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BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Matthew Wright (R)

142nd District

Bucks County

1991-2006

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Heidi Mays, House Archivist
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1 **Heidi Mays (HM):** Hi. Today I'm here with Representative Matthew Wright, who
2 served the 142nd Legislative District from Bucks County between the years 1991 and
3 2006. Thank you for being here with me today.

4

5 **The Honorable Matthew Wright (MW):** Thank you.

6

7 **HM:** I wanted to begin by asking you about the influence of your family and your early
8 life on your future career as a politician?

9

10 **MW:** Well, I grew up in a political family. My father [James Wright; State
11 Representative, Bucks County, 1965-1990] was a State Representative before me, and I
12 was five years old, I believe, when he first ran for office in 19 – well, I was six years old,
13 I guess – in 1965, he ran for State Representative. He was a local Township
14 Commissioner before that, and my family moved from – he was from the New York City
15 area, went to college, met his wife at college, got a job in Bucks County and moved to
16 Bucks County. They started to have children. I was the last. I was the baby of the
17 family, and so, most of my brothers and sisters were getting to be teenager age by the
18 time I came around, and I can remember some of those old photos of him campaigning,
19 bringing his family around, and those were the very first photos. I don't really remember
20 anything specifically about that, but I did see the photos after the fact. But one of the
21 things that – getting back to your question – was, how did it motivate me to get involved
22 in politics? Well, that was the days before Representatives or Senators had offices in
23 their District, and so, therefore, my father worked as a State Representative out of the

1 house, and one of the rooms in the house was converted into an office. They didn't do
2 quite as much constituent work as they do today, but nevertheless, we used to receive lots
3 of telephone calls from people. Stuff would be delivered; people would stop by and want
4 to visit, et cetera, talk with him about problems and issues, and the vast majority of the
5 time – this was really before answering machines. I mean, the telephone rang. If no one
6 picked it up, there was no answering machine. It just rang, and no one picked it up, so
7 those were the days when, especially my father, sort of drilled me, to my mother and to
8 the rest of my brothers and sisters that we were required –it was our duty – to go pick up
9 the phone, and when you pick up the phone, you know, it would be some person at the
10 other end, and they would be talking. They would want to talk to my father. “Oh, I'm
11 sorry. He's not here right now. Can I take your name and telephone number?” “Well, I
12 want to leave a message.” “Okay, what is the message?” And so, they start going on and
13 on and on, five minutes, ten minutes, 15 minutes, and sometimes you get some people
14 who just like to talk, et cetera. And here I'm a young guy, a teenager, you know, my
15 brothers and my sisters, my mother, on this end of the phone, and we're just trying to get
16 out of the person just their name and telephone number and maybe a one sentence sound
17 byte, and I will pass it along, and then – so, we started to learn from an early age how to
18 deal with the public, how to – then, of course, my father would say, would ask the
19 question – we'd leave a cryptic message, you know, “Mrs. Jones had a problem with her
20 driver's license.” Well, of course, my father would ask me 20 questions. “Well, what
21 was wrong with it? What was the problem? Did she say if she did this or did that?”
22 “Well, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.” So, as we were growing up, we
23 almost became the free staff of the office, trying to understand the problem, get to the

1 root of the problem, anticipate what my father's questions were going to be, and, in fact,
2 quite often, if it was in a rush and he wasn't around, if he was traveling to Harrisburg, we
3 would have to call Harrisburg, and we'd get him, or we'd get the staff in Harrisburg, and
4 we'd have to pass on the message and explain the message. And I think those early days
5 of essentially running an office, running a constituent office out of the house, taught me
6 very well. And on top of that, when I became an adult able to vote, then I, of course,
7 became "the committeeperson" for the District, and most people who, maybe, will watch
8 this know that committee people, regardless of Party – every Party has committee people
9 – and volunteers are always getting hard and scarce to find. And as a child, when
10 campaigns came along, and as growing up to a teenager, et cetera, our duty was to go
11 pass out literature, go knock on doors, go work election days, go help my father run for
12 election. And then on the off years, when other people were running, we were sort of
13 drafted to go help them, et cetera. And then I became the committeeperson, so most of
14 those – it wasn't necessarily by choice. It was sort of forced onto me, but I relished in
15 that – and then when I got out of high school, went to college, and had to pay for my own
16 way to get through college, I wanted to get a management degree from college, and I
17 think the customer service, the constituent service that I learned from growing up in the
18 family, led me down the path into the business sector and going into customer service
19 fields.

20

21 **HM:** Well, did your other siblings decide to enter the political arena at all?

22

1 **MW:** No, I think because there was a wide difference between my oldest brother and
2 myself. I think first, my oldest brother escaped before he was required to do the political
3 duty. He was already a teenager at the point when my father first got involved, and I
4 think he escaped it. Then my sister, my sister got involved a little bit. She was next in
5 line, and she did get involved a little bit, and the next brother above me, I think he just
6 totally ignored it and walked away. He didn't have any ambitions or any interest in it
7 whatsoever. So, my sister did a little bit of work, and when she moved out of the house
8 and bought her own house, got married in the community. I think she became a
9 committeeperson, too, and she had to help out until she then moved sort-of out of the
10 area, and that sort-of ended that. She had an interest in, well, what was going on, but I
11 think once she moved away from the house, I think it sort-of ended that. I only moved,
12 actually, about six blocks away when I first bought my house, so I couldn't escape the
13 influence of my father and helping the public.

14

15 **HM:** Did you ever come to Harrisburg with your father?

16

17 **MW:** Yes. When I was a child, I think, quite often. I was brought up to, especially on
18 holidays, or when school was out in the summertime and they were still working, or the
19 various holiday periods, such as, maybe school was out on Monday, or whatever, and
20 we'd be up there. Of course, most Sessions are Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in
21 Harrisburg. A lot of holidays were on Monday, and then with the major holidays, then
22 Session would still be in. My father also, as he rose up through the ranks, he became
23 committee Chairperson on a number of committees, and so therefore, his roles expanded.

1 Not just, what we call Session, meaning when everybody comes to Harrisburg – all the
2 Legislators come to Harrisburg – to vote, but we have an extensive committee structure.
3 Like any other group in the world, the House has subgroups, and those subgroups called
4 committees do a lion’s share of the actual leg work and groundwork. And as he became
5 committee Chairs, he would have to come to Harrisburg just for the day, or many times,
6 just to have meetings, and so, therefore, quite often, he brought me up with him. I had a
7 lot of fun. Nowadays, the Capitol’s a little bit more closed due to security reasons, but
8 when I was a child, there weren’t even guards around. Every door in the building was
9 open everywhere. I could wander all around and go to the Museum and go down to the
10 river, et cetera. Also, my dad’s secretary had some boys roughly my age, and sometimes,
11 they’d drop me off at their house, et cetera, so it worked out very well. I did grow up in
12 the Capitol Building.

13

14 **HM:** So, you feel very comfortable here, I’m sure.

15

16 **MW:** Oh, yes. I was in this building. I was very familiar with the building before I
17 came here 16 years ago.

18

19 **HM:** Could you describe your career and your experiences before coming to the House?

20 You talked about being a committeeman, but what about your other work experience?

21

22 **MW:** Sure. Well, I never had any political experience. Well, I was a committeeman,
23 that is political experience, but I never held a public office, per se, prior to this and my

1 direction was really in business. Out of high school, I had my part-time job going
2 through high school, which was actually working for a local market, and it was actually,
3 looking back, it was the job that I loved the most in life. But it was a teenage job and
4 working with other teenagers my age, et cetera, and, you know, you could never live on
5 that job. But, at that time period, it was probably the most fun I ever had at a job because
6 you had responsibilities, but you really didn't care about the responsibilities. You didn't
7 understand how important they were, and I always loved that job. It was a local – for
8 anybody who ever views this from Bucks County – it was with a local farmer called
9 Styer; it was Styer's Orchards, which still to this day is a very huge business in our area.
10 It employed thousands of teenagers over the years, but some – that was how they, you
11 know, in season, they needed a lot of teenagers. And as I had to pay for my own way to
12 college; I couldn't afford go to college full-time, because I couldn't afford to pay for
13 college full-time, so I had to go part-time at nighttime, and that afforded me to work
14 during the day as a full-time employee, and then I was a manager there. At today's
15 standards, it's not much of a job, but it was the job that I remember the most. I had the
16 most fun. That put me through college. I paid my way through college, and then I got
17 married, and then we started to have kids, and I bought my first house, et cetera. But I
18 got my business degree from Trenton State College, which is now the College of New
19 Jersey, changed its name, and that was a community school. It was 25 minutes from my
20 house, across in New Jersey. For those who are not familiar, Bucks County is in the most
21 eastern edge of Pennsylvania, down in the southeast. It's a suburban county of
22 Philadelphia, and [Route] 95 runs right through the District, so, I mean, you get right on
23 the Expressway, and in 25 minutes you can be out of my house and over into the college.

1 So, that worked very well, and it had a very good night school, and I got a business
2 degree in management from there, and then I used that. My wife and I were married at
3 that point now, and we bought our first business, and it was a wholesaling business. We
4 actually ran that out of New Jersey. We bought someone out and took over their business
5 and the routes, and we did that for, oh, about three years, I guess it was. Our life was
6 very difficult. We were having kids now, and it was a mom and pop type of a business, a
7 couple employees. My wife had to work full-time because we couldn't afford to add
8 another employee on and still make a profit, so we made some decisions at some point
9 that something had to change. It was a seven day week job. We both had to work. It
10 was hard to raise a family. If we wanted to make any money, she had to work full-time,
11 six or seven days a week. Raising kids made it very difficult, so we made a decision to
12 sell the business, and then I entered into the grocery store business. And at this time,
13 Giant Foods is a large grocery store chain in the area, and I became a manager for the
14 Giant Foods. And over a number of years, I was moved around to various different stores
15 in the Bucks County area, and I was on a career path, essentially, there. I was store
16 manager. In so many years, I'd be able to move up into the corporate management,
17 which would be like district management, et cetera, and move on, so I was on a career
18 path to be trained and to move up into higher management. But then, my father, who was
19 still a legislator, contracted cancer, and for about a five year period, he had it, and he had
20 it, and he got better, and he was in remission, and then he got it again. He got better,
21 remission, and then that is – how I got into this position is; he was running for re-election
22 in 1990, and in the middle of the cycle, he won his Primary election in the springtime and
23 getting set to run for the General Election in the fall, and the cancer had risen again, and

