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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable David Steil (R)

31st District

Bucks County

1993-2008

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Transcribed by: Erin Miller

Raymond J. Whittaker, III (RW): Good morning.

The Honorable David Steil (DS): Good morning.

RW: I'm here with Representative David Steil, who has represented the 31st District in Bucks County, a Republican Representative. Thank you for joining us this morning.

DS: Thank you. Glad to be here.

RW: I first want to ask you to tell us a little bit about yourself.

DS: Well –

RW: From your family –

DS: – Sure. Actually, I grew up in central Minnesota in a small town in that area and went to high school and started college at St. John's University, which was about ten miles from our house. It was a Benedictine school. After a few years, I transferred to the University of Minnesota. Studied engineering, and while I was at the University of Minnesota, because I was essentially paying my way through college, I had to work part-time, and I got a job with a company that was based in Trenton, New Jersey. So, I worked for that company while I was going to school, and then I left school. I was actually still in night school in that company, but they asked me to transfer to Pennsylvania, or actually transfer to the home plant in Trenton, New

Jersey, and so I did that in 1969, the end of 1969, and transferred to New Jersey and took over a position there and began to travel very heavily. This was an industrial rubber manufacturing company. It was an old company. It was formed originally in 1870, and actually, was a good company. Was a kind-of a family-owned company, but it was about 100 million dollar business, and so I took over as Manager of the 48 branches that they had, and I became the operations manager for those forty-eight branches. So, I started traveling the country pretty heavily, and I worked for them until – actually, given my, my total experience, really from 1964 through 1969 – I mean, 1989. March of 1989 I left. So, I had a lot of experience, and I advanced through the ranks there. I was an Assistant Vice President at age 32. I think I was the youngest Assistant Vice President they had, and I became a full Vice President at age about 40, I guess right about 40, and I eventually took over the Manufacturing and Distribution divisions for the company. So, I ran Manufacturing and Distribution and then left in March of 1989. The company was actually bought out by a Swedish company, and the Swedes and I didn't see eye to eye on some things, so I decided it was time to find other careers, and I went to work for a venture capital company out of New York. This venture capital company bought equity positions in other companies and then I put together a management team and would turn the company around. So, I was part of a management team that turned around these distressed companies for about four more years, and the last company that I was at was a company called the Environmental Control Group. I left in 1992, when we had turned the company around and began selling off the divisions, and they wanted to take our turnaround team and send it off to Detroit, and I decided I did not want to move to Detroit, so I left the company at that point and actually bought out part of one of the divisions that they had and started my own business. And, at the same time, or simultaneously with that beginning in 1980, I had joined the Planning Commission of Lower

Makefield Township in Bucks County, again, because someone encouraged me to do it. A friend of mine who said, you know, "We think you'd be really good for this, and there's an opening on the board," and so I said, "Well, okay, I'll see what it's all about," and I joined the Planning Commission in late 1980. In 1987, I ran for a position as a Supervisor in Lower Makefield Township. This was all simultaneously with my work experience. So, I spent that time – I took office in [19]88 and through [19]92 was a Supervisor, but in 1992, the 31st Legislative District, because of reapportionment, moved from the Pittsburgh area to Bucks County, so there was an open seat. It was actually made up of three other Districts, three Representatives' Districts, and it was an open seat, and again, a number of people encouraged me to run for it, and I decided I would do it. So, 1992 when I was also starting my company or taking it private, I also ran for office both at the same time, which was a very difficult time for a few years, but I was successful. My Primary was a very tough Primary. I had three opponents in the Primary, a total of four, and I only won my Primary by, like, 100 votes; very close. Then, won the election in the fall and took office here in 1993 in January. All the while I kept my company and that company continues to go on today, and I spend a little time there, but most of its handled by the folks we've hired, and they handle all the day-to-day stuff, and I worry about the long-term kind-of work. So, as I got into the Legislature in 1993, I came in with a real attraction to the land use issue. That was my first – that's actually one of the major reasons I ran for office, because Lower Makefield Township was, at that time, one of the fastest growing townships in the state. And as a matter of fact, was number one for a few years between 1980 and 1995. So, being one of the fastest growing townships, I had a good chance to observe what we as a township could do and could not do as part of the land planning and development process, and I had a good look at state law and the enabling legislation, the Municipalities Planning Code, and so I began to think

there were some things that we probably could do better there. And so, when I got here, the land use was the first major issue that I really took up, and at that time, David Heckler [State Representative, Bucks County, 1987-1994; State Senator, 1995-1998] was still Representative in the House, and Jim Gerlach [James; State Representative, Chester County, 1991-1994; State Senator, 1995-2002; U.S. Representative, 2003-present] was still in the House, and Bob Freeman [Robert; State Representative, Northampton County, 1983-present] was here. Several Members who also had great land use issues, and actually, there'd been a study that was done late in the Casey Administration [Robert P.; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1987-1995]. I don't remember the name of it, but it was a land use study. It was a comprehensive kind-of study that had been done – it pointed the way toward a number of changes that Pennsylvania law perhaps needed. So, I got involved in that process and as the others drifted away, essentially, it was down to Jim Gerlach and I who began to champion the whole issue of land use, and that culminated in Act 67 and 68 of 2000, which were – it took us that many years to get it passed, so it says something about how difficult passing complex legislation is here. There's a lot of people that you have to feed, and I guess, like a lot of Legislators who are elected the first time, they try to do too many things, and I did. I tried to be an expert in almost everything, and I quickly realized after a term that I wasn't going to be able to do that, and I would have to concentrate on a few things. So, land use was one of the big ones. I became very interested in taxation and tax policy, tax principles, the whole revenue areas, and exactly what was fair and what wasn't fair and how we might do things differently, and so taxation became my next – and it was kind of focused on real estate taxes, and it was just, you know, it was something that was just very important at that time. And by the way, if you'd like to break in, just feel –

RW: No, no.

DS: Just feel free.

RW: You're doing pretty well.

