

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Edward Burns (R)

18th District

Bucks County

1973-1990

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Heidi Mays, House Archivist
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Transcribed by: Raymond Whittaker

Heidi Mays (HM): Good afternoon.

The Honorable Edward Burns (EB): How are you?

HM: I'm well, thank you. I'm here today with Representative Ed Burns who served in the 18th Legislative District from Bucks County. He served from 1973-1991. How are you today?

EB: I'm fine.

HM: Great.

EB: Great. This is a great experience.

HM: Good. I wanted to begin by asking you about your childhood and early life. How did that shape your views on politics?

EB: I don't even think I knew very much about politics in my early life. I was born and raised in Branchdale, Schuylkill County. I went to school there until I was about in the 7th or 8th grade. Then, the war broke out and my father got a job, left the mines and came down to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. He was a pipe-fitter and got a job with the government in the Navy yard. And we all moved to Philadelphia. I don't think anything shaped my mind about politics. The war, of course, that was a big thing. My uncle was a

chaplain, went out with the Marine Corps to Guadalcanal, and so forth. But, politics, I never knew another President beside Franklin Roosevelt at that time.

HM: Well, was anyone in your family involved in politics?

EB: Back before my mother was married, my great-uncle Pat, her uncle, was on the school board in Reilly Township in Schuylkill County, in Branchdale. I didn't know much about that. I mean, I was just a kid growing up. But, he was on the school board there and that was about the only person that I ever knew from our family that was in politics.

HM: Did you always have political aspirations?

EB: No. Not really, no.

HM: Well, how did you become involved in politics?

EB: Well, that's a strange story. The Republican committee woman Barbara Reilly, who was tax collector in Bensalem at the time – and she is now Register of Wills in Bucks County - but, she came knocking on my door in Bensalem Township, after I was married and my wife and I moved there, and she asked me if I would vote for a Republican who was running for school board. And everything I knew about this guy was he was the “biggest bum in the ballpark.” And I said, “Why should I vote for him? I mean he's

apparently a bum in the ballpark, from everything I've heard." And we got in a little bit of an argument and she says, "Well, you're so smart, why don't you run?" I said, "Well, you're so smart, why don't you ask me?" (*laugh*) And she asked me and I ran and the other guy got off the ticket and I was elected to the school board in Bensalem Township. It was a surprise to me and everyone else.

HM: So, why did you become a Republican?

EB: I guess because she was the one that came over and registered us. My wife, I think at that time was still a Democrat. And it was one of those things in Philadelphia, at that time, you were one, in case you got a parking ticket. (*laugh*) You could always go to some committee person. But, my wife worked for Michael Bradley, she was his secretary. He was the Deputy Managing Director for the city of Philadelphia under [Mayors] Clark and Dilworth. And then she went with Mike Bradley, who had been a Congressman, to the Board of Revision of Taxes. So, she was a Democrat and I was Republican, but then of course when I won, she changed. (*laugh*)

HM: Well, could you describe your career and experiences before coming to the House, such as your education?

EB: Well, I graduated from Northeast Catholic High School in Philadelphia and I went onto LaSalle College in Philadelphia. I graduated from LaSalle and went into the service. [I] Stayed in the service for five years, between the reserve time and the active duty time;

that was during the Korean War. Then got out of the Service and went teaching in the city of Philadelphia. My mother had taught in the city of Philadelphia for many, many years and she was my mentor to teach in the city of Philadelphia. So, in those days, it was funny, my wife was making about, I want to get this right, about \$3,600 a year as a secretary with the city. She was on the higher level as a secretary. And I was making \$2,800 a year as a teacher in the city of Philadelphia. So, the suburbs were just starting to come along at that time, move along, and I got a job in the Neshaminy School District, I think [it] was a \$100 more, so I quickly took it. But, I went with the Neshaminy School District and I stayed there for about 15 or so years; I taught there. I left there to become a State Rep[resentative].

HM: What subject area did you teach?

EB: I taught Social Studies. I was certified in Social Studies and English, but I taught Social Studies. Most people say I couldn't speak English.

HM: Could you talk a little bit about your military background?

EB: I joined the Navy in 1950 and that was during the time of the Korean War and I was sent on board ship. I was on a PC, which is a Patrol Craft, that was a weather ship on the Great Lakes. I don't know how, but because I was a History major, I was transferred to an intelligence unit for the rest of my career. As a history teacher, the Navy assumed I was qualified as an Intelligence Officer. And often during the Vietnam War, I was

teaching and I was called every summer when they knew I was out of school, they would issue me orders to go down to Pensacola. So, I was in Pensacola teaching Naval History and World Affairs for about five years, or five different summers. Then, they started calling me on different times. As war increased in Vietnam, I did a lot of ASW work—Anti-Submarine Work—because the Russians, at that time, were running the submarines between the North Sea and the Norwegian Sea, and so forth, down to Cuba. So, we did all the patrol work on the Atlantic, or a lot of the patrol work. And I was briefing; I was a briefer at Willow Grove. I was a briefer up at Brunswick Naval Air Station. I was in Bermuda for about five years, I mean I was back and forth. In fact, one time I was still in the Legislature and they called me. I was down in Bermuda and the planes that would leave Willow Grove to come down to Bermuda for ASW work, they would bring the mail down to me and I'd call back, it got to be fun for awhile. So, you know, after the Vietnam War things settled down a bit and I was a "weekend warrior."

