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BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

**The Honorable Raymond Bunt Jr. (R)**

147<sup>th</sup> District

Montgomery County

1983-2006

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Heidi Mays, House Archivist  
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**Heidi Mays (HM):** Good morning.

**The Honorable Raymond Bunt (RB):** Good morning.

**HM:** I am here today with Representative Ray Bunt, who has served the 147<sup>th</sup> Legislative District from Montgomery County between the years 1983, and is currently serving this legislative session, which is 2006. Thank you for being here, again, with me today.

**RB:** Thank you. It is a pleasure and it is a very humbling experience for me to be here.

**HM:** Well, I certainly want to begin by asking you about your childhood and your family life and how they worked to prepare you for public service.

**RB:** Well, I frankly, I never imagined, when I was younger, that I would be here. My father was stationed in Puerto Rico during the Second World War, so that is where I was born. And, my mother is Spanish and French and was a native of Puerto Rico and I was three months old when my dad got transferred from there. And we traveled around quite a bit because my dad was in the military until 1946. And my early childhood was spent in Trooper, which is a suburb of Norristown, Pennsylvania, which is the county seat of Montgomery County. And, except for a brief period where we had moved to Florida for about a year, all my life has been in Montgomery County. I attended local schools, graduated from Schwenksville, they called it Schwenksville Area High School, and it was so big that we had forty-three or forty-four in our graduating class. But, up until the time,

I guess fourth grade, we all came up here on class trips. I think that every kid dreams whenever they do something, that they would like to experience it. And, whether you go to the Franklin Institute [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania] or the Civil War Museum [Harrisburg, Pennsylvania], you try to put yourself—I know I talk to my grandkids and they say the same thing—and I remember distinctly coming up here and just looking around at the grandeur. Because, up until that point, this probably was the most beautiful building that I had ever been in and—it was just—it was a one-day experience. “Oh, maybe I’ll be a State Representative one day.” And I never thought about it again. And, after I left high school, I got married really early; I was just shy of twenty when I got married. I had two children by the time I was twenty-one and then went to college at night, so (*laugh*) I did things in reverse. I married my high school sweetheart, but we didn’t stay sweethearts forever. But, we did have two beautiful children and we remain friends. I went into business for myself. I met some representatives of a small oil company in New Jersey by the name of Depolito Fuel Oil Company, who were also doing business with a small company called Hess Oil. And, they were starting to market gasoline in the mid-[19]60s. And I needed a part-time job, with two kids, in addition to a full-time job, because my wife stayed at home. And, I went to work for them on a part-time basis. And, I worked, I guess maybe six months, when a district manager of Hess Oil came and said, “We are going to open up some retail outlets and would you be interested in maybe being a dealer for us?” And, I kind of laughed, and I said, “You know, I really don’t have any money. I am twenty-one years old, twenty-two, and I don’t have any money.” And they said, “Well, we would like you to come down and meet with some folks that are in our business,” and I met Leon Hess. Leon Hess, who, I will tell

you, later owned the New York Jets, but then he didn't have quite the money then that he had afterwards. And, Mr. Hess said to me, "Can you borrow five hundred dollars?" And I said, "Yeah, I can probably borrow five hundred dollars." Now, remember, in the [19]60s that was a lot of money. I was clearing like, fifty, sixty dollars a week, so that was a lot of money. I went to my mom and dad and, yeah, they helped me and I went to my wife's grandparents and they helped. And, I said to Mr. Hess, "I can't go into business with five hundred." So he said, "Well, I want you to open a checking account and I want you to put that five hundred dollars in there." I said, "Okay." And so, then he said, "Give me a call when that occurs." So, I did. So, we met again and he said, "I want you to give me a check for three thousand dollars." I said, "I can't do that; it will bounce." He said, "I'm not going to cash it until you start making money." And, so, basically, he put me in business. And, I tell that story a great deal, because Connie Williams [Constance Williams; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1997-2001; Pennsylvania Senate, 2001- 2008] is a State Senator here, was elected to the House from Montgomery County in lower Marion, and was a colleague of mine. And I approached her and I told her the story and I told her that I knew her when she was younger, and her brother, and it was an amazing story, you know? It helped me get started in life. It really helped me a great deal. I never stopped working seven days a week and I frankly, haven't. And, hopefully, November 30<sup>th</sup>, I can. (*laugh*) So that is basically the early part of my life. There are lots of things that happened there. I think that experience in business left a profound impression upon me because I not only operated service stations, but I had automotive service shops, franchise shops. I owned a restaurant. They were always dealing with people. And, I always found that the nicer I was to people, the nicer

they were in return. And, I learned something very early on that I was able to train my employees with: that when somebody came for our services or for a product, treat them like they are family. And, when the phone rings, make believe it is your mother and that she needs your help. And, if you do that, you will always have a job and I will always have my business. And, I did the same thing when I entered the State House and I have been here twenty-four years, twelve elections, nine of them uncontested. Again, I had to work seven days a week for it, but (*laugh*) I enjoyed working with people and I still do. I just love the opportunity to help somebody, if I can. And, I think if you listen to people, sometimes they provide their own remedy; they just need someone to talk it out with. But in those cases where they can't, they need somebody to be an advocate for them and I think, if you try, in 90 percent of the cases, you really can help somebody, given the position. It is not me. It is the position that I hold, which gives me access to be able to be of assistance. And probably, one of the things that I am going to miss when I leave here is picking that phone up and being able to get something on the phone. Not because it's "Ray Bunt", but because it's "Representative Ray Bunt." But, I'm going to remain the same person and I am going to try to pick that phone up and try anyway (*laugh*). It has been a wonderful experience. It has been a wonderful experience and that business background, and that small town upbringing certainly laid the foundation for the successes that I have had in political life.

**HM:** Well, speaking of political life, was anyone in your family involved in politics?

**RB:** My grandfather, during the [19]20s and [19]30s, which were the Depression, was active as a Precinct Captain and used to help the local Republican ward leaders and was a Ward Leader, himself, in Philadelphia, during the Depression.<sup>1</sup> And at that time, he used to be going door-to-door to try to help people understand what was going on with issues at that time and he had the access to City Council Members and State Representatives and State Senators. And I asked him why he stopped and it was just the Depression. It was the Depression, where he had to get a job that paid something and that was very difficult. He became a huckster. He used to go door to door selling eggs and butter and chickens and apple cider, whatever people could afford. Sometimes they could only afford to buy two eggs and that's how bad things were and it's hard to comprehend. I know when he used to tell me the stories when I was little it was beyond comprehension that people could only buy two eggs or one quarter-pound of butter. But they did, they did. And, that's how he got by and—I never gave any thought to that political life that he had, other than a life's experience. And, it certainly wasn't an aspiration of mine to get involved politically. I went to a township meeting when I was about twenty-three or twenty-four or twenty-five, somewhere in that area and I had read something in the paper that I was somewhat concerned about, the way that it was written in the newspaper, and I went to a township meeting and I sat there very attentively until the end of the council meeting—the supervisor's meeting—when they said, “Does anybody have a question?” And, I had the newspaper in front of me and I said, “I do have a question.” And I said, “I am very concerned about what I've read in the newspaper concerning some zoning issues that you folks are about to embark upon.” And they said, “Well, what are you concerned

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<sup>1</sup> Economic downturn starting in 1929 and lasting through most of the 1930's. The Depression centered in North America and Europe.

about?” And, I talked about different things that were in the story and I found out at that meeting that not what’s written in the newspaper is always accurate. And that amazed me, because the reporter was in the audience that night, too, at this subsequent meeting, and it was just how people view what is said, sometimes, and how it’s presented. And I learned very early on that, unless these people print a Bible, boy, you’d better get your own answers.