1 got very bad, and in fact, he would not live and survive to finish off the term, even, let
2 alone run for the election. So, he withdrew as a candidate. He was still the State
3 Representative but withdrew as a candidate in August. That was pretty close to the last
4 day he was allowed to withdraw, and that allowed the Party, the political Party, to find a
5 replacement candidate. Interesting, there were a lot of people that wanted it, but at that
6 particular time with, oh, two to three months, essentially, before the election, a Democrat
7 candidate—I'm a Republican—a Democrat candidate was a local County Commissioner,
8 had come from the community I lived in, had from the lowest level elected position
9 worked her way up. It was a very strong candidate, and pretty much everybody believed
10 that they needed a strong candidate to replace my father or else the race would be lost, so
11 after many people sort of vied to try to get it, the political Republican Party got together
12 [and] tried to find the replacement candidate. I did not want to run. I did not want to run.
13 My father asked me once, and I said, "I don't think so." You know, I guess I'll be honest
14 with you. My father went through a mean, mean divorce. Political life is very hard on
15 the family. It is very hard on the family. You're away all the time; a lot of stress and
16 strains, every weekend, every night. If you're going to get into a high elected office,
17 every weekend and every night, every holiday, you are required, essentially, to be
18 somewhere in the community doing presentations and community events, and then you
19 have the job part of it, which is during the day. So, it is an 80 hour a week job without
20 any doubt, and the stress on the family caused my mother and my father to get divorced.
21 So, I was trying to avoid the same types of stresses on my family, and I did not want –
22 and then the Party Chairman asked me, and then my father asked me, et cetera, and I kept
23 saying, "No." Finally, they asked my wife, and my wife didn't really want to, and I said,

1 “Well, only if my wife agrees, my wife Donna, only if she agrees,” because I didn’t want
2 to see what happened in my parents’ lives to occur in ours. And she finally said yes, so
3 then I became a replacement candidate and with two and a half months before the
4 election, I had to get out and go knock on a lot of doors and go talk to a lot of people.
5 And the reason why I was asked, for obvious reasons, I’m never ashamed to say this, my
6 father was well-liked. Jim Wright was well-liked in the community, and a lot of people,
7 they recognized the name, familiar with the name. A lot of people liked him, so there
8 was a lot of the benefit of the doubt. A lot of times you go to elections, and it’s Smith vs.
9 Jones. You don’t know who Smith is. You don’t know who Jones is. You don’t know
10 anything about it. You kind-of just, maybe, fall back to the Party. Whatever Party
11 registration you are, just hope that the Party made a good decision in picking a candidate,
12 but in my particular case, a lot of people have been loyal to my father, regardless of their
13 political affiliation and had made decisions that, you know, “Matt, if you’re anything like
14 your dad,” or “Your dad did a good job, you’re worth a try,” et cetera. But of course,
15 there was always that little threat that, you know, if you don’t do well in the first two
16 years, then you’re out. And I did squeak by, and I worked very hard in those couple
17 months, and I did squeak by, and then it was my job then to prove to everybody that I’m
18 qualified and I could handle the job, and I’m worthy of being re-elected the second time.

19

20 **HM:** Well, how did you balance family and career?

21

22 **MW:** Well, I don’t think I did a very good job, because the same problems that occurred
23 in my father’s life occurred in mine. As I said, to the do the job right, to really do the job

1 right, you have to be very active, of course, in your legislative duties, which are
2 Harrisburg, essentially, coming up to Session, traveling at least three days a week, maybe
3 four days a week. For about half of the week, you're out of the house, overnight in
4 hotels, et cetera, up here, and when committees are called, committee meetings, and
5 sometimes, you know, they're just day trips. Sometimes, it's a two hour meeting and it's
6 in Harrisburg, and you drive out in the morning, you do your meeting, do some other
7 work, then come home. Or maybe it's Allentown, or it's in Philly, but sometimes they're
8 in Pittsburgh or Erie or some other part of the state, and you have to travel overnight just
9 to get to a two hour meeting. Now, it's a personal responsibility. Do you skip the
10 meeting? You say, "Oh, I'm not driving – I'm not going to be away for two days to go to
11 a two-hour, three-hour committee meeting." And some Members don't do that, and
12 sometimes you have local stuff. You, you know, have to balance. You just can't do it
13 anyway, but if you're going to do your job right, you make that effort. That's the
14 legislative part. You have the community part. The community part is attending all the
15 community functions. We represent multiple communities. They all have the local
16 government functions; they have all the holiday functions. Plus, then you're invited to all
17 the Boy Scout groups; you're invited to the athletic groups; you're invited to the social
18 causes that might be in communities, the ribbon cuttings, the presentations, the dinners.
19 You know, when the Lions have their meetings, when the Rotary has their meetings, et
20 cetera, yeah, you can't go to everything anyway, but you try to do your best. There's a
21 couple reasons for that. Number one is it's just the right thing to do. It's part of the
22 responsibilities of the job. Now, you can't be expected to go to everything. The other
23 thing is, unfortunately, we are a product of people's viewpoints and opinions of us, and

1 you want to foster good opinions, and to do that, you want to interact with people. You
2 want to be there for them and their needs. When a local community's having a
3 celebration event of whatever it is, they like to have the public officials come. They like
4 to see the Federal and State officials show up and to be part of it. And in return, of
5 course, you're developing relationships that those relationships, come the next election,
6 are people saying, "Oh, yeah, Matt always comes to these things." "Yeah, I've met Matt
7 personally a number of times at community events, and he seems like a nice guy, and,
8 you know, et cetera." And then, of course, that fosters positive votes for you to stay
9 elected next time. So you're away an awful lot of weekends and nights to the community
10 functions because community functions are basically non-work weeks. They're working
11 hours and they're typically on weekends and at nighttime. And then the third component
12 of the job, of course, is constituent work: creating a local office, training employees,
13 being available. As people come in the office, as they call the office, of course, when
14 someone calls the office with a problem, they want to talk to the legislator. You have
15 staff, and quite often your staff is better at actually helping to correct problems than I am
16 because that's what their job is. They're trained to do, you know—specifically, I'm
17 trained in a more broader range of issues, but people who call or stop by, of course, want
18 to talk to the legislator. You can't be there every minute, so therefore, they can't always
19 visit you, but you want to make their experience positive. You want to help them out.
20 Even if you sit down with them, you talk about the problem, you understand it, and either
21 I work on it myself, or I say, you know, "I'll have my assistant here – I'm going to work
22 with my assistant and I'm going to direct my assistant to help you to try to overcome, and
23 I'm going to oversee. Then I'm going to make sure that every stone is turned over to

1 make sure that we have helped you with your concerns or problems,” and they were very
2 gratified. Now, there are a couple things with that. First of all, the public elected me so
3 therefore, they want to interact with me. And they believe, in many cases, that I’m the
4 most qualified person to help resolve their problem and issue, which sometimes is true,
5 but sometimes, actually, it’s not true because sometimes, as I said, my staff is more
6 knowledgeable about some of the things than I am. That’s just the nature of what the
7 jobs is, and people just want to feel that they can reach out, and they can communicate.
8 They call me at home. They call me – of course, now, today we have cell phones, emails,
9 and all those kinds of things. It used to be telephone, when I first got started, telephone
10 was pretty much the main way, and letters and whatnot and walking into the office,
11 setting up meetings, et cetera, and they wanted to meet with me, and that’s the right thing
12 to do, but you can’t always be available. If you’re going to do all three of those,
13 legislative, community, and constituent work, if you’re going to do it right, or you’re
14 going to attempt to do it right, then you are, essentially, committing yourself to 80 or 90
15 hours a week, pretty much most of the weeks a year. I rarely have a day off, even on a
16 weekend. There’s rarely a day on even a weekend or a night that I literally have nothing
17 to do. I almost always have to specifically block out time. Now, it depends how far you
18 want to reach to find something. All the churches are doing something, you know. You
19 have 30 or 40 different churches in my communities. All of them are doing three, four,
20 five, six times a year something on a weekend, whatever that is, and they’re all doing it at
21 different times, or they’re holding special services, or there are anniversary events or
22 they’re having fundraising, or whatever, so just by doing the churches alone and all the
23 community groups and the athletic groups and whatnot, it’s just a very time consuming.

1 If we're going to get back to what your question was, how did I balance that: as we had
2 little kids, my wife, essentially, was spending most of her time with the kids, so it didn't
3 really create so much of a problem. As the kids became teenagers, though, teenagers
4 didn't want to spend as much time with mom as they used to, so that's when she went
5 back to work, and that was fine, but somewhere along the line, actually, her business that
6 she was with closed up, and then, she was trying to juggle in her mind to go look for
7 another job, but at that particular point, I think that we made a decision that she wasn't
8 going to immediately go back to work, and that's when we started to spend a little more
9 time together. She travels with me a lot. She goes to the community functions. I would
10 go to all these dinners, especially in the evenings, for the community groups, and through
11 all my early years, I went alone. It was just me. You know, and I would talk to people,
12 and meet people, et cetera, but now in the latter years of my career, when the kids are
13 now teenagers, and they didn't have to be babysat, they didn't have to be watched, they
14 didn't have to be home, et cetera, it allowed her to either put more time into a career, or
15 we decided that she would spend time more with me to try to bolster a relationship with
16 me to avoid some of the pitfalls that many of the elected officials have or executives in
17 business, or people that are in a business that are working so many hours. And I do
18 praise her for that because, while not having the second income in the family has hurt a
19 little bit, on the other hand, it's been able to allow her, when I go to Pittsburgh for a
20 meeting, she'd go with me, and so driving out in the car for a five and a half hour drive to
21 Pittsburgh, she'd be in the car with me. We'd do my meetings, and afterwards, we'd
22 have dinner together, et cetera. Of course, when we go to Pittsburgh, we'd stay

1 overnight, sleep a couple hours, and then drive back. So, it's not those hours being
2 separated, at least we're together. Now, it's talking about business, but that's okay.

3

4 **HM:** Whenever you were small, you watched your father. You had small children
5 who've watched you as a State Representative. Do you see any interest in what you've
6 done in them?