HM: Well, why did you run for the House of Representatives?

EB: Well, at that time, I had just won the School Board election and I was the only Republican – no, I'm sorry; there were two Republicans who won. One won for Supervisor, Henry George, and I won on the School Board out of all the candidates in the Township. The Township at that time was about maybe 90 percent Democrat and 10 percent Republican. Henry had been a police officer and he was known, and I was a teacher and I was known. So, I was sitting there fat, dumb, and happy as a School Board member and a teacher, and Otis Littleton came down to see me. I don't know if you

remember Otis. And Otis said, “Look we’re going to start you, one of the two guys that won,” and the only reason they picked me for this seat and not the other guy was they had the other guy figured out, Henry George, was going to be County Commissioner. That was the big job; Legislator was like a throw away. So, he asked me if I would run for the new 18th Legislative District. And I said, “No, I don’t want to run.” At that time, I was making a lot of money as a teacher; \$15,000 a year. I had Masters plus 60 credits above my Masters and they were paying \$15,000, which was a lot of money in those days, and the Legislature was paying \$8,000. I said, “Are you crazy? No, I’m going to take basically a \$7,000 cut to go with the Legislature.” I said no. And he kept after me and they kept calling me and Sam Hayes [Samuel E. Hayes, Jr.; State Representative, Blair, Centre & Huntingdon Counties, 1971-1992; State Secretary of Agriculture, 1997-2004] called me and told me he was a teacher who had come to the Legislature, and so forth. And I talked it over seriously with my wife and at that time the Legislature had passed a bill raising the pay from \$8,000 to \$15,000. Now I’m right on the same level. And I think they had \$8,000 expenses, but they cut the expenses. It was \$8,000 salary and it used to be \$8,000 and \$8,000, but then, I think, they cut the expenses at that time. And it was \$8,000 and something. And I sat down with my wife and she said to me – and I’ll never forget this – she said, “They’re only going to ask you one time. You’re going to have one shot at this thing and okay.” And lo-and-behold, luckily for me, [George] McGovern was running on the Presidential ticket for the Democrats and Richard Nixon at that time was a very popular Republican, he was running on the Republican side and luckily I won. Slightly, but I won.

HM: Did anyone help you get started with your first campaign?

EB: Not really. Not really. There were no House members or staff that came down. There was no money from Harrisburg. There was nothing. I mean, we did everything. I had some good people working for me. A fellow by the name of John Winward, Doris Jacobsen; they were people who lived in Bensalem who I knew. And John was an especially great guy because he was with Bell Telephone. He did one super thing one time. He was, right before Election Day, he had been on the train with Nixon, and so forth, as a Bell Telephone guy/communications-type. And he had this big badge saying something about “presidential,” and so-forth and so-on; he looked like a big shot. And he had this badge and he had his camera and on Election Day he said, “We got to be the first ones at the polls. Then we will go from poll to poll.” I said okay. So, we go up and [there’s] a big line waiting and John saying, “Get out of the way here. Here comes the candidate!” And he’s taking my picture and the people are saying, “Who’s that? Who’s that? Oh my God, he’s with the President.” But, John played the role and we went around to all the polls like that and people are coming up and saying, “Can I have my picture taken with you?” (*laugh*) It was great and I won.

HM: Did you like campaigning?

EB: You know the way I campaigned? I hit every door in my Legislative District every campaign I ever ran and it really paid off. I mean people knew me. They may not have liked me, but they knew me. And I always wondered who those 5,000 people were who

voted against me. I could never figure that out. But, anyway, that's the way I won. Because I was in a District that was, at that time, maybe about 10 percent Republican and a lot of people at that time were moving up into the Korman Development which is behind the Neshaminy Mall now, and those people were all Philadelphia Democrats. A little bit well to do; highly Jewish area it became. And a lot of lawyers and so-forth and so-on. But, I got to know them because I knocked on their doors. I'll never forget one fellow, I knocked on his door and he said he'd help me; he was an attorney. Lo-and-behold, he was a real good attorney and he joined the Republican Party, I think he had been a Democrat in Philadelphia, I'm not sure, but he joined the Republican Party and I helped him very heavily become District Attorney in Bucks County. I worked for him. I brought stuff home from Harrisburg for him; Allen Rubenstein. And Allen, today, is a judge in Bucks County and one of my best friends.

HM: Did your family get involved in the campaigns?

EB: Yes, my wife would always get involved. I had three boys at that time at home. And when I was running for School Board I'll never forget one of my kids, I think was in middle school at the time, he came home and he says, "Mom, you know what they said in school? The lunch person told me, she said, 'Why is your father running with all those bums?'" So, the kids always got involved. And the dog got involved. We had his picture taken, too.

HM: Did your campaigns change over time?