**HM:** How did you become a Republican?

**RB:** I always was a Republican because I was a businessperson and I believed in a limited government and I believed in taking care of those who could not take care of themselves. But, I also was not in favor of an expansive government, of cradle-to-grave type assistance, because I always viewed that as a problem for people, of being able to go out on their own. Because, I always viewed cradle-to-grave government as socialism and that, if you didn’t give people an incentive to work, then they wouldn’t. If everything was provided for, a very large percentage – this is what I thought at the time, okay? – that if there weren’t things out there that were challenges, then people could not rise to the top. So, that is how I became a Republican and I don’t think it was some profound thing that occurred. It was not somebody who sat down with me and talked to me, “Well, you need to do this. You need to do that.” Or, “You need to be a Republican because these guys are bad.” No, that never occurred. It was just a natural assimilation based upon my life’s experiences up to that point and the profound experience that I had as a businessman; dealing with regulations and paying people to fill out forms to send them

off to state agencies or federal agencies. And, I saw that as cumbersome. I saw it as cumbersome and I saw it as duplication and duplicity, and it just appeared to me that we were just making jobs and that somebody was paying the bill for those jobs. But, you know, I have changed since those days and I do know that government can do good, too, and it needs to exist, but it does not need to be big and it does not need to grow as fast as the private sector. I think the private sector needs to grow. If you have good government, you are going to have good politics. If you have good politics, you should have good government, as well. So, that is the way I always tried to apply myself.

**HM:** Your first public office was as Chief Clerk of Montgomery County Board of Elections. Was that a—

**RB:** That was a paid position. My first position happened locally. The Township Supervisors had appointed me to the Local Planning Commission and then my colleagues appointed me to be Chairman of that over a year or two. And then, I had some interaction with the County Commissioners based upon that local political activity and then, they appointed me to the Local Planning Commission, and that's how it worked; that's how it started. I always seemed to have been someplace that maybe I shouldn't have been, (*laugh*) because serving in local government, you serve at your own expense and you serve at your own time and when you do that your family does suffer. Your family does sacrifice. That which you spend comes out of your pocket and when you are a young person, trying to raise kids, you have to make a decision, whether you want to do that, continue to do that or move on. And that serves and acts as a disincentive.

Fortunately for me, I was a businessperson, so my income was a little bit higher than someone else, so—that's what I did. And then, I became a committeeman, locally. I worked the elections, [as a] Precinct Captain, like Grandpop had been. And lo-and-behold, I was asked by the Chairman of the County Commissioners of Montgomery County, which is the third largest county in this Commonwealth, to serve as Director of Elections to the Chief Clerk to the County Commissioners. And, it was something I did not want to turn down because of how I viewed the County Commissioners, with awe. And there was a Chairman of the County Commissioners, Russ Parkas at that time, who I viewed as a father figure for the whole county. And he was one that people and elected officials saw as a parent. When I look back now, he wasn't all that old, but he was to me, at that point. But yeah, he seemed to want to protect the county. He seemed to want to serve it well and everybody that I had ever saw that he had appointed were like him. And so, I viewed that the same way, I thought, Boy, even if it costs me to do this, I guess I have to do it. I want to do it. It didn't pay a great deal of money, either, you know, but I had my business so again, it was okay. And, lo-and-behold, I was there about three years and during that time, prior to serving as Director of Elections, I had become involved in campaigns for Governor, for Drew Lewis [Andrew L. Lewis], who was a Republican candidate for Governor in the 1974 election. And, I had always been at rallies for candidates from President all the way down to the Township Supervisors. [I] had worked in campaigns as Chairman or Treasurer for my predecessors in my existing position. When Ronald Reagan [Governor of California, 1967-1975; 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, 1981-1989] was Sworn-In as President of the United States, this particular person, Drew Lewis, who had been the Republican candidate for Governor and did not win, was

asked by Ronald Reagan to be Secretary of Transportation<sup>2</sup> in his administration; nice feather in the cap for Montgomery County. And, in addition, we had another cabinet member from Montgomery County, Richard Schweiker [US House of Representatives, 1961-1969; US Senate, 1969-1981; U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 1981-1983], who had been a Senator from Montgomery County. So that was two from Montgomery County. And then there was a third, Secretary John Lehman<sup>3</sup>, he also was from Montgomery County and he was a relative of Grace Kelly<sup>4</sup>, the actress. In addition, Alexander Haig,<sup>5</sup> also was from Lower Montgomery County. I thought, My, I was in awe myself. I knew all of these people, but to have them serve at the National level at the same time. Drew Lewis's wife, Marilyn [Marilyn Lewis; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1979-1982], was my immediate predecessor and she was in her second term and she needed to be in Washington a great deal to be with her husband. And so I got a call from Drew Lewis and he said, "Marilyn is not running again," and he had been very active politically in Montgomery County, a former County Chairman. And, he said, "You're running," just like that, and I said, "Well, excuse me. This is something I have to consider. This is something I need to discuss with my wife and my kids." And he said, "You can do what you want to do, but," he said, "you have to run." "Well, okay, Drew. Okay." And I went home and I discussed it and my wife said, "If that will make you happy, we want you to do it." So, that's where I am at.

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew L. Lewis served as Secretary of Transportation from 1981-1983

<sup>3</sup> John Lehman served as U.S. Secretary of the Navy from 1981-1987 and a Member of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States or the "9/11 Commission" from 2002-2004.

<sup>4</sup> Grace Kelly was an Academy-award winning American film actress who married Prince Rainier, III and became the Princess of Monaco

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Haig was the Vice Chief of Staff for the Army from 1969-1972, White House Chief of Staff from 1973-1974, Supreme Allied Commander fro NATO from 1974 to 1979 and the US Secretary of State from 1981-1982 under Pres. Reagan. In 1988, he ran for President of the United States.

**HM:** So you had the support of your family?

**RB:** Oh, absolutely. You could not serve here without the total one-hundred percent support, especially if you have to travel to get here. My colleagues from Pittsburgh or Erie, or Philadelphia – you cannot travel back and forth every day. I mean, it's a minimum of four to five hours of travel every day. You just can't do it. And for those that come from Erie or Pittsburgh, I don't have to tell you the distance from the Capitol and it chews up a half a day, if not, more; three-quarters of a day. So, you can't travel back-and-forth. So you are here three or four days a week and this place has been my second home. I actually have a second home here, in addition to being here as a Representative, and my colleagues, they are an extension of my family, so it is very difficult. It is very difficult to make that decision of when you are going to retire and when you are going to move on. And, I thought I had my decision made up in 2003 and I let people talk me out of it. So I ran in 2004, and then, around Thanksgiving of last year, I said to my family, "This is what I want to do, but I don't want you to tell anybody." And, so, I told my National Committeeman here, Bob Usher, because he was the first person I had discussed it with other than Drew Lewis, when I first ran, and so my family and my in-laws – because we always go down to their place for Thanksgiving – and they all said, "Well, sit on it. Sit on it. Sit on it." And I said, "Well, my decision is pretty final," I said, "You know?" So I didn't announce it until December 31<sup>st</sup>, I guess, New Year's Eve. But, I haven't looked back, either. You get a little melancholy, you know, but if they truly are an extension of my family, I will come back and see them.