7

8 **MW:** I have two daughters, Jennifer and Christine. I do not see any interest,
9 whatsoever. I think probably because when I was a child, as being a boy, well, first of
10 all, we had the office in the house. Now, as I'm a Legislator, we do not have an office in
11 the house, so therefore, my family is not required to go talk to everybody, pick up the
12 phone. My kids really didn't have that much interaction with that. Second of all, as a
13 boy, I was also required to do labor in election times, you know, go hand out literature,
14 walk up and down the streets, pass out stuff, where, I'll be honest with you, I don't think
15 girls were so much pushed in that field as the boys were. And so, therefore, that's
16 another reason why, maybe, I got pushed into it more than, let's say, my sister did. And
17 both of my daughters are now out of the house. They've actually finished school, and
18 they're out of the house, and they actually both live now in the communities where the
19 colleges they went to. They settled there when they were going to college, and then they
20 got jobs in those areas, and they don't live around here, so I think that's the third strike
21 that sort of put them away. One has an interest in issues, but I don't think she ever has
22 any desire whatsoever to get into politics, per se.

23

1 **HM:** Okay. I was wondering if you could describe, maybe, some of your subsequent
2 campaigns. We talked a little bit about your first campaign. Could you talk a little bit
3 about your others?
4

5 **MW:** Sure. My very, very first campaign, I'll just go back and reiterate about that.
6 That, essentially, was a very difficult race. I was a replacement candidate at the very last
7 second, and the sheer factors involved there made it a very close, very competitive, and I
8 will be honest, essentially, the powers to be that were going to help me and assist me to
9 run for election, whether they're from my local community, or the county Republican
10 Party in Harrisburg here. Because it was such a short time frame they said, "Matt, you
11 just go out and interact with people. Go knock on doors, attend all the functions, meet
12 people, interact with people, just do that. Other people behind the scenes will do all the
13 strategy, the fundraising; all those mechanical parts that have to be done." And so, I was
14 not even really too involved with issue development, per se, with how to raise the money,
15 meeting the people that would contribute funds, all those kinds of things. So, that first
16 election, while it was difficult, believe it or not, my part of that was not as hard. Mine
17 was just get up early in the morning, find a way to go meet people, whether it's go to a
18 train station, you know, early in the morning, go wherever the people are. If there's a
19 community event, go to the people. If there's no community events, things like that, go
20 knock on doors. If it's after dark, go to a grocery store, and go talk to the people at the
21 grocery store. That's what I did, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for two full months,
22 at least. Okay, now that I won the first one by a very small amount, then, essentially,
23 running for reelection was now my responsibility, to some extent. You know, I would

1 have help, of course, but the first one, other people were sort of in charge of that. So, my
2 re-election, the burden was on me to put it together, and even though I had run through—
3 I had already won one election, I was still learning some of the trade a little bit for the
4 first time because I didn't have to do that myself the first time. In this particular race, the
5 second time around, I had to learn those things. Put the volunteers, coordinate
6 volunteers, strategy, issues, all those kinds of things, raising money, but you have to
7 balance all those kinds of things. It's a horrible part of running for office, but you have to
8 raise money because you're going to use the money that you raise to pay for your signs,
9 to pay for your literature, to pay for your mailings, et cetera. If you don't raise money,
10 then you don't have signs, you don't have mailings, you don't have literature, and
11 without that, you can't communicate a message. So, my second time around was a
12 difficult race, too. The local Democrat Party said, "Matt shouldn't have won the first
13 one," and so there was a whole huge effort to beat me in that second one. I won by more
14 votes, but it was still a very difficult race. Then, after I won the second one, I've been in
15 office for eight terms, then they all got relatively easy. When I say "relative," they were
16 all fights, but the amount of effort had to go into it and I started to gain support from
17 Democrat voters, local people. My opponents couldn't get the traction that they were
18 hoping to get, and then they couldn't raise the money that they wanted to get to
19 communicate their message, et cetera, so my re-elections were easier. And then we come
20 up to this very last one, and I'm leaving office because I lost. This particular election had
21 some factors in it that were in my control and were out of my control, and the sum of
22 those factors caused me to lose. What started it, I believe, what started the downfall –
23 which was not necessarily the biggest and only issue, but it was one of the many issues –

1 was the Legislature had gone through a period of years without getting a pay raise. And
2 a year ago, the legislature decided that they were going to give a pay raise to the
3 legislature, the Governor, the Administrative staff, the secretaries, the judges, and about
4 forty-four hundred state employees that were in this Executive tier of sorts. And that,
5 even though there'd been, I think, three times prior in my 16 years of service, there had
6 been three prior pay raise votes, they never really seemed to rustle a whole lot of negative
7 outcry. There was a little bit. Nobody likes other people to get raises. Everybody wants
8 a raise, but nobody wants someone else to get a raise. You know, even people who live
9 in all kinds of jobs, you know, you want a raise, but you don't want the colleague next
10 door to get one or, you know, your counterpart, or your neighbor to get a raise. You want
11 to get the raise, and so this year was a little bit different. I think some of it was legitimate
12 complaining. It was overblown, and I think one of the problems was that it was a large
13 pay raise because we hadn't gotten one in a long time, and it was sort-of that sort-of
14 catching up kind-of a raise. When you get a raise every year, you get small ones, but if
15 you didn't get a raise for ten years, and you want to get the same, where you should be,
16 then, of course, it's a big raise. And I used to be grocery store manager. Let me give you
17 the example. This is a very good example. As I said, I was a grocery store manager.
18 Well, take a can of peas. The can of peas would come in. A case would come in, and
19 just slightly more cost on that case, so a can of peas on a shelf for 33 cents, and they say,
20 "Should we make it 34 cents?" "Nah, just let it go." Then, six months later, the price
21 increase comes across and should be another penny a can. "Maybe it should go up to 35
22 cents a can." "No, let it go," and you absorb that a number of times in a row, and
23 somewhere along the line, it goes up again and again, and you say, you know, "You

1 know what? We've got to change. We're going to raise it to 39 cents." You cannot
2 believe how many people came, "Why are you raising these peas from 33 cents to 39
3 cents?" Well, if you would have done it every single time, a penny, penny, penny, penny,
4 nobody ever would have complained. Nobody ever would have complained, and yet the
5 33 to 39 would have been exactly the same over the same period of time, but it's the
6 shock factor, essentially. So, that was the very first thing, and that issue was very well
7 used against me. The strategy used against me was very well done by my opponent and
8 the Democrat Party, but that didn't beat me. That was a factor, of course. What really
9 beat me was in 2006 dissatisfaction at the national level with President Bush, mostly over
10 the war in the Middle East and Iraq and Afghanistan, the heightened anger on a national
11 level and even all the way down to my community, rose up that the Democrat Party on a
12 national level right down to the local Parties was able to harness that negative energy to
13 get a tremendous turnout of Democrat voters, far exceeding what the experts were
14 predicting. And a lot of these people were not regular voters, and in my community, I
15 think most everywhere, they were incited by the war and anti-Bush. For instance, at my
16 political polls, the mailers at the end – and at polls, they're passing out the cards, asking
17 people to vote against George Bush. Well, George Bush wasn't on the ballot, but what
18 they were doing is they were being told "To vote against George Bush, you have to push
19 the straight Democrat party ticket," which is a good strategy from the Democrats' point
20 of view. It is a very good strategy, so they were able to get a whole lot of, in my case,
21 about two and half thousand unexpected voters out that were not expected to be there,
22 and generally speaking, we believe they voted straight Democrat party, which means they
23 were trying to send a message to Washington, [D.C.] which is what the national

1 Democrat and local Democrat messages wanted to be. But on top of that is by voting
2 straight ticket, then they're voting against every regular Republican on the ballot, whether
3 that person is consciously thinking of doing that or not. And in my community,
4 essentially, Republicans got wiped out, including me, so we all lost elections, every
5 single one; all the incumbents, all the Republican incumbents in my area lost. So, it was
6 sort-of that sweep at the State level, anger about the pay raise, but in reality, it was the
7 deluge of the additional Democrat voters that were angry, vote straight ticket to show
8 George Bush a message. And I'm not depressed about that, because you can see in
9 cycles in the past, national times, that like every ten years or so, 15 years, you see these
10 similar kinds of trends where one Party or the other gains or loses because of these big
11 sweeps that go through, and in 2006, the Federal government all got changed. Most of
12 the Governors across the states went Democrat, so the question would be is what's going
13 to happen in the next cycle, and I don't know what's going to happen in the next cycle.
14 The Republicans came in in [19]90 – I think it was early [19]90s. I can't remember when
15 they had a major sweep, the voters, generally speaking, were upset with the Democrat
16 Party at the time and kicked out the Democrat Party at the national level, all the state
17 levels. A lot of Republicans came into control, and the Republicans had control for a
18 decade, and then now, but you can see the patterns. You can see these patterns in history
19 where it's roughly a decade, you know, it's give or take a little bit. Every decade, one
20 Party shifts over to the other Party for control, and this was the time, and I got swept out,
21 too.
22

1 **HM:** You talked about fundraising and raising money. Do you remember how much it
2 cost in your first election?

3
4 **MW:** Yes, mine was an expensive first election in comparison to other races, and if I
5 remember correctly, direct raising money, and then you have – sometimes things are
6 done by other groups on behalf of candidates, and it's kind of hard to put a number on
7 that, but we had predicted—I had raised about 50,000 dollars, which was considered to
8 be on the high side in most elections. My opponent had raised about 100,000 dollars,
9 which at that particular point was one of the more expensive ones, and my opponent lost.
10 At that particular time, 16 years ago, that was considered a lot of money. That was one
11 of the high profile races that raised a lot of money. In today's times, in 2006, that's a
12 drop in the bucket. My race, this particular time, was on the high side. Both my
13 opponent and I were, with our final numbers, we're probably looking at 3 to 400,000
14 dollars a person a piece, so we're talking about 800,000 dollar, 7 or 800,000 dollar total
15 race versus, at best, 150[000 dollars], so it really does make a difference. And in the
16 years that I didn't have tough races, I would only spend legitimately on getting reelected
17 items, probably 15 or 20,000 dollars. Two years ago when I ran, besides sponsoring,
18 buying tickets to all the community events and sponsoring all the Little League teams and
19 whatnot—if you can separate that from actually paying money for mailers and signs—I
20 only spent about 15,000 dollars last time around, and probably 300,000 dollars this time,
21 so it is a major difference, and that must be how that works. There are 203 House seats.
22 Some are obviously going to be Democrat seats, no matter what you do, and some are
23 obviously going to be Republican seats, no matter what you do, and then you have a

1 block that's in the middle that kind of could go either way, but you have some people that
2 are very strong in their Districts, and so you don't even make an effort. Parties don't
3 make an effort to go after them, or if you know of the right candidate, you know,
4 opponent, et cetera. It gets narrower and narrower, so then you get to really about, out of
5 203, you get down to about maybe 30 very competitive seats, and out of those 30 very
6 competitive seats, for whatever the reasons are, then all the money from around the State
7 tends to float towards those races, even people you don't even know contribute to you
8 because they're a loyal, diehard Democrat, Republican, et cetera, and they've been told
9 through the grapevine that where you live, that person really doesn't need your support,
10 but if you want to help out, send a check to some of these other people. And essentially,
11 when you get on to the top thirty kind of a race, what happens is then, people who don't
12 even know you start contributing to you. They want to know you. They want to get to
13 know you, which there's a reason for or they're just loyal to a particular Party, and they
14 were whispered that, you know, "Why don't you contribute to so and so? He could use
15 your support. She could use your support, et cetera," and a lot of times that's how a lot of
16 those contributors also worked out.