EB: Yes. We, I guess, got more sophisticated. We didn't have John Winward running with his big button. We got a little more sophisticated. But, we always had good fundraisers. John and Doris and Dot Ryan who worked for me in the District Office, when we didn't have a District Office; it was her kitchen. They always worked hard and ran good fundraisers. I remember one time we had Mickey Shaughnessy, you might remember him from "From Here to Eternity," he was a comedian. And he was very popular at Wildwood, at the shore. And they had him in the firehouse one night as a "come-on" to buy a ticket. But, they worked very hard. A lot of people, Len Brown, who, in fact, used to kick me in the butt to get me out campaigning on a Friday night. I'd say, "Friday night? You know everybody's out shopping." "Yo, that's why we're going to the shopping centers." But, Len's a District Justice now in Bensalem. They all worked very hard.

HM: Well, what were your first impressions whenever you came to Harrisburg?

EB: Believe it or not, when I came to Harrisburg and I forget whether there was a meeting between the newly elected Legislators prior to the Session or I whether I got there the first day for Session, I think there was a meeting before; first time I was ever in the Capitol. And I was impressed. I'd never been there before and it was very impressive.

HM: Do you remember your first Swearing-In Ceremony and how you felt?

EB: Yes. It was like hitting a homerun with the bases loaded. It was a great day and all the flowers and all of that. And of course, we had at that time David Richardson [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1973-1995] was elected with me, I mean he was in the same class, and he refused to get Sworn-In with the rest of us. He had to have his own private ceremony. And we couldn't get seats on the House Floor or anything. I remember my father was about 75 and could just about walk and he was up in the gallery, and I remember my mother saying, "How do they give this guy a special thing? Look at the busloads of people coming in and sitting on the Floor for him and here we are up in the gallery." But, that's memorable I guess.

HM: Did you have any mentors whenever you first started in Harrisburg?

EB: Oh yes, yes. I had a real great mentor and that was Jim Wright [James Wright; State Representative, Bucks County, 1965-1990]. Jim Wright was from the District right next to mine and Jim took me under his wing and Jim and I became fast friends.

HM: Who did you sit by on the House Floor throughout your career? I'm sure you had many seats.

EB: I'm just trying to think here. Jim [Wright], I know I was beside Jim one year. And Marv Weidener from Bucks [State Representative, Bucks County, 1967-1980]. I sat around a lot of interesting people like Pat McGinnis [State Representative, Montgomery

County, 1973-1978], Rick Cessar [Richard J. Cessar; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1971-1994], a lot of good people.

HM: Well, do you feel like you mentored anyone ?

EB: Yes, I helped Roy Reinard [State Representative, Bucks County, 1983-2002], when Roy was going to run for the House seat in the District that adjoined mine. He came and asked me what's what and I tried to help him as much as I could. And I always used to kid, I said I helped a lot of Democrats how to vote on PSEA bills.

HM: Could you comment on the changes in Party Leadership throughout the years?

EB: Well, of course we had Jack Seltzer [H. Jack Seltzer; State Representative, Lebanon County, 1957-1980; Speaker 1979-1980]. Jack was a very aloof type of guy. I mean, he wasn't a warm, fuzzy guy as Bob Butera [Robert J. Butera; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1963-1977] was. And of course the best of all was Matt Ryan [Matthew J. Ryan; State Representative, Delaware County, 1963-2003; Speaker 1981-1982, 1995-2003]. I mean, Matt was a super, super ace. Between him and Bob Butera, I mean, they were the two best Leaders I thought that we Republicans ever had while I was there. But, we had Seltzer and who else did we have as a Leader? Of course, Sam Hayes. Sam was a hard, hard working guy. And helped me quite a bit, you know, gave me a lot of good advice. I remember one time there was some issue that the press was all over and Sam came to me and he said, "When they come to you, go deeper than a wall-

eyed pike!” (*laugh*) Well, I did, I never said a word to them and I think that was part of the problem with the pay-raise [issue of 2005-2006], they all kept talking to the press. Had they all “gone deeper than a wall-eyed pike,” the press would have had nothing to write. So, I blame themselves for that fiasco.

HM: How did you work with both Democratic and Republican Leadership to resolve legislative issues?

EB: I always got along very well. Leroy Irvis [K. Leroy Irvis; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker 1977-78, 1983-1988], he was a very, very civil guy. The present, Bill DeWeese [H. William DeWeese; State Representative, Fayette, Greene and Washington Counties, 1976-present; Speaker 1993-1994], Bill DeWeese and I were always friendly. I had a good relationship with everybody on the Democratic side. I worked very closely with Jim Gallagher [James Gallagher; State Representative, Bucks County, 1959-1986], who was the head of the Education Committee, he was from Bucks County. Jim and I had an excellent relationship. In fact, they used to call us Gallagher and Sheen; an old radio program in the [19]30’s. They’d say, “Here comes Gallagher and Sheen again.” You know, but Gallagher and I had a great relationship. I had a great relationship with all the Democrats from Bucks County. There was no bitterness. You could go out and have a beer with them. I mean there were no secrets. It was a great time. I understand it’s not quite like that now.

HM: What legislation or issues did you feel were your most important?