**HM:** Well, I would like to begin – take a step back, and ask you about your first campaign run. Now that you have been told that you are going to run for office and you have the support of your family, what was your first campaign like?

**RB:** My first campaign was pretty easy, now when I look at what other people are going through and experiencing. My first opponent – I wound up with a Republican Primary. I had the complete support and endorsement of the entire Republican organization in my district and in the county, but nevertheless, somebody else wanted the job, too. And so, that was a complete surprise to me because it was somebody who I had went to high school with, too. Albeit, a little older than I was at that time, but, I knew what campaigns were about, but I swore I was not going to be involved in personal attacks, nor would I respond to them. And, I didn't have that problem with my primary opponent at that time. His name was Richard Schlick—S-C-H-L-I-C-K. And, he was a gentleman and I hope I was, too. I did extremely well in the Primary; I won better than two-to-one. And there was a Democratic candidate who was a schoolteacher and a Democratic leader in the Upper Perkiomen Valley area of the District where I serve, and her husband was President of the National School Boards Association. And she was a well-respected teacher, now retired, in the Upper Perkiomen Valley School District. Her name is Joan Smith. At the time, she was somewhat of a caustic individual, at least at that point I thought [so], and I told her so. But, she was just being what she thought she had to do as a candidate. There was some subtle inferences that bordered on being a personal race, but it never got blown out of proportion – not on my part, on her part – and we were able to reconcile lots of things during the campaign and when we looked at it, about two

weeks out of the election, she and I agreed on the majority of issues as it confronted our district. But there's certain tenets of the Democratic Party, certain tenets of the Republican Party, about less government, more government, and that was about the only thing that was an obstacle in us agreeing on the majority of issues. We, ultimately, became good friends and I've got lots of notes from her on different things that I have done. She sent me nice notes, she and her husband, and I went on to win that General Election in a bad year: 1982. When I say it was "a bad year," Dick Thornburgh [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1979-1987] was running for his first re-election in Pennsylvania and nationally, the economy was going through a recession. Dick Thornburgh almost did not win re-election and I was running for my first election, but we won handily and I was a top vote-getter. And then, a couple of years later, 1984, Ronald Reagan was running for his second term and he was extremely popular in that election, [19]84, and the Democrats threw the best candidate that they could at me. His name was James Maza. He was then and still is a local attorney. A Democrat in a Republican area, but he went to high school there and everyone like him, but they said, "Jim, what are you doing as a Democrat?" But, in his heart, he was a Democrat. He wasn't a George McGovern<sup>6</sup> [US Senate, South Dakota, 1963-1981] Democrat; he was a Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States, 1933-1945], Truman [Harry S. Truman, Vice President of the United States, 1945; President of the United States, 1945-1953] Democrat. He was, and he is, what he is: a good person. And, again, (*laugh*) we became friends through the campaign, as well. He goes on to tell the stories about how he got shellacked, and he did; he did. He got twenty-two percent of the vote and I got

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<sup>6</sup> A "McGovern Democrat" is term often applied to a far-left liberal.

seventy-eight percent and my first re-elect, as popular as Ronald Reagan was, I led the ticket again, in my District.

**HM:** And you haven't had many other campaigns?

**RB:** No, I really haven't. I had one other Democratic candidate, I think in [19]92 and then I had this spattering of Constitutional Candidates, Libertarian – I think it was primarily Libertarian – and they didn't disagree with me on anything, I think they just put their name on the ballot. And so, I really never had an intense campaign, except for those two and maybe in [19]92, it got to be a little intense, but never embattled. I never felt embattled. And, certainly, people bring up whatever they can bring up during an election and sometimes you know, you get disheartened and think, “Yeah, I don't want to be subjected to this,” but, it never got that bad.

**HM:** Were some of your techniques knocking on doors, or anything like – ?

**RB:** I knocked on doors; I made telephone calls; I had signs up everywhere; I was very active in social organizations, and I just would ask people, “Can I put a sign on your lawn?” I was not content with just putting signs up in rights-of-ways and open fields. I asked people and frankly, it made a difference. When somebody lets you put a sign on their lawn, or they give you ten dollars towards your campaign, they are hard-pressed to vote against you and so, they're not, they're not going to vote against you. My vote totals

were always good and I never wanted to embarrass myself or my family, because the area that I represent is the area that I grew up in and went to school in.

**HM:** Do you remember how much it cost to run your first campaign?

**RB:** Yes, I do. It was about \$55,000. It was very expensive in those days' dollars. And that's between the Primary and General [Elections] like, you had two elections. And, primarily, that was postage and printing and signs and I had a couple of campaign assistants that I, you know, I reimbursed them for the cost of their gas and lunches and that type of thing and that was about the going rate then: between forty and fifty and sixty thousand dollars. And, there were a couple of elections, after that, in Montgomery County. Not mine, but elections that people spent a quarter of a million dollars between the two candidates. And, I thought, "Oh, my God, that's so much money." Now, there are multi-million dollar races for Legislature and that is disheartening, too, because no one works for nothing and you have campaign consultants, printing companies, even a postage stamp is thirty-nine cents. And, you have to have a computer and everything that we do around here to make things more transparent, you have to hire somebody to do it, so it is transparent and so that costs a lot of money. And, I don't know where it's going. I guess every old timer talks about, "I don't know where it's going." I guess if you put it in today's dollars, what I spent back then, I guess, today would be, I guess it would be four or five to one. I guess it would.

**HM:** I would like to ask you about your District now. Can you talk a little bit about the 147<sup>th</sup> [Legislative District]? How it has changed too, because – ?

**RB:** Montgomery County, in 1982, had eleven Legislative Districts. My District, the 147<sup>th</sup>, consisted of one-fifth of the geographic size of Montgomery County. So I had colleagues who were representing much smaller Districts, geographically. We all had the same population density, but mine was one-fifth of the county. And, I didn't quite have as many dairy cows as I had people, but almost, and that's no longer the case. I only have about a dozen dairy farms and none of them very large. I guess, maybe, the largest, may be about one hundred and sixty cows. And, I have just seen so many of them just go out of business or kids didn't want to stay with the farm. Land values have increased so much that they could make more money selling their ground and putting their money in and getting interest and than milking cows or raising chickens. We always had a large food production, like Hatfield Packing, pork products, Moyer Packing. Moyer Packing, during its hey-day used to process seventeen hundred cattle a day for meat and Hatfield Packing used to process around seven thousand hogs a day; a day. We had chicken production; we had egg production, to a large scale; Keller Butter; all in my District. And those who remain have gotten smaller in size because, when farmers go out of business, or they sell their land, all the associated services go, as well. The John Deere dealer doesn't sell any tractors anymore, or combines, or hay-bailers. But, we grew houses instead. And that, again, presents other problems. That's been about the most disheartening thing I've seen, is the land being gobbled up. I know that everybody needs to live somewhere but, the sprawl is just uncontrollable and the demands for services has

increased to such a point that the costs of providing those services make people mad because they demand the services, but don't want to pay the taxes to pay them. And they believe that when they built a house or bought a house, that the three thousand dollars in property taxes that they pay should cover everything. Well, in Montgomery County, it costs about eleven thousand dollars to educate each child and so, if you're getting three thousand dollars out of somebody's house and they've got "2.3" kids, because that's the average out of the development, you can see them never recover. So, senior citizens are going to have to pay more taxes, [and] people on a fixed income. In 1982, the senior citizen population in my district was about eighteen and a half percent. It's now down below six percent, so they've gotten squeezed out. Of course, they can't afford the taxes. And so, it's a high-growth area for homes and we've got quality schools, but they cost money. And, the cost of education is increasing faster than the ability of local government and state government to keep up with it without imposing more taxes. And, people want good education; they want the best schools. They want their children to get the quality education. They want smaller class sizes, but they do not want to pay the taxes and [there's] a great deal of finger-pointing going on, "Well, the state should provide more." The state has no control over what is spent in a local school district and I think it's silly and absurd to think that we can keep pace with that type of increase in spending on a year-to-year basis; that exceeds the cost of living. Because the same people that want all of those also want us to hold our line and to hold the belt here. So, it's frustrating to know what the issues are, to know how to adjust them, but you can't.