17

18 **HM:** Could you tell me a little bit about your district?

19

20 **MW:** Yes. I'm Bucks County, which is a suburban district of Philadelphia. My district
21 is a blue-collar district; its working class communities. Feasterville, Levittown, and
22 Langhorne are the three main towns. It's a compact district, as opposed to in rural
23 America, you know, a whole county could be a district. Mine is, essentially, you could

1 walk, easily, 80 percent of it. Most of them are clustered communities, developments, or
2 old towns, et cetera. We are not the city, but we're right on the edge of the city, so as of
3 today, you have some of those city problems that are beginning to encroach into the
4 communities. And in the 16 years I've been in office, all the vacant land has either been
5 purchased as open space to be preserved or has been built into housing developments or
6 commercial shopping centers, et cetera. So, there was no large tract of land left in my
7 whole legislative district, at all, to be built on, except for a couple of farms that we were
8 able to preserve, which I had assistance in getting money to help preserve those farms,
9 and the local governments own them, you know, for recreational use, et cetera, or park
10 use, and including that one, Styer Orchards, that I had mentioned. Part of the family had
11 given their total share of the value of the property – which they were getting very old and
12 they didn't need the money – over to the municipality to help make the deal work that
13 they would purchase. But it's a 50/50 District. It's pretty balanced. Generally speaking,
14 it's probably slightly moderate to conservative in viewpoints, but the newcomers moving
15 in: I have an awful of people, especially from Philadelphia, moving into my communities,
16 people who lived their whole life in Philly, had a career there, et cetera, retire. When
17 they retire, they moved out of the city, and they moved up into suburban areas, whether
18 it's Bucks County, Montgomery County, et cetera, and by doing so, I believe – I've seen
19 the last four, five, six, seven years a dramatic shift in some of these age-restricted
20 communities that are being built, and the people that are moving into them are vastly—
21 they do not have Bucks County roots. They've come from somewhere else – those are
22 the communities that are tend to not be as familiar with local issues, local elected
23 officials. They tend to not really be involved, plus their kids didn't go to school here.

1 They didn't run their kids through dance classes or athletics or those kinds of things.
2 They're relatively new to the community and have a discretionary income. Many of
3 them have, maybe, a vacation house at the shore or something, so they're not even really
4 one hundred percent full-time residents. I've built up a good relationship with the old-
5 timers. Whether they're old in age, or they're old families – generations of the families –
6 and I've done very well with those, and through voting districts, you can see where I've
7 been successful over the years and where I'm not successful. And all those new
8 communities, especially the age-restricted communities, are the communities that tend to
9 go pretty much along Party registration. And plus, I don't have a good relationship with
10 them. I do very well in Democrat communities in the older communities. I do very well
11 in the older Republican communities, so it's the new people moving in which tend to be
12 Democrat in my legislative district. And I hate to also say that they tend to be "I'm
13 retired now, and I want my life as a retired," and they don't necessarily want to support
14 the schools. That I've really noticed, that generations after generations of families in the
15 same general communities are very dedicated to the local schools in my communities.
16 I've noticed these age-restricted communities that are coming in, they essentially say,
17 "Hey, I paid my taxes in Philly," or wherever it was, "and I raised my kids there. I sent
18 my kids there to school. Now I'm retired, and therefore—and I'm moving into this
19 community, and," you know, "I don't see why I have to support the local schools." I'm
20 getting that tremendously, and in the future, if you're looking back into this, this is the
21 time period when the legislature's going through that, trying to find a way to reduce the
22 reliance on property taxes to pay for schools because these age-restricted communities
23 are typically expensive houses. They're twins. They're quads, but they're very pricey,

1 very pricey, and because they're very pricey, of course, the property taxes for them –
2 these retirement communities – there are many of them that are 500,000 dollar homes,
3 where the average home in my district is probably 200,000, 250[000 dollars]. But these
4 age-restricted communities – and they're not that big of houses, et cetera, but because it's
5 new construction, and people want marble in the kitchens and the bathrooms, and they
6 want the, you know, et cetera, they'll want the best of things, and then, of course, it
7 becomes an expensive house. With the expensive house, then the property taxes are
8 related to the value of the house, and so as of the taping of this, where outside of those
9 communities, the property taxes are maybe 3 to 5,000 dollars a household, in those
10 communities, they are 6 to 10,000 dollars a household, and they're retired, and you can
11 see why there's a revolt. Essentially, "Why am I paying 10,000 dollars when I'm retired,
12 and I don't have kids in school anymore?" Well, it's because it's the house that they
13 have purchased, and that's what property taxes are. It's based on the, essentially, the
14 relationship or the value of the property that you had bought.

15

16 **HM:** Can you talk a little bit about the projects in your district that you were able to
17 help?

18

19 **MW:** Yeah, most of them are the biggest issues are probably the two land deals that we
20 were able to preserve, and what we were working on that didn't work out. But one was
21 the Styer Orchards, which I had mentioned earlier. It's an old family farm. People in the
22 area all know it. It's still in business now: partly as a farm, but it had a big retail store
23 attached to it, farm market attached to it, and so that most people know what it is, but it's

1 still in existence. I had my working relationship with the family when growing up as a
2 kid, and many years thereafter and knowing the family and staying in touch with the
3 family, the three generations of the grandfather, the father, and the son. They all
4 collectively [called] the grandfather "Pop Styer." He was 104 when he passed away, and
5 when he was around 100, that's when his son, which was about 70 years old, said, "I'm
6 out of here. You know, I'm retired, I want to retire." He'd already sort-of retired and
7 moved away, went to Florida, and then his son was managing. And his son really didn't
8 have his heart in it, so they were essentially all one third owners the way that they had
9 passed down ownership of the property, so the son and the grandson essentially wanted to
10 get out, and that was two thirds. And the grandfather, we were able to structure a deal
11 where he gave his value of the whole business, in the land and business, gave his value
12 free, just kicked it in. We were able to get a million dollars, and this was going back a
13 few years now, so therefore, the value of your land's a lot more now than it was then. I
14 was able to get a million dollars, plus some other kinds of grant moneys to kick into the
15 pot. The grandfather kicked in his share, and the two other parties, the son and the
16 grandson, took less money, and therefore, we put together a deal so the township was
17 able to buy the property and preserve it. And then, over in one of my other large
18 communities, the Playwicki Farm, which has roots going back to the Lenni-Lenape
19 Indians, there's recorded history of when they had an Indian tribe there at one time, a
20 settlement, and the various family farms who owned and kept track of that kind of stuff,
21 so we were able to save that one. That was a little over one million dollars for that one
22 also, and they were able to cut some deals. The municipality kicked in money, and we
23 preserved that, and that's a great park now. It's not a farm anymore at all, but that's a

1 great community park. The other thing was the Lower Southampton Library. They were
2 in a very small building in the township building, and then their dreams to break out into
3 a new expanded building, state of the art, and I was able to get one and a half million
4 dollars to make that deal work, and without that money, the township would never have
5 been able to – they would eventually get out, but it would be much smaller, scaled back,
6 and this allowed it to be, at the time it was built a couple years ago, the state of the art,
7 newest library in the area. All the other libraries were envious of the new building. But,
8 of course, the next newest one will be bigger and better. And then, the last thing, St.
9 Mary's Medical Center is in my district, and I've been able to bring lots of state grant
10 funds to assist in expansions. In my time in office, they're growing dramatically.
11 They've probably expanded double what they were when I first got into office, and not
12 all, but a chunk of that was through state funding. They probably would've been able to
13 continue the expansion without the state funding, but they would have had to go find
14 more money. They would have delayed, et cetera, and we have – St. Mary's is a state of
15 the art center; it's a medical center. It rivals the Philadelphia firms, and it helps so many
16 people. It's a big employer; it's the largest private employer in Bucks County, and I'm
17 very proud of that. Those are the big institutional ones, but I have helped so many small
18 groups with smaller grants from all the little community groups, local little parks, storm
19 water management, the municipalities. A big grant that really hasn't got any attention
20 was I got 13 million dollars for the school district to renovate their high school and
21 expand it. It was probably the largest ticket item that I've ever gotten, but it didn't
22 garnish really any attention because it went to a taxing body, a school district. You
23 know, when they're building a 70 million dollar building, that's just a small amount, but

1 that was probably my largest amount that I got for any other group. But I'm more proud
2 of, really, a lot of the small groups that I help get into existence, from the senior citizen
3 centers getting regular money so they can continue to buy equipment, continue to buy
4 new rugs and paint the building, fix things, air conditioning units. Otherwise, I don't
5 think the centers are going to be able to generate enough revenue to do it on their own,
6 and they're very pleased with those items.

7

8 **HM:** Can you tell me how you felt whenever you were Sworn-In as a Member for the
9 first time?

10

11 **MW:** Well, I'm very proud to be a Member. I was astounded by and in awe of,
12 especially, the very first day on the House floor. The day that it's the ceremonial day,
13 you don't really do anything. All the Members come, all the guests and families, every
14 possible seat, folding chairs in every possible niche that there is on the Floor. You cram
15 as many bodies into that Floor as you possibly can with flowers on the desks. You know,
16 everybody sends you flowers, and your little square area has as many flower vases as you
17 can fit onto that, and then all your family's there and your friends and supporters, the
18 people that came and helped you out. I was just in awe, even though I'd been in the
19 building so many times before that. Oh, I was actually a guest page many times. In the
20 front of the House, there are errand people – a page is a glorified term for errand person –
21 running errands. As a legislator's doing work, you know, you need copies of stuff, you
22 need this, you need that, go deliver this to there, all those, just, little errands, that's
23 exactly what it is. They have a couple employees, but they also have what they call guest

1 pages, and I was a guest page many, many, many, many times as a child. And of course,
2 I got to know where most everything was in the building, and so somebody would give
3 me a package, say, "Deliver this envelope over to such an office," or, you know, "I need
4 copies of this, et cetera," and I'd do that. So, I'd been in the building so many times
5 before that, but that very first day you get Sworn-In, you really get choked up. You
6 really get choked up, and it really hits home that the decisions that you're going to be
7 making in the next two years are going to have, could have lasting, lifetime effects on
8 millions of Pennsylvanians, and you don't really understand that until you're actually get
9 in the building, and you're with everybody else, and you stand up, and you swear that
10 you will uphold and support everybody in the Commonwealth.