DS: Yeah, so that became my second area of major interest, and with that, ultimately I got appointed to the Finance Committee, which – so now, I was on Local Government and Finance, and then I also got appointed, later on, to the Labor Relations Committee. And I had had several issues at home, back in my District, related to labor issues, particularly child labor law, and our technical schools had some real problems with it. Our Chamber of Commerce and some of our small employers in the county were having some issues with labor laws, so I got very much involved in that and developed legislation to really bring up to date the state's child labor law issues. And then, the fourth area that I became very much involved in was storm water, storm water management, and that really was the outgrowth of a lot of flooding issues that we had in my District. It was also the result of PennDOT's urgency to try and address storm water problems, because PennDOT, fairly or unfairly, often gets blamed for storm water that – because it runs off a road someplace, they think PennDOT should be managing that storm water, and if it floods somebody, then they want to blame PennDOT, but almost always that water came from somewhere else. It ran onto the roadway from some property, and the water that actually fell on the roadway's relatively minor, but we realized that we have a lot of storm water issues, and we had to begin to address those. And so, when Governor Ridge [Thomas J.; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1995-2001] came into office, he formed the 20th Century Environmental Review

Commission, and storm water was one of the major issues there. Land use was one of the major issues, so those were the four issues that I got involved in directly, and then there were a lot of other ancillary issues on that, so that kind-of carried me through the Sessions.

RW: I just want to take one short step back –

DS: Sure.

RW: – and ask you what influenced you to become a Republican? Was that something that was family oriented, or was that a personal choice of yours?

DS: Actually, it was a personal choice of mine, although my family had been very Republican, but when I was in college, like every kid, you kind-of rebel, and I was sure my father wasn't correct on some things, and I tended to adopt different positions then him, sometimes just to be different, sometimes just to have a position to argue for a while. But after I got out of college and got into the business community, I began to look at how government impacts and interacts with the operation of a business, particularly, and so, I seem to align more with the way Republican principles with regard to the operation of business. That is; a little bit smaller government, less heavy influence, and the idea that we really are functioning in a free enterprise system. We got to let the marketplace work. Yes, it has problems. Yes, there are people in business who are, bluntly, not capable of managing the business. They're not even – they're incompetent. They may even be to the point where they're fraudulent or whatever, and there are people like that, but we can't correct everybody's problem, so we have to accept the fact that

human nature being what it is, we have to allow that. And so, I think I became a pretty staunch Republican at that. Republicanism, to me, has always meant three things; one, first of all, is that we respect the rights of the individual. That's always been clear for me is you respect the rights of the individual. Secondly, is that we offer folks a hand up, not a hand out. I have said in many town meetings and so forth, "I will help you realize all of your potential. I will show you the way to the programs. I will help you understand the process by which you might enter these programs. I will lead you to the door of opportunity. I will not carry you across that threshold. You have to do that yourself," and we've always operated our District office in that way, in the same way that we wanted to. And thirdly, I believe in government closest to the people. I think government functions best when it's close to people and people interact, and I found that one was a little bit more difficult for me, ultimately, when I got into the land use issue and realized that we do all of our land planning at the local level. I began to realize that while sometimes government closest to the people may have some downsides, too, and that we need to find a way through that, and that's not to say that we shouldn't be doing those kinds of things at the local level, but we can do them better, and we need to involve the counties more in the land planning process. But, those three principals were what essentially came to me as the reason why I'm a Republican.

RW: Does any of this business experience that you've been involved with helped you in any way since you're now a Representative?

DS: Yeah, the business experience has been very valuable to me. First of all, just from a management standpoint; how to look at a project, how to put a team together, how to reconcile

the various needs of that team to understand what the objective is to create a good objective to structure a pathway to that objective, a set of projects or lists of items that need to be accomplished. The one difference between my business experience and here is that in business as a senior officer of the company or as a department manager, whatever, I had a lot of control over what happened in that department. Here, you have literally no control. You can put together teams of people, but ultimately, you got to convince one hundred and one other people that your concept, your approach, your ideas are the right way to go. And I quickly learned in the first term, second term, that those who had the most credibility in the House were those who had a few terms under their belt, and they had become very knowledgeable about a couple of issues. I focus particularly on Steve Nickol [State Representative, Adams and York Counties, 1991-2008] who was in the pension areas. Just an extremely knowledgeable person about that, and that first of all said to me is, I can't be an expert in everything, so I got to focus on a few things. Secondly, it said to me that I could see that folks would help me with legislation. They would vote my way if they believed that I knew what I was talking about and if they could trust me; if they knew that when they cast a vote for me, I would give them the upsides and the downsides, the pros and the cons. I would tell them if there was a political issue involved. I would be very happy to say to them, "Here's the political risks in this vote," and so when I did that with people, I found that they could then make up their mind, and they trusted me on issues, and they would vote, even if it didn't impact their District. I think in my time I have never, although I know people get accused of it, but I don't think I've ever really seen a Member vote against the interests of their District. But where their District is not directly involved in it, or if we can't and we try to compromise on some of the issues, I think that is work, but it takes a lot of time to build that kind of rapport with – so I was in my fourth term, literally, before we passed

Act 67 and 68, and it took that long to build a rapport with Members because the issue's complex, and it affects, given a state that's very diverse, a lot of rural areas, a lot of suburban areas, a lot of high growth areas, a lot of low growth areas. They look at this issue very differently, and so it was important that we build that coalition, and that took a lot of time. And ultimately, the key to success for me, and has always been, you got to find someone in the Senate who is going to carry the ball over there, and at that time Senator Gerlach – who was Representative Gerlach when we started, and he and I were good friends; we had a lot of common interests – when he went over to the Senate, we put together a really good team. Act 67 and 68; 67 was his bill, 68 was my bill. So, he managed my bill in the Senate, I managed his bill in the House, and we had a really good team, and that's what really made it happen, ultimately. Early on I passed a few bills out of the House. They went over the Senate, and I kept waiting for something to happen over there, and somebody just said to me one day, "Well, you know, if you don't care about what happens over in the Senate, do you think they're going to care about it?" And, of course, that's right. You can't just wait around for it, so you got to start working with somebody over there to get it done, and that was always the key. So, forming that kind of relationship, especially on difficult legislation, that's what you need to do.

RW: How about, tell us a little bit more about your District.

DS: Sure, sure.

RW: And the constituents and some of the problems that have arisen there that you've dealt with.

DS: Yeah, my District has two major features to it. One is that it is either the first or second most affluent District in the state. And when my District started, I actually had a 58 percent Republican majority in the District. Today, it's down to 42 percent, partially because of reapportionment. But the second major characteristic, outside the affluency, is that it has, I believe, the highest number of registered Independent or Other Party voters.

