

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Milton Berkes (D)

140th District

Bucks County

1967-1974

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Heidi Mays, House Archivist
October 11, 2007

Transcribed by: Erin Miller

© Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Office of the Chief Clerk

Heidi Mays (HM): Good afternoon.

The Honorable Milton Berkes (MB): And hello to you.

HM: Thank you. We're here today with former Representative Milton Berkes, who served the 140th Legislative District from Bucks County between the years 1967 and 1974. Thank you for agreeing to be here with me today in Representative Melio's [Anthony J.; State Representative, Bucks County, 1987-2010] office.

MB: My pleasure.

HM: I wanted to begin by asking about your childhood and your family life and how you feel that that prepared you to be a public servant.

MB: My parents were immigrants. They came from Romania, and they came to this country in 1920. I was born four years later. Interestingly, my sister was born five days after they landed in America, so she became a citizen by five days. They came from a poor family, but they managed to bring all of their relatives over, get them out of Eastern Europe in time, you know, just in time, and, of course, we're Jewish, and they were really facing pogroms and all of that business. And, at any rate, we grew up in the section of Philadelphia called Strawberry Mansion, and it was a great place to live because it was right on the edge of Fairmount Park, and Fairmount Park was our playground. It was big. It's still one of the biggest city parks in the country and had all kinds of things we could do and play with. So, that was a good place to grow up, and I had a lot of friends, and we

had gangs, but our gangs were organized not to fight but to play baseball and to play football and that kind of thing. And well, I went to elementary schools down in that area and then I went to high school. It was Central High School, which was the premium school for high school, academically, but we had 9A and 9B, and I was there for 9A, and then they moved, and for 9B I had a choice of going to Central High School, in where they were located, which would require me taking three buses, or staying at the old school, which was named Ben Franklin, and I got to Ben Franklin very easily by hopping on the back of a truck and going down Ridge Avenue and jumping off the truck when it got to Broad Street, if it would stop, and then walk the couple of blocks over. So, it was really a question – we were still a poor family, and I didn't go to Central because we couldn't afford that. At any rate, I graduated Benjamin Franklin in 1943, January, and two months later I was drafted and I was off to the war. So, in terms of my early childhood, it was trying times, but it was happy times, because it didn't matter that we didn't have money. My father worked very hard, and he was a leather worker, and he worked in a suitcase factory, and what happened is they would call him into work when they needed him, but then they'd lay him off for weeks at a time, and, of course, it was a time of the Depression, which was 1929, I was five years old, and going on until Roosevelt [Franklin Delano; President of the United States, 1933-1945] was elected in [19]32 and, and beyond. And I remember my father selling apples on the street, at Market St., and he would walk all the way from our house, which is about five miles, to a spot on Market St. and put his apples out on the stand and sell them, and the significance of that is – because they couldn't get work then – the significance of that is that one day, he had his apples piled up at home and I was hungry, and I grabbed an apple without telling him, and he got so angry at me, but my mother defended me, and in their way, I

learned a lesson there. But at any rate, I did a lot of little things in those days; I sold newspapers for a while, and when I was teenager, I worked for a local newspaper. I did advertising; I solicited ads for them. And then I worked part-time at the Acme Markets. After I graduated high school – I worked at Acme all through my high school. I had to lie about my age, but they didn't care because they needed people to work there, and that was my first experience with Unions. That was very important to me, because they had a Union Representative who was a State Representative. I forget his name, but it was years ago, and he would come around every Saturday, and he'd collect our Union dues – those of us who were temporaries. I think we were paying three dollars a week or whatever it was – but, that's when I first had contact with Unions. Later on, I became a very strong Union person. My father was a very liberal person, but I would have called him a Democratic Socialist because he believed in Democracy, of course, coming out of that, that terrible place where he was raised, but at the same time, he was so anti-Communist at a time when the Communist Party was flourishing, particularly in neighborhoods like that with a lot of refugees coming in, and the neighborhood at that time was all Jewish, so, you know, and they were mostly from Eastern Europe. But, but they used to – I remember there would be, on Sundays, the Leader of the Communist Party in that area would bring a soapbox and stand on it and preach right in the middle of the street, and everybody would gather there, and my father would throw food at him, and they got into that kind of thing, because his experience in Europe was – his last experience – was with the Russian Revolution. He lived on the border of Russia, and he'd always told this story about in World War I he would first serve in the Romanian Army, and then the Russians would grab him, and he'd serve in the Russian Army, and was just a bridge between Russia and Romania. So, he always told us he hated when they called them Bolsheviks,

but he was socially progressive, and I guess I've got my liberalism from him. And, at any rate, my mother grew up also helped with that. She never went to school, never went to school in any, anywhere. In Europe, she went to work when she was eight years old sewing in a factory, and she had no learning at all, and as a matter of fact, she never learned to speak English after coming here until the day she died. I remember going with her and my older sister to take her down to the customs house in Philadelphia every year where she had to register as an alien, and she would do that, and we would sit down and try to teach her to sign her name. She couldn't even do that. It was just – she had no learning ability because she had never gone to school. So, she lived her life without ever going to a movie except when there was an occasional Yiddish picture, and she loved that, and she'd go to see that or a play, which was more often in those days, so that's, that's where I got my background. And I also, I had a real deep feeling for health problems because both my sister and my brother – and they skipped me. I was in between them. My brother's five years younger. My sister was four years older than me. Somehow the genes jumped over me – they both had muscular dystrophy. My brother had it very serious and very early, and there was a rare form, and he also had clubbed feet, and he was sick all his life, and he's in the hospitals all the time, and my sister had a minor form of muscular dystrophy, and she lived to be 83, 84, but in her later years in her 70's, it really affected her quite a bit. So, that's where I got my commitment for the health system. And my commitment to education I got by going to school in a tough neighborhood and a tough place and knowing the difference between getting good education or not. Now, the other thing that happened that's important is at first when I went to high school, I took the academic course, and that was fine, but then it was obvious that I'd never go to college. My parents didn't, you know, no way they could

ever send me to college. So, in my last year, I changed to a course called Distributive Education, which dealt with people who work in, like, the supermarkets or department stores and things like that, and it was fun. I was a fair student. I got good grades but never all A's. I'd get some A's and some B's and some C's, but when I switched to Distributive Education, which was an easy course, I got all A's, and that was very important later on, because when I went into the Army and I went to basic training down in Florida – and they cut through all kinds of things besides the physical training – suddenly after about a month down there, they shipped me off to the Citadel in South Carolina, I think it is, and they were interviewing people for a special program called the Army Specialized Training Program, ASTP, and because I had all those A's, you know, I was eligible, and I went through a lot of testing there, and I tested positive, and they sent me to the ASTP Program instead of out with the infantry division, and that was in New York, I think it was Brooklyn College. So, I stayed in that course, it was almost a year, and they broke up the whole ASTP program, because at that time, it was now 1944, they had to build up their infantry forces for the invasion of Europe. And most of the people that were my buddies up there, they went into the infantry, but for some reason, I was sent to Fort Monmouth to radio school, and then I realized why; because when I was in high school, I took a club, the Radio Club, and I learned how to deal with radios and Morse Code, and all that kind-of, which was fun. I did it for fun, and because of that background, I got into radio school. So, I trained on field radios and all of that kind-of stuff, and then they sent me back to New York to learn how to operate submarine cables. These were these transoceanic cables where they communicated, you know, from across the ocean. And I learned that, and after that was done, we shipped out to the South

Pacific. Now, do you want me to get into that now? Because that's an important part of my –

HM: Sure.

MB: – background. The first place we stopped – and, incidentally, when I got on the ship, and we went cross-country by train, and that was the first time I was on a cross-country trip of any kind, and then we got on the ship, and that was the first time I was on a ship, but at any rate – the first place we stopped was in New Guinea in a place called Milandia Harbor, and that was really nothing but a artificially built harbor for that purpose of – and it was in New Guinea, and we were there about two weeks, and I, frankly, never left the ship because there was nothing to do, no place to go. There was a bar in town, but I didn't drink. I was never a drinker and so I had no interest in getting off, and then we went to the Philippine Islands where I spent most of my time overseas. We landed first in Leyte, in Leyte Island. That was a mud hole, but we landed there, and we stayed there about a month, and then we got back on the ship and went to Luzon where Manila is and the capital is, because the cable station was in Manila, but we couldn't get there when I first got there because it was still Japanese-occupied. And, we were camped right outside of Manila and right near Santo Tomas University, which was the place where the Japanese kept American prisoners who were not in the service, not in the armies, but were there in the Philippines when they invaded, and they were treated pretty harshly, and we got to see them and talk to them at times. Then, the thing that impressed me the most – it's got to be stupid – but impressed me the most when I was there was, every time we would have mess call, you know, three times a day, and we'd

eat what we want to eat, and then we'd go out to these big garbage cans to dump what we didn't eat, and there was a line of kids, Filipino kids, with tin cans waiting for us to come out, and we would dump our food into their tin cans, and as soon as they got it filled, they'd run and take it home, and that kind of poverty really affected me. I mean, we had poverty when I grew up, but I never had to go with a tin can and stand there at a garbage pail and take garbage. And what we used to do, we would get more food than we could eat so we'd have more to give to the kids, and they came back later and would do errands for us and shine our shoes and things like that, and young girls would come, and they'd do our laundry, and so we had that kind of relationship with them. But, when we went to look at the cable station, the Japs had blown it up, and there was nothing there, so we had to rebuild it. So, while waiting to rebuild that station, we had to wait for material to come from the States, well, we had to do all kinds of different things. For a while, I was in charge of quarters, which meant that I would, in the nighttime on the night shift that nobody else wanted to take, I would answer the telephone or the radio because I could do the Morse Code if it came in and on the night shift. So, that was a while, and then one day, they needed some guys to go guard a farmhouse. Now, who are we guarding it from? We were guarding it from other U.S. soldiers and guarding it from the Filipinos because a lieutenant from another outfit – the ship was just coming in – had been there in advance and had grabbed that farmhouse and the farm. That's where he wanted to have his headquarters, so we had to keep it from being taken over by somebody else. So, we did that for a while, but then we were really – let's see. In August of [19]44 the atomic bomb was dropped, and, of course, we were happy. I never knew what was – I didn't even know what it was. And, that was dropped, and the reason we were happy is because they were taking guys like us that, that weren't doing anything and retraining them to be