11

12 **HM:** Well, the first day is ceremonial. After that, you hit the ground running.

13

14 **MW:** Yes.

15

16 **HM:** Can you talk about – ?

17

18 **MW:** Sure. I obviously had a little experience, more than some others, but others had
19 been in local government, so they'd been through the process at a smaller scale, of
20 course, or some people, maybe, were government staffers, maybe for the House or the
21 Senate, or et cetera, the Governor's office, so they've already had some experience. I
22 think there's a couple things you have to master. You have to understand the issues, and
23 we deal with such a diversity of issues, from inner city problems to rural to mining and

1 hunting. Inner city issues: you've got blight, and you've got housing issues. You've got
2 economic development. You've got all kinds of issues. Since suburbia is different than
3 all the rest. And so, you got to be a farmer, you got to be a miner, you got to be a hunter,
4 you got to be inner city, economic development, blight, you know, law enforcement.
5 Law enforcement in the city is different than law enforcement out in the woods, so you
6 have to understand issues, and nobody knows all the issues. And you have to be able to,
7 besides understanding them to some extent, you can't be an expert on everything,
8 understanding how to get the information that's needed to make rational decisions, and
9 also, who to listen to, who not to listen to, because everybody's biased, of course, every
10 group in the world's biased in a particular direction. You have to be able [to] cut through
11 the bias and be able to cut through the rhetoric to find out what the actual facts are, and
12 then you have to, by doing that, then you have to forge your relationship with Leadership,
13 other Members, other political Parties, Senators, the Senate, et cetera, the Governor's
14 staff. You have to forge those relationships to be able to come and negotiate with them to
15 achieve some sort of a goal, and of course, you have to have goals in mind. Sometimes
16 you have goals when you come in, and sometimes, some of the things that you do are not
17 your initiatives originally. There may be a constituent brought a problem in, and you
18 realize, you know, that doesn't seem right. I mean, you had no idea about that ahead of
19 time, and it doesn't seem right, and you know, I think, "I should work on that and try to
20 make that correction." So any problem, the biggest thing is learning, and I try to advise
21 freshmen or candidates running for office that you should have that drive to change the
22 world, to make things happen, to change the world, but you're not alone. You have to
23 work in a system, and I think the people that are the most successful are those that can

1 work with others and those that can develop relationships and to negotiate and to give
2 and take. You know, if you're one hundred percent, "I want. I want. I want," you're not
3 going to survive, because so many other people up here want also things that are not the
4 same as your wants. And if you're going to be butting heads with them, you have to
5 learn you have to pick your battles. You got to give sometimes when you don't want to
6 give, but you got to give because that is the nature of what the job is.

7

8 **HM:** Were there any Members that showed you the ropes or mentored you whenever
9 you first came to Harrisburg?

10

11 **MW:** Well, a couple different aspects. I learned under Matt Ryan [Matthew J.; State
12 Representative, Delaware County, 1965-2003; Speaker 1981-1982, 1995-2003], who was
13 Majority Leader at the time and then became Speaker of the House, I learned from him,
14 not necessarily took me by the arm and walked me around and showed me the ropes, but
15 I learned through him by example of how to negotiate, how to stand firm on the issues
16 that you really believe in, to be able to give and take and don't get into the gutter, in
17 terms of debate. Debate the issue, don't debate the rhetoric. He was a true statesman,
18 and he taught me, through example, of how to be audible in your job. John Perzel [State
19 Representative, Philadelphia County, 1979-present; Speaker, 2003-2006], who was in
20 various Leadership positions and is now the Speaker of the House, he probably, in the
21 beginning, was the most hands-on with me, teaching me the ropes, how the system
22 works, getting me up and going, getting me to understand, also, the political side of the
23 job, because that is a fact. Unfortunately, we do live in a world where you have to get

1 people to like us, because you need to be reelected next time. It doesn't matter what you
2 do in a two year period. If nobody likes you at the end of the two year period, you're not
3 coming back, and it's very difficult to get things done in one two year period. It's
4 multiple terms, and so therefore, there's a need to continue on for multiple terms. John
5 Perzel taught me how to be able to, "Don't step into landmines, be careful what you say,"
6 those kinds of issues to keep me out of trouble, essentially. And a lot of people – he's
7 from Philadelphia – he takes a lot of criticism, but I've learned to meet him personally
8 and know him personally over the years, and he really does seem to care about everybody
9 from rural America, and Democrats, from rural PA all the way to the inner city, even
10 though everybody says, "Oh, he's from Philly. He only cares about Philadelphia."
11 That's not true; he does care about everybody, and he helps Democrats. He helps
12 Republicans. He's very, very, very fair. And then, probably, at the local level, I sit – on
13 the Floor we have desks, and our desks are joined together. There're rows of desks,
14 there're banks of desks, and for the very first day, I sat down next to Paul Clymer [State
15 Representative, Bucks County, 1981-present]. Paul Clymer is a fellow Bucks County
16 legislator, the Representative from Upper Bucks County and a true gentleman. He has
17 his convictions, he sticks to them, but he's fair, and he has taught me the more nitty-gritty
18 ropes, taught me more about the various angles of issues. You have your own
19 perspective when you come in of some issue, and he's been able to teach me that, you
20 know, you have to look at different perspectives. There are two sides to every story;
21 there's two sides of every issue; it's not black and white; it's not right or wrong; there's
22 shades of grey. And I admire Paul Clymer, a statesman who came before me. He's still

1 here now, very well-liked by everybody. I don't always share his opinion on every issue,
2 but a true gentleman, and I think he taught me the most about how to do the job.

3

4 **HM:** After all your years of experience –

5

6 **MW:** Yes.

7

8 **HM:** – have you had the opportunity to mentor anyone?

9

10 **MW:** I think the individuals coming into Bucks County, not so much across the aisle or
11 other communities, but in Bucks County, I've quite often helped. I was very strong in
12 reaching out to the constituents, communicating. I was very strong with services to the
13 public through my office. That's where my strength was, and my strength was also very
14 strong in understanding the issues. I was not necessarily a big playmaker in Harrisburg,
15 but I was commended many, many, many times for understanding the issues, having a
16 well-brought in understanding of the issues. The grayness of all the issues and on also, I
17 learned from the beginning [that] you can't throw rocks at a glass house. When I first got
18 there, like many freshmen, you start to throw rocks, and you soon realize you're throwing
19 it in the glass house. What comes around, goes around, and I was able to teach that to
20 most of the predecessors from Bucks County that came in who took over other seats;
21 Members who left after I got there, who've left, and new people have taken their seat. I
22 was able to spend time, and I think teach them about the nuts and bolts of the job back in
23 the district, the importance of, you know, Harrisburg's only half the job. The other half is

1 back in the district, and we've had some legislators come to Harrisburg and do nothing
2 but Harrisburg, forgot where they came from, and then lost their next election because
3 they never interacted with the public. The public felt slighted, so whether it should or
4 should not be, it is a two-edged sword. You have to be back at the community just as
5 much as you're in Harrisburg.

6

7 **HM:** Well, do you have any examples of how you were able to work with both
8 Democrats and Republicans to, maybe, bring an issue to light?

9

10 **MW:** Absolutely, probably mostly through committee structure. We're all – I
11 mentioned earlier – we're all assigned to committees. Like every group in the world, the
12 real nuts and bolts of running the House and Senate is through committee structures.
13 This particular year, I believe, we have 25 standing committees, and committees are to
14 take in all the areas of the issues: education, consumer affairs, utilities, you know, all
15 those kinds of common issues going to those committees. So, when you're assigned to
16 committee, then you are charged with the duty to work with the legislators who are also
17 assigned to that committee, Republican, Democrat alike, to understand and to be a little
18 more of an expert in those issues and to work with the other legislators to identify the
19 problems, try to figure out why it's a problem and can you make it better? Sometimes,
20 possibilities just create other problems. When you start playing around with it, you find
21 out that whatever you try to do to fix something just creates some other problem, and you
22 kind-of wash your hands, say, "You know, no matter what, at the moment, whatever we
23 think of doing just isn't working." You can't fix it, and sometimes you realize that some

1 things can't be fixed anyway. But, it's working with those other Legislators, and half of
2 them are across the aisle, Democrat, Republican, and they're also the relationships that
3 you build over the years, too. There're so many issues that I didn't initially, as a
4 legislator, have any desire to get into, but because I was assigned those committees, I've
5 learned about, and I've learned so much about other parts of the State, and I've changed
6 my opinion on so many issues. I had a preconceived notion about various issues when I
7 came because that was the communities I came from, my own experiences, and then
8 when I met these other people, I've gone to their communities. We've gone to committee
9 hearings all around the state; we've done the research and development all around the
10 state, interacting with those groups. I started to realize, "Wow, I didn't know that about
11 that, and I didn't know this, and I didn't know that," and I started to realize that maybe
12 my opinion that I had when I came to the office wasn't necessarily correct or the best, so
13 [I] worked with many Members across the aisle, mostly through the committee structure.
14 And I've been on some of the committees for years, so sometimes, you get moved around
15 from committee to committee. You don't develop quite the relationships, but a lot of
16 committees I've been on for many, many years, and so have other Members, and I have
17 long-lasting relationships with them, regardless of political affiliation.

18

19 **HM:** Well, which committees were they?