RW: Wow.

DS: It has 18 percent who are registered Other Party or Independent and the District, it tends to be, as an affluent District, it has a lot of people who leave the District every day to go to work. It is not a District in which you're going to find employment, for the most part. I have some 3,000 people who will get on the train every day to go up to New York City, which is why on September 11 of 2001, my District, of all the Legislative Districts in the state, had the most victims – number one – because we had a lot of people working up there. And so, first of all, a lot of people commuting; if they're not commuting to New York, they may be commuting to upstate New Jersey or someplace like that to go to work, anything along the New Jersey Transit and the AMTRAK lines. Others are going down to Philadelphia to work, so a lot of them leave the area to go to work. That tends to take them – because their days are long, their commutes are tough – it tends to take them out of real activity in the local governmental scene. I don't want to say just the political scene, but the governmental scene. They don't tend to be active in, not just politics, but in issues-based things. They don't tend to attend Board of Supervisors meetings or Planning Commission meetings, unless there's an issue that immediately or directly impacts

them then they may. But other than that, they tend to be a little bit more standoffish than that, but yet when there was an issue, they would generally turn out. Given the high number of Independents, we found early on that it was really difficult to reach Independents. We tried a number of things to draw them in. We held town meetings to which we only sent invitations to Independents. They didn't know that, but we wouldn't send any invitations to Republicans or Democrats; we'd send it only to Independents. We held breakfasts, legislative breakfasts, and we'd send invitations only to Independents, and we'd send out 3 to 4,000 invitations to those, and we would be lucky if we got eight or ten people to show up. So, they were very, very difficult to reach. Even in the campaigning process I tried to concentrate on Independents, and I never found the key to really bringing them into the scene. They were independent, typically. Also, another thing that was true in my District is, because it's a fairly affluent District, a lot of people in senior management positions. They have moved from somewhere else and know that they're not going to be there for the long term; they're going to be moving again in four, five, six years, whatever it is. So, they tend not to become involved in the local scene. Now, when I say that, I mean that's in the governmental areas. They're certainly involved in soccer and Little League and all that sort of thing for their kids, but in terms of governmental responsibilities, they are tough to reach. After reapportionment in 2002, I lost two townships, Wrightstown Township and Warwick Township, that were heavily Republican, and so that immediately cut my District from 57, 58 percent to down into the low 50's and even the upper 40's. Then another township was cut. But then as these townships began to transition, more and more folks – and I mentioned how fast the townships were growing – a lot of folks moved from other areas, and they tended to be more Democrat than Republican. So, now, as I say, it's 42, 40 – 18, which is a much more difficult – and in the last two, three elections, I've really been winning on Democrat crossover

votes. I really can't win on the strength of my Party registration and given that most Independents seem to be voting Democrat, so it was crossover Democrats who supported me in the last few elections that I had won with. It also made the elections a bit more difficult. I didn't always have a lot of real strong competition. I did have two terms – out of the eight terms, I had two when I didn't have an opponent, but I had a couple opponents who were pretty tough. But, it was a District – and I also had an approach to campaigning that was a very hands-off approach when it came to my opponent. I tried, in fact, I don't think in any piece of literature I sent out in eight campaigns that I ever even mentioned my opponent's name. I just didn't want to do it. I mean, as far as I wasn't going to give him any publicity or her any publicity that I didn't have to, so I never mentioned their name. I would disagree with them on issues sometimes, and we had a disagreement, but I kind of found that most of the opponents I had, with the exception of one, were pretty much the same when it came to issues, because if you're truly representing the District, you approach things pretty much the same way. And we would have some differences, perhaps, on education or health care, something like that, but we had practically no differences on environment, land planning. Taxation, I don't think we had any real differences on. So, we didn't have critical issues that we were arguing. After awhile you can use your experience to that kind-of thing, and you do it, so, but that was, that was very helpful.

RW: Well, take me back to your first election. What did it feel like to find out that you were elected and sitting in on the first day and Swearing-In Ceremony?

DS: I remember when I first got elected – and my first opponent was just a wonderful lady, and she and I are still good friends. Her and her husband and are just, you know, they're just good

friends of ours, and so we had a really good campaign. I remember we had a debate, just the two of us, and it was monitored by the League of Women Voters, and it was supposed to go an hour and a half. Well, at two and a half hours, we were still going, and it was such a great debate because we just bored in on issues; some we agreed, some we disagreed, took different perspectives. But when we got done, a number of people came up to us and said, "We have never heard an issues debate that was as thorough and as comprehensive as this one was, and we got two different viewpoints on many issues. We got the reasoning why you were at that viewpoint," you know. "We can really do something with this," and it was kind-of the situation where we liked each other so much – my opponent and I – that it's too bad one of us had to lose. I mean, and the newspapers actually came out and said, "No matter who wins this race," you know, "the community will win." But I did, and it was, I think, basically because we had 58 percent Republican registration then, so that's why I won, and I won with a 54 percent margin, which was relatively low at that time compared to my other races, until the last one. But I remember, first of all, when I won, I didn't have any understanding of what happened after you won, and so because it had been a long, grueling year, I said to my wife, "We're going on vacation the day election is over. We're leaving," and my daughter and her husband at that time were living in England, and so we said, "We're going to go over and spend some time in England, you know, and visit them and visit the parents." They've moved back to the US now, but, "So, we're going to go over and visit his parents and, you know, just tour a little bit, really have a good time." So, we went and we left for about ten days, two weeks. No one ever told me that Leadership elections were going to occur the week following the election. I had – Leadership – first of all; I didn't even know what Leadership was. So, Dave Heckler called me – I had called – I guess he called me just before I was leaving, or maybe he left a message with

