

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

**The Honorable Austin Lee (R)**

14<sup>th</sup> District

Philadelphia County

1957-1964

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Heidi Mays, House Archivist  
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Transcribed by: Erin Miller

**Heidi Mays (HM):** Good afternoon.

**The Honorable Austin Lee (AL):** Good afternoon.

**HM:** I'm here today with Austin Lee who served Philadelphia County between the years 1957 and 1964 as a House Member. I appreciate you taking the time to be here with me today.

**AL:** Well, I'm delighted to be here.

**HM:** I wanted to begin by asking you: what kind of influence did your family have on your early life and your political aspirations?

**AL:** Well, I was an only child, and my father was a Member of the Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1940 to 1950 [Thomas H. Lee]. As a matter of fact, why, in the District I represented, why, between the Hamilton family and the Lee family, why, we occupied the legislative seat for 40 years, so I sort of grew up in a, in a political atmosphere.

**HM:** So, why did you decide to be part of the Republican Party?

**AL:** Well, I guess I inherited that, but it sort-of conformed with my own particular feelings, and so that's why I am a Republican.

**HM:** Okay.

**AL:** I still am, even though the Republican Party hasn't always been good to me. *(laugh)*

**HM:** Okay. What types of jobs or experiences did you have before coming to the House?

**AL:** Well, I was, of course, in the service during World War II, and I'm also an attorney. I graduated from law school and was sworn-in in a hangar in Florida by a Lieutenant-Commander in the Navy because I took my bar examinations before I went off in the service, and so, in those days, why, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania provided for absentee admissions, and that was the way I got into it. And aside from that, why, that was the only sort-of experience that had any influence on my political life, the fact that I was a practicing attorney. When I first came to Harrisburg, why, when somebody said "unconstitutional" I got all upset, and after I was here for a while, I shrugged my shoulders and said, "That's for the courts to decide."

**HM:** Could you talk about your education? Where were you educated?

**AL:** Well, I graduated from Staunton Military Academy high school, and that's in Staunton, Virginia, and then I went to the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg,

Virginia, and then I went to the University of Pennsylvania Law School and graduated in 1943, and then immediately volunteered for the Service.

**HM:** What can you tell me about your service with the – did you say it was with the Air Force or Army?

**AL:** No, I was in the Navy.

**HM:** Navy.

**AL:** Yeah.

**HM:** Maybe you didn't say that, then.

**AL:** No, I didn't. No, I don't, don't think I said anything.

**HM:** There was an Air Force hangar, and that threw me.

**AL:** No, I was commissioned an Ensign in the Navy, and I went to Jacksonville, Florida, went through Aviation Ordnance School, and then I went to Pensacola, Florida and went through Aerial Free Gunnery Instructor's School, and then I applied for a position on the East Coast someplace, and, of course, obviously, I was sent to the West Coast. *(laugh)* And so, I went to work in what they called "CASUs," which is a Carrier Aircraft Service

Unit, so I was in naval aviation, and eventually, why, I went to school again and qualified as an Aerial Navigator and was assigned to a Naval Air Transport service and wound up on Guam, and I was on Guam when the war ended, and I came home and was discharged and went back to the practice of law.

**HM:** Do you think your experiences being an attorney helped you whenever you came to Harrisburg?

**AL:** Well, it helped in being able to understand the difference between criminal law and civil law and also penalties and litigation and so forth and so on, so I think it helped in a large way.

**HM:** Do you think your father having been a House Member helped you in any way?

**AL:** Well, he brought me up here a couple of times while he was a Member, so I knew where the House of Representatives was, and I met some Members, some of whom were still Members when I became a Member, so that was all sort-of helpful.

**HM:** Well, what motivated you personally to run for the Pennsylvania House?

**AL:** I was asked to run by the political leader in my District. It's as simple as that, because I served with him on the Building and Loan Board, and he used to go to the local restaurant for a milkshake, and he was a little overweight (*laugh*), but nonetheless, why,

we used to sit and talk for half an hour or so and then go our ways, and one night, why, he broached the subject of my possibly running for the Legislature, and eventually, he selected me, and so I was elected.

**HM:** Well, what was your first campaign like?

**AL:** Well, of course, the political leadership in my District was very tight and was strong in those days. They had committeemen in every, every District, so that campaigning really had to do with going to the ward committee meetings and speaking to the committee members, and, of course, after my first Session, why, I began to talk in other areas throughout the city of Philadelphia, because I was sort of designated as a, as a speaker, and I went where I was asked to go and talked to other ward committees here, there, and the other place, But as far as campaigning was concerned, why, we used to print brochures and we had bumper stickers, and we used to put little advertisements in the local newspaper, not in the big metropolitan dailies, but that was about the size of it because the organization was strong enough so that whoever they selected, why, usually they were the ones that were – they were elected.

**HM:** Did you have any tight races whenever you ran?

**AL:** In 1960, why, that was the Kennedy year, and I was a Republican running in a Kennedy year, and so when the votes were all counted up, why, according to our count, I was ahead by twenty-three votes out of twenty-some thousand cast, and the Democrats

had me down by seven. It turned out that the actual margin on the unofficial returns was 23, and that was without the opening of the absentee ballots, which had just come in to use at that time. After they were opened, why, I was ahead by 66, and that was the final result.