infantry for the invasion of Japan, and we'd gone through some of that training, just the beginning of it, and the talk was that the invasion of Japan would be the greatest loss in the history of the world for the troops, and it would have been if – because Japan was such a small island in terms of depth that – and, and they were fanatic. They, they fought every step of the way. They would rather die than surrender, and so it was that kind of thing. But then, the war ended and we were shipped to Japan anyhow in the occupation, and we never did get to know Japanese because – the Japanese people – because they were afraid of us, and if we'd go walking down the street – we lived in a stadium, a baseball stadium. We camped under the stands, and we worked in Kobi. We lived in Kyoto, which was a beautiful city untouched by the war. It was gorgeous and an ancient city, and we, every morning, were transported to Kobi where the sixth army headquarters was for the southern part of Japan, and we worked in the communications room, and we did that for a couple, maybe three months or four months, and at the time, they were – you know, the war was over, both in Germany and in Japan, and they were discharging the soldiers on a basis of a points system. You got five points for every time you were in an area that was under fire, and so I was on three different areas, so I had fifteen points there, and you get five points for a good conduct medal, five points for something else, but it wound up, and I'll always remember that; I had fifty-five points. And every day, we would look in *Stars and Stripes*, which was the paper came out every day over there for the military, and we'd watch the numbers go down. It's 100, 90, 80, 70. When it got down to 60, I said, "Oh, boy, I'm ready," and sure enough, they told us to gather our gear and be ready to disembark the next day. Well, that night – we lived, at that time, we lived in big, wooden barracks. They took us from the stadium to, to the embarkation place, and they were two-story, wooden barracks. There were a whole bunch of them. I

don't know what they were used for originally, but we were living in them, and in the middle of the night, a fire broke out in the barracks next to us, and everybody's rushing to help, and our people, the sergeants and lieutenants, were running, and we all got out. We emptied all the barracks, and the place was burning, and we watched it burn because no fire engines came, and we stayed down there on the ground all night, and about eight o'clock in the morning when we were ready to go get fed, a single fire engine, Japanese fire engine, came out. The fire was out and just smoldering timbers there, and they came. It was like a two-level trolley, you know, (*laugh*) and hand pumps and all that, and that was funny. But later that day, we got on a ship, and we came home, and that was the beginning of a lot of things. Now, all of that, why it was that important to me, opened up a whole new world for me because, as I said earlier, I never would have gone to college, although I had, you know, I had the ambition, but the GI Bill of Rights came, and we got college, and when I got to the interview, it was just a couple months later, I started at Temple University, and they had classes out in the different high schools and in the afternoon, and I had to go there for an interview, and the person that was the principal or the superintendent of that particular – Olney High School is where I went. I walk in there, and I look at him, and it's my old high school principal, and his name was A. Oswald Michener – and I'm stressing Michener because I got to tell you about another Michener that was important in my life – and he looked at me, and he said, "Where'd you go to high school?" I said, "Ben Franklin." He said, "Ben Franklin? What did you have? When did you go?" You know, and I said, "I was editor of the school paper my last term there," and, and he says, "Oh, I remember you," and anyway, he didn't even look at my credentials; I was in. And so, I went to college, and six months after I started, I got married. We got married early in those days, particularly if we came back from

overseas, and went through college, and I was really starting out to be a reporter. I really liked journalism, and I always wrote. When I was in the Philippines, I edited a battalion newspaper. In high school, I edited the school paper, and other organizations I did that kind-of little things, but, you know, having gotten married, and my first daughter was, you know – this is when I was in my second year, and my wife was pregnant and all that – so, I had to find a way to get out of college and start making a living, and so I transferred to Teachers' College, became a teacher, and got a job right away, 1949. I also had got a master's degree – took me another three years – got a master's degree in guidance and counseling, and I transferred to being a counselor. So, I spent thirteen years in the Philadelphia school system, and how did I leave teaching to go into politics? Well, we moved to Levittown in 19 – my wife and I and our, our oldest daughter – moved to Levittown, which was brand new in 1952. We were able to buy that house with one hundred dollars down, and if we changed our mind, we got the hundred dollars back. We settled there with a mortgage. The house cost ten thousand dollars, which just recently sold – my former wife sold that house for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, (*laugh*) and we paid ten thousand for it. At any rate, we were there. We were all brand new in Levittown. We were from all over, but there was nothing there, and one day a neighbor said to me, there was a meeting to organize a Democratic Party, so I said, "Oh, I'll go. I have nothing to do." I went to a meeting, and there was seven of us there, and the old timer who lived in that area before us came in to tell us about politics, and he said in that area – it was Falls Township was the township. It was Levittown, but it was in Falls Township because Levittown was split among four different municipalities. He said, "In Falls Township, no Democrat has ever been elected to office, so therefore, we have a hard time, but we try to get along," and he said, "We have an election coming up." This

was 1953. “We have an election coming up, and we need seven people to run for office,” and there were seven of us there, so I ran for some nondescript office. I think was Township Auditor or something like that, and, of course, we lost the Primary because the Republicans, they wrote in enough Democrats to beat us in the Primary, so that was a lesson I learned. Two years later – and I wasn’t really very active – two years later, 1955, again, the local committeeperson came over and asked me to run for Township Supervisor. I said, “Well, what is that? What do you have to do?” Because I was working in Philadelphia then and she explained the job to me, “Oh, you got three supervisors, and they run the township now.” So, I said, “Well, you know, why should I run? I really, I’m not interested in running for that, for office,” and she said, “Look, Milt, you can’t win. They’ve never elected a Democrat, but just think, you go back to school, and you talk about your experience running for office.” So, I bought that nonsense, (*laugh*) and I let them put my name up, and I had Primary opposition, and I beat the other guy in the Primary, and I enjoyed it, and I learned how to knock on doors, and I remember the first time I went out knocking on doors. It was in the summertime. It was a hot day. It was a Sunday because, you know, I was still teaching, and I go to Fairless Hills where the steelworkers were living. I figure I better start there because they’re Democrats, and they were brand new, too, and I knock on the door – screen door’s closed, but the front door is open – and the guy yells, “Come in.” I said, “Hey, I’m politicking. I’m coming here to ask for your vote,” and he says, “Come on in,” and he’s sitting there in his shorts, undershorts, no shirt on, watching the ball game, and he’s got a can of beer, and he says, “Have a beer.” Well, I didn’t drink beer or anything else, but I figured if he offers me a beer, I got to take it. “Okay,” and I take it. I sip the beer, and we’re talking politics, and he said, “Oh, I’ll vote for you, Berkes, because you came

here.” So, I went next door. Same thing happens. I had to have another beer. By the third place I was drunk. (*laugh*) I had to quit, so I learned my lesson about that, and I learned how you can take a sip and just hide the rest of the can. But at any rate, I won the Primary and I won the General election, and I was the first Democrat ever elected in that Township, and it was by knocking on doors and talking to people. I didn’t know how to raise money, so I didn’t spend much money, and we didn’t do much – you didn’t do any television in those days, and those that raised money put ads in the newspaper, but we never did that, so it was just knocking on doors and talking with people and the fact that the steelworkers are now moving in because U. S. Steel had just opened a big plant in our Township and they were all Democrats, and they were just moving in, and I won. So, I became a Township Supervisor. There were two Republicans and I was the Democrat, and so they were thinking, “This uppity, young, smart guy just moved here, doesn’t know anything, but he’s got a big mouth, and he’s talking too much, and what can we do to control him?” This was my conjecture, and they said, “Let’s make him secretary because that pays” – see, supervisor pays nothing, not even expenses, but secretary they pay a little bit, because they have to write the votes and get them printed and all that, so they said, “We’d like you to be secretary,” and I said, “Well, what do I have to do?” First thing they said, “Well, you get six hundred dollars a year,” and then they told me what I have to do. I said, “You know, I’ll take that job, but I want twelve hundred.” And they said they would have given me anything I wanted because they thought that would shut me up because I’d be busy writing the minutes, but it didn’t shut me up, and two years later, we elected a second Democrat, and we became in control, and I became Chairman of the Board, which, in effect, was Mayor, and then two years after that, we elected another Democrat, and then we were allowed to change our Township into having five

Supervisors instead of three, and we elected two more, and we had five supervisors, and that was really my beginning in politics. I kept teaching until 1962. In [19]61 – oh, let me backtrack a minute; 1960, of course, I was a Supervisor, and I was finishing up my first term. They were six year terms, and Kennedy [John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, 1961-1963] was running for President, and Kennedy had a big rally in Levittown, and I was feuding – as we always do, us young guys. They called us the Young Turks – we were feuding with the County Chairman who was, you know, from Doylestown, the other end of the County, and he was so mad at us that he wouldn't let any of us on the platform, but I was, you know, I was a Supervisor, and my police were out there, so I just stood with my police, and I got closer to Kennedy than anybody else did, but the point of that story is this; James Michener (1907-1997) – you know who James Michener was? James Michener was appointed by the Kennedy people to organize in Bucks County those dissident Democrats who were feuding with the Chairman and any Republicans who might want to vote for Kennedy, particularly among the Catholic population, and any Independents who might want to vote for Kennedy. So, he organized a group, I don't know what he called it, Independents, or something like that, for Kennedy, and he talked to me one day, and I got to tell you how this happened; his closest friend in Bucks County was a man named Herman Silverman. Herman was the founder and president of Sylvan Pools, which was a nationwide pool company. Herman and I grew up together in Strawberry Mansion. He lived next door to me. His brother Izzie, who then became Ira when he made money, his brother Izzie was one of my closest friends, and Herman was a couple years older than me, but Herman, from Strawberry Mansion, went to school in Doylestown, National Farm School, and he opened a business doing landscaping, and then he went into the pool business, and he

jumped, and he built that business up so big, and by some coincidence, Michener and he became great friends. Now, Michener was working in New York then at a publishing company. He was an editor, but he would visit Bucks County every weekend because he grew up there and his two aunts still lived there, and he got to the point where he met Herman, and they become good friends, and every time he'd come to Bucks County, he'd sleep in Herman's house, and so they were real tight, and so I conjectured – I didn't find this out till years later – that when Michener mentioned that he was putting this committee together, Herman said, "Get a hold of Milt Berkes," and so he did, and he called me, and we met with a bunch of other people, and he asked me to be one of his Vice Chairmen. He appointed three Vice Chairmen. They had all different – one for the Democrats, one for the Republicans, one for the Independents – and, and that's how I got to know Michener. Now, in 1962, that was two years later, he called me one day, and he said, "Milt, come on up here. I want to talk to you." He lived up above Doylestown near Pipersville, and so I said, "Sure." Well, there was snow on the ground and all that, but I figured, "Oh, I'll drive up," and I went with a friend of mine, Jack Ford, and we're sitting there talking, and he got right to the point, which is the way he was. He said, "Milt, I want to run for Congress, and I want to run this year. What do you think?" And I said, "Well, Mitch, this is a tough year to run. Kennedy won in 1960, and traditionally, in the off-year election the Party that's against the President wins seats, and it'll be tougher for this year. Why don't you wait till [19]64?" And he says, "I can't wait till [19]64. I made my plans for [19]62. I've done my" – that's the way he was. He did everything in advance. He cleared his calendar so he'd be able to campaign, and he had it in mind, and then he popped the question to me. He said, "I want you to be my campaign manager." He said, "I'll pay you what you're getting from teaching, from the school job, and you'll

