

Knocking on Doors: Members Reflect on Campaigning Across Pennsylvania

One thing most Representatives have in common despite their age, gender, political party, or the location of their district is that in order to secure their election, they have spent a great deal of time knocking on doors. During oral history interviews, the House Archives always asks retiring Members to reflect on their experiences campaigning, which inevitably includes going door to door to meet potential constituents and hearing their thoughts on issues.

Early mornings and late nights...

Kenneth B. Lee (Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming, 1957-1974; Speaker, 1973-1974) Interviewed: August 16, 2005

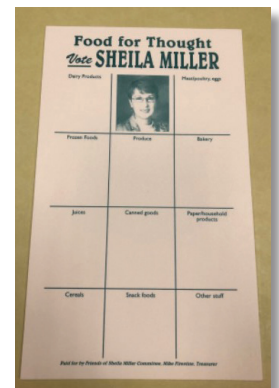
"I would get up at four o'clock in the morning and hit five or six farms while they were still doing their morning milking. And that impresses farmers and they would talk to other farmers. And the other thing, we have the largest town in the community at the time when I first came here, I think, had six or seven hundred people in it and ten bars, and about half the county was much similar. And so you'd campaign in the bars. I mean, you hit more people in the bars at that time."



Not always finding a friendly face...

Sheila M. Miller (Berks, 1993-2006) Interviewed: August 1, 2006

"The only good thing about campaigning was I did get to catch up a little bit with my mom because she would tag along with me as we would go door to door to door every Saturday and in the evenings. The one story that I will share: we went to one home and an older woman came out and my mom was kind of standing behind me on the sidewalk. This woman comes out and says, 'Oh, all politicians are crooks. You're a crook' and, you know, 'I don't want to talk to you.' And my mom took it personally, and she steps out from behind me and says, 'My daughter is not a crook and you can't call her that.' So I had to just calmly turn my mom around and say, 'Let's walk, Mom, it's okay.'"



Above: A shopping list tablet as part of Miller's campaign efforts



Saving a life...

William F. Adolph, Jr. (Delaware, 1989-2016)

Interviewed: October 18, 2016

In our research prior to Representative Adolph’s interview, we uncovered a small newspaper article that revealed an unusual experience he had while campaigning. Here is his response:

“You caught me by surprise... But I remember that day. I knocked on the front door and the front door was open, you know, screen door was there. I knocked and nobody answered, okay? And the television was on and I said, ‘Hello? Hello? Hello?’ and nobody answered, and I walked around to the garage on the side and there was this gentleman laying on the ground and unconscious. I ran inside, called the police and the ambulance, they arrived, and you know, it was pretty exciting from the standpoint that he lived... He lived. He has since passed away but he didn’t die of that heart

attack that he had and that was good. And I talked to him a little bit while he was in the hospital, and so forth, and it was quite an experience to know that, you know, if I wasn’t there that time he might have passed away immediately.”

Wearing out your shoes...

Thaddeus Kirkland (Delaware, 1993-2016) Interviewed: November 3, 2016

“... My first experience was one that was just on the road, constantly on the road, constantly meeting people, constantly learning, and constantly reaching out and listening. It was a great experience. Even when you ran into some opposition, at least you have an opportunity to hear what the people are thinking. And so it was a great experience, and, yes, I did wear my shoes out. I did actually have a hole in the bottom of my shoe when I finished my first campaign!”



But it’s not for everyone...

Susan B. Laughlin (Allegheny and Beaver, 1989-2004)

Interviewed: November 22, 2004

“No. I do not like to campaign. I’ve never knocked on a door. My husband did all of that for me, so I didn’t have to. And everyone knew me, you know, in Beaver County. It was a 4:1 Democrat district; it’s now 2:1. So I just couldn’t do it. You know, I stayed in the office and I worked. People would come to me [and] I would take care of their problem.”



These are just a few of the responses we have received to questions about campaigning over the years. Check out our website to read more of each of these interviews and many more.