**HM:** So, were there recounts like there are today?

**AL:** In those days, why, they had voting machines, and they were mechanical machines, so that you could open up the back and see what the numbers were for the various candidates, and so that was the only recount that there was, that aside from the opening of the absentee ballots, which was before the County Election Board. And then we went to the warehouse and examined all the machines to verify that the results turned in were correct.

**HM:** Because you hear an awful lot about recounts, so I was just wondering if that – ?

**AL:** Yeah, well, it's evolved over the years.

**HM:** (*laugh*) In your own words, could you please describe your District, specifically the people, their issues, the sections of the County that you represented?

**AL:** Well, I represented an area in Northwest Philadelphia, and it was composed of three communities: Roxborough, Manayunk, and Wissahickon. Roxborough was sort of up on

top of the hill. Wissahickon was down in one edge near the river, and Manayunk was along the river on the other side of the, the community. I would say there were 30-some Protestant churches. There were five or six Catholic churches, and it was a pretty cosmopolitan sort-of an area. It was, I would say, middle class in the sense that there weren't a lot of poor people and there weren't a lot of terribly rich people, and so the kind of community that I represented. As far as issues were concerned, why, of course, I, at one time, I think in 1960 when I was elected, there were 34 Democratic Representatives from the city of Philadelphia and one Republican, and that was me. *(laugh)* So that, over the years, I became involved in a lot of issues that spread more than my own, my own District. Of course, the people in my District, why, all they were really concerned about were things such as taxes, and, then of course, when the Kennedy Campaign came along, why, abortion became an issue and so forth so that – you know, actually, I didn't get involved in a lot of issues as far as my constituency was concerned, but I did become involved in issues as far as the city of Philadelphia was concerned.

**HM:** What was the political make up of your District, or of your Seat?

**AL:** It was fairly heavily Republican, that is, by registration.

**HM:** Okay, and that's how they primarily voted then, Republican?

**AL:** Yes.

**HM:** Okay. Do you still live in the neighborhood in which you served?

**AL:** No, after I was defeated for reelection<sup>1</sup> in a Primary in 1964, yeah, [19]64, and after about two or three years, why, I picked up and moved to Paoli, which is in Chester County, and I lived in Paoli up until about a year and a half ago when we moved to Lancaster in a retirement home.

**HM:** Okay. Well, what was it like serving for the city, you know, Philadelphia, in a large Delegation, such as what you said. You were, what, one of 35 people?

**AL:** Yeah, well, I was friendly with all the Democrats, and they were, you know, friendly to me, and whenever we could, why, we cooperated on various things. I guess, the major issues that I was involved in, some of them involved Statewide issues because I was the principle sponsor of a bill in the sixties, and I can't remember the exact time, but it extended Civil Service coverage for State Employees, made a major expansion in Civil Service, and that was interesting because the Republicans in Harrisburg finally woke up to the fact that by extending Civil Service, they were protecting a lot of Republicans, (*laugh*) so they controlled the legislature at that time, and that's why they passed it. I would say locally in Philadelphia, why, I can tell you where the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority came from; SEPTA. There was a gentleman named Lennox Moak who was the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Economy League. He had an office in the same building that I did, called me one day, came down

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<sup>1</sup> Defeated by Wilbur H. Hamilton, who died after the Primary Election, and was succeeded by John Hamilton [1965-1978], who was elected in the General Election.

to see me, said it was time for a transportation authority in Southeastern Pennsylvania. He said, “Will you help me?” I said, “Yes.” I made an appointment with Governor Scranton [William Warren Scranton, Governor, 1963-1967], and Mr. Moak and I went to see the Governor, who was in his office along with Walter Alessandroni [Pennsylvania Attorney General, 1963-1966], who was his assistant, I think, Attorney General at that time. And, Moak made the presentation, and Scranton indicated that he was favorably disposed, so I introduced the bill, and it was eventually enacted into law. Also, on the local level in Philadelphia, one of the big bug-a-boos for many years that was pushed by reformers was called “City-County Consolidation,” and so that eventually in my last term, why, I was the principal sponsor of a bill that brought City-County Consolidation about, and, of course, that was what led to my defeat in the Primary because the political leadership in Philadelphia didn’t like that.

**HM:** Oh, why didn’t they like it?

**AL:** They didn’t like it because it meant the abolition of certain – in other words, City-County Consolidation meant there were officials in the city and officials in the county, and there was a lot of duplication of effort, and this enabled them at the local level to do away with certain of those duplicate offices, and they were occupied by Republicans, so they didn’t like it. (*laugh*)

**HM:** That's very interesting. How was the Philadelphia Delegation viewed whenever they came to Harrisburg? Because Philadelphia just always seems like it has so much power behind it.

**AL:** I think this goes back to the days even before Boies Penrose [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1885-1886; State Senator, 1887-1898; President Pro Tempore, 1889-1898] that Philadelphia, I believe at one time, because of population, had a majority of the Representatives in Harrisburg, and they used to do what suited them, which didn't suit the rest of Pennsylvania. As a result of which, why, the animosity toward Philadelphia has continued forever, and it still exists today, that they didn't like what Philadelphia did to them in those days, and they've been getting revenge ever since.

**HM:** So what, what – you talked about SEPTA being a special issue. Were there any other issues or things that you were involved in with that?

