

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Carole Rubley (R)

57th District

Chester & Montgomery Counties

1993-2008

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Heidi Mays (HM): Good afternoon.

The Honorable Carole Rubley (CR): Good afternoon, Heidi.

HM: I'm here today with Representative Carole Rubley who represented the 157th District from Chester and Montgomery Counties. She served from 1993 through 2008. I'm so happy you're able to participate in our project today.

CR: Well, so am I and thank you for doing this.

HM: Thank you. I wanted to begin by asking you if you could describe your childhood and family life and how you feel that those prepared you for public service.

CR: Well, I grew up in a small town in Connecticut. The town had about 5,000 people. I was one of five children, so we had a pretty large household, but it was a great community to grow up in. We had sidewalks and places to ride bikes, and we had a lot of freedom that I don't see our kids having anymore. I wasn't actively involved in politics really until college, I started getting involved. I went to a small women's college in New Haven, Connecticut and one of the clubs I joined was the Connecticut Intercollegiate State Legislature and we would get together in Hartford, in our capitol building, once a year, with other colleges from across the state and we'd introduce bills and get them out of committee. At that point, never ever, ever dreaming I would really be doing this at some point in my life. But, I did have an interest; I liked to watch local

racers in our town and county, you know. So, from a distance I was involved, but this wasn't a dream I had at that point in my life.

HM: Well, how can you differentiate between Connecticut and Pennsylvania? Are there many differences?

CR: Well, Connecticut is a much smaller state but we do have some of the diversity that we have here in Pennsylvania. We have rural areas and we have highly populated areas. Most states have transportation problems, but you're dealing in a microcosm, really, of what Pennsylvania is. But, the town I grew up in was a former hatting – hatting was a big industry in our area at one point in time and, you know, a good part of the percentage of that town were employed in that industry. And then hatting went down the tubes, people didn't wear hats anymore, so the town had to re-identify itself and it has done it. It really is a very vibrant town now and it's just lovely. One of the communities in my district is Phoenixville, which is a former steel town; steel industry went out of business leaving a big gap financially and in every way in terms of, you know, the vibrancy of the community. Phoenixville now has done a direct turnabout. There's just wonderful new programs going on and people coming into the downtown area, new restaurants, the theater's been restored, the old foundry building has been restored and it's absolutely beautiful. So, you know, these two towns are very, very similar.

HM: Great. You had talked about your involvement in college, in that committee. When did you decide to become a Republican?

CR: When I moved to Pennsylvania, which was 1970. We moved to what was then a very Republican area and, you know, to have a voice and to be involved, it seemed to be the prudent thing to do, and I espoused many of the same philosophical opinions.

HM: Why did you move to Pennsylvania?

CR: My husband's job took us there. We had gone from Connecticut to the Maryland area and then up to Pennsylvania.

HM: I already know what your degrees were in –

CR: Oh, you've done your homework.

HM: We've done our homework. But, I think that they're very interesting. So, were you able to use your degree in biology?

CR: I did. Right out of college, I did teach high school biology in Danbury, Connecticut for two years and then almost a year in Waltham, Massachusetts where my husband was finishing his law degree. So, I taught high school biology, I loved it, but we then moved and we had a family, so I never got back to teaching. But, I still love the sciences and I've been able to use that background in biology in different ways.

HM: And you have your Master's degree as well?

CR: My Master's degree, which I finished in 1988, is in Environmental Health. So, I went from biology to a broader area of science and I really enjoyed that program too.

HM: And it looks like you're able to use a lot of those in your activities in the House –

CR: Yes, yes.

HM: – which we'll talk about in a minute. Well, what motivated you to run for the House of Representatives? Was there any one issue?

CR: There were a number of issues, but I was active at our local township level. I had been on our Planning Commission for ten years; I chaired a regional planning commission, doing a lot of land use and environmental work. And then I ran for board of supervisors and I was in my fifth year on the board, really enjoying it, also working at the same time, but liking that local level of activity, but I found that I was getting more and more frustrated because bills were being passed at the state level that had a great impact on us at the local level, and yet we were never part of the process. We were never given the opportunity to comment on some of these proposed bills, and suddenly there they were law, and we had to try to abide by them, and in some cases they had a negative impact on our municipalities. So, I was called one day when my predecessor, I guess, was thinking about stepping down, and someone called me and said, you know, "would you be interested?" And, you know, just out of frustration, I said yes. So, the rest is history.