Campaigning Through the Ages in Pennsylvania

Everyone is familiar with political candidates producing pins, bumper stickers, and yard signs — but many other items such as pencils, pens, and combs were once commonly produced as well. The House Archives has collected many examples of Members' campaign materials. Here are just a few of some formerly common campaign items — as well as a few unique pieces.



Above:
"Ernest B. Posey"
Reading Times,
October 20, 1920.

Rep. Ernest B. Posey (Berks, 1921-1926) used these sewing kits that were possibly aimed at new female voters who were able to cast their ballot after the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920.



Pens: John E. Scheaffer (Cumberland, 1971-1980)
Reno H. Thomas (Snyder and Union, 1969-1980)



Frisbee: Russel H. Fairchild (Snyder and Union, 1989-2010)



Pin: James C. Cole (Adams, 1909-1912)

Pocketknife: John E. Barley (Lancaster, 1985-2002)



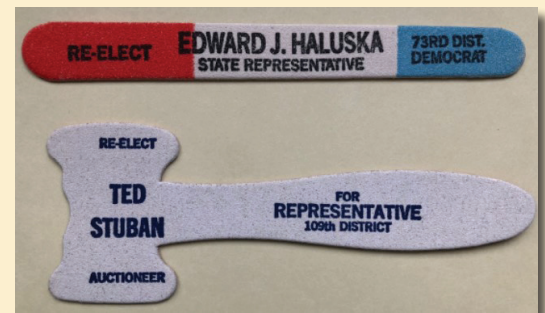
Clip: Walter F. DeVerter (Centre, Juniata, Mifflin, and Perry, 1973-1988)

Keychain: Richard J. Cessar (Allegheny, 1971-1994)



Banner: Kent D. Shelhamer (Columbia and Montour, 1965-1976)

Seeds: Patricia H. Vance (Cumberland County, 1991-2004)



Nail files:
Edward J. Haluska (Cambria, 1981-1994)
Ted Stuban (Columbia and Montour, 1977-1992)



Matchbooks:
Herman Toll (Philadelphia, 1951-1985)
Lester H. Zimmerman (Juniata, 1957-1966)
Donald W. Snyder (Lehigh, 1981-2000)



Combs:
Robert E. Belfanti (Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, and Schuylkill, 1981-2010)
James J. Gallen (Berks, 1965-1992)

lpo.kl.1018

Recent additions to our collections

- Hats, cards, and promotional materials from the 2018 Capitol All Stars Softball Game
- Framed map and document, gifts from Dutch Ambassador Henne Schuwer to the Speaker of the House, Mike Turzai (R)
- Framed photo collage of Members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, 1887-1888, gift from Rep. Donald W. Dorr (R) 1973-1990
- Collection of Theodore L. Mazia (Chief Clerk, 1995-2005), 2 boxes
- Personal Papers of W. Curtis Thomas (D) 1989-2018, 2 boxes
- Personal Papers of Matthew E. Baker (R) 1993-2018, 7 boxes
- Personal Papers of Harold F. Mowery (R) 1977-1990, 6 boxes
- Personal Papers of Frank Tulli (R) 1991-2002, framed items
- Pennsylvania House of Representatives hat, Curtis S. Bowley (D) 1985-1992
- Book, *Harrisburg Broadcasting*, Timothy P. Portzline, CORE Broadcasting staff
- Book, *Redemption: Book One of the Spades Trilogy*, Rep. Michael H. Schlossberg
- Book, *God in Our Government*, Rep. Richard Saccone
- Personal Papers of Leon Czikowksy, Democrat staff, papers, memorabilia, and books



Above and Right: Pieces from the Theodore L. Mazia Collection; donated by his widow Holly Mazia



Above: Speaker Turzai receiving a framed document from Dutch Ambassador Schuwer. The gift is a replica of the first time Pennsylvania is believed to be noted by the Dutch in their records.

Below: Gifts from Dutch Ambassador Henne Schuwer