someplace, but somebody reached me while I was gone over in England and said, "Well, aren't you going to be here for Leadership elections?" And I said, "Who's the Leader? What's that all about?" I said, "No one ever told me," and I said, "Well, I'm not going to be there, so that's not going to happen." So, Dave Heckler actually carried my proxy for the first Leadership election. I do remember that right after the election, I said to people or a couple, I guess it was the HR [Human Resources] department at that time, that I would be on vacation, and I didn't exactly tell them when, but they said, "Well, you need to interview for a secretary," so I did do that before I left, which is probably good because I got in a little bit early. If I had waited till I come back, there probably wouldn't be anybody left, but I did do that. I didn't know anything about office, didn't have really much help in setting up the office. And I have to say in my campaigns I never, ever had any communication really with HRCC [House Republican Campaign Committee]. They did not put any money in my campaigns. They did not provide technical support. They did run some kind-of courses on how to run a campaign and sort of thing, but other than that, I pretty much ran my own campaign. I just had to learn how to do it, and I talked with people who'd done it before, and, you know, we learned how to do it. So anyhow, when I got elected, I didn't know much about setting up a District office, but I knew I had to find space, and that turned out to be a little easier because my campaign manager was the mayor of Newtown Borough, and he said, you know, "We'd really like to have you in the borough here," and I said, "Well, it's a great place to have an office," and he had a good friend who was in the law firm of Stuckert and Yates, actually was a partner in that firm, Sid Yates, and they said, "Yeah, we got some space. We got a building here that's got some space in it, and we'd be happy to have you." So, we formed a really good relationship and got our District office in there, and I think we opened it probably by – I'm thinking it was just after Swearing- In that office opened, and during December, we didn't

really have much in the way of an office, but I think it was about mid-January when we opened up the District office. I had one staff person and another lady who was an older lady. I did not know her before, but she came to our grand opening, and she said, "Well, can I help you here?" She said, "I have a lot of experience in government in New Jersey," and my District you can see the New Jersey State Capitol right across the river from my District, and she actually had been the administrative assistant to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and she'd been in New Jersey government for like twenty-five or thirty years, had just retired and said, "I'd be happy to help you. I don't need to be paid. I just, you know, can help you out," and she came to the office and helped the new staff person that we just hired, and she worked for us for about eight, nine years, and she's just wonderful. I mean, she was then in her – she's sixty-seven or sixty-eight at that time, I guess. But, she was always good because she knew when a constituent was pushing a little too far, you know, when a constituent was out of line in their request, and so she was very good, and especially for a young staff who didn't really have any experience in a Legislative office, she was very, very helpful. So, that was a really good thing for us. So, we had one staff person. That staff person actually only stayed with us for about five months, and in the meantime, Dave Heckler, who was in the House because Jim Greenwood [James; State Representative, Bucks County, 1981-1986; State Senator, 1987-1993; U.S. Representative, 1993-2004] had run and won the seat for Congress at the same time, so Jim Greenwood's seat was now available, and Dave Heckler was running for the seat. He was in the Special Election. He got elected, and when he got elected in the Special Election, he asked me if he could hire our staff person because he had known her before, and I said, "Yeah, that's okay." I mean, I had felt that it was an opportunity for her and I never stood in the way of people. So, I had another person that had helped me in my campaign. She was a young lady just out of college, and she

graduated from Indiana University here in Pennsylvania and was just months out of it, but she helped us some in the campaign, and so we were able to offer her the job, and she's been with us now all sixteen years, so she started five months into the term and has stayed with us ever since and has been just, just a very big staff support. I mean, just been wonderful. She's now chief of staff. But, at the beginning it was just her and this older lady, whose name was Dottie. So, Kimberly and Dottie were in the office, and we were in the Stuckert and Yates building. We had a small – two offices, I guess. We've been there all sixteen years. They did renovate the building at one point, and we moved into a different suite of offices but still very helpful to us, and so I've always been in Newtown Borough. But we gradually got into very heavy constituent service work. We never did a lot of PennDOT work. We would show people how to do PennDOT work. We would have them fill out the forms, write the checks, and if they wanted me to take it to Harrisburg, fine. We'd take it to Harrisburg. We didn't do it for them, and it was a philosophy of our office and this whole self-reliance sort-of thing. Again, the philosophy that I had is, "I'll give you a hand up, not a hand out." We wanted to teach people how to do these things for themselves. We did not, and never did, attempt to do them for them. They had to take a responsibility to do some of the work. For several reasons, we never had a notary in our office. We didn't want a notary because, first of all, I didn't want to compete with notaries in the area. Secondly, there were notaries within the law firm that we were in. If we really, really had to get a notary, we could do that, but I wanted people to take responsibility for these things, and, you know, if you got to get a notary, you got to get a notary, and if you got to pay a couple of bucks for the notary seal, that's what you got to do. We're not going to do that for free and we're not going to do it for you. So, that was always our philosophy. A lot of constituent service work, and we set the ground rules on constituent service very early on. One of the things that I always

insisted on is when people call in here, first of all, they deserve a friendly voice, and I mean, often they're angry. They're mad when they're upset with their government. They don't understand the process. They don't understand the bureaucracy. They're hurting. They have some issue that is really intense for them, and they need help. So, I said the first thing we will do is I will be sure that I hire people who can deal with that and know that it's not personal attack on them, that this person has an issue. And secondly, I said too often government – you can't get the government. In our case you can get to us pretty easy, but I want to know that when you do that that that person has follow up, continuing follow ups. So, if they call us and it's going to take a week, two weeks, three weeks to resolve this issue, as sometimes tax problems did, every few days you call them, and you say to them, "We haven't forgotten you. Your issue's important to us. We are working on it. We've contacted the Department of Revenue, and here's what we're doing to resolve the problem. Just to let you know we're still on it," and they always appreciated that, because otherwise if you go two, three weeks, they think, "Oh, they just forgot us. They dropped us again," and so that really served us well, and we always had people who we followed up. We had a good tracking system. We recorded the cases. That time we didn't really any computer to help us do that, but later on we did. So, we were very heavy in constituent service in the first – and I have to say that personally, coming out of the business community and coming out of a relatively affluent District, I never understood the really serious human problems that we had to face at times. That people had really, really serious problems, and the poverty – there was poverty in the niches of affluence that I never would have believed existed. Not, you know, not a lot of them, but doesn't make any difference; If there's one or two, they're really hurting, and we had to find ways to help them, and I think in most cases we did.

RW: You already mentioned a lot of issues that you worked on, but maybe two recent ones that I'd like for you to talk about little bit is suburban sprawl and legislative reform; things that you had worked on fairly recently. Tell us more a little bit more about those issues.