**AL:** Well, I really can't dredge up – it's been, what, 64, it's been, what, 40-some years, 43 years, and, you know, I just have no particular recollection. I was very active as a Legislator and introduced a large number of bills, and many of which became law. As a matter of fact, I used to get criticized by some of the Senate Leadership who were saying, "Well, all we do is we act on Austin Lee bills," and so, there it is.

**HM:** *(laugh)* How did you reach your constituents whenever you were a Member? You know, now today, we have computers that our Members are able to, maybe, shoot emails

to their constituents. Were you able to write letters or use the telephone, or how did you get your message to your constituents?

**AL:** Again, I want to emphasize the fact that I was the product of a political organization –

**HM:** Okay.

**AL:** – who, with committeemen in every division, why, they went around, canvassed every household, and made the case for the Republican candidates, including me. I did write a few articles for the local newspaper and, of course, I was available by telephone, although we didn't have anything that they have today, such as telephone banks and that sort of thing. We didn't have a lot of communication with people in the, the broad sense, meaning like newsletters and so forth and so on, because in my day, why, they didn't have an expense allowance that enables these people nowadays to send out newsletters two or three times a year, so that I didn't have any, any of that. I would say that the main reason for my election was the support of the local political organization.

**HM:** Okay. Whenever you came to Harrisburg, did anything surprise you as a Member? I mean, you already had the experience that your father provided you.

**AL:** Not really. I can't say that anything particularly surprised me. Of course, in those days, I think we were getting the magnificent sum of 3,000 dollars a year, plus 100

dollars in postage stamps, and a lot of the Members used to sell the, the postage stamps (*laugh*) that they got them for half price. (*laugh*) But, but no, I can't say that anything in that regard.

**HM:** Do you recall your first office?

**AL:** First office? We didn't have an office.

**HM:** Or, you didn't have an office.

**AL:** In those days, why, I had a seat on the Floor of the House with a brass spittoon, and it was, you know, a foot high, and it was a gorgeous sort-of thing, but we used to use it as a trash can. (*laugh*) But in any event, why, aside from that, all we had was a locker that was probably three feet high and maybe a foot wide, and that was all. There were no offices as far as Members were concerned.

**HM:** So, I'm assuming you had no secretary?

**AL:** Oh, no, you had a secretarial pool, and I think there were as many as, maybe, six ladies in the, in the pool, and if you wanted to send a letter, why, you went down to the pool, and some of them didn't have very good shorthand, but you dictated the letter, and then they made it up for you to sign. But, of course, remember, I was a practicing

attorney, so I had a secretary in Philadelphia. So, the bulk of my correspondence, why, I did from my office.

**HM:** Okay. So you –

**AL:** I would only respond to communications by constituents. Although my phone used to ring in the evening by kids who had homework assignments. They wanted to know who their Congressman was and who their State Senator was and so forth and so on, and the other people who wanted an appointment to Annapolis or West Point or anything, and a lot of people used to say, “Why aren’t you in Washington?” and thinking that I was a member of Congress instead of the House of Representatives in Harrisburg.

**HM:** So, you maintained your law practice while you were serving in the Pennsylvania House?

**AL:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

**HM:** And that was because you were a part-time legislature at that time, correct?

**AL:** That’s correct, yeah. As a matter of fact, my first Session, why, we were here, we came in January. We went home the middle of June and didn’t come back for the balance of the two-year term, and while I was here, well, they did amend the Constitution

to provide for Fiscal Sessions in the odd-numbered years. Of course, nowadays, why, they're in Session almost continually.

**HM:** And you said you didn't have a District office, which is something that's very common these days.

**AL:** No, we had no District office.

**HM:** But you maintained, perhaps, a District office, sort-of, in your law practice? Not at all?

**AL:** Not really, because my law practice was always different than my legislative activities, and if people wanted to see me, why, they came to my home.

**HM:** Okay.

**AL:** Or I went to see them.

**HM:** Very different, isn't it?

**AL:** Oh, yeah, oh, it's a lot different. *(laugh)*

**HM:** Could you explain how you felt during your first Swearing-In Ceremony?

**AL:** Well, it was fairly emotional that I can't remember who was here with me, but I remember I used to bring my children one at a time to Swearing-Ins. I don't remember which one it was the first time. But, because of my father's service and so forth, why, I got fairly emotional, but there were flowers all over the place, and we didn't do anything. We just got Sworn In. That's all there was to it and then we went home.

**HM:** Would you say anyone mentored you whenever you first came to Harrisburg?

**AL:** No, not really. That I made some, some firm friends among the class of Legislators with which I came in, and some of them I still have today, but as far as any mentor was concerned, why, no. If they wanted your vote, why, they would come around and talk to you, but aside from that, why, nobody sat me down and told me all the ins and outs of legislation.

**HM:** Okay. Well, who were you Sworn-In with, and who would you consider to be your friends?

**AL:** Kenneth B. Lee [State Representative, Sullivan, Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties, 1957-1974; Speaker, 1967-1968, 1973-1974], later Speaker; H. Jack Seltzer [State Representative, Lebanon County, 1957-1980; Speaker 1979-1980], later Speaker; and the Honorable James S. Bowman [State Representative, Dauphin County, 1957-

1964], who is a President Judge of the Commonwealth Court in Harrisburg, and those were the three major friends that I made during my service.