have to get a leave of absence because I want you full-time,” and I said – took me three seconds to say yes. I mean, to work with him was – so I was really up and I figured that the school would give me a leave of absence because the opportunity to work with Michener and then relay that experience to kids I was working with, so I went into school the next day, and the principal, “Oh, we can’t give you any leave of absence for political things, you know, blah, blah, blah,” so I appealed over his head, and the next day I got a call. “We can’t do that, Mr. Berkes. We won’t give you a leave of absence,” so I said, “Well, I quit,” and I sent them a letter of resignation and went to work for Michener, and I worked for him for nine months, and he was a great guy to work for. I really learned a lot from him, and then when that – that campaign was a great campaign. I got some great stories about that, which I’ll tell you about. Let me tell you one of them. When we had an office in, in Doylestown, there were only two people that worked on the campaign: me and the secretary. He didn’t hire anybody else, but we had a lot of volunteers, and these two – I’m in the office in Doylestown. We had an office in Allentown, also because the district included Lehigh County, so these two beautiful young girls walk in. I mean, they were gorgeous and young, and they say, “Is Mr. Michener here?” And I said, “No. What can I do for you? I’m his campaign manager.” She said, “Well, we’d like to help you,” and I said, “Well, give me your name and address,” and I wrote it down. The one was named Lindbergh, and it was Charles Lindbergh’s daughter, and the other was named Morrow. Now, her mother was an ambassador to England or something, and these two kids were in college and they wanted to work for Michener, so we put them right to work. Every place he went to make a speech, he’d introduce Lindbergh and Morrow and it really was great, and every place we went, people would come with their books to get an autograph, and they’d ask him questions about the books and not about

running for office. And, one time, Mari Michener, his wife – she was, she was a doll. They're both dead, incidentally, now – but, Mari came to me and said, "How's the fundraising going?" I said, "Well, you know, here and there," and she says to me, "How about" – she gave me a name, and it'll come to me soon, of the head guy at the pub – Random House at that time Bennett Cerf, C-E-R-F [co-founder of Random House publishing company, 1898-1971], and Bennett Cerf was his, Michener's, contact there, and every time Michener wrote a book that they printed, Bennett Cerf made a lot of money, so as his Random House. So, she gives me his private number, and I call Bennett Cerf up, and I said, "Mr. Cerf, you know, I'm," I told him who I was, and I said, "You know, Mari said you were going to send us a contribution," and he says, "No way. I'm not going to send you a contribution." I said, "Well, why not?" I said it that way, and he said, "Because if he starts politics, he's not going to write any books, and I'm not going to make any money," and so I really tore into him, and we had a really interesting conversation, and I went back, and I told Mari, and about a week later we got a check from him for one hundred dollars. He was making thousands on Michener's books. Anyway, so when that was over, I worked for him, as I said, for nine months, and Michener lost, and we really figured that it's the Bennett Cerf thing that beat him. People who loved him for his books didn't want him to stop writing, and they told us that. They come to say, "Will he still write?" "Yeah, he'll still write," but they knew that a Congressman wouldn't have time to write much except through ghosts, and it was interesting because he still was doing, while he was campaigning, he was catching up on a couple things, and he had one of our volunteers who he assigned to do some research for him –and that's the way he worked, but I'll tell you about that later – Anyway, the campaign was over, and we had lost, not by much, by about thirteen thousand. We had

been behind twenty-four thousand. There were twenty-four thousand more Republicans than Democrats, so we had cut into it a little bit, and in 1961, my term came up. Let me see, yeah, [19]61. I had already been reelected to Township Supervisor. I still had six years to go. So, I went back down to the school system, and I applied to be reinstated. Well, they offered me a job as a counselor, at another school, which was okay. I would go anyplace, but I would have to start at a beginner salary and just for a year I would, I would get the beginner salary, so I said, "Well, I'm not going to do that," and they said, "Well, we have to punish you for quitting," so I said, "Well, I don't have to come back," and I didn't, and so I just never went back to teaching except for a short period of time when I taught at Temple University, and that was a different thing. I was an adjunct instructor there for five years, but at any rate, I had to find something to do, and a local real estate broker offered me a job, and I would work for him, and I really wasn't up to doing that because I was going to be dealing with them. They were developing, and I didn't want to get into that, and I had another six years to go, or five years to go, as a Township Supervisor – actually, four years to go – but suddenly our acting Township Manager died, and the other members of the Board, the other four, came in. They said, "Milt, why don't you take that job?" And I said, "Well, the law says that you can't be a Township Manager with that title and be a Township Supervisor, and so then we started kicking that around, and they said, somebody said, real smart, "Well, we'll appoint you as Township Administrator," and that worked, and it was all the duties of a Township Manager, but I wasn't called the Manager; I was called the Administrator. And so, I became the Township Administrator until – and that was a good job. I loved that – but until 1966, when the reapportionment created the Legislative District, and I ran for – I said, "This is my seat," and Gallagher [James J. A.; State Representative, Bucks County,

1959-1986] supported me, and the Party supported me down there, although the County Chairman was still kind of mad at me, and – oh, oh wait a minute. We had made up with the County Chairman. What happened was he was indicted for macing, M-A-C-I-N-G. That's hitting workers, employees, for contributions, and he was hitting state workers who worked for the Highway Department for contributions to –he had been County Commissioner – for contributions to the Party, and so they found out about it, and they indicted him, and it didn't hurt that the District Attorney was also the Republican County Chairman, and, you see, that kind of politics got into it, and he went through a whole week – I was up there every day of the week, and Michener was there every day, and we brought in a guy from Pittsburgh who was running for Governor, and he came there to testify for, and Michener came and testified, and, and I would have testified, but they, they never called me, but we supported him. At the end of the week, he was acquitted, but he was really bitter. And it was the following year, that was 1963, early [19]63, in that year, we were running County Commissioner candidates, and the people who were running the Party with – Johnny Welsh was the County Chairman who later became a good friend of mine – but the people that were running the Party came up with the idea that we ought to run two new young people who were in Township office and who are bright and who could do things, and they pushed for me and Walter Farley was the Supervisor of Middletown, to go on the ticket. Well, Welsh didn't want either of us, but he finally accepted Farley, but he said, "Oh, that Berkes, that blah, blah." Anyway, we were in the meeting, and they cornered Welsh, the other people that run the Party, said, "You got to get over it blah, blah, blah," and he said, "Well, I don't know that much about him," and then they took out Michener's book. Michener wrote a book after the Kennedy campaign. He called it Report of the County Chairman. He was County

Chairman of this group that he started, this independent organization, and on one page of that book – I should have brought it with me to show it to you – he wrote had this meeting with all these people, and this bright young man with the quickest mind I ever met named Milton Berkes, a young schoolteacher out of Philadelphia, he got up, and he made such great – you know, anyway, so from then on, I want to tell you, that every time I ran for office, I used that, and “This is what James Michener said about me, and it’s on page one forty-two of the book. Now, look at it.” But, at any rate, we got to this [19]63, and so they finally convinced him, and they showed him what Michener said, and they convinced him to support me for County, County Commissioner, and so the two of us ran, and we were close friends, and we ran closely together, and I lost by five hundred votes, so that was my first loss and only loss. So, I went back to being Township Administrator, and then the State Rep[resentative] job opened up, and I said, “That’s my job.” I had gotten – and Welsh had a habit; when a person ran for County office and they knew he couldn’t win, they would give him something, some other job, so he got me elected as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1964 in Atlantic City, which was the first convention I ever went to. Subsequently, I went to six conventions, and I love them. That was fun – but at any rate, I ran for the, for the State House, won the Primary easily. In the General I had a lawyer running against me, a really nice guy. He called me up one day. “Milt, I want to talk to you,” and he said, “I want to run a clean campaign. Now, do you pledge to do the same thing?” I said, “Of course.” I didn’t even know the guy, so I didn’t know any dirt about him. I said, “Of course. If you want it clean, I’ll be clean, and we’ll run it clean, and we’ll see how it goes.” He was afraid because he had a girlfriend, you know. (*laugh*) That always comes up, but I didn’t know about it, and I wouldn’t have used it anyhow. It was ridiculous, because in those days it

was different from these days. These days they use everything. So, anyway, I beat him by twenty-seven hundred votes, and that was a good, solid victory, and that was my first election to the State House. The next election I won by five hundred. The following election I won by one thousand. The next election I won by two seventy, and at that point, I said, "You know, maybe I better do something else," (*laugh*) but I want to talk later about my, my time in the House, but finish out my career business. Milton Shapp [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1971-1979] was running for, for Governor, and he ran twice in the Primaries. Bob Casey [Robert P.; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1987-1995] was the endorsed candidate. I was elected County Chairman in 1968, and so as County Chairman I supported Casey, although I liked Shapp, and I knew him. I got acquainted with him at the [19]64 Convention, and I knew him well, and he called me up one day and said, "I understand, Milt, that, that you've got to support Casey, but take it easy on me, will you?" So I said, "Don't worry, Milt." And what I did for Casey, I was his advance man in the eastern part of the state, but at the same time I was also running for State Rep[resentative], and he said to me at the end of the Primary – in fact it was the last dinner before the Primary he was in Doylestown – he said to me when he offered me this job being his advance man for the whole state, I said, "I can't do that because I'm running." He said, "I thought about that," and he says, "I'll come into your District five times during the campaign. Five times. I'll get big crowds," because he thought he was going to win the Primary, and so I said, "Okay, I'll do it," but he lost the Primary. Shapp beat him, and then, that was [19]66, I guess, and Shapp lost the General Election to Ray Shafer [Raymond P.; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1967-1971], the Republican, and then [19]70 it was the same thing. Shapp filed, and Casey filed. Casey was endorsed. I supported Casey. Shapp won again, but, you know, I sent him congratulations, and I was