DS: Well, the sprawl issue was basically an outgrowth of the land planning in my experience in Lower Makefield Township and the belief that we could do things better. And I felt, even in Lower Makefield Township – although it was township government – that, one of the problems we had to face in Pennsylvania was the fact that we didn't do planning at the local level, and essentially, the county planning commission, which had, they were good staffs, at least in Bucks County, you know, very strong staff, professionals, they got really no attention from the municipalities. So, that's what really kicked off the planning for Acts 67 and 68 was to develop a more cooperative approach to land planning and to sprawl so that – in Pennsylvania there's the convention called exclusionary zoning. It says no municipality may exclude any type of land use, so whether it's trailer houses or industrial, or whatever it is, you can't exclude them just because you don't like those sorts of things. And many municipalities around the state in that time were getting challenges that were called curative amendment challenges, which a developer would come in and say, "You know, you don't provide for trailer homes at all, mobile homes in this township, and so we're going to sue, challenge your zoning ordinance, because it doesn't provide for that," and municipalities would constantly lose. In Lower Makefield, actually just before I got on the Planning Commission, they had a challenge because we did not permit any kind of high density development; apartments, townhouses, condominiums; nothing. Everything was single family or really low density stuff like one home every two acres, that sort of stuff, and we got challenged on it, and the court said "Absolutely," you know, "the people who need

townhouses or condominiums for whatever reason, whether it's financial, whether it's because that's the lifestyle they like, whatever it is, they have a right to live in your township, too." And so, we lost the case and the zoning went forward and, you know, we built the first townhouses and condominiums they ever had. And so, that was a huge thing, and I realized that a lot of this could be ameliorated if municipalities got together and did their planning cooperatively, and that's what Act 67 and 68 ultimately tried to accomplish was to provide for joint inter-municipal planning and zoning, and that's why we began to have a real impact on that. Before Act 67, 68 passed there were two or three groups of municipalities in the state that did any kind of cooperative planning. Actually, one was right in my District. The only real effect of joint comprehensive planning was done in my District, but after we passed 67 and 68, there are now over, I'm told, somewhere around 600 municipal groups that are doing joint planning. Now, some of it's fairly simple. They might just be agreeing on police services or plowing snow or running park systems or something like that. Others are doing joint comprehensive planning. So, I think that was very successful, and it certainly led the way. It is not the end by any stretch, but it is a very good first step. We then had to – and the other issue you wanted to talk about was, oh, this reform issue. In 19 – no, it was probably 2000 – somewhere in there – I became involved with NCSL [National Conference of State Legislatures], and I'd been very concerned about how the process worked, the legislative process worked, and part of that was an outgrowth of Act 67 and 68, which were very difficult – as I said, it took eight years for us to accomplish that and were very difficult. There were, I will never forget, I thought we had almost everybody together, and we were approaching finality on these bills, and we were ready to come to a vote, I will never forget the chair of a committee who had to review this bill who said to me, "If you don't take care of the timber people in this state, I'm going to whack this bill when it comes to

my committee," and I thought, well, first of all, no timber people have ever expressed any problem with the bill. No one's spoken to me, and I found out a lesson; and that is, that people will probably go directly to Leadership on things that they want done and won't come to the Member, because I didn't think there was any issues. And so, we had one more issue to work out, and it wasn't all that complex, you know. It was pretty difficult. Had they come to us, I think it would have been very simple, but they went to the committee chair, and he basically told me what was going to happen, and so, I began to get really concerned about a process that allowed Members' ideas to be either abandoned, delayed, buried before they ever had a chance to debate them. And the concept occurred to me that ideas and issues should stand or fall on their merits and not for some other personal reason, and when I began to look at the process, I said, "You know, there's really two people who control the legislative process: the Majority Leader and the Committee Chair." The bill will never get a hearing in committee if the committee chair doesn't want to do it; that's number one. And if you get it out of committee, if the Majority Leader who schedules the calendar and the votes in the House doesn't want to do the bill for one reason or another, it's not going to happen. And I said to myself, "That's really wrong," and I began to look around what other states were doing, and I particularly got involved with the National Conference of State Legislatures, NCSL, and I got a lot of information. I started interacting with Members from other states, House and Senate Members from other states, and I asked, "Well, how do you handle legislation? What happens when a bill gets introduced? Who controls the process of the bill?" And I found that we were probably the most conservative of all the states; that, in fact, the fact that a couple of people could control the whole legislative process was abhorrent to most of the people I talked to. They couldn't believe that we would do something like that. Another thing I quickly came to realize is that in Pennsylvania we

rarely defeat a bill on the Floor of the House. Almost everything that comes before the House passes, and I stopped to think about it, and I talked to other people, and they said, "Well, you know, up to 40, 50 percent of every bill that comes to a vote fails." So, I realized that we didn't fail legislation, but the reason was because they had to bring everything to the Floor. They couldn't stop a piece of legislation because they didn't like it or didn't think it was ready, or whatever the reason was. It had to come to a vote. And I said to myself, "So, the process has to be" – because even if I bring a bill to a vote, and even if I lose, it's still instructive. I learn something from defeat. I can bring it back again in the next Session, and I can address the issues that I apparently didn't do a good job of addressing the first time. Find ways to compromise with the folks who oppose it and do whatever, but it was instructive. So, that's when that really kicked off the whole, really, the reform effort. There had been an earlier reform effort with Representative Carone [Patricia; State Representative, Butler County, 1991-1998], Representative Krebs [Edward H.; State Representative, Lebanon County, 1991-2002], and a few others back in 1996. Todd Platts [State Representative, York County, 1993-2000; U.S. Representative, 2001-present] who's now a Congressman, was involved in it, and Mike Hanna [Michael; State Representative, Centre and Clinton Counties, 1991-present] was involved and a few others, and we had attempted, at that time, to make some fairly simple changes to rules. We weren't successful in most of them. The only one we ever got was the change to the number of votes that was required to suspend rules. We did get a small change there. Of the others, we didn't, and I remember we traveled around the state and visited editorial boards and did all this sort of thing, and there was really no interest in what we were doing. I mean, if we got one editorial at all, it was one editorial, and that was the end of it, and so it was clear it wasn't time. It just wasn't an issue. But, I became very concerned about it, so in the early 2000's I spent a lot