**HM:** Ken B. Lee. No relation, right?

**AL:** No, no relation at all, and he was another one who – his son later was a Member, and, of course, my father was a Member.

**HM:** So, very confusing for everybody, I'm sure.

**AL:** That's right.

**HM:** Would you say you had the opportunity to mentor anybody while you were here? Did you sit down with anybody and tell them – ?

**AL:** I helped a guy named James C. Humes [State Representative, Lycoming County, 1963-1964], who was a Member from, Lycoming County, I think, and aside from that, the only other one that I sort of helped a little bit was Robert Butera [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1963-1977], who came from Montgomery County. But I mean, mentoring was not a big thing in those days.

**HM:** What type of relationship did you have with the Speakers that were here? Obviously, you mentioned two Speakers that you were friendly with, so.

**AL:** Well, the first Speaker was Stuart Helm [State Representative, Armstrong County, 1941-1964; Speaker, 1957-1958, 1963-1964], and I didn't have any – you know, we knew each other and so forth. I wouldn't say that there was any particular relationship. Hiram Andrews [State Representative, Cambria County, 1933-1936, 1939-1940, and 1945-1962; Speaker, 1959-1962] and Robert Hamilton [State Representative, Beaver County, 1941-1972; Speaker, 1965-1966] were Democrats, and while I knew them, why, there wasn't any particular relationship then, and I think, I guess, Helm was the Speaker again in my, my last Session.

**HM:** Did you have any relationship with the Governors? I mean, obviously, you said you had numerous [*inaudible*], so that's why I'm thinking maybe?

**AL:** I guess – I'm just trying to think. Governor Leader [George Michael Leader, Governor, 1955-1959], I think, was the Governor my first Session. Of course, he was a Democrat, so I had no particular relationship with him. Had no particular relationship with Dave Lawrence [David Leo Lawrence, Governor, 1959-1963], and I guess the last Governor was Bill Scranton [William Warren Scranton, Governor, 1963-1967], and I was one of the first ones who came out for Bill Scranton to be Governor. He was then a Congressman from the coal region, and I met him and sort-of kibitzed as far as his campaign was concerned, but – and we were, we were fairly friendly, and I have nice letter from him thanking me for my contributions and so forth and so on.

**HM:** You've already mentioned some legislation and issues that you were involved in. Can you talk about some of those other things that you were involved in?

**AL:** What? You mean like the Bipartisan Management Committee?

**HM:** Not yet.

**AL:** Not yet. Okay. *(laugh)*

**HM:** I wanted to hear a little bit more about the Commonwealth Civil Service, the expansion of that.

**AL:** Yeah.

**HM:** You just mentioned it. I was wondering if you could tell me what were some of the issues that were involved in expanding, and who was involved?

**AL:** Of course, Civil Service is always a matter of sort of controversy between Labor Unions and the Administration or the, the, the general public and so forth and so on, because the unions want a low threshold in order to get a job and a high threshold in order to get rid of an employee. As far as everybody else is concerned, they want it just the other way around. They want a high threshold to be sure the person is competent and to get in, and then they want a low threshold going out. And, of course, Pennsylvania

was one of those states that had a large number of patronage employees, and the idea was that so many of them were in their positions, they knew what they were doing; they were experts in this, that, and the other, and so forth and so on, and the idea was to give them some sort of job protection so that they couldn't just be fired just because political leadership in the state changed. So that, in essence, was what it was all about. It was, in my view, why, a, a good concept and something that should have been done and it was done.

**HM:** Something else that I think you had marked down as one of your accomplishments was the Inheritance and Estate Tax of 1962.

**AL:** Yeah. My practice was mainly in wills and estates. I was a member of the Legislative Task Force of the Joint State Government Commission at that time and sat in on the drafting sessions by the advisory committee, and eventually, I became the principal sponsor of the legislation when it was introduced in the House. I introduced it and pushed it to be sure that it got connected, and it was. And it's still on the books. It's been amended a number of times since then, but it's, it's still in existence.

**HM:** Well, what were the issues surrounding that particular legislation?

**AL:** Well, there was – the Joint State Government Commission – when my father was a Member, he was a member of the Legislative Task Force, and they set about to revise the laws relating to wills and estates in Pennsylvania, and they had completed that by the

time I became a Member, and so that they moved on to inheritance taxes, and that was what I participated in as a Member, so it was just the, sort-of, the end of a series of activities in that field of the law.

**HM:** So, now it's complete?

**AL:** Yeah.

**HM:** Okay.

**AL:** Never complete.

**HM:** More amendments then. Something else that you had listed; you were a cosponsor of the bill to have Pennsylvania participate in the Kerr-Mills Act of Congress [1960-1965], which was the forerunner to Medicare, I think?