HM: Well, could you describe your first campaign for the House of Representatives?

CR: Well, a lot harder than I expected. It was not like running at the local level where I never even had an opponent when I was running for Board of Supervisors. It was difficult. We had a somewhat open Primary, so originally there were four of us running. My predecessor, he picked his own candidate and then two of us were recommended and another woman was involved in the race. And then the other recommended candidate dropped out, so it left three of us. But, it was stressful, difficult, but it's, I think, having that time with a Primary and getting your positions out, it fine tunes your positions and enables you to get out before more of the public than what you might have known before, and, you know, I think it's a healthy experience from the electorate too. Now, I have to say back then, this is 1992; campaigns were not as nasty as they are today. I mean, there were some barbs, but nothing like what I see in the literature today.

HM: Did you have an endorsement process?

CR: We did have an endorsement process. In Chester County – at that point the seat was all Chester County – you have to get 60 percent of the vote of the committee people and none of us could get it, so two of us were recommended. So, I was one of the recommended candidates, and then the other recommended candidate dropped out so it just left me as the only recommended candidate. And that helped.

HM: One of the things we like to do for the historical process is, do you recall how much it initially cost to run your campaigns?

CR: At that point this was a very, very high number, but between the Primary and the General Election, it was about 74,000 [dollars], and that was unheard of then. That's nothing now compared to what people are spending.

HM: Right. That's why we like to, kind of, put it in context for people. In your last election do you recall how much you spent?

CR: I don't recall exactly, but I didn't have to spend that much. I didn't have, you know, a serious opponent. So, you're always worried when you have an opponent, but I just had to do a couple of mailing pieces so it was not an expensive item at all.

HM: Okay. Do you like to campaign?

CR: I don't mind campaigning. Once you get out going door-to-door, you get into a routine and it becomes, you know, a challenge. Hit some more houses that might make the difference in the election. I don't mind debates. You know, I like the positive end of campaigning, which is getting exposure and presenting your positions before the electorate, that part is fine. I don't like the negative attacks.

HM: Was your family ever involved in helping you?

CR: Oh, they were. My husband helped putting up signs and delivering signs to people and my children were grown at that point, but they came back Election Day. I even had my mother, who was in her 80's, she came up from Florida in my first campaign and helped out at the polls. So, yeah, we had family involvement.

HM: Well, good. I was wondering now if you could describe the 157th District and what it's like; the people and their issues.

CR: Well, it's different than it was when I first ran. When I first ran in [19]93, when I first came into office, I had five intact municipalities in Chester County. And it was good; it was diverse. I live in Tredyffrin Township which is a highly populated township. So, I had that township and then I had Phoenixville that had, at that point, serious economic issues, and I also had East Pikeland and Charlestown and Schuylkill. They were a little more rural. So, I had a mixture and it was diverse but it was a great district. Then with redistricting – although my numbers were okay, I could've had that district together and still been within that statistical range – for other reasons, I lost two municipalities, Charlestown and East Pikeland, and was moved into a portion of Montgomery County and I picked up four precincts in Lower Providence and one precinct in West Norriton, which has been hard because West Norriton is a different school district. I have such a tiny slice of it that, you know, people forget that I'm there. But, it's been a growing experience too. I've learned a lot about the area. People were just wonderful. The committee people were extremely helpful to me in the beginning, and have been all along. And, once the people got over the shock of having a woman from Chester County representing us, because, you have to cross a bridge to get there; a very small bridge. So, that

was hard. We have Valley Forge Park that kind-of separates the district too. It took some doing to win a lot of the people over, but I think for the most part we've been able to do that.

HM: You said whenever you moved into the district, it was a Republican district.

CR: Yes.

HM: Has that changed?

CR: It sure has. When I first ran in [19]92, Republicans made up about 67 percent of the district and that's when it was all Chester County. Then it went down to about 64 [percent] three, four years later. I have just recently learned that it's down to 45 percent Republican. So, that has been a big, big difference. People have moved in. We have many more Independents and many more Democrats than we ever had before.

HM: Are people moving in from an area or for, like you said, the jobs that are being created?