of time – did a lot of work with NCSL, served on the Executive Committee, served as Chair of one of their standing committees – and really learned a lot about the legislative process. It became very apparent with the failed pay raise – or the pay raise that passed, but then was withdrawn – that there was now a huge opportunity to begin to push the issue of reform. It was a huge opportunity to address the things that people didn't care about before, because when the pay raise happened, the general public began to ask, "Well, why do these things happen?" And when they began to understand that we had a Rules Committee that would simply amend bills without even meeting, and that's how the pay raise language got into a bill. A two page bill became, oh, I don't know, what, a 35, 40 page bill because it was amended in Rules, but the committee never actually met. They just shoved the amendment in on a concurrence vote from the Senate and was bought out on the Floor to do it. Well, I don't think that's the way it should happen, and given the uproar that that caused, I said, and a few others, namely Representative Schroder [Curt; State Representative, Chester County, 1995-present], Representative Manderino [Katherine M.; State Representative, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties, 1993-2010], and a few others said, "Yeah, you know, we've now got," and it was a bipartisan effort. "Here's an opportunity for us," and that's when the whole reform thing kicked off, and we actually had several initiatives. We had a Bipartisan Reform Caucus, which we established in late 2005. The Jefferson – I guess actually the Jefferson Reform Initiative came first. That happened in late 2005. In 2006, we formed the Bipartisan Reform Caucus, and we actually got Members to sign up to it, and we put together agendas and began drafting other ideas and that sort of thing. Weren't really successful at accomplishing anything, but we were now making some noise, and we went out and visited all of those who were running for office in 2006, especially those who were running in open seats or where the incumbent had retired, whatever. We got out to meet

with them, and we told them what the whole reform initiative was about and tried to bring them to our view. As you know, 50 new Members came in at that time, and we thought, you know, this is going to help. Not all of them saw reform the same way we did, and some because they didn't understand the process here, but nevertheless, it provided a good base. And so, when the issue for Speaker came along, the number one issue for me is, what are you going to do to advance the cause of reform? And Representative O'Brien [Dennis M.; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1977-1980, 1983-present; Speaker, 2007-2008] is the one who said, "I will form a Speaker's Reform Commission," and I said, "Good, you got my vote." I mean, because that's what's going to take. It's not – and you have to be willing to address the tough issues, not just things you think you think got to happen, but things we as a group of Members believe. These are ideas, and like everything else, got to come to the Floor, got to vote on it, and it'll pass, it'll fail, whatever, but let's start addressing it. So, that's really how that came about.

RW: Interesting, very interesting. You talked a little bit about seniority and Leadership, too. How does that affect you over your term?

DS: Well, I've been an opponent of the seniority system ever since we got here, and that's one of the reforms that we did propose but didn't happen, and I can understand. There's a lot of vested interest in it, but when I was a new Member, I had had at that point 27 years of senior management experience in a business. I mean, I knew a lot about managing. I knew a lot about the business and those sorts of things, and so I tried at first to get onto the Economic Development or Commerce Committee, Commerce and Economic Development, and I tried to get on Finance, and I tried to get on those kinds of committees which would have some

relationship to the business community, but I couldn't get on the committee, and so I decided that I needed to address those in a different way, and – I'm losing the question. What was the question again?

RW: I was just talking about seniority and Leadership, yeah.

DS: Oh, seniority, okay, yeah. So, I realized that the seniority system did not use the talents of the people who came here. They did not use our background and experience, and I've often used the example of Representative Rubley [Carole A.; State Representative, Chester County, 1993-2008] who had a very strong environmental experience before she came here; worked for major environmental companies and, really, all kinds of experience. I'm not even sure she got on the Environmental Committee the first time, but certainly, she didn't have any role to play. To me, appointing a committee chair simply because they've been around here 18 or 20 years was the wrong way to go, and I looked as a first and second term Member, and I looked up there, and I said, "You mean I got to be up here 16, 18 years before I can even be a Committee Chair to begin to utilize the experience and the background I have?" And I said, "That's wrong." And I also felt that the perks and benefits of office shouldn't just flow to those who are here the longest. I don't think we should be encouraging people to stay here. We should be encouraging people to use the talents; to come here, use the talents they have, and if the voters feel they should continue on it, that's fine, but I don't think it should just accrue. So, I oppose the seniority system, and actually, when I came here, there was a tradition of seniority, but there wasn't – it wasn't enshrined in our rules. And then because of the issues that happened in 1994, you may recall, when Tom Stish [State Representative, Luzerne County, 1991-1996] switched

Parties, and Republicans became the majority party, there was some reaction with regard to chairs of committees, and when that happened, we passed legislation that enshrined – or passed rules changes – that enshrined the seniority system. I voted against it. I was one of the few Republicans who voted against it at that time. I still feel it's wrong. I feel it, you know, that we should be using people's talents to the best effect, and I don't care if they're here one term, two terms, three terms, whatever it is. We should be using their talents.

RW: Well, maybe something that goes along with that; the minority and majority. Now, you've been in both?

DS: Yes.

RW: Tell me some of your thoughts about that.

DS: I was in the minority first term and then in the majority for twelve years after that, six terms, and then in the minority again in the last one. The one thing I feel strongly about is that the majority party should have the right to run its agenda. I mean, there's no question that while we have to give consideration to other people's views and opinions, we should be able to run our agenda because that's why you're in the majority is we do approach the same problems and things from different ways, and we should absolutely have the right to do that. It's also clear to me that without some change to the process, the minority party members really don't have a, have a much of a forum to have their ideas heard, and that's why I have certainly felt that being in the majority is a desirable thing. If we're going to take the long-term approach to the kinds of