**HM:** Well, the 147<sup>th</sup> has appeared, at least historically, to be a fairly firm Republican District. As you mentioned before, Marilyn Lewis held the seat and before her, I think it—

**RB:** Dr. G. Sieber Pancoast [Montgomery County, 1965-1978], who was a professor of political science at Ursinus College. He held the seat from [19]64 to [19]78, Marilyn from [19]78 to [19]82, and so, for forty-two years, it has been three Republicans. There will be another Republican who will win next month, November, but beyond that, things are changing and they are changing very quickly in Philadelphia and the suburbs. And, for what reason, it is hard to pinpoint, but things run their cycle. The same thing occurred in Philadelphia in the late [19]30s up until 1950. There was Republican control in Philadelphia up until it started around 1936 with the election of George Earle [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1935-1939], a Democrat from Montgomery County, to be Governor. And, there was an erosion of Republican government in Philadelphia that started out slow—a slow erosion—and then it accelerated and accelerated and accelerated up until 1950, when Richardson Dilworth [Mayor of Philadelphia, 1956-1962] and a fellow by the name of Clark, Joe Clark [Mayor of Philadelphia 1952-1956, US Senator 1957-1969], won in Philadelphia. And, I don't think there has been a Republican that has been elected down there to be Mayor since. They have had a Comptroller who has been a Republican and a DA, Arlen Specter [US Senator, Pennsylvania, 1981-present], who was a Republican. So, this same acceleration has been occurring in the suburban counties. It started out slow, it's accelerating and I see it gaining speed. The more homes we're building, the people are completely different, and most of them from Philadelphia. So,

they abandon Philadelphia; they abandoned Philadelphia and are very – when they move out into the suburbs, they are very upset at the politics of where they came from, but they bring their same voting patterns out to the suburbs and that is what is going on.

**HM:** Can you talk a little bit about the camaraderie of the House? You mentioned it earlier. You alluded to it a little bit before. I wonder if you could talk about that now?

**RB:** Well, people have referred to me as a character up here and I probably am, but I have served with some very interesting people, very interesting people; people who are still here, who were here when I came in. Bill Deweese [H. William DeWeese; State Representative, Greene County, 1976-present; Speaker, 1993-1994], Gaynor Cawley [State Representative, Lackawanna County, 1981-2006], Tommy Tigue [Thomas Tigue; State Representative, Luzerne County, 1981-2006], and for whatever other – they're still here. Jim Manderino [James J. Manderino; State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1967-1989, Speaker of the House, 1989], Matt Ryan [Matthew J. Ryan; State Representative, Delaware County, 1963-2003, Speaker of the House, 1981-1982 and 1995-2003]: people that I have shared a great deal with over the years, laughs and concerns. And they are just a small part of the list. If I had a list in front of me, I could tell you a story about every one of them and they could tell a story about me, too. Over the years, there has been an erosion of that, too, the camaraderie amongst us. We used to fight like cats and dogs when we got into here and were in Session. The debate, the interrogation was civil, but it was heated. But it was always civil. There was a night life up here at that time, too. And, it was an unusual night when you did not run into, oh, my

goodness, fifteen, twenty colleagues on any given night at one of the local watering holes or restaurants – watering holes after restaurants – and you’d share a story or a cigar and a cigarette. Different times, different times. And a newspaper reporter or a newspaper publisher; we had publishers who served here, in those days, and I don’t know if it’s me who’s changed or whether the times have changed, but I’ve seen an erosion of that camaraderie and it’s very difficult to find people out at night now. You can go to virtually every restaurant in town and you may run into one or two people and it’s usually the same one or two people you’d run into next week, too. And, you lose something if you don’t have that after-hours camaraderie, in my opinion, because if you have that after-hours camaraderie, a part of it comes into the day work, too, you see? There is an element of trust that begins to establish itself and it’s amazing how much you can get done when there’s trust between people who work together. You get to know a person’s other District, why they think the way they do, because you have more time after hours and if something occurred during that day, you’d say, “Why did you vote that way? Are you nuts?” “No, I’m not nuts. You know, I have a plant over here that is about to close, and it has eighteen hundred people over here. It just so happens, you know, I’ve got a next-door neighbor, I’ve got people up the street, I’ve got people that were active in my campaigns, I’ve got somebody,” and all of this has an impact because I hear them talk about what’s going on and I need to do this and I need to do that in order to make provisions to either keep them a viable company in the area, or to provide some job transition grants or retraining, all of which is more government, you see? And, when you hear that, and when you know that, then you understand somebody better, you see? When you understand somebody better they don’t have to look at the ground when they

make a vote that they ordinarily would not have made because they know you know. Okay? Now, frankly, I'm concerned that maybe some folks that got elected and have been elected in the last ten or twelve years don't have enough of life's experiences. Not that there are not good people; there are. There are good people. I'm concerned that they don't have the adequate background they need to be here. You can't have all academics. You can't have all governmental ex-pat[riots] here. *(laugh)* You need to have a blend of housewives, of fathers, of couples, of somebody who's had a business, of somebody who's lost a job. Everybody brings something to the blend here. Everybody can tell a story of life's experiences, that if you want to listen, you'll learn. And, I don't think we should allow people to come in here at twenty-one years of age, you know? I just don't think that should occur. You know, somebody could take issue with this, but I think you should learn how to make a payroll first. Know what it's like to give birth first. Know what it's like to pay your employees first, and you get what's leftover. I think you need to serve here having had a job and gotten fired from a job. They are life's experiences. And, I don't know if we have those kinds of Members coming in now. **[End of side A]** I'm pretty high in seniority in our Caucus and they're all good people coming in, as I said, don't get me wrong, they're all good people coming in. Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, in order to succeed, you need to be part of a team. Because, a team is an organization and if you have an organization, you can only succeed if there is a certain amount of discipline. Not the kind of discipline where somebody raps you up against the side of the head. But you need to know, there are some things that you need to do for the good of the all, not the good of just you. So, the lessons that you should learn are that you first come up here to be a representative of your District. You next then need to know

that you are a member of that particular Caucus and then you are also a State Representative. So there are some things that you need to do for the good of the Commonwealth and not for your own political viability. I don't think there is a vote that can be made up here that is that bad, that you are going to lose if you know why you made that vote and try to defend it, okay? If you don't do enough research before you make a vote up here, then how can you defend it? And, how can you make a vote, and how can you decide to equate what you are going to do, if you have no life's experiences? And so, I've been blessed. I've got friends on both sides of the aisle that I would jump into the Susquehanna River to save any one of them. There is something about each and every one of them that I can find that's good and I hope that they feel the same way about me.