still very close to him, and so we're up to 70, [19]74, and Shapp was now serving his second – no, in [19]78 he was elected to a second term. In [19]78 – no, it must have been [19]76. It may have been [19]74. Anyway, whatever, when he was elected to his second term, and I had worked for him after the Primary, and I really hustled, and we won big in Bucks County, by twelve thousand votes – it's still a Republican County - and I saw him on the campaign trail, and he said to me, "Milt, what are you going to do? I mean, you," and I had already said I'm not going to run for reelection, but he offered me a job. He said, "I want you in the Administration," and I said, "Well, that's great. I mean, I'd love to do that," and by doing that, you know, so when he, he was Sworn-In, and in February I went before the – Dick Doran, who was his assistant, his Executive Assistant, and we talked about a job, and because I had been involved in the Legislature, which I want to tell you about later, but in the drug and alcohol field he said, "How about we appoint you as Deputy Secretary of Health, and your duties would be to oversee legislation for the Health Department, mainly for drug and alcohol abuse and the Welfare Department. You'd work with both Secretaries, but you had to be housed in one of them, so we'll appoint you Deputy Secretary of Health," so I said, "That's fine. What would the salary be?" And he told me something, and I said, "Now, wait a minute. I want forty thousand dollars." At that time, you know, other Secretaries were getting that and Deputies, and he said, "Well, we can bring you in at thirty-nine," so I said, "Okay. I'll make a deal," so I went to work for him. Of course, you know, that enhanced my pension eventually because that was twice what we were making as Legislators. At any rate, I went to work for the Health Department, and I was working on health issues and welfare issues, and Terry Delmuth, who was the Governor's Special Assistant for Human Services, and a great guy, he was tired of public service, and he really wanted to turn to something else,

and he told the Governor he was going to resign. This was about six months into his second term, and the Governor says, “Well, you can’t quit until you find a replacement,” and Terry came to see me and asked me how I would like that job, and I said “I’d love it.” The job was Deputy Assistant Governor for Human Services, which is right up my alley, everything I’d been trained to do all my life, and so I was hired in that position as Assistant to the Governor for Human Services, and I served there until 1978 when his term expired and – must have been [19]74 was the election, or [19]73, [19]74 – and after that, I submitted my resignation because Thornburgh [Richard; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1979-1987] was elected, and he wasn’t going to keep me on. I knew that. And I looked around for maybe another position in government, but it was obvious that Thornburgh was going to make big changes, and it was only Republicans that were going to get appointed to good jobs. So, one day I’m reading the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and I see an ad in the paper – this is funny – and the ad was for, they were looking for an Executive Director of a brand new social service agency that worked with inmates at a city jail system helping them turn their lives around. The agency was called OAR, which stood for Offender Aid and Restoration, and this was one of nine such agencies in nine different states, but I would run the Philadelphia agency, and I applied for it, and the salary was very low, but I was going to draw my pension. I was old enough then to draw my pension, so I figured I don’t care about the salary now because, you know, I’ve got a backup. So, I took the job and I stayed there eighteen years. It was the job I held for more than any other job I ever had, and we did build a good agency. We worked with inmates at the city jail. We ran the work programs for them inside the jail. We had to teach them basic things like, like how to dress when you go apply for a job and how to talk, and we had to teach them how to fill out an application and write a letter and things

like that, and people don't understand that most of the prisoners in the city jail system are not people that have been convicted, but they're people that can't make bail, and they're in there because they couldn't come up with one hundred bucks for bail so, you know, they're, they're very, you know – the class of people is – they've committed a crime, but they haven't been convicted yet. And so, we worked with them for eighteen years, different groups, and we had a pretty good thing going. As part of that, at the time I was appointed personally, but, you know, because of the agency, as the monitor at the juvenile detention facility, which is called the Youth Study Center, and the juvenile institution was under fire for terrible conditions, and a group went to court, and they got a court order listing forty different things that had to be done to improve, and my job was to oversee those forty things and make sure they're listening to what the court said and to report back to the – it was a Federal court, incidentally – to report back to the Federal judge each month as a progress on that, and I loved that. You know, I did that just, you know – I'd go there one or two days a week, but I still running the agency, and I was able to get some things done, but, you know, that was a long time ago, and even then, even then the conditions at the study center were horrible, and then everybody talked about replacing it, tearing it down, building a new one, but nobody did anything. And every time I went to the judge, I said, "You got to get a new building there," so eventually, the judge died, and they came to be in compliance, and I had a heart attack, and so I had to leave – I came back to the job, but from there, it kind of went down. We still worked with inmates, but they had other programs doing it, and when Rendell [Edward G.; Governor of Pennsylvania, 2003-2011; Mayor of Philadelphia, 1992-1999] was elected Mayor, and Rendell was a good friend of mine, he had to cut a lot of things, and we were getting 175,000 dollars a year from the city, plus other funds, which I raised, and he had

to cut that program. And I got mad because he didn't talk to me about it, but I agreed that he had to cut it, and I got other funds, mostly from the court, to continue on for a few more years, although I had to lay off a lot of staff, and eventually, the money ran out, and I left, and I retired, so that was my working days.

HM: Well, what a very interesting career and life you've had.

MB: It was fun. It was fun.

HM: Well, I would like to go back just a little bit to your, your time in the House.

MB: Okay.

HM: Could you describe the District a little bit more? You talked about some of Levittown, being one of the areas.

MB: Part of Levittown, yeah.

HM: Right, so could you talk about the area, the people, where they worked, their issues?

MB: Right, right. The District consisted of part of Levittown that was in the Township of Falls; Falls Township. Levittown was really divided into four different Townships, and no place was it called Levittown except in the post office. It was a postal address.

We were Falls Township or Bristol Township, which this is, or Middletown Township or Tullytown Borough, so we, we consisted of Falls Township and Tullytown Borough and Bristol Borough and two wards out of Gallagher's District in Bristol Township, and the, the overwhelming number of people were steelworkers who worked for United States Steel. There was, in addition to Levittown, there was a new community built called Fairless Hills, and they were all steelworkers, and eventually, you know, it turned around, and there were some newer houses built and all that, and so it became an overwhelmingly Democratic District and it really reflected my own views, which were very liberal. And so, early on, I was pro-choice, and I was anti-gun and all of those good things. That's the way the District was, but mainly in Bristol Borough, they were very solidly Democrat, but it had been Republican because the king of Bristol Borough – who never held office in Bristol Borough – but he was a State Senator named Joe Grundy [Joseph R.; U.S. Senator, 1929-1930], and Joe Grundy owned the local mill, and everybody in Bristol had worked for the mill. By the time I came on the scene the mill has gone down, Grundy was no longer a Senator; he was ninety years old. And I remember this interesting – and everybody talked about him, but I never met him. One day, a Republican who became friendly with me and was friendly with everybody, particularly the people who wanted to convert Fallsington, which was where our Township seat was, was an old community. They wanted to make a colonial area community outlet, and her name was Hutton, and she said to me, she said, "Have you ever met the Senator?" And I said, "No, I never have. I'd love to," and she said, "Well, come on with me. Hop in the car," and we drove to his house in Bristol. It was a big house on the river. She knocked on the door, and they knew her, and, "Well, the Senator's up in his study." We went up, and we stood there, and he was hunched over a table and didn't lift his head. We stood there, and then

finally, Ann, Ann Hox Hutton was her name, she said, “Senator, I want you to meet a young fellow who’s the new Supervisor in Falls Township,” and without lifting his head, he said – he was Quaker - “Be ye a Republican?” And I said, “No, I’m a Democrat.” Never lifted his head, never said another word, and Ann grabbed me by the arm and said, “Let’s go.” (*laugh*) So, that was my first experience with him, but despite that, Bristol Township turned out to be a Democratic area. It was very important to me personally. Whenever I’d have trouble in my home town because I was County Chairman, and other reasons, we had to do things that not everybody thought was popular, the Bristol people would bail me out, and it was a very funny story about Bristol; they were, and probably still are, inhabited by the Irish and the Italians who never saw eye to eye, but, you see, they both could support me. They would fight each other, but I was Jewish, so I didn’t fit into either side, and they supported me from both sides, but I have to go to both clubs. I’d have to go to St. Ann’s, and I’d have to go to the Mutual Aid Society, the fifth ward. One was Irish. One was Italian, but I enjoyed it.

HM: Not in the same night, though, I hope.

MB: Huh?

HM: Not in the same night, I hope. (*laugh*)

MB: Well, it was not the same night because they kept me there a long time when I went.

HM: So, actually being Jewish helped you then?

MB: It helped me in Bristol, did not help me in the old part of town. It helped me in Levittown, did not help me in Fairless Hills, but there was never any open hostility. My first election they didn't really know who a Jew was. They didn't know who a Democrat was. *(laugh)* So, you know, it was really strange, but after that, it was, you know, it was not a problem.

HM: Could you describe your first Swearing-In in the House of Representatives?

MB: Yeah, yeah, that was fun. I was Sworn-In sitting at my seat and going through the whole Session, and Jim Gallagher had arranged for me to have a reception over in the Penn Harris Hotel. So, you know, I was anxious to get over there because people were coming up from Bucks County, and I'm sitting in the way back seat, next to the last row, and the Speaker of the House, Ken Lee [Kenneth B.; State Representative, Sullivan County, 1957-1974; Speaker, 1967-1968 and 1973-1974], says, "The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Bucks, Mr. Berkes," and I looked up. I said to Jane Alexander [State Representative, York County, 1965-1968] who was sitting next to me, I said, "What's he calling me for?" And she said, "Well, you're supposed to do something. You want to make a speech or something?" I said, "No, I don't want to make a speech. I just got here," and she says, "Oh, but they're calling you to do something," and then an aide comes running up to me and hands me a slip of paper, said, "I forgot. I should have handed you this before." I was to make the adjournment motion, so they were calling on a brand new guy, and I was 'B,' so I was first in line to make the adjournment motion.

So, I read it from – oh, before that, while Ken Lee was trying to figure out, he said, “Maybe I’ve got it wrong. Maybe it’s the gentleman from Berks, Mr. Bucks,” and we had a big laugh about that, and then, he handed me the slip, and I got up, and I made the motion, and everybody applauded. (*laugh*) That was my first day.

HM: (*laugh*) And then the parties began?

MB: Well, this was another interesting. Gallagher, as you know, Gallagher was my best friend, my dearest friend, and he taught me everything I knew, but he was also a big drinker, and everybody knew that, and he got one of his friends to set up the party, and they rented the largest reception room in the Penn Harris Hotel, which is usually reserved for the Speaker of the House, and it was on the first floor, and everybody coming in to go to the other parties had to go past mine, and they all thought it was Herb Fineman’s [Herbert; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1977; Speaker, 1969-1972 and 1975-1977] party reception. They all came in, and they were looking around, and I go over and shake hands with them. “Who are you? Bucks County? Democrat?” You know, and they were really looking for Herb who was in some other room. So, I had a lot of people go through there, a lot of beer, a lot of booze, and we had a big bill, but that was really interesting, and my father, he had a ball. He was running around, “That’s my son. That’s my son.” (*laugh*)

HM: So, did you have a relationship with Mr. Fineman, since you’ve mentioned him?