CR: Jobs. A lot of people have come from Delaware County and have moved in and choose to stay Independent or register Democrat. So, the Democrats now are 40 percent of the district. So, it's definitely a changing district.

HM: Is there anything that makes your district unique? Or is it more like Pennsylvania, just the –

CR: Well, it's not as rural as some of our northern tiers, you know where they have more deer than they have people, but it's just a wonderful district. I think the people make it unique.

HM: Have you aided in any special projects in your district?

CR: Oh, lots of projects, yeah. I mean, I really made an effort to try to reach out to the people. I think some of the fondest memories I have is that I had started – first of all, we honored the World War II veterans, so I had four different events around the district honoring the veterans, giving them the medals and the luncheon. They were so touched. Wherever I go people still tell me about how much that meant to them. And then, after that, we moved onto the Korean War veterans, had another event and then we did the same thing for the Vietnam War veterans. And each one was different but they all were appreciative, and, you know, that just meant so much to me. You know, I just had tears in my eyes, honoring these people were so great. Now recently, I've been honoring the volunteering firemen in my district. I'm still giving out the citations to them and these are men and women who have served 50 or more years and, I mean, I am just so indebted to what they have done with their time to, you know, work on behalf of our communities. And I thought maybe I'd have a handful, but we have had over 15. I know one gentleman, just recently I gave a citation to, he has been volunteering for 62 years. And they deserve to be thanked.

HM: Well, That's great. Can you recall how you felt whenever you were first sworn in as a Representative?

CR: Oh, that was an overwhelming experience. And, the odd thing is that it feels like it was yesterday. These 16 years have flown by and that's scary; you don't want life to go so quickly. It was just overwhelming to drive up out here to Harrisburg, to come into the parking garage and have my name on my own parking space, and the whole Swearing-In Ceremony; it was overwhelming.

HM: Do you recall who you sat next to on the House floor?

CR: I sat next to, who is now our Congressman, Jim Gerlach [State Representative, Chester County, 1991-1994;.State Senator, 1995-2002; US Representative, 2003-present]. He was at the end of the aisle and I was one over and, you know, we spent many, many, many hours seated there hearing about bills and hearing lots of speeches. And, you know, every time you have to get up, you've got to squeeze by somebody. So, he then, after my first term, moved to the Senate and I moved into his aisle seat. I've since moved down closer to the front, but, you know, I vividly remember and Jim was a good model and he was helpful, you know, in explaining some of the processes and procedures. And then I sat around other Members from Chester County and Montgomery County, so we used to have a lot of fun; we had some good times there.

HM: That was my next question; In addition to Mr. Gerlach, are there any other names that you recall?

CR: Well, Lita Cohen [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1993-2002], she came in with me. She was behind me and, you know, she always had interested comments to make. Tim Hennessey [State Representatives, Chester County, 1993-present] and Art Hershey [State Representative, Chester and Lancaster Counties, 1983-2008] were in front of me, and, you know, we were just sort of all together. Different people were, you know, to the other side of me, but we always had a good time.

HM: Well, is there anyone you would consider to be a friend in this? Like camaraderie?

CR: Oh, yeah. All of our Chester County Delegation, and you know, now members of the Montgomery County Delegation. But, for, I think, about six years, I sat next to Ellen Bard [State Representative, 1995-2004], who is from Montgomery County and she was active in the environmental field also. We were very good friends. We shared an office suite, we sat next to each other on the Floor of the House. She was from Abington. And then she chose to run for Congress and that didn't work out and then she left the House. But, she just moved up to Cambridge and just this summer, just maybe three, four, weeks ago my husband and I stopped to see them and spent the night and we had a great time with them. So, we keep up and get together whenever we can.

HM: What was it like to be a freshman Member, now that you're seasoned?

CR: Well, you know, at that point you don't know what to expect and to compare. In my first term, we were in the minority and it was a frustrating time because I was over in what was then

the South Office Building, now the Irvis Building, and with the elevator situation it was pretty far from the floor of the House, so it took a long time to get back-and-forth. And we were called to the floor of the House for session and there would be one delay after another. First they say, "Alright, we're delayed 15 minutes." Well, that's not enough to get back and get my materials and papers and things. And then it would go on, and on, and on. So, it was that wasted time that really frustrated me. Then I remember the all-night sessions. They were difficult. Thank goodness we don't do that anymore. That's one of the biggest changes.