EB: Well, the ones I liked: the Bingo Bill [HB 261 of 1981-82]. I always liked that. I always say that two guys that wrote that bill; one was Rabbi Isaacson from Philadelphia, and the other was Monsignor Musial, who was my pastor. I think between all the information I got from them and the help I got from them, I was able to get a bill.

HM: And that was in [19]81 or [19]82.

EB: Was it? Is that when it was? You know, you mentioned dates and places and I'm like a General Motors commercial, you know, "as I get older, General Motors recalls more, and I recall less." (*laugh*)

HM: Do you remember the specific issues regarding that bill?

EB: Yeah, it was how much could be awarded per night and who could do it. The real thing came with, the problem with that was the District Attorney, I think in Philadelphia and Bucks County, but the District Attorney came from Bucks County. The Jewish War Veterans at that time were running vacant places and shopping centers and the Post may have had five members, and they were taking in \$50,000-\$60,000 dollars a year running these bingo games and the money was going for trips to Hawaii for the members. And the District Attorney, Ken Beihn in Bucks County, came to me and we talked about it and went over a lot of things. And it became a very difficult bill to pass, because a lot of the firehouses ran bingos and they had all the Legislators who represented all those

firehouses, they had ideas. It became very difficult: how many days could you play? How much money could you win? How much a night? You know, how much could you build up? All of that became an issue. I think it was Marv Miller [Marvin E. Miller, Jr.; State Representative, Lancaster County, 1973-1990] who was a leader, sort-of, against me in that. I mean, he represented a lot of the conservative areas that really didn't want bingo. Of course, I was from Philadelphia, outside of Philadelphia, Philadelphia suburbs; no problem at all.

HM: Did you have any problems dealing with who may work the games at the different organizations?

EB: Yeah we did. I know the Pennsylvania Crime Commission came and talked to me about the whole thing and we tried to put all of that from the DA, from the Crime Commission, from the pastors – we tried to get everything as best we could to come to a compromise. And we did finally and even afterwards, I guess it was about five or six years after or maybe more than that, the Pennsylvania Crime Commission guys got to me and they said, “It’s not working.” They were having problems with it. I know I was out of the Legislature then, because I didn’t get involved in it.

HM: Okay, you were also known for sponsoring legislation that has named our State’s official fossil. How did that come about?

EB: *(laugh)* Phacops Rana [HB 2171 of 1988]. You know, a fellow by the name of Tony, I forget his last name, he was a teacher in the Bensalem schools. Tony something. He came to me and said that the kids want to bring up a bill in Harrisburg, and so-forth and so-on. And I got together with the kids and they showed me their work and I went to the Legislative Bureau and came back and showed them our work. And we fought like hell to get it on the calendar. And you know, that was the bill, of all the things I voted on in Harrisburg over the years, that was the bill that got me more press. Out in Pittsburgh they had it in the newspapers and got me more – I could have run for Governor at that point. *(laugh)* I was getting so much press over a 4th grade or 2nd grade, or whatever, 3rd grade group of kids who had written this bill from Bensalem schools and we got it passed, finally. We got it passed.

HM: Okay, I have to ask; was there controversy over this?

EB: Yeah, there was. They didn't want to bother with this. Nobody. This is crazy; "What is this bill coming up here?" But, I had some friends on the other side. Bud George [Camille George; State Representative, Clearfield County, 1975-present], I think it was in his Committee, if I'm not mistaken. But, I threw my friendship with the other side of the aisle. I got the bill on the agenda and it passed.

HM: You worked with the Public School Code.

EB: Yes.

HM: And there were a lot of issues there.

EB: We were trying to redo the Code at that time. I guess under the direction of the Secretary of Education, the Governor – I think the Governor was a Democrat at that time, I think it was [Robert P.] Casey [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1987-1995]. I'm not sure. Do you have a year there?

HM: I have [19]79-[19]80.

EB: And who would that have been? It might have even been [Richard] Thornburgh [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1979-1987]. But, anyway, there was a move to redo the Public School Code and Jim Gallagher and I got involved with it. And Sam Hayes was the Whip at that time I believe, we weren't in the Majority – he may have been the Minority Leader at that time – and Gallagher and I worked very hard on that Code. I forget all the specifics about it now, but we took turns on the Floor and that's when we got the name Gallagher and Sheen because I'd speak and he'd speak. So, I think we did do some work on it, I mean we got some things passed, some things changed. I forgot all the specifics, to be honest with you.

HM: Some of the topics were furlough of teachers and resident requirements for teachers.

EB: That was a big one. We had to fight a lot of the local government types there because you know, the police at that time were required to live in the townships and the workers were required to live in the townships, but the teachers weren't. And we kept that in that they were and finally the police were able to move out. You know, they all profited I think from our work on that particular issue. But, we did a lot of work on that issue.

HM: In 1977, you fought for, and passed, HB 677, which prohibited employers from firing or penalizing employees who missed time –

EB: - for fighting a fire.

HM: For volunteering as firemen.

EB: Yes.

HM: What can you tell us about that?