MB: Fineman was very good to me. I thought he was the smartest guy I knew. He did more for the Legislature in the years he was Speaker, and before that, he was the Majority Leader, than anybody ever did. Leroy Irvis [K. Leroy; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker, 1977-1978 and 1983-1988] picked up on it and so did Ryan [Matthew J.; State Representative, Delaware County, 1965-2003; Speaker, 1981-1982 and 1995-2003], and they improved everything that Herb had done. But when I first went into the Legislature, we didn't have an office. I said to Gallagher, "Well, where do I work?" And he said, "You work out there on the Floor of the House at your desk." I said, "Well, where's the telephone?" "Well, there's telephone booths there, and you go up there, and you wait in line, and you use the telephone booth," and I said, "Well, how about if I want to get a letter written to my constituents?" "Well, you get in line at the secretaries pool," and that's the way it was. The only people that had offices were the Committee Chairs and the Officers of each Caucus. Herb Fineman did away with that. In our second term, we all got offices, although we shared secretaries, but at least we had an office to work in, and in the third term we didn't have to share the office. We got our own, and we had phones and, and whatever other equipment they had in those days. I mean, that was before the computer was really big, and he did all that, and Herb, Herb brought that out of the old ages and into the modern ages, and he made that a really functioning Legislature. And, we also met more, and we did more, and we discussed more, we had Caucuses and discussed everything that was going on and what would be coming up on the agenda and things like that. So, Herb was very good. Unfortunately, he got into trouble, which to this day I believe was not his fault, but he took the fall for it and served 11 months at Allenwood [prison].. That really changed his whole – you know, he never went back to public office. Although, I used to meet with him when I

was running my agency in Philadelphia. Gerry Kaufman [Gerald; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1967-1972], who was also an ex-Legislator by that time, but was working and living in Philadelphia – he Represented a District in Pittsburgh, originally – Gerry and I would call Herb, and we'd have lunch with him every once a month or so, and just discuss old times and things. But in the final analysis, I suppose the trouble he got into might override everything he did, but everything he did was great, really brought us up to modern times, and he was a good liberal, and he supported all the liberal causes, and he showed it. He was unafraid. He was a good Leader.

HM: Well, they also call this time the Era of Professionalism.

MB: Absolutely.

HM: And they were moving from a part-time Legislature to a full-time Legislature.

MB: That's right.

HM: So, you were a full-time Legislator?

MB: Full-time right from the beginning, full-time, and I never had another job. You know, we weren't getting paid much. I think it was 75 hundred a year or something like that and no expenses, so Gallagher and I chipped in, and we rented a small office, and it was actually in my District, but it was close to his, and the two of us paid for it ourselves,

and we paid our telephone bill ourselves. But, that was a small, home office. Then after that, of course, it got better.

HM: Most people had their District offices in their other businesses.

MB: Yeah, yeah, and I didn't have another business – neither did Gallagher. He was a full-time Legislator. I just never sought another job. My wife worked, and Gallagher's wife worked, and we made due with what we had.

HM: Was it difficult serving this county, this District, in relation to where it was from Harrisburg? Did you commute every day?

MB: Well, no. Gallagher and I would drive together, and he had been in the habit of renting a room at the Penn Harris Hotel because he was there before me for several years, and this room was as big as a closet. It had a bed and nothing else and a bathroom down the hall and whatever, but that, that's – I said, "Jim, you know, you got to get bigger space than that." So, he and I rented an apartment. I remember it was at that – what's that real cheap motel that was in town? It was just on the outskirts of town. They're still in business, but they're the cheapest hotel you can get. I forget its name – and we'd rent a room there, and what they would do, we'd rent it in one person's name and, either me or Jim, but they had two beds, and you would pay by the number of beds you used, one or two, so in the morning we'd make one bed up, and, and we'd pay for one bed, (*laugh*) and nobody cared.

HM: Well, very interesting.

MB: But then after that, it got so that we rented a larger space, an apartment, and we had like four people in there, Bill Shane [William Rodger; State Representative, Indiana County, 1971-1976], Gerry Kaufman and two aides. At one time we had six people. Some sleeping on the floor, and they brought sleeping bags with them,. The aides did; we had beds. But, we did that, and that's what we did afterwards; we'd rent. When I went into the Governor's Office, I rented my own apartment, and it was on Front Street, two blocks from the office, and that was because – and see in the Legislature we'd stay there three days, sometimes four, but Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, sometimes we'd be able to leave Wednesday night, but usually, we'd have committee meetings or something else, and we'd stay over till Thursday, and so, you know, it paid us to rent a place and share the cost, but I did go home. Sometimes I went home and came back and wasn't really home. I went to Doylestown to conduct a meeting. I was still County Chairman, and if I had to go down for some meeting on Monday night or Tuesday night or even Wednesday night, I would go down, and Jim would go with me sometimes. Otherwise, I'd drive myself and then come back the same night. Sometimes I would go home to sleep and then come back the next morning, but usually, I'd go back the same night. So, I did that for two years.

HM: Well, we had noticed whenever we were looking at your legislation that you and Mr. Gallagher sponsored and cosponsored a lot of each other's legislation.

MB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

HM: Is that because of your relationship, or was it because – ?

MB: It was our relationship, but also our interest. I was naturally interested in education, and Jim was the Chairman of the Education Committee. Should I tell you how he became Chairman?

HM: Sure.

MB: Okay. Again, my first day in Harrisburg there's a Caucus of the whole new guys, and they introduced the new guys, and I'm standing in the back because seats were taken, and so you have to stand in the back, and they were electing Officers. Now, that's also always proforma; they present a slate, they all get elected. Jim comes back to me and says, "Milt, nominate me for Secretary." I said, "How do I do that, Jim?" "Raise your hand and say you want to nominate me for Secretary." So, I raised my hand.

Prendergast, Jim Prendergast [James F. Prendergast; State Representative, Northampton County, 1959-1978], who was from Northampton County, he was presiding because the others were running for Offices. So, he was presiding, and they had the slate, and I said I wanted to make a nomination. "You can't do that." I said, "Well, why not?" You know, democracy, and people are yelling and, "boo," and some are laughing. They're laughing at me, this guy that just came here, and so I say, "I want to nominate Jim Gallagher for Secretary," and he bangs the gavel. "I can't accept that nomination," and people are screaming, and Joe Wargo [Joseph G.; State Representative, Lackawanna County, 1949-1984] was the designated nominee – and Joe was a nice guy, and he had one leg, – and,

he comes hobbling over to me on his crutches, and I said, “Talk to Jim. He told me to do it.” (*laugh*) So they got Jim, took him outside. They called a recess, took him outside. Jim said, “I want to be Chairman of the Education Committee.” Came back in to me, whispered, “Withdraw the nomination.” I raised my hand, “I withdraw the nomination,” and everybody clapped and laughed, and Jim became Secretary of the Education Committee. Turned out to be a great Secretary. He was excellent. The guy never went to college. He was a bus mechanic when we ran him for the Legislature. Never went to college, but he was responsible for the community college system, the state colleges that are state-related, did many things because he had a good staff to work with, but, but he fought the fight. I got involved in drug and alcohol issues when a guy walked into my office one day, back in the District – but I was paying for it, Jim and I – he walked in, and he said to, I think at that time my wife was putting in time as secretary or receptionist, and he said to her, “I want to talk to one of the Legislators.” “Well, who do you want to talk to? Gallagher’s not here.” “Well, who’s the other guy?” And she said, “Berkes.” “Yeah, I want to talk to him.” The guy was – first of all, he’s black. Secondly, he was dressed in such dungarees that fell off of him and dirty clothes, and his hair was all mussed up, and he had mud on his face like he was a street person. So anyway, my wife calls me, and I call him into the office. I said, “Sit down. What do you want?” And he tells me this story – first of all, he introduces himself. His name was Jack Hopson, and he was a drug agent for the State of Pennsylvania. At that time they had – what he was doing that day, why he was dressed like that, he was undercover. He was undercover. They had 27 drug agents that work independently as undercover; didn’t wear uniforms, didn’t carry guns. But they are very effective, because some of them were street people themselves, and they knew the streets and knew that they could work. And what

happened was that Ray Shafer, when he got elected Governor, wanted to disband that unit of 27 people who had a great record of bringing in the dealers, and turn the job over to the State Police. Well, the State Police are uniform people. They couldn't do what these guys are doing, and he laid this all out to me and that they're going to fire us and blah, blah, blah, and what we're doing and had statistics as to how many people they arrested and how they worked, and I said, "That's crazy to do away with a unit that's doing whatever it is," and so I, you know, I talked to Gallagher about it, and we talked to Fineman, and Ray Shafer hesitated in putting forth his legislation, and for some reason, it didn't move forward until the end of the term, and we had enough votes to defeat that legislation. But I said to Herb, I said, "Herb, what you got to do is have a Special Committee to work on this problem," and he says, "You know, we don't like to appoint Special Committees. Really the tradition is to turn the problem over to the Health Committee because it's, you know, or the Welfare or somebody, and, and it was a Criminal Justice problem, so turn it over to the Attorney General," but I said, "Look, we can bring out a lot of interest in this problem and come up with new legislation and do a lot of things." So, in the second term – Herb became Speaker in the second term. He appointed me as Chairman of the Special Committee on Narcotics. Well, that was strange because no second-termers got to be a Chairman of a Committee, and we had different Legislators that wanted that job, but Herb stuck with me, and I was Chairman, and that led me to my interest in drug and alcohol. Took us about four or five years to finally get the bill passed and signed into law by Governor Shapp, but that was after we had public hearings. We traveled to different states to see what they were doing, and the committee really worked hard. So, that's why every drug bill I had Gallagher was on, and I was on his education bills because that was still my interest. I got to tell you about

a thing we did that was never done in Legislature and hasn't been done since. When I was doing hearings, public hearings, in different places for – and we were writing a new drug and alcohol control bill; that's what we were doing – and when we were doing hearings, we would go to different places, but then I got a call from the people at WHYY, and they wanted to know if I'd object if public radio televised one of your hearings, and I said I'd love it. I talked to Herb, and he said, "Set it up," so we set up the hearing in your, your building, the museum there, and they brought in all their equipment. They had big trailers outside and everything, and they were going to spend the whole day with us, and we planned a whole day of public hearings, and it was on television, and well, it sobered up some of our guys because they came in dressed up in ties, and everybody wanted to sit next to me because they knew as Chairman I'd be, you know, so – but I had to save a seat for Fineman, and I had Gallagher in the other seat, and I made a mistake of letting them take a break for dinner, and they came back, and some of them had drank a little too much, (*laugh*) but it was okay. They all behaved very well, and Jim, of course, knew to behave himself, and they taped the whole day. They didn't show the whole day, but they taped the whole day, and it was a really good hearing. I brought in a guy [Father Daniel Egan] from – I shouldn't call him a "guy." I'm sorry. He's a priest. I brought in this priest from New York who they called the "junkie priest" because he worked on the Bowery with drug addicts, and that was his calling, and we had gone up there to see him, and I talked to him up there, and I brought him in to testify, and he was the main guy to testify because, you know, with that title of the "junkie priest" he got the whole credit and all the – but it was good. Never been done since. They've never invested so much money in doing something we did, and there were a lot of good things that were done.