HM: Do you believe it was harder to be a female Member whenever you first started?

CR: Not really. I haven't felt that type of discrimination. I would say the main area where it's different is that there's a lot of camaraderie among the men out on the golf course and, you know, maybe tending to go out to bars, you know, after dinner or later-night sessions. It's harder for a woman. I don't play golf and I'm not going to go frequenting bars at night, so you don't have as much chance for that kind of social interaction as the guys do. But other than that, no. In terms of legislation, you know, I've been very lucky. I've been able to push my pet causes.

HM: Well, you talked about starting off in the minority. And then you did go to the majority.

CR: Yes, in the next session.

HM: What were the differences?

CR: Oh, It's like night and day. We were only in by one seat, so it wasn't like we had a huge majority, but, you know, suddenly we were in control of the schedule, of the whole process. That first term, I know through Policy Committee, it was active in developing our agenda. We had the Partnership for Progress; we had hearings on it around the state and, you know, a wonderful booklet, I still remember it vividly, and it outlined what our agenda would be if we were able to control the Session. So, when we did come back with one seat, we were ready to roll and, you know, we made some very, very good changes in direction and, you know, I was really proud of the progress. We also had Governor Ridge [Pennsylvania Governor, 1995-2001], so we had a Republican governor and a Republican Senate, and a Republican House, so that made things a lot easier too.

HM: Well, now that you're back in the minority, how frustrating has it been?

CR: Oh, very frustrating, mostly because I waited 14 years to become a Committee Chair. And the Committee Chair then controls the bills, everything, the whole agenda for that Committee. I was appointed to Children & Youth Committee and I had served on that committee so that was fine. I'm a minority Member and I have no control over what bills come up, what type of hearings we have, what action items we take care of. So, you try to do what you can behind the scenes, but I just feel we have not been as productive as we should have been.

HM: Has it been a difficult session year in general though? Have there been many distractions?

CR: Yes, definitely, but then some positive things. After the fallout from the pay raise vote, lots of Members lost their seat or chose to retire and not run again, so we had many, many new Members, and also a realization that the time is right for reform. I had been working with a very small group of other Republicans on a reform initiative, that there was about seven of us that we called the Jefferson Reform Initiative, and we put together our agenda on how we were going to change the system here and what would be allowed and what wouldn't be allowed. We had hearings, we had press conferences, you know, we got the information out. We weren't popular with certain groups, but the Democrats then, some of them, came to us and said, "We like this stuff, this is good stuff. Can we join you?" So we did. We joined together and we picked out all the items which were of mutual concern that we both agreed should be changed, and so that became the Bipartisan Reform Commission. And we still weren't getting too far at the top level, but after the results from the election, with the outcome of the pay raise, there was a realization that yes, we do need to reform. Speaker Dennis O'Brien [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1977-1980 and 1983-present; Speaker, 2007-2008], he appointed the Speakers' Reform Commission and, so, I part of that. I think we made some significant, internal reforms that have improved the way we operate in the House.

HM: What was it like to be on that committee? What were some of the major discussions?

CR: Well, we started with the rules. We were given our agenda through the Speaker's Office, so we just couldn't do everything we wanted to, but we started working with our internal rules and that's how the House operates. We did, I think, an outstanding number of things, like not allowing all-night sessions. This is when staff gets worn down, we're worn down, and mistakes

happen, and bills get through that, you know, we weren't even aware of things were in those bills. We did away with the ability to rewrite a bill in Rules Committee. We would have a situation before, a three-page bill, like the pay raise bill, could get put into the Rules Committee after it's been to the Senate, and it's totally rewritten, becomes a 65-page bill which included say the pay raise or other things, no committee hearings, nothing. I mean, that was wrong, and so that's done. Bills have to be read on three separate days, and, you know, just many of these internal rules that have made the process much more open. We post the bills online, our expenses are online, our votes are online; it's a much more open process. I had hoped we'd be able to go further and address things like campaign finance reform. We have no controls, no limit on how much an individual or group can give to candidates, and that's wrong, that really is. We are in desperate need of a good campaign reform law. I was working with Representative David Levdansky [State Representative, Allegheny and Washington Counties, 1985-present] from the Western part of the State, we were Co-Chairing this Task Force, trying to get something through but there were other distractions this year and we just were never able to get this bill considered, but hopefully he'll carry on this effort when he comes back next Session, because we really need it. We did pass the Open Records Law and that goes into effect in January; that's a big step forward. We did Lobbyist's Disclosure reform so, you know, we had done a lot that has made Pennsylvania a better state to operate in and has made our data more accessible to the public.

