr. And, of course, going into the [19]60s some of the groups were just fantastic. And I owned a record shop called Mr. Q’s – with Dick Qutan – and we used to bring in some of the “top 20” groups into Butler. So, I got to know a lot of them like The Spaniels, The Cadillacs, The Platters, The Four Freshmen, The Lettermen; I like all that kind of music. I actually like every kind of music there is that I can understand. Now, some of it I don’t understand, so I don’t understand it and

therefore, I don't like it. But, most everything else I enjoy very, very much. And my wife will be glad to know (*laugh*) that when I'm not doing anything, I'll be listening to my music.

SB: Well, the connection that I see is that you seemed to like to make people happy whether in public service or in this music. Where do you think that value comes from?

GAT: Gosh, I don't know, unless going back to the days of the movies when the musicals were being pumped out 100 a day. There was always a joyous thing – a party going on. And it was always that thing that happens – it looks like the end of the world is right around the corner and then all of sudden the sun shines and people are happy, and they're singing, and I guess maybe that's what I want to do.

SB: Looking back on your career do you have any regrets?

GAT: None whatsoever; none whatsoever. I think the radio business started to cement my personality. The dances helped out, and when I decided to get into politics it just broadened my learning experience. It taught me a new way of studying and of analyzing and coming to a conclusion. And I hope it was to the satisfaction of everybody.

SB: As a Representative, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

GAT: Well, one was getting the [State] Health Centers back in Butler is one that I'm most proud of.

SB: Could you describe it?

GAT: Well, there were 67 [State] Health Centers throughout the Commonwealth. Governor Ridge [Thomas; Pennsylvania Governor, 1995-2001] put out a pilot program with Butler, Berks, and Dauphin Counties as a pilot program to eliminate the State Health Centers. The idea was in two years we were going to look at it again. Well, it didn't work out, because the individual organization that took on the [State] Health Center only handled it about a year before they realized that they couldn't do all the procedures that the [State] Health Centers under the State Jurisdiction were doing, and they gave it up. I had been trying since 1997, I think, to get them to reopen in the three counties. Last year, I gave up on the other two counties because they never even contacted me to find out, "Could they be of assistance?" or, "We're with you," [or] "We're against you," or anything. So, I told the Governor [Edward Rendell, Pennsylvania Governor, 2003-2011] I was interested in Butler County, and if the other two come along that's fine; if they don't, that's fine too. But, I was really interested in Butler County. I pitched to him a couple of times and wrote letters a couple of times. Finally, we got to the point where the first of the year they decided to move on it. And I just talked to the [Pennsylvania] Health Department this morning. They're hunting a place to lease and they're hiring, taking applications to open the Health Centers up, hopefully, within a couple of months. And I worked hard on that, which shows you that hard work pays off. And that was one

of the better things that happened that I'm thrilled about. I used to belong to the CDC, the Community Development Corporation. I no longer am part of that, but I enjoyed my years with them and being able to talk to CEOs and Purchasing Agents and finding out what their needs were, and how we could do things. I probably will – I won't go back on the Committee – but, I probably will be putting my nose there to keep in touch to see what's going to be done and how it's going to be done. Our community is in dire need as many communities are, financially. Programs are being cut; people are being laid off. I hope to take an active role in bringing Butler back to what it was when I was growing up, to a prosperous community with programs that will satisfy everybody. If I can do that – whether I'm a legislator or not – I can help do that. So, that's what I'm going to do.

SB: What other accomplishments do you remember?

GAT: Oh, gosh, let me think. I was able to get the Governor to release 1.8 million dollars towards refurbishing [the] Pullman Park baseball field that we have there. And we – the Board of Trust – [are] now negotiating with getting a Semi-Pro team to come in and play there. It took me about five years to get that accomplished. Of course, you had to convince people to move the buttons around and I was able to do that.

SB: So, a lot of being a legislator is personal persuasion?

GAT: Yeah, I would think so; I think it is. I never thought I had that, “personal persuasion,” but, I guess, being persistent and not demanding got some of the things I

wanted done, I got done. And I feel that if it's for the betterment of this Commonwealth or for the betterment of my community, I don't object to going to somebody else and let them carry the ball. Having did justice to that particular program, I didn't object to going over to the Republican side and seeing if somebody there would help out, as I did it back home. I had no problem in bringing people together; I liked that. I'll be active; I'm on the [Butler County] Area of Aging Board back home [and] the Irene Stacy Board [Irene Stacy Community Mental Health Center]. I'm Treasurer of the Butler Area Sports Hall of Fame; I'm active in the CUBS and the SOI club [Sons of Italy]. I'm going to stay active in those things. I'm on the Board of the [Moraine Trails Council] Boy Scouts. I'm going to stay active in those things and work within their mission to get things accomplished.

SB: If you had advice for new freshmen Representatives, what would it be?

GAT: Take the job seriously and promise yourself you're going to do a good job, everyday, not every other day. And, I think, if they come here with the right attitude that they're going to help people, they'll get wrapped up into it real fast and realize that that's the way they want to do it. And things can always be better and you can be one of the things to make it better. And I think with the young people coming in today –there's a younger group and they're going to have ideas. And with the aid of the older legislators – because they can tell you, "We did that back in [19]26 or back in [19]46. We did that and this is why it failed." And with the youth, with their ambition, their dreams, their

gusto, maybe they can make the change that'll make it come true. I have great faith in young people.

SB: And how do you want your service as a Representative to be remembered?

GAT: That I tried and that I succeeded. And that's all I want.

SB: And what does the future hold for you?

GAT: Well, I'm going stay active [and] I'm going to become part of the community back home. And if I can be of assistance to Harrisburg, I would like the opportunity. I would welcome it, as a matter of fact.

SB: And on that, I want to thank you for your time and sharing your memories with us.

GAT: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Thank You.

SB: Thank you.