HM: And just for the record, those were the Pennsylvania Drug and Alcohol Control Acts, Act 63 and 64 of 1972 –

MB: Exactly, exactly.

HM: – and you were the prime sponsor.

MB: I was the prime sponsor. I had to fight about that, too. I worked – and it was really the staff, you know. I had a good staff, and they did all the legal work because I didn't know anything about the law, but we had general ideas, and one of the things we did – by definition, we defined that drug abuse and alcohol abuse were health problems, not criminal justice problems. So, that opened up the state to get millions of dollars of Federal money for health treatment programs, and that's what our bill basically did; set up treatment programs all over the state. And every program that's in existence today, [inaudible] and two or three Philadelphia programs, and TODAY, Incorporated, here in Bucks County. That's when they were formed, and they're still operating today. There's dozens and dozens of them that are still operating.

HM: Is there any other legislation that you would like to talk about?

MB: I also instituted a crime victim's compensation bill. I worked hard on that, and it came about through a constituent. Joyce Sebular was her name. God, how can I remember that? It just came to me. I haven't been able to think of it for years, but Joyce lived in Fairless Hills, and she was accosted by a neighbor, a young neighbor, who hit her

over the head with a hammer intending to rape her, and, of course, she screamed, and he ran, and, of course, he was caught, and Joyce had to go to the hospital, was in the hospital for months and months and months, and under treatment for years because, you know, she had a concussion, and that developed other brain problems, memory problems, et cetera. This kid got six months in jail and was out on the street and doing whatever it was he was doing, although he didn't get into any more trouble. Anyhow, she came to me, and I said, "Well, we got to do something about that," and so I, together with our staff, our lawyers, we put together the Crime Victims Compensation Act. I was the principle sponsor, and Bill Eckensberger [William H., Jr.; State Representative, Lehigh County, 1965-1976], whose name I haven't said for a long time, he was the second sponsor to me. He was a cosponsor, and we got the bill through, got it up, and we couldn't get it reported out. The Republicans controlled the House, and they had the Speaker – was Ken Lee Speaker? I don't know. Lee Donaldson [Lee A., Jr.; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1955-1970] may have been – no, Butera, Bob Butera [Robert J.; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1963-1978] was Majority Leader, and, and he controlled things. So, every day I would talk to him, and he said, "Oh, we're thinking about it, Milt. We're thinking." He never reported the bill out because two Democrats were principle sponsors. Came to the last day of the Session, and you know what happens on the last day; they pass 150 bills. And they were running bills through back-and-forth, back to the Senate and back – and I grabbed Bob Butera early. I said, "Bob, you got to get this bill out for me." And Bob was a nice guy. We always got along well. He said, "Milt, I'll do it. I'll find out where it is, what committee." I told him what committee. So, it comes noon, it's not out. I said, "Bob, where's the bill?" "Oh, yeah, I'll get it, Milt. We got a lot to do here." Six o'clock comes, it's still not out, and they

got to adjourn at 12; It's what the law says. The Constitution said we got to adjourn at 12, midnight, and I come up to him again at ten o'clock, and he says, "Yeah, Milt, they're supposed to bring it out. Let me see what's happening." Comes 12 o'clock, the bill never came out to be voted on. I was really mad, and so the next term I was no longer – and that was my last term in there, so I was the end of my term, and, you know, I was out. And so, Bill Eckensberger took over the bill. He did some changes to it, some upgrades, and he put the bill through, and they passed it, and the following Session, which was Democratic control, and Bill became the principle sponsor of the bill as passed, but I was the principle sponsor as the bill as it was drafted, and I worked on that, and that was because of a constituent getting hit over the head. Constituents – I worked on education bills. Let me tell you a funny – not a funny one. It is funny in a way. Remember I told you how important Bristol Borough was to me? Now, the public schools were allowed to transport nonpublic students, but not out of their ordinary route. They couldn't cross a street. They couldn't go any way unless it was on their ordinary route. Well, they were able to go down to a block from Route 13 then go into Levittown streets, and they would take St. Ann's kids, which was in Bristol Borough to that point, and they'd have to walk across Route 13, which was very dangerous. It was a, you know, two-way highway and a lot of traffic, and through a business district, to get to the church. So, I introduced a bill that would allow the public schools to go off their established route where a hazardous condition was concerned. And so, then they could go off it and into Bristol, and we'd – okay. So, that bill was languishing in committee, and we were getting ready to really get it out when Marty Mullen [Martin P.; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1982] – I don't know if you remember Marty, but Marty, we called him a State Representative from the Pope's chair. Marty was a great guy, but anything that was

Catholic, bang – so, he amended the bill to have public school buses bus kids within ten miles of their home. Now, for us in Pennsbury, it meant taking kids over to Trenton to some private school. It would go to the Hill School, for example. But boy, all hell broke out from the schools, and I had to make a choice. Do I leave my name on that bill as principle sponsor, or do I take it off, which I could do? And I decided that Bristol Borough was too important to me, and I left my name on as the principle sponsor, and so I became principle sponsor of the bill that did more for the nonpublic school system, poured more money into it, because then they did away with their buses because they can transport their kids from anywhere within ten miles. So, I was a hero down there. St. Ann's, they loved me. St. Michael's in Levittown, they loved me, but that doesn't – you know, that's the way things get done. It's, you know, in retrospect, school boards are still hollering about it, but it's there.

HM: Did, did you ever get frustrated by the system?

MB: Often. Always, always. We're considering a bill that had come on the Floor to create a no-fault insurance system. That was an insurance bill. Herb Denninburg was the Secretary – they called him the Insurance Commissioner at the time – and I was very strong with the labor people, and labor was strong with the bill, and I get called into Governor Shapp's office. It was in his first term, and the Governor says, "Milt, we want you to handle that bill on the Floor." I said, "I don't know anything about insurance," and I didn't. I didn't even know what the bill – I mean, in general, I knew what it was, but I couldn't answer – all the lawyers there were, were against the bill. I mean, the lawyers were against it. The insurance people were afraid to speak up, and he said,

“Well, we can’t get anybody else,” and the guy from labor who was there said, “Milt, come on, you handle yourself well on the Floor.” “But I don’t know anything about that.” So, Herb Denninburg, who was in the meeting said, “Look, I’ll sit at the back of the Floor, and whenever they ask you a question, you stall them with a little ‘ha, ha, ha,’ and I’ll send you the answer,” and so, he had an aide that was assigned to sit with him, and they’d ask a question, and I’d “ha, ha, ha,” and he would send me the answer, and I’d read it, and this went on, and they murdered me. I mean, the lawyers they weren’t going to take that, and they would have another question after that, and I was really very embarrassed, but when it was over, let’s see, the Speaker then was Irvis, Leroy Irvis, and when it was over, and we lost overwhelmingly, I mean, the lawyers were really tough on us. We lost, the Speaker said, “Let us give a hand to Milt Berkes. He did an excellent job in trying to do this thing and called on at the last minute,” and everybody applauded, (*laugh*) except the lawyers. But, that was the kind of thing that’s frustrating, but, you know, other things we did. I was the principle – not the principle sponsor, I’m sorry. But, I was one of the sponsors that signed on early to legislation that made it legal for public employees to bargain collectively, and that led to the rise of AFSCME [American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees] and, you know, and the Union movement in Harrisburg, and I was always really proud of doing that. Jerry McEntee was – yeah, I met him up there, but he was also a Democratic committee man in Northeast Philadelphia. So, I knew of him and he was just organizing. Well, you know where he is now. He’s the International President of AFSCME. Big, big, big, big job he’s got. Makes a half a million dollars a year, but he was, he was coaching me on that, and that bill got through. See, I never, I never wanted to, even if I could, go into Leadership, that is, the top Officers, because I was very happy being where I was. I

would have loved to have been Secretary of – not – I’m sorry, not Secretary, but Chairman of the Health and Welfare Committee, but they go by seniority, and Palermo, Anita Palermo [Anita Palermo Kelly; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1963-1978], a nice lady. But anyway, very nice lady, she claimed the job, and she got it, and Herb told me, “You got to go by seniority,” but I became Vice Chairman, so I was able to do things. And before her, Sarah Anderson [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1972] had been Chairperson, and Sarah really took a liking to me and gave me a lot of things to do on the Welfare Committee. So, you know, without a title, but with Anita, I had the title of Vice Chairman. So, I would have liked to have been Chairman of that committee.

HM: Did you find your committee work rewarding then?

MB: It was rewarding. That’s where things got done. On the Floor was just a matter of voting. Out there it was, you know, you were able to move things around and create something to listen outside. You know, one time I listened too much to a lobbyist. I ought to tell you this quick story, if it’s okay? Came to see me – he lobbied – I don’t know who he was lobbying for, but he was lobbying against – you know when you buy meat in the supermarket that’s on a tray and then it’s covered by cellophane or something, plastic, but it’s on a tray. Now, he wanted to do away with these trays because the supermarket managers would, when they packaged the meat, they’d hide the fat underneath so it doesn’t show; it’s on the underside. And so, I introduced a bill to do away with those trays that they have to package them in plastic all around. And the morning it was a scheduled for Floor debate, which floored me. So, the morning it was

scheduled for debate, I said to my secretary, “Gail,” I said, “Go run over to the supermarket and buy a tray and just – we’ll take a chance that we get one that’s –” So, she gave it to me, and it was wrapped completely, and I didn’t unwrap it, and I stand up to debate the issue, and I hold up this tray, and I said, “Now, just look at this,” and I take off – and sure enough, there’s a big blob of fat on the top. (*laugh*) I was lucky. I was lucky, and everybody started to laugh, and, of course, the union that represented the trays then came down on me, and we couldn’t get it passed. They had enough votes there to kill it. They made it a labor issue. They’d lose jobs, so – but that was a funny incident. So, let me tell you another story; you know, it’s customary in Legislatures all over to introduce a state flag, or, not a state flag, but a state tree and a state flower. And one day, somebody introduced a bill naming the state dog, and oh, we laughed. Anyway, the bill came up for a vote – it was a resolution – came up for a vote, and a bunch of us when the Speaker yelled, “We’ll do a voice vote. Ayes – all in favor say aye.” Well, a bunch of us jumped up and barked, and we jumped up on our seats and barked, and there was at least 40 of us that did that, (*laugh*) and everybody laughed, but that was one of the funny things.

HM: Then did it pass?

MB: It passed. It always does by acclamation. You can put in a resolution, I mean, you might even be able to do it today, honoring let’s say Raymond Rover, who’s really a dog, but it might be a person, for heroic conduct, and it’ll pass because nobody reads them. They just perfunctorily pass all the resolutions. So, you can pass anything there in resolutions.