20

21 **MW:** Well, the more recent going—the long-serving times, I've been on Insurance
22 Committee. The Insurance Committee deals with obvious insurance issues, and
23 Consumer Affairs Committee, which I've been on a very long time, is utility issues and

1 just generic issues regarding consumer issues, the real estate, through the Attorney
2 General's office, through anti-scamming and all those other kinds of things. And then,
3 also, Commerce, which is generally banking and other related financial affairs, securities.
4 And Tourism, which is a—it's not a hard committee that does a lot of work because
5 tourism really—the best way to do tourism is to let tourism do itself, to encourage it, not
6 so much laws related to it. But that particular one I spent the most time traveling around
7 the State and learning about the State because in the Tourism Committee, part of this is to
8 understand the tourism needs for multiple corners, tourism needs in center city Philly, in
9 Colonial Philadelphia. Their needs are totally different than tourism in the Lake Erie
10 region or the Pocono's, et cetera, or Gettysburg. So, we would quite often travel to those
11 places; interact with the local tourism groups and businesses to learn that. But over the
12 years, I was on other committees, too. I was sub-committee Chair of First Class Cities,
13 which was an inner-city Chairmanship, which to this day, I learned more about public
14 housing than I ever thought I'd ever learn. We went through projects and public housing
15 units in Pittsburgh and Philly and, you know, places I'd never want to go back in again,
16 and I learned a lot about that. And I had no desire to learn about that originally. I was
17 the Utilities Chairman for quite a while, which involved interacting with the telephones,
18 the electric companies, the gas companies, et cetera. And my most recent is the Vice
19 Chair of the Insurance [Committee], which is technically the highest position I've been in
20 and working with all the various insurance needs and issues, and I've learned an awful lot
21 about insurance. And my opinions have changed as I got into these positions. Some of
22 my opinions of what I thought was right and wrong when I first got in didn't necessarily
23 hold true when I learned more about it.

1

2 **HM:** Well, I want to get back to that.

3

4 **MW:** Okay.

5

6 **HM:** How your issues have changed and your thoughts; but I want to talk about your
7 legislation and your issues, and what do you feel were your most important pieces of
8 legislation?

9

10 **MW:** Well, I was looking back during this election cycle. Looking back, I have 19 bills
11 that autumnally became law. Now, some of them became laws as their own bill. I'd
12 introduced bills, beginning of Sessions, to try to do something, and some of them became
13 law as their bill, but others, due to negotiation, political reasons, maybe a Senator would
14 introduce a similar bill, and so I'd have to work, and maybe I'd let the Senator get that
15 bill become law, or I'd take my bill and turn it into an amendment and tack it onto
16 another similar bill, so the one that did become law, another Member, actually, was the
17 sponsor, but it had multiple issues in it, and I'd be one of those issues. So, those are
18 issues that ultimately became law that I had pursued. Probably my biggest is the
19 insurance changes regarding some diseases such as diabetes, vasectomies, gynecological
20 visits, well-baby visits. Those are probably some of my biggest bills that I ever got
21 passed. Also, one that I don't talk about, but specific to my community directly is the
22 Scofflaw Bill, which is the live stop bill for Philadelphia. One of my committees I was
23 on, we had realized there was an issue of so many uninsured cars in Philadelphia,

1 especially Philadelphia, but in other places, but mostly Philadelphia. And that was
2 driving up the insurance rates for all Philadelphia residents. A resident who legitimately
3 goes out [and] buys auto insurance, the insurance companies were paying out bills for all
4 those people that are driving cars around with no insurance. You get into an accident and
5 you have insurance, but the other guy doesn't, so your insurance company can't go to the
6 other insurance company to get the money to fix your vehicle because there is no other
7 insurance company. So, as a suburban legislator, we do go into the city all the time and
8 people come out, so it affects our insurance rates, too. So, a series of hearings that we
9 had, it was determined that, "Why can't we just get rid of these cars off the street?"
10 Well, the current laws sort-of prevented the police officers to pull a car over and to ask
11 for insurance, and the person would say, "Well, I don't have insurance." Well, the laws
12 at the time prevented the police officer from just impounding the car. They could do
13 nothing but write a ticket and hand them the ticket and say, "Good bye. Have a nice
14 day." And they drove away. The reason why they didn't get insurance in the first place,
15 they probably didn't have the money, so you know they're not going to go buy insurance
16 tomorrow, so they're still driving around those vehicles, and that wasn't right. So we
17 passed, actually, the law affects the whole state, but it's mandatory that in Philadelphia –
18 we gave them automatically authority – that police officers can live stop vehicles, and if
19 they've determined on the street that that car is not properly registered or inspected or
20 insured or whatever, they can impound the vehicle on the spot. Philadelphia police have
21 that authority today, and in fact, I was working with the mayor of Philly at the time, and
22 they were requesting this. And Mayor Street [John; 2000-2008] had impounded, his
23 second year in office, I guess it was, had impounded thousands of vehicles, you know.

1 He got on the backs of the police force, “I want these vehicles off the street,” or even to
2 go down the street [and] find an abandoned vehicle. The police would just write a ticket
3 and put it on his windshield, drive away. Well, that vehicle was never moved again, so
4 this allowed them to tow it away, so that was one didn’t give me much credit. I had
5 liquor code bills for various types of small changes from club licenses to catering halls to
6 wineries. And being in Tourism, one of my small issues was a lot of the wineries are –
7 our state is popping up with all these local wineries. These are small little wineries that
8 are making their own wine and selling it. One of the issues was there was limitation as to
9 how much wine they could sell and how often they could sell out of their own little
10 winery. And that was one of my bills that basically says you don’t have the constraints at
11 your little winery. If you produce it, you can go ahead awhile, you don’t have to get
12 special permissions and all that as long as you’re on your properties, and that allows them
13 to go to special occasions to take the wine off the property, et cetera. There’s a lot of
14 other small things, but the insurance issues that are directly mine, some of the scofflaws,
15 the anti-crime bills, the liquor code bills, et cetera.

16

17 **HM:** You had basically all the ones that I had.

18

19 **MW:** Yeah.

20

21 **HM:** Thank you. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the issues that are
22 before the current legislature. What do you think is the hardest issue right now before the
23 legislature?

1

2 **MW:** There's probably three main issues that I believe the next Session's going to incur.

3 Number one is the public – I think more the media is driving the public, but there is a

4 desire for some sort of reforms of how government does business, whether it's the

5 Federal level or State level, and so the legislature has to look among itself and decide if

6 they're going to change the internal rules of how they do business or impact upon

7 running for elections, how to fund elections, rules of how the Governor runs, all those

8 kinds of things. So, generic reform is a big issue that a lot of the freshmen coming in are

9 going to want to see some sort of legislative changes. Property taxes and how we pay for

10 our public schools. While we have made some changes in the prior Session, they're

11 small changes because the big changes are truly very difficult. There are winners and

12 losers. Any change will cause some people to actually pay more money rather than less

13 while others receive less, and from their point of view, they don't want to pay more.

14 Reform to funding our schools. People think everybody should pay less. Well, if

15 everybody pays less, that means, then, for instance, the school districts can only spend

16 less money. But as long as they're spending the same amount of money, the money still

17 has to be collected. That issue is not resolved. I think we did some things that improved

18 it by putting caps on increasing spending. The gambling that we've created will, over

19 time, kick in some sort of money that will help assist; it's not going to solve the problem.

20 And requiring local communities to be involved in putting reference on the ballots to

21 decide how they should maybe switch to some other types of taxes, what might be a little

22 more fair. I think they're all good, positive steps, and I think it's going to help out, but

23 it's still not the big nut that people really want to crack. And the last thing is, this next

1 budget year, there's going to be – we have some costs that are in government that are
2 rising very quickly, and they're mostly health care related costs to certain groups of
3 people within the State. Elderly that are receiving the state prescription plans or in-home
4 health care plans or, et cetera. Then there's the poor, whether they're old or they're
5 young. There's the desire to assist more individuals with some sort of health insurance
6 need, such as children, older working people who just are in jobs that don't provide
7 insurance, and the poor, what they call Medicaid, medical assistance, because the sheer
8 cost of providing health care is rising so fast per unit. The number and the desire of
9 people we want to serve, so that the number of people are rising, and the cost per unit is
10 rising, we're starting to see an explosion of insurance health care related expenses that
11 the state is going to incur, and it's far faster than the rate of kind-of new money coming
12 into the state. And if not this year, at least by next year, we're going to see a crisis at the
13 state level. They're going to have to make some tough decisions of not providing the
14 health care that they want to provide or talk about raising taxes, and that I believe will be
15 – that third component going into the budget cycle that there's going to be some serious
16 discussion of whether there's enough revenue being collected at the state level to pay for
17 the things the state wants to do, and whether there's going to have to be either make cuts,
18 which people don't like cuts, or raise taxes, and people don't like to raise taxes, so it
19 would be very difficult budget year.

20

21 **HM:** So, how have your issues changed through the years?

22

1 **MW:** I'm a more compassionate person now than I was when I first came to the office. I
2 was a conservative, for sure, when I came into office. I'm a moderate now. Conservative
3 on fiscal issues, because I've now seen in the communities, over the years, that groups of
4 people are not working, not because they choose not to work, it's because I didn't fully
5 understand the dependency issues. I didn't fully understand the mental health problems
6 that people have. I truly didn't understand the behavioral issues that people have, and
7 also how the workplace has just changed, pushed some people out of the market,
8 especially older citizens that are 55, 60, 65 years old. How I may have had more of an
9 attitude, "Just go get a job," but their jobs aren't paying enough to pay the bills or pay the
10 health care expenses, et cetera, the benefits, and I'm more understanding of how things
11 are not as easy in the world, or black and white as they were what I thought they were. I
12 was a young guy. I always had the motivation and drive, and I still do. If I needed more
13 money, you went out and worked extra hours; you found a little part-time job. You
14 changed your job. You went back to school. You got a better career, et cetera, et cetera.
15 You made it happen, and I still am a believer of that, but I also understand that not
16 everybody can do that, and there's different reasons. There're many, many different
17 reasons, and I'm a little more compassionate than I was when I first got into office. I am
18 understanding of some of the needs of our society, and in the end, of course, society's
19 changing, and government has to change with it. And so I think if anything, I think I'm a
20 little more compassionate. I'm a little more willing to spend money if I think it's a
21 worthy cause. I'm a little more willing to consider increasing taxes if it's for a good
22 cause. I'm a little more willing to get schools more money if needed, if I think it's going
23 to make a difference. When I first got elected, I was very harsh. In suburban

1 Philadelphia, we spent a heck of a lot of money on schools. Oh my God, we spent so
2 much money on the public schools, and when I first came into office, that was wrong.
3 They have to change, and they do have to change, and there is some changes have
4 occurred, but now I kind-of [have] an understanding of why they spend so much money,
5 and some of the factors are out of their control. Some of the things that higher
6 government puts upon them, they have to do. Special education; if you have a child, you
7 want that child to grow up to be successful, to be able to survive in our society, to be able
8 to be sufficient, and when I first came into office, I don't think I fully realized how a
9 family who had a child that had special needs who needed service at the local school
10 district level or from whatever group it was; I don't think I fully understood how if you
11 didn't provide that service, then five, ten, 15 years from now, that child is just going to
12 dependent upon government, and that we really need to do is at early age, we need to
13 spend the money and the resources to try the best we can to make that child succeed. So
14 now, that's a long term investment, and I don't think I saw that when I first got elected. I
15 don't think I saw today. I said we need to control those expenses today. I'm a little more
16 compassionate and understanding if we spend money in some area now, it will yield in
17 the future less government expenditures, so those are some of the things that have
18 changed in my life, in my career.