**HM:** Were you so wise whenever you started in 1983?

**RB:** No.

**HM:** Did you have mentors and who have you mentored through the years?

**RB:** Oh, boy.

**HM:** That is a loaded question. *(laugh)*

**RB:** Yeah, a mentor sometimes provides a service without he or she knowing it and that usually is the case here. I didn't always agree with Matthew J. Ryan, who was the Speaker, our late Speaker or Jim Manderino, or K. Leroy Irvis [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker of the House, 1977-1978 and 1983-1988]. I was a student of what went on in Pennsylvania politics because I was an avid reader and I was always interested, you know, when I was active, politically. Herb Fineman [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1977; Speaker of the House, 1969-1973, 1975-1977], or a Cianfrani [Henry J. Cianfrani; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1963-1966, Pennsylvania Senate, 1967-1977]; they were all legends. They were all characters, and whether you agreed with them or not, they all gave you some valuable lessons of things they did right or things they did wrong. And, it helps you. Bill Deweese – you know, when I first came here, I thought he was a buffoon and a clown, but it did not take me long to know that that was not the case. And I'm sure others saw me the same way. But, it can take you a lot longer if you don't come here with some basic skills and that is why I am very concerned that those people that come here without those kinds of building blocks, if you will, and I am sure that somebody will have another opinion about it, but that's just the way I feel and it's been my life's experience in viewing everything that I've seen here in twenty-four years. Everybody has been a mentor for me because I have learned something from each and every one of them. When I made a decision not to run again, you know, I don't know, people that I didn't know that I was making a difference to let me know that I did. One as recently as last night, Dave Millard [State Representative, Columbia County, 2004-present], only a second term or one term, came to my office and said, "Ray, can I get a picture of you and

I together?” “For what, Dave,” I mean, we haven’t really been that especially close, and he is a very quiet man; a hard worker, a hard worker. And, he said some things that just knocked me off my chair, almost, you know and that’s occurred with a great deal of frequency. And, that kind of pay is worth more than being a millionaire, you know; that you have been a good teacher.

**HM:** Yeah, I think Senator Wonderling [Robert Wonderling; State Senator, 2003-2009] has gone on record listing you as a mentor as well.

**RB:** That’s nice, as well, yeah.

**HM:** Do you recall how you felt the first time you were Sworn-In as a Member?

**RB:** I was in awe. I was not cocky at all. I guess I was thirty-eight when I got Sworn-In. And, my dad was here – my dad is now passed away – and he was just so proud. I remember the first time I sat in my chair before the festivities started, there was flowers all around and I, kind of like, leaned back and I was looking up and I had to pinch myself. I really did. And I still do. *(laugh)* It’s just me here. Am I worthy of being here, you know? And, it’s a very humbling experience and every time I found myself getting too smart for my own pants, not sitting in that chair and looking around, and looking at the Apotheosis in the back, and that pinching yourself again brought you back, you know? Because there is a tendency of thinking you know everything. You only know a little bit more than somebody else, maybe in one little given area, but you don’t know it all. And

you may know more about what went on up here today than your neighbor who is just watching PCN [Pennsylvania Cable Network], but you may not know as much as that person does, okay? So if you can get a hold of yourself, grab yourself every now and then and get back, you'll be okay. But, I think it's been more humbling than anything, more humbling than anything. In our desk drawers, I think, for every new Member they should put a copy of the US Constitution, a copy of the Pennsylvania Constitution, and a history of the Apotheosis, and the characters behind the Speaker just to see who they are and what their background was. Not just a picture, "This is Ben Franklin, and you know, that's Dewitt, and that's William Penn." No, just a little, you know, two paragraph summary about each of those individuals and their background and the history of this building and a history of this Commonwealth since 1681. That would be a big help to those who think they may know it all.

**HM:** Do you remember your first office when you came to Harrisburg? What it was like, and where it was?

**RB:** Yeah, it was in this building [Ryan Office Building] and it was at the top of the stairs, room one-twenty-three, I believe. And, they gave me the office because it was my predecessor's, Marilyn Lewis. And, I don't know, I came in this building and you know, the staircases out here are, that you know, they are impressive if you come from someplace else. *(laugh)* If you don't work here every day, it is impressive; even the building in its deteriorating condition at the time. And that first term, I spent a lot of nights in my office because the days are so hectic that you really do have to come back to

your office at night to answer mail, draft letters, return some phone calls, and get your thoughts ready for the following day. And, I had never had an office like that and I had good staff and I now know that it wasn't the best office in the Capitol. (*laugh*)

**HM:** You have a very nice office now.

**RB:** I have a very lovely office right now and there are folks that come in and say, "Oh, boy, when I get elected, I'm going to get an office like this?" I said, "Yeah, it's going to take twenty years." It wasn't done for me, it was done for the seniority and the amount of activity you are involved in. But, the present office that I have was—where my secretarial staff sits now housed my office and my secretary, so it was quite small then, so. But, there are meetings that are held there and so that's why the Chairmen get bigger offices and what have you, but it's seniority; seniority more than anything else.

**HM:** Well, I wanted to talk to you about the committees that you have served on, which are numerous.

**RB:** I have served on quite a few of the committees: Health and Welfare; Game and Fisheries, when I first came here; State Government; Finance Committee, which is the tax-writing committee. I was on the Appropriations Committee; I Chaired the House Agriculture Committee; I Chaired the Consumer Affairs Committee. You know, you—

**HM:** Liquor Control, Consumer Affairs, (*laugh*) yeah.

**RB:** Not all of them, but an overwhelming majority of those. Twenty-four years is a long time.

**HM:** I was wondering if you could talk about some of the issues that came in front of you as Chairman or some of the more interesting issues that came – ?

**RB:** Some of the more interesting – as a Chairman?

**HM:** Yes.

**RB:** As a Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, it is the number one industry in the Commonwealth, and so it wasn't the type of background that I had to chair the Ag Committee, so I had to be a student first and I had a lot of help. I had a great staff. I had to work with all of the Agricultural Associations throughout the Commonwealth. I just, frankly, got in a car and went all around the State to meet as many people as I could in the Industry and learn as much as I possibly could about the production of food and its distribution throughout the Commonwealth. And how many farms we had and what the principle products of those farms were; dairy production being number one. We've got over twenty-five thousand farm families that live in the Commonwealth so, you know, it's the number one industry. It's not steel production or computer production or whatever. But, the issues were not being attended to, no one was leading on some of those issues, and I remember I went over and I talked to the newly appointed Secretary of

Agriculture at the time, Charlie Brosius,<sup>7</sup> who was a mushroom farmer from Chester County; great guy, great, great person. He had that business background, too, that I admired so much in governmental officials and, an older fellow, he was in his fifties at the time. And, I said, “Charlie, what is going on that we need to address?” He said, “Everything.” He said, “Everything.” He said, “Our dairy farmers are not getting the kind of money that they need to get to be able to sustain them and subsidize the operation of their facilities.” He said, “The mushroom growers in Pennsylvania are being harmed by imports from other countries where their government subsidizes the growing of mushrooms. We don’t get government assistance here.” He said, “We have very antiquated laws within the Department of Agriculture is also where the Dog Law is contained. And, at that time you could buy a dog license, it was mandated that you have a dog license, but you only paid a buck. And so, the entire operation was being financed by that dollar a year, of which fifty cents went back to the County Treasurers or the selling agents. And, the trucks were all bad. They had antiquated equipment. They were demoralized and it just wasn’t functioning the way it did. Again, you know, I don’t agree on big taxes, but I agree that if you have a Department by law, well, then you have to operate it. You have to operate it. And so, they needed a dog license fee increase. We were able to get that done in an Administration that didn’t like taxes, by a Chairman of the Committee that didn’t like taxes either, but we had to get it done. Either that or phase out the department. And, we also suffered one of the worst droughts in Pennsylvania history and our farmers lost a great deal of their reserves by planting crops of which we had no rainfall all summer. And, so I went around the state with the Democratic Chair, who was sick at the time, Italo Cappabianca [State Representative, Erie County, 1979-

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Brosius served as the Secretary of Agriculture from 1995-1997.