HM: Noncontroversial.

MB: Noncontroversial.

HM: Right. Well, were there any Members that you didn't see eye to eye with?

MB: I had a lot of Floor debates with Jean Fulmer, F-U-L-M-E-R. [State Representative, Centre County, 1959-1971] Jean was a good guy, a Republican, but he was really – he was on to this drug thing, too, and he was minority at the time, and from the minority side, he would have been the principle sponsor maybe of something, but wouldn't be what we did. He would have done away with the 27 guys we saved, and we saved them as part of the legislation. But at any rate, Jean and I had some tough times on the Floor, and he was a tough guy, and he'd call me names, and one time Prendergast was in the Speaker's chair, and Herb was out for something, and he was really going over the line with me, and nobody stopped him. Usually the Speaker will gavel him out of order, and Prendergast was busy talking to somebody and nobody stopped him, but then afterwards he came over and apologized, but we had some tough times, so it was that way. I had some tough times sometimes inside the Caucus, like, you know, I was pro-choice, I was anti-gun, all of those liberal things I always was, and others who like, you mentioned him before – he just retired.

HM: Bill Rieger [William W.; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1967-2006]?

MB: Bill Rieger, and I loved Bill Rieger, but he made his few speeches against me at times like that.

HM: Well, what aspect of your job did you enjoy the most?

MB: In the House?

HM: In the House.

MB: Well, I enjoyed working on legislation. I enjoyed, to a lesser extent, constituent service, because that was very important building up a base, but working on legislation was really intellectually rewarding, and I enjoyed that. And I worked on a lot of bills that I didn't get credit for. I might have been, you know, cosponsored them among ninety-two others, and that was fine, you know. If I wanted a clean credit for any of them, I would say I was a cosponsor, which was true, but if I was interested in it, I would do what I could. I'd try to sign on as the cosponsor and then work on it if I can, but when I was Vice Chairman of the Health and Welfare Committee, I worked on a lot of bills and they were all interesting and good and liberal. *(laugh)*

HM: Well, what aspect did you not enjoy?

MB: Well, you know, I really enjoyed it up there. I even enjoyed when we had – oh, I loved having cross and back debates. It was just, you know, it was the kind of thing I like

to do, and I loved it. You know, I just liked being there. There was nothing that I can really pin down that I did not enjoy.

HM: You talked about taking some hard stances on certain issues. What do you think the hardest issue you ever had to face personally as a Legislator was?

MB: I think it was gun control issues. See, in the days I was there, the pro-choice abortion issue didn't really come up. It came up, you know, as a sideline, but it didn't really come up as legislation as I remember, but the gun issue was always coming up, and that was tough. There were others, you know, like some of the right-wing legislation that I would oppose. I can't offhand recall bills, but I would oppose them and engage in Floor debates as much as I could. I loved that, you know.

HM: People talked about hard votes, especially around budget times. Did you have any hard votes?

MB: I had a lot of hard votes I had to deal with. A hard vote was my keeping my name on the bussing bill, because that was hard to do, but I did it. Yeah, we had a lot of hard votes. In fact, one time, as usual, they ran over the time that, you know, June 30th, and I had scheduled a class in drug rehabilitation at Yale University, and I was due to go up there the first two weeks in July, and – or it may have been the – yeah, the first two weeks, and they were keeping us over, and so I said to Irvis, “Roy, I really got to go up and take this course. It'll be helpful to me,” and he said, “Look, you can go, but you leave your phone number wherever you're going to be, and if we need your vote, we'll

call you,” and sure enough on the third day up there, they called me. I had to hop on a plane, and they made the reservation for me, fly down, go in and vote, get on a plane, and go back to Yale, but that was, you know, I had to do it, so I missed the day of the classes. But there were other hard votes that I had to take because of – here, here’s one that was typical; the Legislature one time passed a bill, as part of the budget, to put a tax on insurance premiums, not policies, but premiums, so there’d be a tax on your premium. The insurance industry came down on us real hard, and I voted for the bill because, you know, the Caucus voted for it, and Herb wanted us to vote for it. Then I went home for the weekend, and man, they were waiting at my door. One of the ladies, who was a widow, and she was a committeewoman of mine, and she was a very good worker and very loyal to me, she was screaming at me. I said, “Well, what’s the matter, Marie?” She said, “They’re going to take away my insurance. I’m living, blah, blah, blah.” I said, “Nobody’s taking away your insurance. It’s a tax on the premium.” “Well, I’ll have to pay more money, blah, blah, blah, blah.” But the insurance people were telling them that it was the first step in taking away their insurance, and some people believed it. I went back the following Monday, because I got a lot of calls that day. Sunday, Saturday, Sunday, I was busy on the phone. I went back on Monday, and I went up to see Herb. I said, “Herb, I’ve got to do this. I’m going to introduce a resolution rescinding that tax that we passed,” and Herb tried to argue me out of it, saying, “It’ll go away. It’ll go away.” I said, “No, no. When Marie Gillinger came in front of me” – I haven’t said that name in 20 years – “When Marie Gillinger came in front of me, and she was a really loyal person and a decent person and a widow and was crying, I got to listen to her,” and so he said, “Well, you got to do what you got to do,” and I introduced a bill. I got other

sponsors, and we rescinded that tax, and that was a hard vote, because I didn't like to go against the Caucus, but I did it when I had to do it, yeah.

HM: Was it tough to go against Leadership?

MB: It was tough to go against Leadership, but I didn't, you know, I didn't do that too often, but when I had to do it, I did it.

HM: When you recount your experiences on the House Floor or just as a Member, do you have a favorite story?

MB: Well, I've told you a couple of them. Besides those, there was a time, another budget story, and we were one vote shy. The Democrats were in charge, and we were one vote shy of passing the budget, and that vote was – and a very old guy from the farm areas. He was a farmer, and I forget what county he was from, and he was not going to vote for it because there were tax increases in it, but he sat in the seat, and he was a nice guy, but, you know, we had the levers that you push. He held his hand over the lever so nobody would push it. He had it pushed no, and he held his hand over there, and he put his head down, and this Whip came over to talk to him and others, and the Speaker came down, and then he brought a Senator in – I'll get his name soon – from the same area, and I don't know what he said to him, but he straightened up, took back his hand. The Senator flipped his lever, and that got the bill passed, but that was tough. That was tough.

HM: Wow.

MB: I remember we had a Legislator, getting a lot older than me, who had that – I forget what you call it – nar-something, where you fall asleep in the middle of a sentence.

HM: Oh, narcolepsy.

MB: Narcolepsy. So, he would stand at the microphone, and they always gave him the seat next to the microphone. He would get up to make a speech, and he was good, and he'd stand there, and one of the Legislators was assigned to catch him, and in the middle of his speech, he'd doze off, and they'd sit him down, and then when he woke up, he'd go back up and take off where he left off, and this was, you know, was kind of tragic, but we accommodated him, and it was good. He got elected year after year. He could never be beat; he retired. (*laugh*)

HM: Did you have a fondest memory?

MB: Well, there were a lot of them, but I think the day we passed the drug bills, that was really the highlight of my whole career, and then, to show you how fond I was, on April 14th, the Governor, 1972, Governor Shapp signed the bills, and we had all of the people who sponsored it stand around him and, you know how they do, and every year thereafter on April 14th, they had the Governor come out and call the Members of the Governor's Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse, which was part of that bill – and I got to tell you a little about that – but called them to come up and stand with the Governor and get a

picture taken as an anniversary. This continued until Thornburgh became Governor, and the first time he was going to do it, and they didn't call me because I'm a Democrat, and I was County Chairman, and, you know, I didn't support them. But, I happened to be in Harrisburg that day, and I saw one of the Members, and he said, "Oh, Milt, you coming over to –." I said, "No, I don't know about it. What is it?" and he told me. So, I went over, but I didn't go and stand behind them, although Pat Crawford [Patricia; State Representative, Chester County, 1969-1976], who was Republican and was very helpful in getting the bill passed, and she was a cosponsor, she wanted me to come up. "Come on. Come on," and I said, "No, I've not been invited," and I just stood there and stared at the Governor, and when the picture was over, I walked over to him, and I shook his hand, and I said, "Thank you for commemorating my bill, and I really appreciate it," but he was bewildered. He didn't know anything about it. It was the people that had set the picture up, and, you know, they never told him. Later on, Doris Fleming was it? No, it wasn't Doris. It was Fleming was her last name. She became – what happened – let me tell you this because it's an important part of the story; one of the things that that bill did, Act 64, I guess it was or 63, one of them, was set up the Governor's Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse. Now, that Council was an independent body that reported only to the Governor, and they were the single State Agency for the distribution of funds, both state and federal, to treatment programs all over the state, and so if anybody wanted to get their program funded like the TODAY, Incorporated, they would have to present their plan for the coming year and what they wanted to do with the money, how much they wanted, present it to the Council, the Council would review it and, and if the Council approved it, they'd get their money. So, you can see, it's a powerful body. Now, we designated the Governor as the Chairman of the Council, but we also said, knowing full well he's not

going to come to these meetings and listen to all that, that the Governor could designate somebody else to be Chairman in his place, and, of course, he designated me, so I was Chairman of the Council, which I loved. That was great, and we had a lot, a lot to do and a lot going on, and that was enjoyable. You know, wherever I went, it was the Berkes Bill, and they would say, "Did you bring the Berkes money with you?" And I said, "I got four dollars in my pocket," (*laugh*) but we had a lot of fun with that, but they got a lot of money then. It was all out of that bill and, and the Council. At any rate, when Thornburgh became Governor, he appointed this lady named Fleming. Nice lady, very competent, but she had been running a lobbying group that was lobbying for programs for drug and alcohol programs, but she was a staunch Republican, and she was appointed to head the drug and alcohol programs, but not through the Council. They downgraded the Council, and they gave the whole program to the Department of Health, and she was designated as Deputy Secretary of Health, in charge of drug and alcohol programs. And she was tough, and we were not good friends. But now, turn forward to a year ago, and Representative DiGirolamo [Gene; State Representative, Bucks County, 1995-present] from Bucks County, Bensalem, was introducing a bill creating the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, and that's exactly what our Council did, and I get a call from Deb Beck, who – you know Deb? Deb calls me, and we had a great talk on the phone because I hadn't talked to her for years, and she said, "Can you come to this hearing and talk about the Council and what it did?" I said, "I'd love to." So, I traveled up to West Chester, and I appeared at the hearing, but when I walked in, and she said to me, "You'll be surprised at who's going to be there," and I walked in, Fleming comes over to me and hugs me, kisses me on the cheek, "It's so good to see you, Milt," and I said, "God, what are you doing here?" And she says, "I'm going to be testifying in favor of DiGirolamo's

bill,” and it turns out that she had stayed in Pennsylvania for some years, but then took a job in Ohio as the – what did they call it? The Secretary of Drug and Alcohol Programs, and that was a Cabinet-level job, and that was her last job, so that convinced her that we were right. So, Deb Beck got a hold of her, and she came back to testify, and when she got up in the seat, I was sitting next to her; she was first, I was second. And she said, “It is so good to be sitting here next to the godfather of drug treatment programs in this state,” and, you know, I burst out laughing, and Deb burst out – she started applauding, and, and that was a great time, a great moment, but that was just last year.