19

20 **HM:** How do you think you differ as a legislator from your father?

21

22 **MW:** First of all, the job is dramatically different. The job as a legislator is – as the
23 legislative part of this, probably very similar. The outreach into the community, my

1 father was very good at that, but I've taken it to a – this is my business background, my
2 reach-out background – I've taken that to a new level and have made that a major part of
3 the job of essentially a one-stop shop. People know who I am in the community. On
4 Election Day, they know who I am. They didn't know who a lot of the other people
5 were. Whether they liked me or not's a different story, but they knew who I was. I have
6 thousands of people that go through my office. I don't mean they just, like, walk through
7 the door, but through telephone, email, et cetera, letters, go through my office every year.
8 My father never had those things. I reach out and touch. I'm the first stop for people.
9 When they have a problem or if they have questions, even if it's nothing to do with the
10 state, people call me first because if it's not me directly – when I say “I,” it's collectively
11 my staff and I – we will take their issue, even if it's with the Federal Government or if
12 it's the local government, we will take their issue, and we'll say, “We'll work on this.
13 We'll get back to you when we get it resolved or get to the next step at least,” where the
14 old way used to be, you were given a telephone number. “We think this is your local
15 municipality problem. Here's a telephone number to call the building. Thank you,” and
16 that was the service you got, which was good and adequate at the time. We have gone
17 one step beyond that. It's this, “You know what? We understand your problem. We
18 understand the issue. You don't have to call over to the Township building. We will call
19 on behalf of you. We will call the local elected officials. We will whatever. We'll write
20 the letters. We'll, et cetera, et cetera, and we'll work on it until we get a result, or we run
21 into a wall or whatever to whatever, and that frees you up of the worry because you don't
22 know who to call,” you know. And you know what? We can go through ten different
23 places before we get an answer. Old way used to make you go make those telephone

1 calls and get frustrated, and you'd just give up, and you just accept whatever fate you
2 had. Today, we do it for you. We, by far, get results. My father was very involved in
3 the community, but I'm more involved in the community than he was, partially because, I
4 think, the job has become a full-time job. It was a full-time job for him, too, but we have
5 made it a full-time plus job and I think we've taken the community and constituent side
6 to a new level that those older Members had never seen before. A lot of the old Members
7 had other jobs.

8

9 **HM:** What do you think were the memorable events that occurred during your tenure?

10

11 **MW:** Well, the memorable ones are usually the more negative ones, and that goes with –
12 and a lot of people always say, you know, running for elections, “You know, why are the
13 elections all negative?” Well, the reason is, because people remember negative before
14 they remember positive. It's just a sad fact of life. People say, “That isn't true,” but you
15 know what? It is true. The researchers always say, “You whisper down a line a negative
16 and a positive. At the end of the line, it's the negative that's always remembered.” You
17 know, that's a sad fact, but that's the way it is. Not in every case, but it's just a
18 generality, and same thing with me. I can remember during welfare reform years, my
19 early career of my first or second term, we were going through the welfare reform, and I
20 can remember the protesters coming to Harrisburg and marching and protesting and
21 rallies and stuff like that. And I can remember when in the Visitors' Gallery in the back
22 of the House, second floor back of the House, the visitors used to throw stuff at us on the
23 Floor, and so they had to put a plexi-glass wall up to keep people from throwing stuff at

1 us. I can remember when Act Up, which is an AIDS awareness group, which is probably
2 still in existence, but you don't really hear much about it anymore, back in the [19]90s,
3 mid-[19]90s, [they] would come up on a regular basis to protest, to rally, and when the
4 media stopped covering them on just the protest and speech, they started to try to find,
5 "Well, how can we get the media, how can we get the television to come back and cover
6 us?" so they started to escalate their antics. They used to dress in the Grim Reaper outfits
7 with sickles and all that, and then they got coverage, and it disappeared. Then they
8 started to chain themselves to the statues up here. That got coverage then it disappeared.
9 Then I can remember when they used to throw the red dyed water balloons through the
10 Capitol at people and whatnot, and that was a symbol of blood, and that got them a lot of
11 attention, you know. Then the media lost attention with them, and I can remember when
12 Governor Casey was Sworn-In for his second term there on the front steps of the Capitol
13 here, out in the wintertime, we were all freezing, and they were out on the street with
14 bullhorns, sound systems, blaring up and trying to drown out the speeches. They broke
15 into a building across the street, locked themselves in. They were upstairs. The State
16 Police had to barge in and arrest them and drag everybody out during the ceremonies.
17 They had these –catapulting the red water dyed balloons onto all the guests in the
18 audience, et cetera, and the only reason why they were doing all that is because they
19 wanted to get media attention. I can remember during tough budget votes, being here for
20 months without having a budget, having shut government down. Nobody got paid. You
21 know, essentially, when I say "sweating out through the summer," you know, a long
22 summer with people—employees not getting paid, vendors not getting paid, people
23 getting very upset about it. I can remember fist fights on the House Floor. By-and-large,

1 the legislature is a very friendly group. We get along very well, very well. Occasionally,
2 though, there is some scuffles. People have a difference of opinion on things. They think
3 somebody's stabbing them in the back, et cetera, but probably – that's another thing.
4 Some of the positive ones I enjoyed is when Matt Ryan, who was a Majority Leader at
5 the time, and Bill DeWeese [H. William; Greene, Lafayette and Washington Counties,
6 1979-present; Speaker, 1993-1994] who's the, well, the two Leaders from both sides
7 would be on the House Floor, and I loved this when they would get into political debates.
8 Individual Members would get up and speak about stuff, support a bill, oppose a bill,
9 whatever, but when the two Leaders got up, quite often, even though they knew they
10 weren't going to change the other's minds. And I loved this, they got into a
11 competitiveness against each other of who could give the best speech, and they did have
12 little smirks and smiles, so they were, sort-of, they were making fun of it, too, in a good
13 way, I mean, where they would try to beat the other one in the debate. And those
14 debates, you know, there'd always be a lot – when other Members would get up and
15 speak, people weren't always paying attention; they were talking to their neighbors and
16 stuff like that. But when those two Leaders would get up to debate, the room got quiet,
17 and it went back and forth, back and forth, and a little bit of a bite, little bit of a picking
18 on each other, but, you know what? They were civil, but priding a little bit, but civil, and
19 even though they knew their, maybe, their debates weren't going to change any votes, it
20 was like, they would escalate against each other, and Bill DeWeese has grammar that
21 people can't even understand, and Matt Ryan had an Irish background, and he wanted to
22 win, and he always wanted to win. When he, you know, he took a position, he wanted to
23 win, and he wasn't going to let someone beat him on that, and those are probably some of

1 the positive things. We had the Centennial for the building. In my terms, we spent an
2 awful lot of taxpayers' dollars renovating the building, and we did a great job. In fact,
3 like a house, a 100 year old building, like a house, it's been repainted many times; it's
4 been re-carpeted, refurbished. There's a leak, so they put a drop leaf ceilings in, all that
5 kind of stuff, covered stuff up. When they brought the professionals in, you cannot
6 believe what they found. You cannot believe how they restored – it's a beautiful
7 building, and I'm very proud of what we have done, but I think the most memories I have
8 are individual Members. The Legislature is not a building; its people, and other
9 legislators and other staff and key people really are probably my fondest memories I've
10 ever had.

11

12 **HM:** What aspect of your job did you enjoy the most?

13

14 **MW:** Working with people. I didn't prize what I did in Harrisburg so much as how I
15 helped my community groups and individuals with their problems. We have helped
16 thousands, tens of thousands of people in my career with everything from trying to find
17 them a telephone number, which is something very simple, to people who have literally
18 dug themselves into such a horrible hole. Now, we don't necessarily solve their
19 problems, but we have improved them. You know, the goal was to make them better off
20 than they were when they came in the door. You can't always be successful in
21 everything. Sometimes you just can't help people. Sometimes people got into such a bad
22 problems that you can't do anything to help them, but that's what my greatest pleasures
23 have been, satisfaction because myself, individually helping people, or my staff, and

1 people saying thank you, which you don't get a lot of, and helping groups. My
2 community groups are dependent on me to assist them with bringing grants home,
3 participating in the anniversaries, the ribbon cuttings, and the public community events,
4 and the dinners, and all those kinds of things. And help, you know, honoring local
5 people, and et cetera. Bringing home Eagle Scout presentations for the boys who rose up,
6 and I think, those families and those people, you know, never forget that.

7

8 **HM:** What aspect did you not enjoy?

9

10 **MW:** The one thing I don't enjoy the most is the wrangling or arm twisting for – I've
11 had to take some votes that I would not have normally voted for in the past, only because,
12 as I mentioned earlier, if you come in and you're completely one sided, "It's my way or
13 no way," you're not going to be around very long. Nobody will give you what you want
14 unless you help the group as a whole, and if you're always the outsider throwing rocks,
15 you're not helping the group as a whole, and many times, you're on the same side. You
16 like the group as a whole, and you legitimately try to help them, but there are times, to
17 get something important, you have to give up something, and sometimes you don't want
18 to give that up, but you sort of feel you have to. And there're all kinds of different
19 reasons for it, and what I don't like the most is sometimes having to swallow your pride;
20 sometimes kind of going back on what you maybe wanted to do, and taking some hard
21 votes maybe the way that you really didn't want to and having to go back home and
22 explain them and knowing darn well that the public generally doesn't understand that you
23 had to give a little bit to get something else, and people who are only fixated on one

1 aspect cannot understand why you gave that away, and they don't understand the other
2 aspect.

3

4 **HM:** Can you talk about the technology and the technological changes that you've
5 witnessed since you've been here?