EB: Well, I knew just speaking to different volunteer fire companies throughout my District and I also knew from the fire companies that I had heard from other Districts that it wasn't like the old days. In the old days, the fire company was developed in the town and the town workers all lived in very close proximity to the town. They either worked in the town or they worked right outside the town. And when the alarm went off,

everybody could hear it and these guys came, whether it be ten o'clock in the morning or three o'clock in the afternoon, or midnight, or whenever; they came to fight the fire. But, things have changed. And there are problems today. For example, right here in Pocono Pines, they have a volunteer fire company – now I don't know that much about it, I mean I can just surmise – but, they're not many people who work in Pocono Pines. I mean, there may be a few in the candy store or a gas station, but there's nobody that really works around, so that when that whistle goes off, there's nobody to fight a fire. So, that is a problem and I guess will remain a problem. But, the problem that we were fighting at that time on that bill was, let's say the whistle went off at five o'clock in the morning and it woke people here and they could get to the fire company. But, they were fighting the fire at ten o'clock in the morning when they were supposed to be at work at eight. So, we got that bill so that they wouldn't be fired if, I think, the fire-chief had to say this is a fire – he had to document it, and so-forth. And, we were successful with that bill and I think that volunteer fire companies still have a real problem today.

HM: Another piece of legislation was your involvement with libraries [HB 2293-1982].

EB: Of course. Having been a teacher and working in the educational community, I always listened to what they had to say and tried to get them the money to run the library systems throughout the State, and so-forth. They have a great, I mean it's unbelievable, the different areas like this – Pocono Pines has one of the best libraries. We didn't have that good of a library in Philadelphia when I was a kid. They just weren't around. And Philadelphia always had a good library system. I mean, I'm not knocking it, but I'll tell

you, it would be hard to beat this library that we have here. And it's all because we fought to put money into the library system throughout the State.

HM: Could you talk about your involvement with the Lemon Laws.

EB: Phyllis and I – Phyllis was my staff person on that, and we worked very hard on that. And Charlie Laughlin [Charles Laughlin; State Representative, Beaver County, 1973-1988] was the Committee Chairman, and that was in the Consumer Affairs Committee. And Charlie and Woody – is a staff member on the Democratic side – Woody Kozloff, I think he is still there. Is he?

HM: He passed away.

EB: Oh, Woody passed away. I didn't know that. I know his sister is President of Bloomsburg College, but I didn't know Woody passed away. Well, I'm sorry to hear that. But, he worked very hard on that and we got it passed. And the Governor signed it and I remember the day the Governor signed it, Phyllis slipped me a big lemon and we put it on the table in front of the Governor. *(laugh)*

HM: Would you mind just talking a little bit about the issues?

EB: Well, the issues were the person who bought a car that was a lemon and they couldn't do anything about it. I mean, they kept taking it back to the garage and the

company would say, “No, it’s not our fault. It didn’t happen here. You got to take care of that.” And they never took any responsibility for the fact that the car was quote “a lemon.” But, this bill talked to that and we spoke to a lot of people on the Committee when we held committee hearings, and even just Charlie and I meeting to talk to different dealers and different people from the industry and people who were from the Attorney General’s Offices, and so-forth. But, finally we got it passed. We got a bill that enabled people who really had a lemon to get compensated for it, to be able to take it back and get a new car, get their money back, or whatever.

HM: Did you have any opposition?

EB: There is always a lobbyist around that was pushing people for the new car dealers and the used car dealers and the manufacturers. Yeah, we did have some opposition.

HM: What is key in your mind to getting legislation passed?

EB: Having a good relationship with all the Members, and that is what I always tried to do. In fact, I was up in the House, maybe a year ago, and I was really amazed. I walked in the back of the House and everybody clapped and, in fact, I went in to get a haircut and DeWeese came in and, God, he was like my long lost uncle. I was really impressed. Guys came out of their seats, not only Republicans, I mean Democrats came out to talk to me. Tom Tigue [Thomas Tigue; State Representative, Luzerne County, 1981-2006], who I was always friendly with – in fact, one of the things I hated about this last

election/Primary was my good friend, Democrat who came into the House as a Republican, and you think I can think of his name now? *(laugh)* From Scranton, got beat in the Primary – Belardi, Fred Belardi [State Representative, Lackawanna County, 1979-2006]. And, Fred came into the House as a Republican on an election that, I guess, I forget; there were some issues. But, that’s how he got in, because a Republican finds it pretty hard to win in Scranton. And he came in and he changed over and he told me, he said, “I changed over.” He said, “I just couldn’t win as a Republican in Scranton no matter how good I was.” And he was a good Legislator for a lot of years and he got beat because of the pay raise, which I didn’t think was fair, but you know, I’m prejudiced.

HM: Is it frustrating at times when a bill of yours doesn’t get the deserved attention?

EB: It is, it really is. If you can’t, you know, you have something you really want, you’re trying to press for it, you tell people you’re going to get it, “Oh, I’m going to have that fixed.” Well, then you can’t do a thing about it and you got to go back and say, “Geez, I didn’t get it fixed. I couldn’t.” But, I always had pretty good luck. Probably a lot of things I didn’t get passed, but I always had a good rapport with the other side and I could go and talk to people about it. And they might say, “Hey Ed, no way, we can’t do this, and these are the reasons why.” But, it was never rancor. There was never any bitterness. It was always, “Let’s go out and have a beer and I’ll tell you why we can’t do it.”