problems that we have, whether its taxation, health care, education, whatever it is, we need to be sure that we address those problems in a long-term way, and so being in the majority enables you to do that. But that doesn't mean that we should be excluding the minority. I've always said that good ideas are good ideas. It doesn't make any difference where they come from, but they're just good ideas, and they're not Republican ideas or Democrat ideas; they're just good ideas. So, it's always preferable to be in the majority, no question, but I've also felt that there ought to be a different process, that so few people, two people, should not be controlling the legislative process, and that's why I introduced in this Session, House Resolution 851, which puts together, some – it puts together a system of automatic calendar, which is used in a number of other states. Essentially, it says that when you introduce a bill you have a right to have that idea heard. Now, I think if our committees were formed a little bit differently, a lot of the bills that are either half-baked, or the ideas are not ready for prime time, they're not even going to make it out of committee, but the committee should hold a vote on it. They should have a debate on it, and if they hold a vote and it goes down, well, it goes down. It's dead, you know, come back again next time. Try again. But, it's dead. If it gets out of committee, it ought to be scheduled for a Floor vote. The whole House ought to have an opportunity to deal with it, and each Member who represents their constituents and has the responsibility to represent those constituents ought to be able to bring forth the issues that those constituents care about, and some of them are tough political issues. I understand that, and, I mean, I can recall a number of times when a Member would say, "Well, do we have to really vote on this? I mean, this is a tough vote in my District. I'm not going to win no matter which way I go," and, "So, can't we just kind of bury this someplace so I don't ever have to vote on it?" Well, that's not why we're here, in my opinion. We're here to make tough votes, and some of them are really tough, and I understand there are

political consequences to it, but I always went into every vote with the idea that I could – before I cast my vote yea or nay, I would say to myself at some point, "When questioned on this vote, how am I going to defend it?" Whichever way it was, "How will I defend it?" And, "Do I believe that I have a good defense on my vote?" And if I didn't, then I'd have to second guess myself and say, "Well, you know, maybe you're going the wrong way here, David," so, I would consider that. But generally, when I made a vote, I knew why I did it, and some people wouldn't agree with me. I understand that, but that's okay. So, I always thought that was very important. So, that's why being in the minority, I think there has to be a change to the process that allows legislation to come to a vote that is difficult, and there has to be a process to bring these difficult things to a vote, and you can only have to go back to health care and taxation and things like that that we just haven't been able to get at, and the reason we haven't is because there's no process to bring those concepts to a vote, so.

RW: A lot is talked about the role of camaraderie and how that –

DS: Yeah.

RW: – plays into developing legislation –

DS: Sure.

RW: – and also extracurricularly, how have you seen the role of camaraderie played out?

DS: Well, I think it's very important. One of the things that I related earlier was that we needed to – you need to build up rapport with your Members, with your colleagues, because ultimately, they will support issues that they either don't know much about or don't care much about if they know that you know about it and yet you're trustworthy. And then that camaraderie comes in because you can get votes. And quite honestly, when you need to get 101 votes besides yourself, you need a lot of that, and so you need to get the good will of your colleagues, both sides of the aisle do that.

RW: You talked a little bit earlier about the use of computers –

DS: Yes.

RW: – and technology. How has that changed over the length of your term?

DS: Huge change to us. I think I may have mentioned that when we first started, particularly in the District office in terms of constituent service, we would have anywhere between 30 and 60 calls a day, many of them constituent cases. Some of them were very, very simple, but there was things we had to do. Since the advent of the information technology systems that are now available, both internet-driven and our whole email systems and everything else, our constituent calls have fallen off considerably in the last six years, and it has been because now if somebody wants a piece of legislation, they just want to know what a bill does or how it is, they can go get it. They don't need to call us for it anymore. A lot of information with regard to grants, programs, those sorts of things are all available online now. We didn't have that at the

beginning, so if somebody wanted to apply for a grant for a municipal park or something, we'd have to draw down the forms and get them to them and usually pick up the forms, take them back to Harrisburg, follow through on it. Now they can do it all online; very, very different. Legislative action, what bills passed, what bills failed, where they were in the process. That's all available now. We didn't have that then. So, a lot of the reasons why constituents called us went away when they could access the information in a different way. The constituent service cases that still stuck with us are the more tough ones. They take more time. They may be a tax problem. They may be a child care problem. They may be a Social Services problem. Whatever they are, they often can take much more time to resolve, and we were able to communicate better with the people we represent because of technology. We didn't have E-mail when I first came in. There was no way. And I had had it in my business world, so when I came here, I was just shocked the fact that I didn't have E-mail available to us. In one sense, E-mail was very helpful; but in another sense, it took more time because now I was typing my own responses instead of just dictating a response and letting my secretary respond. But, I'm not sure that in the end I dictated a letter a whole lot faster than I typed it out, so. And I knew that I could communicate, and it was easier to get responses back-and-forth, so if I sent an E-mail to a constituent from a problem that they presented to me, when I sent that E-mail out, if they didn't agree with something or didn't like something or didn't understand something, they could come right back and we could have an interchange. We could actually have a dialogue via E-mail. Couldn't do that before. Got a lot more phone calls earlier in the term. Phone calls now are significantly reduced, again because they can get the information other ways, or they may just E-mail rather than phone calls. And the other thing that, from a technology standpoint, that has really helped us was our ability to gather information from other states, particularly. What do

other states do, and how do they approach the problem that we're trying to address? And we do that by direct contact with those states, or we may do it by going through the NCSL Web site, who has a tremendous library of information and documentation about how states approach problems. So, we could do a research ourselves. We didn't have to rely on the research done by our standing committee staffs, which was always tough because there's only a few people there, and they got a lot of work to do, and so we tended never to have to use committee staffs. We also have the LORL, Legislative Office of Research. We used to use them quite a bit in the beginning, and they were always very effective, but now we could do most of that ourselves; we didn't need to do it. So, we still use them sometimes on long-term things or something that may be more complex, but generally, we can now do it ourselves. And the other area that technology really helped us was just understanding or keeping records of people who contacted us. Before that, everything was a paper file. You know, somebody called us about an issue and we resolved the issue, we had to write it up in some way. Even if we just did it over the phone, I had to write notes somehow because, you know, some time down the road we might want to know, did that person call us before? What did we do? How did we help them? Maybe the problem came back again, and the only way of doing it except writing paper notes. So, with a data system, we can now record what we had done, and we could retain E-mails, we could print out the E-mail. We could do whatever, but we could actually create a record of what we had done, and that was particularly helpful. So, those are the three areas, I think, that it affected us most.

RW: Generally, how do you feel about your contributions to the legislative process?