2001] from Erie County. He went as many times as he could with me, and we just, you know, at the end of August we saw corn that was only ankle-high, and yet we had a banner year under the Ridge<sup>8</sup> Administration with some huge surpluses, so I just, I said, “We need to reimburse farmers for some of their losses here. We need drought assistance.” And these were emergency conditions. I don’t like to give tax money to people, but we couldn’t afford to lose our farms either or see them go under. And, we were able to pull, kicking and screaming, if you will, the Governor into this and the State Senate into this and say, “Hey, we need to make these people whole or we are not going to have them. We are already being attacked by the suburban sprawl on the one hand and now, you know, they are getting kicked again. They can’t survive.” And so, I was able to get a great deal of money. It was historical and unprecedented for Pennsylvania farmers and for Ag producers. That was my work and the good work of my staff and that’s – I want to be remembered for that, primarily, so that was great. The Consumer Affairs, I came in just as we needed to do a reauthorization of the telephone act. That’s done every ten years. It is very contentious and I had two predecessors as House Consumer Affairs Chairman that did not want to do it. It involved a lot of work. So, I grabbed the bull by the horns and we got that done, too. But I was only there a short time, and then I moved into Leadership in January of 2004.

**HM:** Something that I thought you were a little bit ahead of the game on was the agricultural terrorism, your work with that.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Ridge served in the US House of Representatives, Pennsylvania from 1982-1994; as Governor of Pennsylvania from 1995-2001; Assistant to the President for Homeland Security from 2001-2003; and as the first United States Secretary of Homeland Security from 2003-2005.

<sup>9</sup> House Bill 1492; Act 27 of 2001

**RB:** I worked with agricultural terrorism because we saw what – there’s groups out there that do not feel that we should do any research on animals, nor should we grow crops that are anything other than organic. We wouldn’t have the food that we have in this country if we didn’t have products that did away with pests or that were not fertilizers other than organic fertilizer and we would not have the yields per acre that we have, nor the cheap food prices, so. But, I also knew that there were terrorists out there that viewed themselves as animal rights people and that viewed themselves as people that – we should only grow natural crops. And, they were actually in a position to do harm and damage by making people sick and by killing the same animals that they swore to personally defend to further their cause. And, so, it was a growing epidemic, if you will, of terrorism towards our crops, terrorism towards animals, to stop research and to stop genetic modified crops. And, we were involved in that before 2001.

**HM:** That’s why I said I think you were ahead of the game. Well, as somebody that did not come into the Committee of Agriculture with an agricultural background, you certainly sound like you have a full command of all the issues and I’m impressed.

**RB:** I had good teachers. I had good teachers. I sought out the people that I knew could help me and if I approached them the right way, everybody wants to be teacher, you know? It depends on how somebody comes up to you. You would tell me everything you can about your job, won’t you? You had to trust them, so I developed relationships first and then I went and I talked to people.

**HM:** What were some of the other major pieces of legislation that you worked on, not necessarily in regard to your committee work?

**RB:** There were lots of things that I had introduced legislation over the years, that subsequently became law, but maybe not under my paternity, if you will. There was a bill [HB 1521, Act 44 of 2005] we just did last year that provides exemption from taxation for gold and silver that is held in an investment trust, if you will. We provide those same tax incentives if you buy stocks or bonds or mutual funds and also real estate but, we don't – there's people that are taught to keep at least ten percent of your total assets in tangible products as well, like gold or silver because, you don't know what kind of conditions go on. And if you ever take any investment courses in school or at one of the night universities, or even in the high schools, they do it for people that are looking for retirement. You should have a certain amount of your assets in real estate certainly, stocks, bonds, money market, some in tangible products. And, so, we were taxing them, so there was a disincentive to do that. Most of the dealers were not charging tax anyway, so what they were doing was not kosher, so I wanted to make it legal. I introduced the bills many years ago and we had lots of hearings on it, but we always had some objection from the Department of Revenue that they were going to lose money. Well, they could not show us that they would, so I just left it go and a couple of others picked the bill up over the years and did it. There was lots of legislation like that that I have been involved in. Fingerprinting of newborn children [House Bill 564, Act 70 of 2004]; taking their fingerprints and taking their footprints – I think they always did footprints, but –

fingerprinting we were doing as well. And the reason it wasn't done was because people were concerned about the state or some organization being the repository of that information. And, so, there was a way of doing it by saying, "Okay, mom and dad, you get it. Okay? You get it." Because back when we were talking about it, there were lots of children being abducted. There still are today from people who can't have a child, or there is at least one a month, you know, somewhere. And, so I did that with a couple of folks who are no longer here from Allegheny County. We got that done. The 9-1-1 access imposing the dollar fee; that was a bill I had worked on years ago. You know, it is so hard to ring my bell, if you will.

**HM:** Well, like I said, I think that some of your legislation probably was done through amendments, but what a wonderful legacy you have left. What do you think was the hardest issue you ever had to face?

**RB:** The one that affected me the worst was – it almost appeared innocuous to people – do you mean as a legislative issue or something that I had to do legislatively?

**HM:** Either. I mean, that –

**RB:** We had a Supreme Court Justice who was mentally ill and our Constitution doesn't make any provisions for the removal of a person like that, removal from office, except the impeachment process. And the impeachment process is a necessary process, but not for the removal from office for somebody who is sick. And, so, we were left with only

that device of removing somebody. I took that personal. I took it personal because it disenfranchised somebody. By the impeachment process, yeah, you remove him from office, which is your ultimate goal, but you forbid them from ever holding public office and you leave a stigma upon the record for not only them, but their whole family. And, probably the only one in my memory that – and I talked to the managers of the impeachment process in the House, and you know, they tried to reassure me that this was a vote that was absolutely necessary, that we had to do it, that there was no other way of doing it, and we haven't changed it since then. And, I shared that with a lot of people during that time and I think that left me with something – I always thought I did the wrong thing. I still, to this day, think, “That’s the wrong way. There’s got to be another way.” And, for those who think that mental illness is an irreversible problem, I don’t believe that. Or that a physical disability is an irreversible – I don’t believe that either. I am an eternal optimist, okay? I just think we did something for the wrong reason. We achieved the goal, which was to remove him from office, and I agree he needed to leave office. I just don’t agree that the impeachment process is the only one that should be made available for that. You disenfranchise him. He can’t ever hold public office. They also cannot vote. And, so, I took that personal. On political issues I’ve been frustrated many times around here. Lots of times you would do all the work and somebody else will put the bill in and it’s done for political purposes. It’s either done by the opposition party, or it’s done by the Senate, or it’s done by, maybe, somebody you think won’t work as hard as you do. It does matter to people. I’d much rather get the job done, but, by the same token you know, when you run for reelection you are asked, “What have you done lately?” So, people who come here to serve or in Washington [D.C.] to serve, or go to

the township supervisors – there's got to be a feather in the cap somewhere. You know? Yeah, you can talk about that, what you've been involved in or those amendments, which you did, which are the same as a bill that change the composition of the legislation. Those sometimes, are the only devices that are made available for you, but it is at least made available. But, for somebody to just –