HM: Could you describe some of your important issues or aspects of your committee work throughout your career?

EB: That were what?

HM: Some of the issues that you dealt with in the committees in which you served.

EB: Well, the Consumer Affairs, one of the big issues, and I see in some of the newspapers it's still an issue, is this rent furniture, this rent things for your home. I mean, these people really rip you off. And Charlie and I and Woody Kozloff worked very hard to do something there and we never got anything done. We couldn't get the support for it. There was too much pressure against us, and so-forth. But, people get ripped off like crazy on that rent-to-own and all of that nonsense. Some of the PUC [Public Utility Commission] issues we got – one of the things we did do was get the PUC commissioners from 10 years to 6 year terms. We got that passed from the Consumer Affairs Committee. Another one that I really worked hard to get passed, and that was to get the school board terms down from 6 years to 4 years. So, that was part of the School Code change. That was another big one we got. Those are the top; you have the Lemon Law and the kids' bill. But, as I said, I forget a lot of them. There probably was a lot.

HM: Do you recall how the House dealt with major events that affected the way Pennsylvanians lived, such as Three Mile Island and –

EB: You know, what was funny; I was there. That night, before the night that it happened, I was in that restaurant right across the street basically. What's it called? What's the restaurant there? Jim Wright and I went over there to have dinner. And we were sitting in that place, ate dinner, left, came back went to bed, and got up in the morning went down to the House. And at that time I think I had an office on the third floor of the House, facing back into the old back parking lot, and we found out what was happening. And you heard the alarms go off – the city air raid sirens were going off – and people were really scared. A lot of the secretaries were crying and they were dismissing the House, and so-forth, and I stood looking out the windows. And to me, when an air raid siren went off, it brought back to World War II and [the] Korean War, and so-forth. You heard these air raid warning sirens go off and I was never in a place that was bombed at that time, but you always thought about here come the planes and they're going to drop bombs and you got do this and that. And I stood there looking out over the back parking lot out to the park back there, and I thought, "Where are the planes?" You know, it just took you to that mode or that era. And they dismissed the House, of course, and people were running out of the House crying, and so-forth, and soon, everybody was going to die. And I remember down at the Governor's Office, I went down by the Governor's Office, and all the Good Morning/Today shows were all there and they were all interviewing the Governor and anybody that would talk, they would talk to. And Jim Wright and I were on the Mines and Energy Management Committee at that time, but, we left because we didn't know anything at that time. And I drove down the road, what is it [Route] 83? That goes out to the Turnpike, out by the airports that way, and you keep going out to the Turnpike. And I thought, "Hey, this damn thing is

right here!” And they were talking about cows dying and the milk’s bad. I mean, it was just – and I thought, “What am I doing here? Let’s get out of here.” But, then the Mines and Energy Management Committee got involved in it and I never had the opportunity, Jim got the opportunity to go through, walking through there after things settled down a bit, and so-forth and so-on. But, it was a different time in Harrisburg at that point, and to think when it was all happening I’m eating across the street.

HM: Could you comment on the changes in the House structure while you were a Member?

EB: Well, there were a lot of changes. When I came to the House, I was in an office I think with eight Legislators and two phones and you took turns using the phone. You never had a phone on the House Floor, so you just took turns doing those kinds of things. Stu Greenleaf [Stewart Greenleaf; State Senator, 1979-present; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1977-1978] was sitting right behind me at a desk. Stu, he is a Senator now. And Charlie Volpe [Charles Volpe; State Representative, Lackawanna County, 1973-1974], who died, he was in there. And we had one, I forget what our expenses were, but they were almost nothing, you know, compared to what you had to spend. And our lunch room was right down the hall from us and we were backed up the wall, backed to the back parking lot, the old back parking lot. And we had this fellow, and I can’t think of his name now, but he was a retired lieutenant commander from the Seabees. He was a Legislator from Montgomery County and he brought a mobile home-type of thing up and put it in the parking lot. Now, he had to get electricity. So, he was

running lines from our office – they had these little windows, like you could sort-of, about that big, to let air in or something – and he running lines out there through to his trailer to get electricity in the trailer. (*laugh*) Oh God, they were funny days. But, [*Telephone rings*] – Oh pardon me, leave it ring, leave it ring. They’ll leave a message. If they want me they can get me on the cell phone. I know it that was my wife. She was at the doctor’s. I got to meet her – But, anyway, they have all kinds of things now. They have offices, I had one of the best offices when I left there. I was in the absolute new part looking out over the fountains, and so-on. And they have District Offices; we never had District Offices. Nobody had money. The Leadership wouldn’t give you a nickel to get a beer. But, now they have home offices, they home expense accounts and they have this and that.

HM: Staff.