DS: I feel very good about it. I certainly do not regret any time I spent here; no regrets. It was an honor to serve here. When you think about the fact there's 12 and a half million people in Pennsylvania, and only 203 people get to do this job, that's a pretty big honor. I think my legislative record was good. I think up until this past term, anyway, I was averaging about 1 point 8 or 1 point 9 bills per year. So, that was a pretty good record, and, you know, some of them were more important than others, and I also had some major legislation which went through that didn't have my name on it, like the Uniform Construction Code. I mean, that didn't have my name on it, but that bill came out of the work that I and a subcommittee that Jim Merry [James; State Representative, Crawford and Erie Counties, 1981-1996] had appointed – Representative Merry had appointed – we drafted that bill and what passed was 90, 92 percent of what we put together. The tax reform legislation that ultimately came about, I was very active in that, and Act 1 is – even though my name is not on the bill, I was on the Conference Committee that did that, and I'm still very proud of Act 1. A lot of people say it was a failure. It wasn't a failure; it was actually, in my way of thinking, a great success. It didn't shift the burden of property taxes, but in most cases it was because people didn't feel that – they didn't want to do that. They were more afraid of what they were going to than what they had, and it didn't go as far as I wanted it to go. There's no doubt about that, but the rest of Act 1, there was a whole lot of other conditions and regulations in Act 1 that all were in fact, and a lot of seniors are getting a lot of help now they never got before. So, Act 1 was a success as far as I'm concerned. So, if you add all those together, the things I didn't even have my name on that did it, I was involved in some very difficult issues, even recently the issue of tax collection. Now, finally we have this county tax collection system, which I'm not particularly thrilled about, but a lot of the work that Task Force that I put together about statewide collection of income and sales taxes came about

because of the work we did, and actually when this county tax collection bill came out, I offered an amendment that would have mandated state tax collection, and it failed by just a few votes. So, that was another example. That vote came up on a day I couldn't be here, and everybody knew I wasn't going to be here, and they ran the bill anyway, so, you know, but I still only lost the amendment by three votes. So, those are the kinds of things that I feel very good about. So, I think my track record is good, and I think I probably did fewer citations and fewer bridge namings and resolutions than probably most people around here did, because I was involved in pretty complex issues. So, the fact that we were actually able to accomplish that stuff was good, and I will walk away with some disappointments and things I didn't get done. I mean, I guess that's true of most the things you do in life.

RW: When you think back over your service, what are some of the fondest memories that you'll have? Is it going to be the legislative stuff? Is it going to be the work with the constituents, or, or in general?

DS: For me, personally, it's going to be the legislative work because I've always considered myself an idea person, and being an idea person means that I think I brought some new thinking to a number of areas of policy in this state, both through my service on the State Planning Board, through the service in NCSL, through interaction with my constituents. So, I'm very proud of that, and I think that for me, personally, that is good. For the people that worked in our office, there's no question that our constituent service work is just very meaningful to us and, just to give you a brief example of that; a couple weeks ago – actually, it was several months ago – I was walking down the street in Newtown, and a lady came up to me and just gave me a big hug

and a kiss, and she said, "You probably don't even remember me, but you helped me 12 years ago, and," she said, "you may recall that my son and I, along with a daughter, had just broken free from a very abusive marriage, and my son had huge anger issues, and he was failing in school, and he was just a wreck," and she said, "you helped me get him into the Hershey School and we were successful. He got into the Hershey School, and he succeeded there. He worked through his problems, graduated, went to the University of Pennsylvania, then went to Penn Law School, and is now an attorney for a major law firm down in Washington, D.C.," and she said, "If it hadn't been for that, I think he could be in jail today," and that's so rewarding. I mean, that was just entirely rewarding. But then, on the other hand, you have the constituent service – and my staff will always focus on these kinds of things – we had a few mothers, you know, in their 50's and 60's, and they'd come in and say, "My, my 28 year-old son has his driver's license suspended, and he's suspended for 20 years. Can you help him?" Well, we'd say to them, "Well, first of all, send Johnny in here," you know. "Send your 28 year-old – why are you trying to solve his problem?" And sometimes, little old Johnny would actually come in, and we'd find out he'd just been totally irresponsible, you know. It was just – legally he may never drive legally in this state again for what he was. And we do what we can, but the admonishment we always gave to them is, "Now, you were already suspended. Do not drive in this state." "Oh, no, no, no, I certainly won't drive anymore. I," you know, "I've learned my lesson. I'm going to do that. I want to get married next year. I want to have kids," you know, and I said, "Well, we'll work to find ways that there is a probationary period you can serve, but that's at least seven years. Don't get picked up again driving without a license." We'd watch him walk out the door, get in the car, and drive away. You know, it's just that kind of irresponsibility which just would

frustrate our staff, but we still tried to help people, but many times, in those cases, there was very little we could do.

RW: You're retiring. What are you planning on doing next?

DS: Well, I'll go back to my business. I'm going to get reinvolved in the manufacturing business. I want to spend more time there, and given the state of the economy today, it's going to be very important for me to spend more time there because we're going to face some very difficult – very difficult marketplace for the next year, year and a half, and so the business is going to take a lot of attention.

RW: What kind of constituent do you see yourself being?

DS: I consider myself to be a – I still am going to be active. I've already had the conversation with several Members here who have said, "Well, can we call you when we get into these things like storm water or other reform issues? Can we call you for advice?" You know, sure, absolutely. I'm not likely to become involved at a local level a lot, and I'm really trying to back away from that government area, so I don't expect to be involved as a public advocate for any particular kind of legislation or action, and that's not to say that that couldn't change, but I mean, at this point I don't expect that. I do expect to offer the benefit of my experience and knowledge as I can, but that's probably where I'm going to be.

RW: If you had any advice to give to people who are looking in to get in this type of work, what would you tell them?

DS: I would tell them, first of all, that it is a very rewarding job. I mean, it's a job to do something that few people have the opportunity to do. It is a much harder job than the newspapers will let you believe. If you're going to do the job. Now, when you take this job, it is a job where you're going to have to have the self discipline to do the work. If you do that, you can make some major contributions. If you don't have that self discipline, if golf is more important to you than legislation, you might get elected time after time after time, but you'll make very little contribution. And the second thing I would advise you to do is, begin to think about both sides of an issue; you know what you believe, you know what your principles are, but start understanding the other person's beliefs and principles, because if you don't have a willingness, if you don't have an understanding of where they're coming from, you're not going to be very successful in wending your way through these very complex issues.

RW: I think that's a great place to end. I appreciate your time with us today.

DS: Glad to do it.

RW: And I want to thank you again for doing it.

DS: Okay, thank you.