**AL:** Yeah. Well, back in the early [19]60s, why, Congress passed what was known as Kerr-Mills, which set up a system of assistance, medical assistance, to aged persons. The Democratic administration in Pennsylvania dragged their feet on implementing that law because they were trying to force the adoption of what later became known as Medicare, and I took the position that, "Well, why should we wait? We have the opportunity to help our aged citizens, and let's go ahead." So, I remember making a speech before a group of social workers in Philadelphia, and the Democratic Leader came to me

afterwards and said, “Wow. You really lit a fire under a lot of people.” And so in any event, why, eventually, why, the bill was introduced in order to implement the Kerr-Mills legislation. An interesting side light to that was that in the Appropriation hearings that year, why, the Department of Welfare came in, and we were asking them a lot of questions, and finally, I said to them, I said, “Well,” you know, “won’t you qualify in the various homes that you operate for medical assistance for these people?” and he looked at me and said, “Why, yes,” and I said, “Well, why don’t you come back tomorrow and give us an estimate of how much that’s going to amount to,” and they came back the following day with an estimate of 2,000,000 dollars for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, so that, that was something that I was sort-of, sort-of pleased to be able to do.

**HM:** What do you think is key, in your mind, to getting legislation passed?

**AL:** Well, the first thing; there has to be a need for it. And what you do in the legislation has to comport with all of the – there may be competing interests as far as the legislation is concerned and sometimes, why, you take one side and say, “That’s the way it ought to be.” Other times you try to reach a compromise and, you know, advocate something as sort of, sort of middle ground. So, I would say that you have to be careful in advocating legislation as to who’s for it and who’s against it and make your accommodation. I remember saying to Paul Beers, who is the historian for the House of Representatives, one time, I said, “Legislation is a search for consensus. That’s what it’s all about.” You’ve got to, to get to a point where you have the consensus of a majority of

the Members in the House and the Senate that this is the right thing to do for one reason or another. They may not like it, but they have reasons as to why they should do it.

**HM:** You sat on a number of committees, including the Banking Committee, First Class Cities, and Appropriations, and you served as Vice Chairman of that committee. Could you describe what the committee structures were like at that time and any thoughts on some of the types of legislation that may have come through those committees?

**AL:** Well, I don't have any, aside from the ones we've talked about, which I consider to be, you know, major pieces of legislation. I don't have any real recollection of any earth-shaking things. (*cough*) I guess one of them was the community college concept in Pennsylvania because there was a lot of agitation at one time – this was when I was on Appropriations – for the establishment of Community Colleges because after World War II, why, Pennsylvania was very fortunate because we had a system of thirteen State Teachers' Colleges, so that when the push came with the GI Bill and so forth to expand educational facilities, we had thirteen colleges around the state, all of whom had libraries and gymnasiums and a lot of the infrastructure that goes with the college, and all they had to do was build more buildings to house the students, and as a result of which, why, then they got into the, the community college concept, and there was a lot of pressure to make those four-year institutions, which I opposed. And so, what eventually passed was the community college is basically our two-year institutions, the idea being that they're a springboard for the people who succeed to go on to a four-year college.

**HM:** What about the committee structure? Can you talk about – ?

**AL:** Well, the committee structure in those days didn't amount to a lot. There was a Chairman. He had the right to call up bills for consideration. Most of the consideration and perhaps the educational bills for the city of Philadelphia, where there was a lot of debate or controversy or conferences, and so forth and so on. As a matter of fact, on education in Philadelphia, why, I was sort-of a leading advocate for funding in the Philadelphia School District, and I sort of stood alone. But nonetheless, why, we used to sit down with the people from Appropriations and eventually, why, the Executive Director of the School District, why, he was outside, and I would go out to him and say, "Well, they'll agree to this," and he had his assistant who would get out his little calculator and say, "Well, that's okay," or "It's not okay," and I'd go back. So, eventually, why, we'd agree on a figure, and that was what was in the appropriation bill – or the authorization bill, because that's another thing that I was involved in. In those days, why, the School Board in Philadelphia had to come to Harrisburg to get authorization to levy a school tax in Philadelphia, and I was the principle sponsor of the so-called "Educational Home Rule Act for Philadelphia," which turned the ability to levy school taxes over to the School District in Philadelphia with the approval of City Council, and so that was one that I'd sort of forgotten about.

**HM:** Did the committees have research staff?

**AL:** No.

**HM:** No. (*laugh*) Do you know when that came about?

**AL:** Basically, I think it was in Kenneth Lee's Speakership. He authorized a resolution for a study of the operation of the House. I think that in the Fineman [Herbert Fineman; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1977; Speaker, 1969-1972, 1975-1977] Era, why, they began to add staff, and so forth and so on, and so eventually, why, the staff got to be fairly, fairly substantial. Every year or so, why, they expanded the appropriations and hired more, more staff. At the present time, why, almost every committee has two or three or, or sometimes more staff persons assigned to a particular committee.

**HM:** Okay, we're going to start leading into the BMC questions. So, do you think it was a good idea to start adding staff, coming at it from a Member's point of view, somebody that – ?

**AL:** Certainly. Certainly, yeah.

**HM:** Okay. So, professionalization was a good thing?

**AL:** Yeah, and, of course, you know, there's a political atmosphere, so that not all the employees are there because of their particular expertise. Some of them are hired just to be hired. Others are there because of their expertise, but I think that the staffing of the

committees was a good thing because it provided a larger background of information as far as any piece of legislation was concerned.

**HM:** Some other expansions in staff were adding secretaries to each Member and giving them their own private offices; all good things?