EB: Pardon? Staff. I mean, I had Connie. And when I was committee, either the ranking Republican or the Chairman of the Committee, I did get one person. Greg, he went with the Education Department, but anyway, I had Greg. You got one person who was for the committee. He wasn’t your staff, he was your staff guy in the fact that you were the Chairman or the ranking person, but he was really the committee’s. And they have, like you say, staff and phones. Now, toward the end we did get some of those things. We got the car allowance. The per diems were increased. I guess we got phones, well, if we had phones we had phones in our home office. That was – I used to let people come in. Somebody would say, “Gee, I have to make a phone call to my

cousin and I really can't afford the (*inaudible*) and stuff." I'd say, "Come on down to my house, make it on the State phone." I thought, they're paying for it, let them use it. Well, I had a lot of people come in to use the State phone. But, they didn't do it to call Aunt Sally. [*Telephone rings*] – That's my wife. I got to get this. I can't get out. Just bring my phone over. I'll call her back on her phone – Okay.

HM: Okay?. You ready? Did you have a District Office that coincided with your office in Harrisburg?

EB: I had a District Office in my home, which I was never paid for. I made an office in my home in Bensalem and had my phones in there. I could call Harrisburg at all times. And Dot [Ryan], who worked for me – by that time we were given a home secretary – Dot worked between her kitchen and my office. She had a call-forwarding type of thing and when I wasn't in the office and she wasn't at that office, she was in her kitchen and she'd pick up the phone and take all the messages.

HM: How would you compare the technology of the House today with that during your first years in office?

EB: I was amazed when I went up there and saw those computers. I said, "It's a good thing I'm not here, I don't know how to use them." But, the technology has just been fantastic. They have all phones, well we had phones on our desk after a while I guess in the [19]80's. But, between the phones and the computers and I really don't know what

else they have now, but on the technology side, I guess they got everything that is anything. **[End of Side A]**

HM: Well, do you think that that changed the way that laws are [created]?

EB: I think it's a different, different animal in Harrisburg today from what I've seen and from what I've heard from other people. There's no more of the comradeship that there was in our day. In our day, it was person-to-person type of thing. Now, I don't know if half of these guys talk to one another. It's a different ballgame.

HM: Could you explain your relationship with the Media?

EB: I always had a fairly good relationship with the Media, except when I became Mayor of Bensalem and I was still a Legislator. And I had promised if I had won the Mayorship, I would resign. But, Matt [Ryan] was Speaker at that time and he wouldn't call a Special Election. So, it would have meant that the House District would not have been represented. So, I stayed on and I was running back-and-forth to Harrisburg all the time. Like, I'd be up there until three o'clock in the afternoon or whenever Session ended, and I'd be home and I'd work at the Township Building until ten or eleven o'clock at night. So, because we were just changing the form of government and everything else at that time and the press took me on for that. But, other than that, I had a good relationship with the press.

HM: What role do you think lobbyists play?

EB: They play a very important role, at least the ones that I've ever dealt with. They came in and explained what the bill was all about. They explained why it was good, why it was bad, why they liked it, why they didn't like it, why you should like it, why you shouldn't like it, how it affected your District, and on and on. I always had a good relationship with them. If they took me out and bought me a meal, I took them out and bought them one. I had Stoney Starner, who was a magnificent lobbyist I always thought, for Bell Tel [Bell Telephone]. He and I go out to dinner, he picked up the check. I brought him up here, he and his wife come up here, we would go out and play golf. I would pay for the golf. I paid for the dinner up here. He was my guest; he stayed here at the house. So, I had a very good relationship with lobbyists and anything usually that they did, I tried to reciprocate in kind. And these people who think the lobbyist is going to change your mind because he bought you a steak dinner or something is crazy. I mean that's ridiculous. But, you can't tell people that. I get so mad that very few people know how government works. Very few people could care less how government works, until something gets them riled up. They have no idea the time that a Legislator spends, the hours that a Legislator works. I get mad at some Legislators. I mean, there are some Legislators that I never really cared for, in that they never had a job in their life until they came to Harrisburg, and then they were living basically high on the hog because they had nothing before they came there. So, the people don't know what goes on, how you work, how you didn't work. When you're a freshman you go up there and you don't work very much because you don't know anything, you're not on very many committees or you're

not important at all. You have to work your way into the system. But, as you're there a few years, I'll tell you, you're there instead of three days a week, you're there five days a week. And when you're not there, you're at a firehouse or you're at a township building or you're at a senior citizen's center, all the time; it never ends. I mean, and you know, you're just answering phone calls all the time and running here and there all the time. I know, I talked to Denny O'Brien [Dennis O'Brien; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1977-1980, 1983-present; Speaker, 2007-2008] from Philadelphia quite a bit, and I know I try to get Denny on the phone and I'll get him on his cell phone finally and he's down in Center City, he's going to see the DA about some bill, he's going over to see the Board of Revision of Taxes about somebody's assessment or something. He's always running. I mean it's nonstop. And when you come home and you're ready to put your feet up, it's the firehouse dinner. I used to hope for Saturday night when I could go home and my wife would say, "What would you like?" "I'll tell you what I'd like. I'd like a cheeseburger, a nice cheeseburger. I've been eating out in restaurants all week. I'm tired of eating out in restaurants," you know. And we'd sit down and she'd make cheeseburgers for Saturday night dinner, you know. And then Sunday afternoon you're off again back to Harrisburg. It's a tough life and people don't realize that at all. But, I think some of these guys who, the Populist Movement guys, if they get elected they'll change their tunes.