HM: Thank you for those efforts. I wanted to also touch on some of the other committees that you had served on. I have a list. In 1993-94, you were on the Conservation Committee; In [19]93 through [19]96 you were on the Consumer Affairs Committee; Environmental Resources

from [19]95 to 2008 and Finance from [19]95 to 2006; Urban Affairs from [19]95 to [19]96; Liquor Control: [19]97 through 1998; Aging and Youth: [19]99 through 2000; Children and Youth, 2001 through 2008 in which you are the Chair; and you were also on the House Republican Policy Committee. Having served on so many Committees –

CR: Yeah.

HM: – did you have a favorite?

CR: Well, the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, because I was working in that field before I came into office. I have been on that, really, since Day One; they changed the name from Conservation to Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, but I loved that Committee and I love what we've done in that area. I have enjoyed all of my Committees because it's been an opportunity to learn about new activities and issues that, you know, I wasn't part of in the past. Finance Committee I found very, very interesting. I was told I was the first woman to be on the Committee. We had a Chair that, I don't know if he wasn't too fond of women, but he was not easy to work with and it was difficult to speak out in committee, to even be called on. But, the issues – because I like dealing with tax-related issues – so. I really enjoyed the activities of that Committee. I was on the Consumer Affairs Committee my whole time until this last session. We did some very, very interesting things with telecommunications deregulation, electric utility deregulation, which we're facing now as an issue, some really, very, very fascinating hearings all over the state, so you learn a lot about the state as well as the topic. Liquor Control I was only on for one session. I did try to get a bill through that would allow beer

to be sold by the 12-pack. Little did I know I was walking into a hornet's nest on that one, so we were not successful and it's still not successful here, but you know, live and learn. You do what you can do. Then, of course, Children and Youth, the issues dealing with children and helping to improve our education system. The Pre-Kindergarten, Pre-K Counts, is, I think, a really, really important program for Pennsylvania. And all the welfare-related issues, in terms of how our children are treated, are critical. So, each committee has been very special.

HM: What bills that have come through Committee have really grabbed at you and made you want to work harder on them?

CR: Well, I mean, so many of the bills are really interesting. I have been fortunate to have had 14 bills signed into law, with one just a week and a half ago signed by the Governor. So, that was a thrill, because it's not easy getting a bill through when you're not in the majority so you have to work very closely too with the people across the aisle. You have to work closely with the Senate because they're key. You're not going to get a bill through that doesn't go through the Senate. This was the mercury thermostat, banning the sale of thermostats with mercury, and requiring that the old thermostats be recycled. So, it took five years of effort. I mean, people have no idea. I spent eight years working on a Pesticide Notification bill; when pesticides and herbicides are sprayed on school grounds or inside the school, that the parents and employees of that school district be notified so that – because they were, in some cases, spraying pesticides in school when kids were in the building. So, that took eight years and I worked with Senator Greenleaf [Stewart J.; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1977-1978; State Senator, 1979-present] on the Senate side and we ended up dividing the bill in two. But now, we have

notification and we have to go for best management practices where you just don't start spraying immediately, you use prevention and less-toxic methods first, and then as a last resort you use the chemicals. You know, you just can't explain to people why things take so long, but it did. That's all I can say.

HM: Yeah, I think each one would present its own certain set of issues, unbeknownst to common people.

CR: Yeah. I mean, even straightforward bills that shouldn't be a problem. Also this session, I had the Uniform Environmental Covenants Act signed into law and most people had no idea what I was talking about, but it would require that with brownfield sites, that under Governor Ridge we had three bills, Acts 2, 3, and 4, put in that allowed for massive recovering of the old brownfield sites; putting them back to productive use, getting taxes from them. It's been an excellent program, but they had to be cleaned up to a set of standards. One of the loopholes in what we did back then was that we didn't require strong enough controls over future uses of the property; the covenants were not strong enough, so with this bill, it's now law, it has tightened that up. So, you make sure that if a site has been cleaned up and it's meant to remain as an industrial use, that it's not going to end up one day – and this happened in New Jersey – as a preschool and it was a facility that contained mercury. So, you know, I'm really thrilled about this, but it took a long time to get that one through and I didn't know of anyone that was opposed. *(laughs)*

HM: What do you think the hardest issue you encountered as Representative was?