**AL:** I think so, yeah. You know, not everybody was in the position I was in where I had a secretary in my office that I could rely on for correspondence. As far as Members are concerned in this day and age of more instant communication, why, I'm sure they get a lot more inquiries and input, and so forth, from constituents, and they have to respond to it, and in order to do so, why, you need somebody. You also need somebody to man your office in Harrisburg when you're not there, and to field the calls, and take appropriate action, either communicating with you, or doing what the person has requested, or referring it to somebody who can.

**HM:** Did you see any changes towards this process while you were here?

**AL:** Well, of course, I was here at two separate times. I came back after my House Membership 14 years later. Jack Seltzer, whom I referred to previously, was the Minority Leader, and when he was elected, why, he called me on the phone, said he was elected Minority Leader. He had 300 employees. He didn't know who they were or what they were doing. Would I come up here and help him? And so I said, "Yes, I would." So, I came and I think in the fall of the prior year, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* had run a

series of seven articles on the Pennsylvania Legislature out of control, and they talked about the expense accounts and all this kind of business and indicated that things were just in a terrible state, and so forth. So that, in the spring of the year when I was appointed as the Executive Assistant to the Minority Leader, why, they adopted a resolution for a study to be made of the House of Representatives, chaired by a former Representative named John Pittenger [State Representative, Lancaster County, 1965-1966 and 1969-1970], and I was designated as an *ex officio* member of that committee and sat through all of the hearings. As a matter of fact, I have the, the report of the committee. And when the report was finally issued in the fall of that year, that was an election year, and low-and-behold, why, the Republicans won control of the House of Representatives, and my friend Mr. Seltzer, was named as the Speaker. He then said to me, "Now, we have this report of that committee you were messing around with. Why, why don't you draw the legislation?" So, I sat down, referred to other states that had similar legislation, and prepared a bill, and we consulted with the Democratic Caucus, and we had a lot of input as far as they were concerned. I think the most unique thing about it was the composition of the, so-called, Bipartisan Management Committee. It's composed of five Members; three majority and two minority. But the important thing is that in order to do anything they had to have four votes, which meant that the minority always had a veto over anything that was, was done. And so, in any event, why, that eventually was translated into House Bill 777, which was enacted and took effect on December the 10<sup>th</sup>, 1979. And so, that then they met – the Bipartisan Committee was specified by Statute: the Speaker, the two Floor Leaders, and two Whips, why, they comprised the Bipartisan Management Committee. And they had a meeting, and I was

selected. They were going to do a national search for an Executive Director, and I said to them, I said, "Well, you're going to have egg on your face if you do a national search and you wind up selecting somebody that you know from back here. So, you better be careful." As a result of which, why, they made me the Executive Director, and a lady named Deborah Medvick was the Assistant Executive Director, and so we were faced with the proposition of trying to implement the provisions of the Act. In background, the employees of the House of Representatives, every time there was a change in political control, why, they had to go and get a sponsor. And people were fired, and people were hired, and so forth and so on. But there were a lot of people who were doing things, such as the reporters, the storeroom, the procurement office, the Comptroller's office, and so forth and so on, the people in there who had acquired expertise in what they were doing, and so forth and so on, and there was really no reason for them to be subject to this political whipsawing, and that was part of the background for the creation of the Bipartisan Management Committee. I think the Leadership finally recognized that these people were worthwhile and we ought to give them some sort of protection, and as a result of which, why, that was when we adopted the concept of CORE, which meant that basically all of the housekeeping functions of the House of Representatives were centralized in one area under the Chief Clerk, and that was what was done. We abolished the office of the Secretary of the House, which was a nothing office. He didn't do anything except occupy a chair and cash a paycheck, and so that that sort of in a shorthand way was what we did. Now, there were, I think, 30-some recommendations by this committee, and a large number of them were implemented and had been in effect for a long time, including your office of Archives, which I don't think I had anything to do

with the original establishment of that. There was a lady named Jackie Jumper who used to, you know, collect whatever she could, but the office sort of evolved from there.

**HM:** Yes, it did.

**AL:** But, we set up an Internship program, and we developed a set of personnel rules and regulations, which was quite an interesting operation. It took us months to come together on all that, but we finally did that, had pay ranges and classes and so forth and so on, so that, in my view, why, we went a long way to putting the office on a professional basis.

**HM:** You talked about the seven articles that were written, or the series that were written in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

**AL:** Yeah.

**HM:** What else was the climate like leading up to this committee to investigate and to make recommendations? Because I think we're looking at similar times almost 30 years later, you know.

**AL:** I think that's true because in many ways, why, the Bipartisan Management Committee and the Chief Clerk, they've been in existence and in operation, and in many ways I can see that it may be that even though we didn't think about it way back then, why, they probably ought to be consolidated in some, some way, and really there ought to

be one person in charge, because back in those days, why, everybody was all excited about R[epublican] and D[emocrat]. In other words, you had to have Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee (*laugh*), and that's why I wound up with a Co-Executive Director because the Democrats wanted somebody as a, as a Co-Executive Director equal to me, and, you know, I shrugged my shoulders and said, "All right. If that's what you want, why, that's fine," and he and I got along very well, so.

**HM:** And who was that?

**AL:** His name was Robert Hendershot, and he was an employee of the State for some time, but very capable guy, and we did well together because we sort of complemented each other.