**HM:** *(laugh)* Frustrating.

**RB:** It is. It is. It still is to this day.

**HM:** What do you think the hardest issue is before the Legislature right now?

**RB:** What it will be is cable competition. I don't think the gaming issue is a tough issue. I don't think that lobbyist disclosure is a major issue. If we would stop playing politics about the moral implications of gaming or if we stop appeasing the press on lobbyist disclosure, we can get something positive done that we need to get done. I want you to find one legislator who has gotten three letters or three phone calls from constituents who are not a member of Common Cause, who are not affiliated with the Pennsylvania Newspaper Publishers Association who has said to them, "We need lobbyist disclosure." If they tell you, they're lying to you. And, I'll tell them to they're face they're lying. I've gotten no calls. I went to a lobbyist disclosure forum that was held by the Pennsylvania Newspaper Publishers Association and they said, "Why isn't this being done?" It isn't being done because you want too big of an apple. You want to force lobbyists to discuss

how much they pay for the electricity in their building, how much they pay for the lease of their automobile, how much they pay for their secretarial staff, how much they pay for the computer in the office, how much rent they pay, and to whom. What's that got to do with lobbying? That's a business, okay? The public only wants to know what you, the lobbyist, is spending to influence me; if you're buying me a cup of juice and how often, if you take me to dinner, and how often and how much; if you put me on a plane to fly me somewhere or pick up. That's what the public wants to know. You want too much and you won't settle for that which the public wants. And, I said it on a live PCN broadcast and I didn't get one negative call, except from the editorialist at the Harrisburg *Patriot News* and then he said to me he didn't disagree but, sometimes you have to ask for everything. Well, not in government. You have to ask for that which is absolutely necessary, or else the public doesn't grasp it. And in the Allentown *Morning Call*, they did a story, "Well, why won't the House do it? The Senate does it." The Senate reported sixty million dollars last year to wine and dine those Senators. Hello? There is not one member of the public that believes – even the most cynical reader of the newspaper believes that fifty Senators can eat sixty million dollars worth of food. If you do what I just said, the public wants to know how much you spend to influence Ray Bunt, not how much you pay to have your computer in your office, okay? This stuff, this stuff. And, we can get there. But those two issues are not as important or reconcilable. It's just politics on both of those issues: the moral implications of gaming and the politics on lobbyist disclosure. The most important issue for Pennsylvanians, for people, is, "My cable is too expensive and I want choice." That may not have been the case ten years ago, but to pay eighty bucks a month to watch [channels] three, six and ten, and a handful

of others, where the quality has just sunk into the ground and I'm not picking on one company or another, I'm just telling you that without competition, in any given area, this is what you're going to happen. I would not have thought that years ago, but I do think it now. If you only have one gas station in a town, they can charge you whatever they want. And guess what? When they can't raise the price enough, something's going to happen with the product. It's what's going on. The same thing happens in the pharmaceutical business or with a pharmacy, or with a hairdresser, same thing. And it's happened here with the cable industry. They pioneered a business and you've got to give them kudos, but technology is out there right now and people want to take advantage of the technology of the competition and the service. In Boston, you can buy what is called a "Triple Play," phone service, broadband and cable TV for \$69.95 a month, for only one reason: competition. You check your cable company and I don't care who it is, you won't get a "triple play" for \$69.95. That's going to be a big issue. And the reason it's going to be a big issue is because they're big companies. You have the communication companies and the broadband industry and they're big. They're huge. Anybody that can buy Disney is big and anybody that provides phone service is big and so they're going to spend a lot of money. They're going to have intense lobbying and it's going to be a nasty battle. I got involved in it, to a degree this year, but I had to pull the plug on it. I just didn't have enough time before I leave.

**HM:** Well, that is my next question: what would you like to see passed before you leave?

**RB:** That's it and it can't be done. So, I just had to face reality and say, "You know, we only have so many days left and it just can't be done."

**HM:** So someone else will have to take up that.

**RB:** Somebody else has to take up – and I gave it the good battle and I had five or six hearings across the Commonwealth this summer and early fall and hopefully I laid the groundwork and somebody will ask in ten years when the bill gets done, "Well, who was all involved in this?" Maybe they will know me, maybe they will not, but at least it got done.

**HM:** Well, I wanted to ask you next about the process leading up to your selection as Majority Caucus Secretary.

**RB:** A position became available and I threw my hat in the ring. And, about a week later, the field was four candidates and one of them was a colleague of mine from Montgomery County, who I don't ever feel was really interested. I guess he wanted to talk about something else. And then, there was a Bucks County Candidate, Dave Steil [State Representative, Bucks County, 1993-2008], Bob Godshall [Robert Godshall; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1983-present] was the one from Montgomery, and then Jerry Birmelin [State Representative, Wayne County, 1985-2006]. All of those candidates were good people and Bob Godshall pulled down off the ballot and Bucks County was seeking something if they couldn't get the Leadership position. And no deal

was made with them and so I had to go into the race with two opponents. And, I needed fifty-four votes on the first ballot to win, and I only got fifty-two, with three candidates. So, we had to take it to a second ballot, and David Steil, the Bucks County Candidate, had to drop off because he didn't have enough votes. But he had enough votes to deny me on the first ballot. And so, I won on the second ballot and they all got up to make it unanimous. But again, it was not a nasty battle. Regional issues came up, parochialism. There was some concern whether it was a fight between the far right and the right of center, you know. I think there is a great deal of that going on today, and we have to be concerned about that in our Caucus, but we were able to run a good campaign and we were able to do it without being personal. And, we were able to win because I didn't want to win at all costs. And I won.

**HM:** Well, you talked about the void and that was because of Representative Cornell's passing.

**RB:** Representative Roy Cornell [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1979-2004] created a vacancy in Leadership by his untimely passing. He had brain cancer. Roy and I were very good friends. We lived together here in Harrisburg in our house when we were up here. We were good friends. We had dinner virtually every week together. He was Policy Chairman and that left a position there and Mario Civera [State Representative, Delaware County, 1980-2010] then became the Policy Chairman and that made the Majority Caucus Secretary position open. So that's the position I ran for and that's the position I'm in. It's called 'the Baby Leadership.'

**HM:** Do you like being in Leadership?

**RB:** Yes, I do. Yes, I do.

**HM:** Better than being rank-in-file?

**RB:** No, there is more action. Oh, yes, better than being rank-in-file, but not better than being a Chairman of a committee. The Chairman of a committee wields a great deal of lee-way, if you will, on bills that get considered or don't get considered, and you are more involved in the process. Caucus Secretary, I am the administrator of what goes on. So, all the Chairman do pass reports of their committee action to me and we put it in such a way that we make it available then to you folks at the expiration of Sine Die. And, I am the holder of the record, if you will.