HM: Wow.

MB: Yeah, and I testified once more in front of this committee when they had the hearings down here, and the bill was passed in the House and is tied up in the Senate, but maybe they can get it out. Who knows?

HM: Well, I usually ask, what do you want your political legacy to be?

MB: Drug and alcohol.

HM: Maybe that’s it.

MB: That’s it. That’s it. That’s what I did, and that, that’s what I was known for a long time, and when I took that job in Philadelphia, you know, my connection with drug and

alcohol problems, well, it fit right in because most of the kids we worked with were drug users or alcohol users. Most of the inmates were there for it, so I fit right in.

HM: It did. What a great –

MB: Yeah, it's one of those things that turned my life around because I was looking for a job. I had mentioned earlier about A. Oswald Michener who got me into Temple and then James Michener who I worked for, well, that's where the name Michener comes together. They were no relations, but they had the same name.

HM: Great. You said you're retired.

MB: Yes.

HM: So, are you active in any politics right now?

MB: This year I'm not active in politics. It's local issues, it's the county campaign. My heart's not in it and I'm not too happy with the candidates. So, I'm not in it, but, you know, I'm not supporting Republicans or anything, and I will vote Democrat, but I'm also active in other things. One thing I'm doing – and when somebody questions me, I say, "I always talked the talk, and now I'm walking the walk." Now, not too many people know this, so they'll know it now. My wife and I are both volunteers at Planned Parenthood. There's an abortion clinic in Bucks County, and we go to that clinic every Friday morning and serve as escorts for the young people that are coming in there

for abortions. They've had appointments. They've been through counseling and all, and there are a group of pickets out there every Friday morning, and they march up and down in front of the place, and they have a bullhorn, and they scream at us, and one time, they brought in a whole bunch – I happened to miss that day, because we go every other week – but, there was 100 people they brought in that were pro-life, anti-abortion, and they stormed the place and they stood at the doors, and nobody could get in; none of the workers and, of course, the people coming for abortions and nice little young kids, and they were scared, and, of course, they had to call the police. The police cleared them out. That was the worst incident. Otherwise, we get harassment from them, and we're under strict orders not to answer, so we don't, don't get engaged with them. Under our breath we'll call them names, but we don't get engaged, and we let them scream and holler, but we do what we have to do. I call them "kids." They're mostly teenagers that come in there. Some come with their mothers. Some come with boyfriends. Some come with girlfriends. Some come with husbands. But, nine out of ten of the people that come for abortions are, are teenagers or maybe early 20's, you know, go up to that. And they're coming. They've been through all of the – because Planned Parenthood does that – they've been through all of the counseling and what the alternatives are and what you can do and what might happen if, you know, things go wrong in the procedure, and everything. By law, they have to do most of that, so they do it, and some of them have gone to other counselors or have gone to doctors, and doctors have said, you know, "That's all you can do," and they're really, you know, they're really under stress. I mean, this is a big thing for them. It's not small. Nobody considers it to be a small thing, and they come in under stress, and the first thing they hear these guys screaming at them with bullhorns. Well, what we do now; we got two radios, real loud, and we play music, and

we try to drown out the bullhorns, and we're successful in that. And one of the kids said, "Why are you playing music out here?" And I said, "The bullhorns," you know, but that's one thing we do. I'm also the – they call it "President." It's really Chairman – President of the local chapter of the AARP [American Association of Retired Persons]. Now, not too many people know about local chapters. What we do in the local chapter, we don't sell insurance, and we don't sell automobiles, you know. What we do is work on senior issues. So, I worked hard on the Medicare thing. I was against the national when they flipped and supported the Part D, the drug thing, because they gave George Bush the one or two votes they needed to push it over the top. I would work hard on Social Security. We got that stopped when they wanted to privatize Social Security. We stay aware of the property tax, it's a big issue for seniors, and we have monthly meetings to which we invite a speaker, and we had Chris King [Christopher; State Representative, Bucks County, 2007-2008] at our last meeting, and we'll have Tony at another meeting and, you know, the other Representatives from down here, from Bucks County, and that's the other thing I do mainly. Politically, I do little things if people ask me. Somebody running for office asked me for advice, like, I get a lot of that, and, you know, I'll talk to them, meet with them, help them out. A couple years ago, I guess it was about four years ago, I got really tied into a campaign in Lower Southampton. They hadn't elected a Democrat in years, and this young lady that was running for Supervisor, Connie Beran, was real sharp and bright, and I knew her from the Party; she was very active. And she called me up and asked me if I could help them, so I went down as a volunteer, and I met with them every week once a week, and I advised them on literature and campaign things they should do and strategies, and they won. They won for the first time in many, many years, and they now have a majority in that town of Democrats on the Board of

Supervisors, and they elected school board members, too, which they never had before. So that's, you know, I like to do that kind of thing. But I recognize that I'm eighty-three years old and I'm losing it, and so I don't push myself. If I can remember something, I'll help them.

HM: When do you think you first had that political aspiration bug? Because that's another question I usually ask, but I don't think I asked you.

MB: Yeah. You know, it may have been hidden within me from what I heard my father say, and, and when they had these speakers out there from, mainly from the Communist Party speaking, you know, I got to hear them, and then they had, you know, Republican and Democratic candidates. Franklin Roosevelt was my hero. I always regretted that I could never vote for him because the voting age was twenty-one. When I was eighteen, I was already in the Philippine Islands and wasn't able to vote anyhow because I wasn't 21. I couldn't vote until I got home, and then I voted for Truman [Harry S. Truman, President of the United States, 1945-1953] the first time, but that's when I got the bug, and I really got the bug more for national politics when I went to that first convention in 1964, and then I went to five more conventions after that. I just loved those conventions, and I knew that, you know, your voice doesn't mean anything. Your vote is enough. I was in Chicago in [19]68 when those kids rioted, and we couldn't get to the convention hall there in – I forget what they called it – we couldn't get there because the buses were on strike, and the trolley cars were on strike, taxi cabs went on strike, and the only way we can get there was that the mayor, Mayor Daley [Richard Joseph Daley, Mayor of Chicago, 1955-1976], the old man who was the boss of Chicago, he commandeered every

private bus he could find, school buses and everything else, and set up a schedule to pick us up, and we had to be there when the bus was there and to take us back to our hotels, and I was in the middle of them rioting at the hotel where Hubert Humphrey [Vice President of the United States, 1965-1969] was staying, and they had a – oh, the police were out there in force, but it was a really telling experience. It was, it was tough.

HM: Well, you said you really didn't have aspirations for Leadership. Did you ever have any aspirations for any higher offices?

MB: Only once. Here's what happened; they created a reapportionment. I forget what year it was. Might have been [19]72, might have been [19]72, but they expanded the 6th Congressional District, which had been all of Bucks County, I mean, the lower end of Bucks County, into Philadelphia, and so there was a part of Philadelphia – Philadelphia's going to lose a state Senator – so, here's a part of Philadelphia in the District, and I really wanted to run for that District, and I talked to Fineman and the Leaders, and I talked to – I forget his name. He was the city chairman in Philadelphia. It'll come to me soon – and he said, "Oh, you'd be fine, Milt. We'd like you, blah, blah, blah," and the way it works is that they create a plan, and the Republicans create one, and the Democrats create one, and the District, incidentally, was represented at the time by Bob Rovner [Robert A; State Senator, Philadelphia County, 1971-1974], the Philadelphia part of the District, and so they had these plans, and the Republicans wanted, wanted to protect Bobby Rovner, and, you know, our people wanted to put me in that District. And as of the night before – we were to vote on the plan, and we had the votes to pass the Democratic plan –as of the night before, I was slated to be the candidate, informally, you know, nobody ever said

anything formally. When they brought the map out, my house was located a half a block from the boundary line. Cross the street, and I was a half a block from the outside, so if I didn't want to move, I couldn't run, and that was my ambition. I never had an ambition for Congress because I saw if Michener couldn't win, who could? And then until Peter Kostmayer [U.S. Representative, 1977-1992] came along, and we had a – he was a protégé of mine, and I had convinced him to change his Party from Republican to Democrat, and we ran him for Congress, and, and it was a good campaign he had, but John Renninger [State Representative, Bucks County, 1965-1976] was the – he's dead now – he was a State House Member, and he was the Republican candidate, and he took it for granted that he was going to win, and he lost by about 1,000 votes. But until then, I didn't think we would ever be able to win the Congress seat.

HM: Well, you talked about giving advice to people that are looking to run or as a Party, maybe giving them advice. What would your advice be for new Members of the House of Representatives?

MB: One; pay attention to constituents. Have people who work for you, staff people, who have good contacts with the Department of Transportation – there's always problems there – the Department of Welfare, Health. Have them have inside contacts that they can call if they need something done for a constituent. So, constituent services is the first thing, and the second thing is to pay attention to your people, what they want, rather than what the Party wants, and I don't say cross party lines, but if there is something that might not go with the Leadership, you fight to get it on the calendar, and if it can't go, it can't go, but, but you put up a fight, and you can say to your people back

home that you did it. The worst thing, really, about being in the Legislature, you asked me that before, is that you have to run every two years. It's terrible. You never stop running. The day after you're elected, you're running for the next time, and, you know, that's the worst part of it, and now, when I was here, I didn't have to raise a lot of money. I mean, I don't remember spending hardly anything in my campaign. I printed little cards to give out at the polls, but I didn't have to raise a lot of money, but today, God, they spend – I don't know how much King and Matt Wright [Matthew N.; State Representative, Bucks County, 1991-2006] spent, but boy, they spent a lot of money over there. Tony doesn't spend as much, but he's got a better District. But Middletown, they had a good fight and a big fight, and King was another protégé of mine. King beat an incumbent, which is hard to do. Yeah, but that – you know, pay attention to your District first, and then stick with the Party on, on basic issues.

HM: Thank you very much.

MB: Okay.

HM: This was great, very –

MB: I'm going to think of some more stories. *(laugh)*

HM: Okay.

MB: No, go ahead.

HM: No, I just wanted to thank you for spending the time with us today and, you know, all your remembrances and recollections. It was great fun. I appreciate all the stories.

MB: It was fun for me. Thank you.

HM: Thank you.

MB: At my age, I appreciate it.