**HM:** You served as Executive Director for 10 years, correct?

**AL:** Yes, yes.

**HM:** Can you talk about the duties that you experienced as Executive Director and some of the issues that you faced?

**AL:** I would say the main issues that we faced were the construction of the Bipartisan hierarchy, and I mentioned the fact that the Comptroller's Office was important. They processed all the payrolls, and also the expense accounts, and in other words, I had to get

into that and to systematize a lot of the things that they were doing, the simple things. In those days they used to keep all the payroll records in bound books that were entered by hand. We computerized all that. We now have all the payroll records from the time I became Executive Director on microfiche so that, in other words, a whole year's worth of payroll is about the size of a dinner napkin now, and so that, you know, I mentioned the intern program, and the storeroom, the procurement office. Oh, there used to be lots of things that used to go on. In other words, we established the process of surplus goods went to the Commonwealth surplus. Where, if the Members wanted these things, why, they can go to the Commonwealth surplus and buy it at auction, or whatever, instead of being dealt something under the table in a sort of an informal sort of way. I'm just trying to think what else there was that, in other words, the personnel policies and regulations, why, that kept me busy for a long time, but then there also were the complaints by Members because they would go to Leadership and complain about me, and I wouldn't do this, and I wouldn't do that, and I said no to this and no to that, and at least as far as the Leaders were concerned, why, that was one of the important things about the Bipartisan Management Committee was in order to fire me, why, they had to get four votes (*laugh*), and so that, you know. And especially Matthew Ryan [State Representative, Delaware County, 1965-2003; Speaker, 1981-1982, 1995-2003], and even Jim Manderino [James J. Manderino; State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1967-1989; Speaker, 1989], why, they, they stood behind me, and they figured that I knew the difference between right and wrong, and that, you know, whatever I did was okay. I never had a Leader come to me and try to get me to change a decision that I

made, and that's, that was a good thing, because I didn't need the job. So I, you know, I shrugged my shoulders and said, you know, "If you want to can me, why, help yourself."

**HM:** (*laugh*) Do you recall any of the projects that you were involved in as Executive Director? I think the East Wing project may have been going on about that time?

**AL:** I was the liaison between the House of Representatives and General Services for the construction of the East Wing, and that was a, sort-of a, fascinating experience. We used to have meetings, usually once every – at least once a month, if not sooner than that with Wally Barron, who was then the General Services Secretary, and, you know, all sorts of problems were brought up and discussed, and we got into furniture and furnishings, as well. There was also Beam 5466 because, you know, when you have a driveway that goes down and then goes up, you can't measure the clearance from the bottom. You have to figure that a vehicle is going to have wheels on both of the slopes, and therefore, if you measure 13 feet, six inches from the bottom of the slope, why, the truck that will clear 13, six inches is not going to clear, and that's, that's the sort of thing that we ran into in connection with the construction. Also, they had a set of marble steps, and the – our people, the House employees, had to bring everything up that set of steps. It was only five or six steps, but some of the things that were brought in, such as reams of paper and so forth, were quite heavy, and so we had to – those were the sort of things that came into, into the view in connection with the monitoring of that building back there.

**HM:** I think – was there a Federal investigation at that time involving Senator Fumo [Vincent J. Fumo, Senator, Philadelphia County, 1977-2008] and ghost voting? Was that under your realm?

**AL:** No, I don't – there was no investigation of Fumo during my years, at least that I know of. No, the Cianfrani [Henry J. Cianfrani; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1953-1966; State Senator, 1967-1978] investigation was when when Jack Seltzer became the Speaker. Why, a guy named Charles Mebus [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1965-1978], who was a former Member, became the Chief Clerk, and within about three months, why, he called me on the phone. He says, "The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] is here," and so I went down and told them, I said, "Well, whatever you want, why, write us a letter, and tell us, and give us the authority that you have to demand it" and so forth, and – but I think it had to do with the Cianfrani investigation involving ghost employees.

**HM:** Okay.

**AL:** And he was eventually convicted.

**HM:** Okay. Do you think more measures need to be taken today to, to maybe increase some of the oversight that the Bipartisan Management Committee has over its Members, or, or do you think – ?

**AL:** Well, Heidi, I have no way of knowing at this stage in the game as to what's going on as far as oversight is concerned. As far as I was concerned, why (*cough*), expense accounts, why, whenever they had a problem in the Comptroller's Office with expenses, they came to me. And I made a decision one way or the other; either it has a legislative purpose, or it doesn't. If it didn't, why, we don't approve it. And we also ran across hanky panky by Members submitting, you know, expense accounts and that, you know, whenever we caught up with it, why, we were nice about it, but we said, "Uh uh, no. No more."

**HM:** Do you feel that politics is conducted differently today than it is, you know, or was during your service?

**AL:** I don't think so, not in any major sort of way. I think, you know, politics may have been – well, I didn't say it, but I'll take it back before I say it, because today's rancorous relationships between the two Parties in my view are just, it's inexcusable. Because there's no real reason as to why they should be at each others' throats all the time, and I would say, back in the days when I was a Member, why, you know, they had political agendas, and so forth and so on, but there wasn't a lot of personal rancor because, you know, you could argue on the Floor of the House and go out to dinner that night. It was all in a day's work.