**HM:** And you call it the 'Baby Leadership?'

**RB:** 'The Baby Leadership,' yeah, Caucus Secretary. It is the fifth highest Constitutional Leadership position. You have the Speaker of the House and then you have – in the majority side, the Majority Leader, and then the Whip, and then the Caucus Chairman, and then the Caucus Secretary, then Appropriations Chairman, then Policy Chairman. So, it's the fifth highest leadership position and frankly, it has a history in Pennsylvania as being one of the older ones.

**HM:** It is another honor that's bestowed upon someone that's been here for many years.

**RB:** Oh, what a great honor. To be elected by your colleagues to a Leadership position.

The Chairman of a committee is appointed by the Speaker, but to be appointed to a Leadership office, you have to be elected by your colleagues, so it's an honor; a real honor. I got voted on by a hundred and nine members with a majority vote of them. That's a nice honor.

**HM:** What changes have you witnessed through the years in the House? There's probably been so many. It's almost not fair to ask.

**RB:** Well, technologically it has been beneficial. We have less paper, if you will. We have a computer system, a laptop system on our desk and I was involved in that, as well. I was on the Computer Services Committee that traveled all over. In fact, we went to California on that, to see how theirs operated, and came back with a recommendation to our Leadership that that's what we'd do and they implemented that. I was also on the Computer Services Committee when we were able to find a software company at the University of Montana in Missoula, to draw boundaries for school district transportation, for gerrymandering our reapportionment. Basically, you know, GIS systems so, I've been fortunate to be, if not the point person, at least part of a team, part of a small team that made some monumental changes around here. Some people will say I operate on the peripheral level a lot. Say what you want, but I was there so.

**HM:** Has technology helped or hindered the House?

**RB:** I think technology always is of assistance and I think it's helped a great deal. I'm not so sure if I controlled the decision of having TV coverage in the House, that we'd still have it. I think that's been a major deterrence to maintaining an orderly House. There will be people that will say, "Well, we need to see what's going on." I don't think that's necessary on a – if that was so, we'd all be mandated to watch everything all the time, so. There are many times when I think there's more pontification on an issue than should be and if we didn't have the cameras, I know for a fact that it would not happen because I've been here before we had it. And, I've had occasions of walking in unannounced into some of my colleagues' offices, not recently, but certainly at the time of implementation, where I've seen them just admiring themselves on the cable system. *(laugh)* And, I kid them about it. I kid them about it, but I think we could do away with that and we should do away with it. But, I don't think it's going to happen.

**HM:** When you think about your experiences in the House, do you have a favorite story?

**RB:** I don't have a favorite story. They are all stories. I could tell you a story about lots of things. Every day is a story. Some of them are late night sessions and some of them are tough votes where we've made a joke of them. They were just tough political votes, you know. But, you try to add some humor to them to lessen some of the proverbial shit going to hit the fan, you know? I hate to use that term, but it is certainly descriptive.

Gaynor Cawley figures into a whole lot of some of the most interesting times because, I think he's been here the whole time I've been here and when we needed humor, he provided it. And I know I'm not going to be the only person to sit here and tell you that he's not been involved in most of it. Bill DeWeese, John Perzel, lots of interesting stories, but it would take me a month and I know we can't do that.

**HM:** Well, what aspect of your job have you liked the most?

**RB:** I guess, as I remarked to you earlier, just being in a position to be able to be of assistance when people need help. Generally, when people call their elected official – and I don't mean this in a negative way – they are scratching the bottom of the barrel because they are frustrated, okay? And, most times, they've exercised every avenue that they feel is available to them to try and do it by themselves. Most people want to do everything by themselves and so when they call you, they are really frustrated and maybe mad, too, because they haven't been able to take care of it themselves. Boy, it is a nice feeling. I mean, it's a better feeling than getting a paycheck, really, when you are able to call somebody and say, "You know, what you've been so upset about, we've got some action here, okay? And this is what happened. This is why it happened. Please, don't lose the faith."

**HM:** Any special projects in your District?

**RB:** I've gotten red lights where none of my predecessors could have gotten red lights up: traffic signals; lots of bridges. Virtually every bridge in my District. It's those kinds of issues. I've never been really interested in being a bill-writer, if you will. I'll do what needs to be done, but I'd much rather make provisions for my District and I see my role not as a Legislator, but more as a State Representative: some person that people have elected to be their spokesman and to do things on their behalf. Okay? Most times that people have and want access to them, it does not deal with legislation. It really doesn't. They want you to make contacts on their behalf. And, if someone is cynical about that, I'm just telling you the way it is and you won't feel any differently about it until you make that call to your legislator, too to see just what they can and can't do. And, you know, if they can't, if they can document what they have tried to do, then you'll be much more appreciative of the job, maybe not the person.

**HM:** What have you liked the least?

**RB:** The loss of camaraderie here, [**End of Tape 1, Side B**] the loss of the interaction, if you will. The win-at-all-costs campaigns, the personal attacks that I've seen. Those sides – you know, I'm not here to criticize one Party or the other, or one person. I think, once you go down that road, I don't know how you get back from it. I don't know if you can have a gentleman's agreement without – if you break that gentleman's agreement, how do you ever put it back together again?

**HB:** How would you like to be remembered?

**RB:** That I made a difference. Yes, that I made a difference.

**HM:** You talked a little about your plans after leaving the House. Would you like to elaborate anymore?

**RB:** Well, my mother is going to be eighty-eight years old and I love her dearly. She lives in Florida and I need to see her and I need to spend time with her. And so, I am going down to see her and I want to travel out west a little bit. So basically, I want to do anything for three months. And then, I've talked to some folks in the Industry and maybe I can do something in government relations or consulting, you know. I can't work in the House for a period of a year, I certainly can in the Senate or the Executive Branch. Most of the Congressional delegation in Washington I served with at one time or another here. I know them all on first name basis. The State Senators, the same way, and I've been involved in most of their races, as well. So, if I cannot do that, some consulting work. But just anything that keeps me from sitting in a rocking chair. I don't want to do that, either. I can assure you, I m going to do some traveling, but I do want to work. I've been working since I was fourteen and I've got to work.

**HM:** Do you have any advice you can bestow upon new Representatives that will be taking their seats very soon?

**RB:** Take the time to listen; take the time to develop friendships and relationships. If you say you are only going to come here for two years, don't come here at all. If you say that you're going to come here for two or three terms, don't come here at all. If you want to say that only your ideas are reform ideas, don't come at all. I don't know how you build anything by destroying it. It's not the way I've seen life. If they come up here with that idea that they can destroy the Institution – the Institution has been going on since 1681, in some form or fashion – but, be careful of what you ask for; be careful what you do, because it just may work and it will take a long time to straighten out again. If you look at the history of Pennsylvania, since 1681, we have had some form of limited Constitutional changes because of some populist concern or movement that has come up. Every adoption of a reform is an adoption of a previous practice that was done away with forty years ago. So you will set us back. And each Constitutional Convention has set us back. So, a lot of what is going on is concern about the War, concern about high utility costs or energy costs or concerns about the loss of their pensions or healthcare. And the reforms are a whip that, "You did it!" That's not true. We're all victims of everything that goes on. Elected officials' families go to the War in Iraq and get killed or elected officials go to Iraq to serve. We pay the high gas prices, too. And so, who is the whipping boy? We're all in this together. Let's find solutions, not whipping boys. I just hope that we learn a lesson quicker or sooner than I think we going to.

**HM:** Well, that concludes our interview. Thank you so much. I've really enjoyed it.

**RB:** Thank you.