CR: Probably, well, number one; getting bills through. It's a huge amount of effort, huge, but that's a challenge. And what I've learned to do is to work with the parties who were involved, one way or another, like the Uniform Environmental Covenants; we had, in a very small conference room, we had hour after hour of meetings with the legal people from the Governor's Policy Office, the legal people from DEP – Department of Environmental Protection – and some of their people, the chemical industry, they were at the table with their legal people. And I'm not a legal person, so you're going through every single word to make sure that, you know, it's going to work here in Pennsylvania and that everyone is going to be on board. That is tedious and difficult, so that's hard. The other thing that's hard is trying to represent your entire district, because I do have diversity in my district. You know, you come out one way, but you're going to have some people that want you to vote a different way. You can't please everyone, so you have to take a stand and you have to explain to people why you took that stand. Some understand it, some don't.

HM: So, was it hard to vote, maybe, the way you wanted to versus the way people back home wanted you to?

CR: For the most part that hasn't been an issue. I've been able to, like, survey people. One of the really sensitive issues was shortly after Governor Ridge came in when he was pushing school vouchers. I am a fan of public education and that's our constitutional challenge. I was fearful that with the implementation of the vouchers that money would be siphoned off from our public schools and we wouldn't have the money to do that basic education that we have to do. So, I

didn't support that. But, I had surveyed in my newsletter before that, the people, and fortunately, the majority of people that responded agreed with my position, because I had to meet with those who were passionate about this and, you know, I said, "I've got to represent that majority too." So, that happened to work out in terms of my beliefs too.

HM: It's such a tightrope, huh?

CR: It is a tightrope, yeah. Because every vote, you're losing potential voters next time around.

HM: You've also brought up lots of resolutions in your 16 years.

CR: Yeah. Yes. You've done your homework.

HM: Are there some that you would like to specifically discuss today?

CR: Well, many of the resolutions, as you know, they pretty much go through; they're not controversial and they're voted on. But, many of mine revolved around the environmental field like Radon Awareness Month. Radon is a serious, serious problem. So, it's this opportunity to keep the issue before the public and remind them they should have their homes tested and take remediation when necessary. Also, I've done a Career Education/Career Awareness Month each year, recognizing Vo-Tech – Vocational Tech. I think these schools are very, very important. There are many people that truly, we need them, they need to be trained in certain skills so that they are employable, and society needs them. So, we have to have people that are doing these

kinds of activities, and these schools have progressed so over the years, it is amazing. I mean, some of them are high-tech, really, now. So, I really liked recognizing them. We had Clean Water Awareness Month. You know, many of them were definitely – Lyme Disease – you know, things that I want to keep before the public because they're important health and environmental issues.

HM: You've served on the Governor's 21st Century Environment Commission and the Green Ribbon Commission. What can you tell us about serving on these Commissions and how did you become involved?

CR: Well, I was approached by people, I think, because of my environmental background, that when Governor Ridge was appointing this 21st Century Environment Commission, to help Pennsylvania move into the 21st century with an environmental perspective and land use. So, I was approached, you know, would I like to be on it? I said, "absolutely," and put my name in and got appointed. That was a wonderful, wonderful experience. We had terrific leaders. We had a mixture of people from across the state who really had brought all kinds of experience to the table. We divided into four separate task forces and I was working on land use, and we had hearings all over the state to try to make sure that the public was involved in what we were doing and that we were hearing from them and they were hearing from us. One of the things I know Governor Ridge wanted and Jim Seif¹, who was our co-chair, was to reduce the number of municipalities; to try to condense it. We have 2,567 municipalities in this state; some of them tiny, tiny. I've been to municipalities that – one was 67 people. Anyway, it's not efficient, but

¹ Pennsylvania Secretary of Environmental Resources, 1995; Pennsylvania Secretary of Environmental Protection, 1995-2001.

as we met with local government officials across the state, it was very clear that our plan that we came out with, our Report, would be dead on arrival if we tried to mandate that they merge. So, we didn't do it and I know there was great disappointment. Hopefully, we can use the carrot approach and get more of them to start working together to bring about these efficiencies. That Report – I still keep a copy of it because I think it just had some great suggestions. Many of them have been put into effect and have been used. So, It was a wonderful opportunity.