6

7 **MW:** Well, let's go back a little further. When my father was in office, I was a kid at
8 home. Telephone and written letters were the only communication – and in person –
9 were the only communication there was. That was it. No fax machines when he was in
10 office; no computers, essentially, you know, no computers, and answering machines,
11 essentially, not either. That was when I was a kid. It was years here, you know, before
12 there started to be some of that kind-of stuff, but especially the older Members didn't
13 have computers. They didn't want to – people wouldn't understand – they weren't really
14 accepting computers and things like that. When I came in, of course, I'm a young person,
15 and I'm more familiar with the modern tools that we have, and so, you know, right off the
16 bat, we got fax machines; we got computers; we got emails; we got voicemails; we got
17 call forwarding. We got all kinds of things, cell phones, so, you know, we got a mobile
18 office. I don't have to be at my desk anymore to do work. And it is dramatic how it's
19 also created a problem. The public used to have to wait for answers, unless it was on the
20 phone and you just talked with them. They'd have to wait sometimes, you know, when
21 the secretaries would do a letter on carbon paper, type it out, and then, you know, mail it
22 in the mail, it took forever; it took a week to get an answer. Today, in many cases, we
23 can get answers to them immediately. At three o'clock in the morning, we can get them.

1 We can get people who ask me questions at three o'clock in the morning. I mean, I'm
2 never on the computer at three o'clock in the morning, but in the morning I'll find that,
3 and I can respond right back to them, and I can get them at work; I get them at their
4 home; I can get them on their cell phone; I can get them whenever. They got my cell
5 phone number. And the good and the bad of that is people now are used to getting instant
6 information, and if they don't get it instantaneously, they get upset. At one time, if they
7 got it in a week, they were happy. Today, if they don't get it immediately, they're not
8 happy, so it is a monster, too. It sort-of created a problem, but on the other hand, I think
9 it's allowed legislators to do a lot more, to achieve a lot more, to do a lot more for people,
10 to reach out a lot more than ever before to communicate with people than we ever did
11 before, and it will continue to evolve in the future.

12

13 **HM:** Would you like to comment on your relationship with the media?

14

15 **MW:** It's a love-hate relationship. Generally, it's not a good relationship. Let me
16 explain why. I'll go off on a couple different reasons here. I'll give you an example, first
17 of all; the media complains how elected officials and challengers are so negative in their
18 talks and their mailers and their issues, et cetera, but just go to the paper every day. Just
19 look at that paper. I provide, every day, positive stuff to the media. I got a grant for a
20 group, a bill we passed, something is a little better. It's a positive message, and it rarely
21 gets printed. They don't cover it. They don't care. Remember I talked about the
22 whispering the positive and negative message, which one lasts? But yet, anything even
23 remotely negative, front page news, or it gets a prominent article, or whatever, and so

1 they talk out of both sides of their mouth. They say, you know, “Candidates should talk
2 about positive issues,” but even as candidates, you give them positive issues, and they
3 don’t write about them, but as soon as you even rumor something, they want to write an
4 article. And the reporters are that way, but I have to admit, they’re only responding to
5 what the people that are buying the papers want to read. The people that are buying the
6 papers or watching the news, et cetera, people say they want positive news, but whenever
7 there’s the local papers or whatnot write positive articles – we have these little Weeklies
8 in the community, et cetera, that do positive things, no one subscribes to them. They
9 don’t get viewers, but yet, the people get the Dailies that have all the negative stuff in it,
10 the war, the death, the fires, the arsons, the rapes, the murders, you know, that’s what is
11 in the papers. And so the writers, editorialists, are really just mimicking what the public
12 seems, not to what’s coming out of their mouth, but it seems to be purchasing with their
13 dollars. They’re just providing what the viewers, even though they say they don’t want
14 that, are actually in action are purchasing that product, and so the writers and the editors
15 are essentially then writing and doing those issues, those stories regarding what they
16 perceive the public would rather read about, and scandal. People love scandals. They
17 don’t like to talk about scandals, you know, but they love them. They always love who’s
18 doing what to who. They love those kind-of stories, and the reporters are just reporting
19 it, and I have done so many opportunities, giving the media positive stuff. They just
20 don’t print it, and, you know, you talk to them 100 times, and you get nothing out of
21 them, and then there’s some kind of a negative issue, and so you try to talk about the two
22 sides of the issue, “Well, but, you know, it’s not that bad, this, this, this, and this.” But
23 they don’t print that other side of it, and they only print the negative. So then, of course,

1 elected officials are shy to say that, “Well, you’re not going to say anything good about
2 it, anyway, so why should I give you anything? You’re just going to be negative.”

3

4 **HM:** Do you have any regrets?

5

6 **MW:** Well, yes and no. The only immediate regret I have was the pay raise vote that we
7 took last year. I’ve voted for pay raises in the past and it didn’t generate to be this. You
8 know, public gets pay raises and, you know, but elected officials don’t seem to be
9 allowed to because the public are essentially, through taxes, are paying our salary, and
10 they don’t want people using their money, even public officials or even staff, to get raises
11 out of their money. But if any of them, the votes, the worst votes, that would probably be
12 the worst one. At the time, it didn’t seem to be any different than some of the other tough
13 votes I took in the past, knowing darn well it was going to be a tough vote. I knew it darn
14 well, but it generated a life of its own, and that goes back to the question about the media,
15 I think, because the media made it an issue. And the media’s also losing control over the
16 public because the public has so many other places they get information from, but the
17 media is trying to stake out a turf to say that, you know, “We will drive policy in America
18 and therefore, take positions on things,” and then do the reporting to reinforce what their
19 positions are. And it was very clear, this year, that they wanted some sort of changes and
20 reforms, and they were using the pay raise as one of the issues of why they need change
21 and reform, and they just drove that hard. I did vote for it, and they were successful, but
22 that didn’t beat me. There were other factors, but I think that was probably the most
23 regrettable vote.

1

2 **HM:** We've talked about your legislation and your issues. What would you say were
3 your greatest accomplishments?

4

5 **MW:** Well, we had talked about legislative issues, and I talked about some of the
6 proposals, but—and we sort of really haven't dealt with this question. Some of the pieces
7 that I voted for and discussed, obviously, were my legislative pride, but the lion's share
8 of the job is what I said is back in the community and helping people one on one. I've
9 helped so many people get out of tough problems that very few people know about. And,
10 of course, you don't want the public to know someone had a problem, and I've had
11 people who have had issues that are outstanding people in the community, and nobody
12 else knew how bad they were, in terms of – they lost their job, paying their bills, and
13 being kicked out of the house, et cetera. I can remember just one example. It was
14 Mothers' Day morning, five o'clock in the morning – this was probably eight years ago –
15 five o'clock in the morning, the phone rings. Local police force called me. They just
16 picked up a woman on the street who was living with a man in this place. They were not
17 married. The apartment was actually under his name, so it was his place. She was living
18 with him. They had a child together. It was a young baby, an infant of sorts. The father
19 and mother, but they weren't married, and he did not have custody of the child, either, but
20 they got drunk. He became abusive, but not overly abusive, not assault abusive, but there
21 was a little bit of it, so she fled, and all she had was her coat, and that was about it. And
22 ended up at the police station at that particular point and the police were trying to decide
23 whether to file charges or not. It was like the borderline kind-of an issue, and I'm not

1 involved with that part of that issue, but why they called me is now they have a woman
2 who has no money at all, no place to go. She did not live in this area. She was from
3 another part of the county. No relatives, no friends, no nothing. Five o'clock on
4 Mothers' Day morning, what do they do with her? So, they called me and I got my little
5 black book out, calling the DA's [District Attorney] office, calling the various directors
6 of various social service groups, et cetera, and I was able to find her a place, a homeless
7 shelter to get her into. It was a women's place, which is a shelter, typically, a women's
8 abuse center. [I] got her fixed up with some clothes. [I] got her fixed up with a legal
9 rights person to advise her about her rights and whatnot. [I] also had the welfare
10 department go out and check on the child, you know. They said the child was perfectly
11 fine, and he was the father, so there was no immediate risk. There was no evidence of the
12 father doing anything, and it seemed to be perfectly fine. He was a responsible person for
13 the child, and he was the father, so, you know, there's those difficult issues there. So,
14 that's just an example of some of the things that we do, and we had talked about some of
15 the grants I brought home for the various communities and local governments that I'm
16 very proud of.

17

18 **HM:** What are your future plans?

19

20 **MW:** As I sit here, I don't know what I want to do when I grow up. Thank God I'm
21 young enough. And this is a real problem. Some of the Legislators that are leaving that
22 are upper 50s and 60s are not really old enough to retire, but yet, in this society, it's
23 difficult to get a good job at that age. They're going to have a little more trouble. I'm at

1 the age where I could start another career. My goals will be to get into some sort of a
2 management positions with (*inaudible*) businesses. I have, through my committees, not
3 when I first started, but through my committee structure, I'm very knowledgeable and
4 experienced in working with insurance fields and financial fields. [That's] probably
5 where I'm going to be going into.

6

7 **HM:** Do you plan to stay active in politics?

8

9 **MW:** I don't know about that. For the near future, yes. I don't know, though, if I, as a
10 person, am going to run for another position or just to be a loyal supporter for the cause,
11 but I will probably be a loyal supporter for the cause. I don't know if I'll ever run for any
12 other positions.

13

14 **HM:** I think you answered this question, but what advice would you have for new
15 Members?

16

17 **MW:** To be civil. I have seen the tone of elections to get nasty. These election cycles
18 get very nasty the last couple terms, and that quite often sets the tone for when whoever
19 wins, they come into office, and I said earlier that, by and large, this is a very civil group.
20 We get along very well. I don't want to see the bickering. I don't want to see the
21 backstabbing. Unfortunately, this Session coming up, we have an awful lot of Members
22 that will see only black and white on issues. It's their issue or else. It's their opinion this
23 way or nothing else. They will not bend. This crop of freshmen, both Parties, seems to

1 be a very inflexible group of people. Other people in the past have come in and said, you
2 know, "I'm open-minded on issues." This class of legislators coming in, by-and-large, I
3 think, is probably the largest group that has ever been, in my mind, inflexible, and that,
4 "Things are going to change, and they're going to change my way and nobody else's
5 way," and they're going to run into a wall. They're going to run into the existing
6 structure who's going to say, "Earn your keep first before you tell us what to do," and I
7 don't see some of these people being able to survive that and essentially having so much
8 stress that they desire to not run again or essentially be beating their head into a wall over
9 and over and over again, or unfortunately, pushing the structure that's already in
10 existence to essentially go after them, which I don't want to see, either. So, main thing
11 for the freshmen is three different things: be civil: remember your community: and also,
12 remember your family and spouse.

13

14 **HM:** How would you like to be remembered?

15

16 **MW:** As a caring person who helped thousands of people in my community and helped
17 a tremendous amount of community groups make the community better.

18

19 **HM:** Thank you, Representative Wright. This was a wonderful interview. I appreciate
20 you taking the time to be with me today.

21

22 **MW:** Thank you.