**HM:** You also said you sat on the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission.

**AL:** Yeah.

**HM:** Can you tell me about your role in that?

**AL:** Well, Matthew Ryan, who was the Speaker, why, he called me in one day and said, “How about the State Ethics Commission?” I said “I’ll think about it,” and so I agreed to serve. And my observation was, in my entire service, 10 years, there was only one vote when I suspected that political influence was involved, and I think that by-and-large, as far as the Members were concerned of the Ethics Commission, they took their positions seriously, they were conscientious, and they did what they considered to be the right thing. And I remember that when they passed the Lobbyist Regulation and Disclosure Act, why, I was the Chairman of the Committee to do the regulations, and, oh boy, we spent hours and days on the regulations under the Act, and, of course, then the Supreme Court declared it all unconstitutional. *(laugh)*

**HM:** You served in government in many capacities. Which role did you enjoy the most?

**AL:** BMC. It was, sort-of, day-to-day problems to be solved, and I enjoyed solving them and interacting with the Leadership because, of course, my attitude with Leadership in those days was that if I decided to do something, why, I wrote a memorandum and I sent it to them. I said, “Unless I hear from you within a certain period of time, why, I’m going to do it,” and that always worked. *(laugh)*

**HM:** Did you have the opportunity to serve as Speaker Pro Temp?

**AL:** Oh, yes. Yeah.

**HM:** Did you enjoy that?

**AL:** Yeah, yeah, and, of course, back in those days, why, Eddie Moore [S. Edward Moore, House Parliamentarian, 1935-1964] was the Parliamentarian, and he was just a unbelievable resource because he went back 40-some years. But, he used to coach me as to how – “Your voice is too harsh; soften up,” and so forth, but when I would say that this bill has been read three times at length and so forth. But no, I enjoyed that. I used to get called on, you know, not a lot of times, but occasionally.

**HM:** What are your fondest memories of the House when you think back?

**AL:** I’d say the friendships, the associations that I had with, with people and, you know, as I say, why, some of them were friendships that continue today. I saw Jack Seltzer in last February in Arizona, and so we’ve been friends, social friends, for a long time. Of course, we both belong to the Yacht Club in Stone Harbor [New Jersey], so that was part of it.

**HM:** Very nice. *(laugh)* What would you say if you had to rank one accomplishment: what would be your greatest accomplishment?

**AL:** BMC.

**HM:** BMC. The creation of it?

**AL:** Yeah. I think it was something that its time had come and it was something that was needed and, you know, I just hope that in the present climate where there's some feeling as far as needs change, why, I hope they behave themselves and do it in the right way because then, you know, I've known Roger Nick, the Chief Clerk [2007-2009], a long time, and he's a very competent sort of, sort of person. I've known Pete Wambach [Peter C. Wambach; State Representative, Dauphin County, 1982-1992; Co-Executive Director, BMC, 1994-2006] and Susan [Susan Cohen; Co-Executive Director, BMC, 1993-2007] well, in a sort of a professional sort of way, and well, I understand Pete's going to retire, so the time is coming when they have the opportunity to do something.

**HM:** What aspect of being a Representative did you enjoy the most?

**AL:** I would say the sponsoring of legislation in which I either, in other words, strongly believed or did to accommodate somebody else, and so that I think that was the aspect that most appealed to me.

**HM:** Okay. What did you like the least? (*laugh*)

**AL:** I would say, oh, the sort-of behind the scenes sort-of stuff that went on, and, you know, somebody was always trying to get an edge on somebody else and always trying to submarine, and so forth and so on. I think that, to me, why, that was the worst part of it. In other words, I enjoyed the positive aspects but didn't like the negative.

**HM:** Are you still involved in politics?

**AL:** No.

**HM:** Officially retired.

**AL:** Yep.

**HM:** (*laugh*) Can you talk briefly about – ?

**AL:** When I was on the Ethics Commission, why, I wasn't allowed (*cough*), which was a blessing in a way because you can't contribute. (*laugh*) So, when I got all those letters, why, I put them in the trash can.

**HM:** Since you've left the House, you were involved in the Ethics Commission for 10 years, did you say?

**AL:** Yes.

**HM:** What have you been doing since that time? I guess that would be about 2001.

**AL:** Well, I had a stroke in June of 2000, and as you can see, why, it didn't affect me too much – knock on wood – but I figured that it was time for me to quit. At that time, I was still engaged in the practice of law, but I'm still engaged, but I'm trying to retire, not taking any new clients, and I'm working things down to the point where in the foreseeable future, why, I'll be completely over and done with it and completely retired.

**HM:** That's wonderful that you're still practicing.

**AL:** Yeah, well, but I don't know what I'm going to do. *(laugh)*

**HM:** Oh. If you had some advice to give to a new Member that will be starting soon, what would it be?

**AL:** I'd just say, be honest with yourself. Be honest and above board with your constituents, and don't get involved in the negative side of politics. That, in other words, you know, respect your opponents, but don't hold grudges, and so forth and so on," and that's, to me, why, that's the most important thing, as far as they're concerned.

**HM:** My last question: how would you like to be remembered?

**AL:** As an effective Legislator. I think I was effective not only as a Legislator but also as the Executive Director of the BMC. And I think I also was effective as far as the Ethics Commission was concerned. So, I would like to be remembered as effective in all three capacities.

**HM:** Thank you very much.

**AL:** I enjoyed it. Thank you.

**HM:** This concludes our interview.