HM: What aspect of your job as a Representative did you enjoy the most?

EB: Oh, I guess just the comradeship with the people in Harrisburg. I had a great relationship with people there. They were wonderful and that's what I missed the most when I left. That is what I liked.

HM: You talked about Representative Wright. Anyone else?

EB: Oh, Rick Cessar. I still call Rick and he calls me. Bob Scheipe, who was the Chief Clerk [1973-1974]; I call him in Florida. I met him, I guess it was two years ago, I was up at the cemeteries near Memorial Day in Pottsville, and I went out to the club with him and had lunch. Tom Tighe, I see on Election Day, here. In fact, I got to send a note to – what's his name? He resigned, he's leaving this time – from Scranton, big heavy-set Democrat, oh not Belardi. He was a minor-league pitcher, funny guy.

HM: Gaynor Cawley?

EB: Gaynor Cawley [State Representative, Lackawanna County, 1981-2006]. I had a bad shoulder and Gaynor was supposed to get me some liniment that was horse liniment, you know, for my shoulder. "Oh, I'll take care of it." I'd see him on Election Day at the polls. "I'm going to take care of you." So, now he's retiring, so I'm going to write him a little note, "You're not leaving until you send me the horse remedy for my shoulder." Those are the kinds of relationships you had that you'll never forget.

HM: What aspect did you like the least?

EB: I guess the fact that you could never put your feet up when you were home. You always had a senior citizen luncheon, you had to meet with the county commissioners, you had to run to a firehouse, you know that type of thing; bingos. You know, wherever they wanted you, you had to be.

HM: You did not give a farewell address that we could find in the record.

EB: No, I don't think so.

HM: Is there anything you'd like to say now?

EB: Tears came to my eyes. Well, I really appreciated all of the time that I spent in Harrisburg. I tried to do the best. I tried to be a person who could look in the mirror in the morning and say, "Hey, I did the best I could." I did the best I could for everybody that I knew. And I just thank the people who elected me those many years. And I thank my family, of course, who had to live through that time and some of those times were tough because of the schedules and everything else. And I just like to thank the Good Lord that he let me have good career.

HM: What was your fondest memory of serving in the House?

EB: Oh, there were so many of them. I really don't know which was – just every day there was a fond memory as I look back on it. And I don't know if I have any one fond one. There were a lot of funny ones. I remember Bill Rybak [William C. Rybak; State Representative, Lehigh and Northampton Counties, 1967-1972, 1981-1990], he was from Bethlehem, he had one arm and one leg. And believe it or not, he kicked field goals for Moravian or Lehigh University with his one leg. He had the arm and leg cut off when he was a child on the railroad, he used to tell me. And the first time I ever saw him, he was elected and I was sitting in the front row; it was Swearing-In day. And I saw him come in with one crutch and I said, "Why do you have one crutch?" He said, "Because I only have one damn leg." (*laugh*) He had one arm in a tuck, there was no arm there and he had the one crutch. He had one leg off and one arm off and I was never so embarrassed in my life. But, a lot of funny things that happened. Just going up there seeing Buster [Mervin John Hodge, Sr.], who was the Men's room attendant, I mean, those kinds of – and the fellow, I understand now he had prostate cancer or something there, was the barber. They were great guys. I mean everybody was fun people in those days.

HM: So, what have you been up to since you left the House?

EB: Oh, not much. I, unfortunately, got skin cancer. I have a melanoma. I have to be out of the sun all the time, but I play golf. I got special shirts that the sun won't go through and so forth, but I play golf. And between the golf and the hospital, I'm fine. No, I shouldn't – I am fine. I mean I enjoy everyday watching TV. My wife says I watch too

much of it. I read a little. I play a little golf. Winter is tough up here. I don't do much. We usually went to Florida, but we couldn't go this year because I was operated on.

HM: Are you still active in politics?

EB: No, no. I talk to guys once in a while around here who know a little about politics. You know, these types of communities you either grew up in or you're an outsider and I'm an outsider.

HM: Do you have any advice for new Members?

EB: Yes. The biggest advice is go deeper than a wall-eyed pike, when these controversial issues come up and you have to speak to the press, because you're going to be not misquoted, but you're going to make mistakes in what you say. And especially these guys who say, "I'll never raise taxes." Well, keep your mouth shut and just do your job and do the best you can. And don't make any predictions.

HM: And lastly, how would you like to be remembered?

EB: Oh, just as a guy who did his best for a number of years, that's all. Who loved everybody and hoped he was loved back.

HM: Okay.

EB: What do they say, what is it? “Philadelphia loves you and you love Philadelphia back,” or something like that. That’s about it, even though I’m long gone from Philadelphia.

HM: Well, thank you very much.

EB: Okay.

HM: That concludes our interview.

EB: Thank you very much. Thank you.