HM: Well, as you're nearing the end of your legislative career, is there anything you wish would be able to be done, maybe in the next month? Or do you wish someone would take it forward for you?

CR: Well, I have two bills that I have been working on a long a time and they're my Green Building bills that are the energy efficient, high proficiency buildings. The evidence is there that the more of these buildings that are built or renovated into using these energy-saving device, the more money that's been saved and the more energy that we're saving and the less toxic fumes and other things that we're putting out there. These bills, originally the Democrats were going to take both bills after they took control, and I fought to keep one and the other one went to a Democrat, but neither one of them have got signed into law. So, that's a big disappointment and I've already talked to one of our Members about spearheading this effort to try to get it through.

HM: Well, what was the second one?

CR: They're both , they're two Green Building bills, but one would give a tax incentive to help to overcome the initial higher costs associated and the other one that I kept would have mandated that any building – these are the larger, commercial and larger residential buildings – but if you're getting 50 percent or more state money, you had to build it to a standard, either LEED [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design] or one of the other models out there.

HM: Well, we'll keep watching for that.

CR: I hope. *(laugh)*

HM: Have you experienced any technological advances since arriving?

CR: Oh, indeed. Yeah, we went from the dark ages into the modern age. When I first came, we didn't have computers on the desk, but we had mountains, and mountains, and mountains of paper. It was just a tremendous waste of paper. So, that has been great as we have the laptops on the desk and all the amendments come right up and, you know, you can see the bill, you can see the amendment and we don't have all that paper. So, that's number one. I think computers, quality computers, in our offices has been terrific. Better phones – I had to go out and get my own phones, but it was an antiquated phone system. And, you know, now most Members have either the Blackberry, or I have a Treo², so you're getting your emails constantly. That's a mixed blessing. It is too easy for groups and people to send emails. I mean, just last week I came back with my office staff to the district office and, oh my gosh, we had gotten, just in a matter of a

² The Blackberry and Treo are wireless hand-held devices which supports conventional telephone coverage, text messaging, internet service, faxing and other wireless services. The Treo also has camera capabilities.

half an hour, over 500 emails, and these were people from out of state on an issue connected with voting; nothing I could do anything about. Finally, we called Harrisburg and they were able to stop them from coming in. But, it can cause a collapse of the system and, you know, waste the time to have to go through and delete all those. So –

HM: Oh my goodness.

CR: Yeah, so that's not the greatest thing.

HM: Do you find the cameras on the House Floor a blessing or is that a mixed blessing as well?

CR: It's probably a mixed blessing. I don't even think about them, but I've heard – because they came on shortly after I got here – I've heard that some of the speeches, especially during primetime when people might be home, are much, much, much longer than they were before they had that opportunity. So, it's probably lengthened the amount of times for our sessions, you know.

HM: Well, can I ask, why have you decided to leave the House now?

CR: Well, I never expect to stay this long. I also didn't expect the time to pass so fast. And I didn't expect that it would take so long, so many years, to get bills through. But, this seemed to be a good time; I have eight grandchildren. My youngest daughter and her family just moved to California, so I can't go out there on a weekend and see them, and my husband and I would like

to travel more. You know, you're very limited when you're a Member of the House. I mean, just taking a little trip, you're always missing something. You know, you work around the Session schedule, but you're always missing something in your district, and you're feeling guilty. So, this will be nice to have that freedom. And I also want the time to focus on issues that I think are really critical to us, rather than trying to deal with hundreds of issues.

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

CR: Well, it's a combination of working with the people in my district; that has been wonderful. I just really had wonderful groups and what wonderful citizens they are. And also, working on policy and legislation; that's really my favorite. And I suppose you're going to ask what's my least favorite.

HM: That is the next question. *(laugh)*

CR: Well, I would say constantly running for re-election. You know, every other year we're up for re-election in the House and that is tough. So, that's hard and always having to raise money and, you know, dealing with some of the political issues. I won't miss that at all.

HM: Do you see a solution for that? I mean –

CR: I think we have to start really rethinking campaigns. I'm appalled at the amount of mailings I'm getting and they are expensive; I know from personal experience. I've noticed the

mailings are just saying the same thing over and over but I'll get my mail, I'll probably go home tomorrow, and I'll have, you know, three or four from sometimes the same candidate, and to me, the consultants are getting rich on this, but I don't think it's benefitting the public. I think there's better ways to spend money and I'd rather candidates spend money on talking about their position and the issues and not attacking one another.

HM: When you think back, and you tell stories about your experiences in the House, is there one favorite story that you like to share? Or several?

CR: There's probably several, yeah. Trying to get through that 12-pack of beer – and that stemmed from right after I was elected, a couple came to see me and they were going to New Jersey to visit their children and so they were going to bring some beer, and they went to a beverage store – we have an antiquated system here in Pennsylvania, there's no doubt about it – and some of their kids liked light beer, some like regular beer and they tried to mix and match and of course you couldn't; you have to buy a case of everything. So, they were so upset they went to New Jersey and bought their beer. So, when I was on the Liquor Control Committee I related this story and then I was approached about “Well, let's sponsor the 12-pack,” and I said “Great.” Little did I know the ramifications, you know. And threats were made against the people running these beverage stores from certain other distributors. I couldn't get another bill out of committee because it was upsetting this balance they have now where delis can sell by the six-pack. I mean, it just was one thing after another and no one was talking about the rationale for doing this: saving money, drinking less, you know, giving customers this option. So, you know, it went up in flames and we still don't have it. And people can't believe it.

HM: Do you have a biggest disappointment?

CR: I really don't have too many disappointments. I would have liked the opportunity to run for a Senate seat and that was not given to me, so that's a disappointment. But, you know, I've been very happy here in the House and happy that I've been as successful as I have been getting legislation through. It's disappointing I couldn't have gotten, you know, a few more bills through the hopper, but I didn't. No, I mean, I've really had a wonderful, wonderful experience here.

HM: How would you like your tenure to be remembered?

CR: I hope people remember me as someone who cared about the issues, worked with people on both sides of the aisle – and I have done that. I have a good working relationship with the Senate people too, and that's why I've been able to get as many bills through. So, I think that's one of the things I'm most proud of. I haven't gotten bogged down in partisan politics.

HM: Do you have advice for new Members?

CR: Well, learn the issues and fight for what you think is right. Get out there, if you have a bill, and you fight and fight and fight – and you have to – but, you know, just keep persevering. You have to pick and choose your topics. You can't be an expert on everything. So, you move in the areas where you do have the expertise or the interest and try to focus on that and then learn as

much about all these others. But, we have a wonderful research staff and they have, you know, great background information and, you know, things that you can get. Bu, you can drive yourself crazy if you're trying to be an expert on everything.

HM: Do you think you'll remain politically active?

CR: I don't think so. I think I'm ready to stay involved. I want to work on energy conservation, energy efficiency. I'd rather work on the issues at this point, until I see a change in the political climate. But, I'm most concerned that our rate caps in the area where I live are coming off in 2010, we're going to see increases in electricity. Other parts of the state and out of the state have seen huge increases, in some cases. I am really concerned about senior citizens. How are they going to afford this when they've already had to pay a lot more for heating oil or natural gas? And there's a lot that can be done with efficiency, with conservation, and with smart meters that will help these people, and so, I'd like to work with them.

HM: Well thank you very much for sitting down with me –

CR: Thank you.

HM: – today, and I always let the Representatives have the last word, so if there's anything else you'd like to share, I'd like to give you that opportunity.

CR: Alright, thank you. This is probably what I should've said about disappointments. I'm not a feminist but women in Pennsylvania are about 51 percent of the population. In my tenure here, we have gone between women making up 12 percent to 14 percent of the House. I think that's terrible. Wherever I go, I'm trying to encourage women of all ages to get involved. It is a rewarding career. You can make a difference, and we need more women.

HM: Well, thank you for that because I agree. *(laugh)*

CR: Good. *(laugh)*

HM: And, again, thank you for participating.

CR: Oh, thank you for doing this.