

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

**The Honorable Michael C. Gruitza (D)**

7<sup>th</sup> District

Mercer County

1981-2006

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

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

**The Honorable Michael C. Gruitza (MG):** Good afternoon.

**HM:** I'm here today with State Representative Michael Gruitza, who represents the 7<sup>th</sup> Legislative District from Mercer County. He has been here since 1981 and he is completing his term here in 2006. Thank you for being here with me today.

**MG:** It's my pleasure to be here.

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

**MG:** Well, I grew up in a pretty typical Sharon, Pennsylvania family, and in some respects typical, and in other ways, a little different. Ours is an industrial area, so a lot of the kids' parents worked in the mills and I grew up in a family business. My father owned and operated a building supply company. We had cement mixers and dump trucks and a lot of hard work and a lot of heavy equipment, and I spent a lot of time at what we called "The Yard" working with him and my brothers that also worked there as boys growing up, even at a pretty young age. There was always some kind of little chore, even for a six or seven year old, to be doing down there; if it was cleaning tools or whatever, and so it was a big part of my childhood. And I think the nature of the business made our family very well known in the community. My father was very

popular, a very popular person. My mother was very active – they were both very active – in our church, and I guess the nature of the business gave my father the opportunity to do a lot of favors for people and as I grew up, I felt that I wanted to do something other than that. Although, as I've reflected on it, you know, in my later years, I could see how much fun we really had as a family and with all the workers that we had and the many good people that worked for the family. It was a very unique experience. After graduating from college and then law school and returning home, I returned to a District that kind of distressed me in a way. I attended law school out in Western Ohio at Ohio Northern University, and there wasn't very much really to do there other than study and get together occasionally with your friends, and that. But, we'd take rides in the country and sometimes visit county courthouses and, you know, just kind of taking in the natural, the kind of picturesque beauty of that part of the state. And when I got home, the roads in our area were so bad that it really bothered me. I thought, you know, at the very least, the state government ought to be able to provide a system of state highways that aren't in the shambles that our roads were. And that was pretty much true of the entire state but particularly the case in western, southwestern, and northwestern Pennsylvania. And it was really one of the issues that helped that – I guess, sometimes being upset about something gets you more involved in what's going on, and growing up in the construction business, it was kind of a natural thing that I paid attention to. And it was something that, I guess, as we go on in this interview, I can touch on, but it was really a high priority for me when I was elected. I mean, our phones rang off the wall in those first few years. And I got on the Transportation Committee, and I think that every time the Department of Transportation came to the Legislature looking for help to get the

money they needed to fix the roads, I think every single time, I supported their efforts and would continue to do so if I was continuing in this office.

**HM:** Could you talk a little bit about your first campaign run? I'm guessing the roads were probably a motivating factor.

**MG:** Well, it was one of the things. What had happened in my case; I was motivated as well by some incidents that happened to me as a young lawyer at the courthouse, and so I made the decision to run for District Attorney. And the truth of the matter is, the District Attorney that we had was an excellent attorney and an excellent prosecutor, one of the best I've ever seen, and I've seen a lot of trials and I've observed a lot of things in the courthouse and in the courtrooms and I've worked with so many great lawyers here. He was a great attorney, but I had some issues, and I ran and lost in a fairly close Primary and that kind of got my name out there, and so when my predecessor, Reid Bennett, [State Representative, Mercer County, 1965-1980] made the decision to retire from the House, a lot of people came to me, and asked me if I would be interested in running. And it wasn't really an instant yes, you know. I really had to give it some thought, because it was quite a departure from where I was and what I was doing. And I enjoyed the practice of law and the work I was doing. But I was very strongly encouraged by our labor organizations. We had a lot of steel workers and trades. All of them were really encouraging me to run, and I spoke to my father about it and he felt, you know, "Why not?" you know, "It's a two year term; if you don't like it, if it doesn't feel like something you want to do, you don't have to run again." And so, I did run and won in that first

campaign. It was a tough race. We've had many since then, but I was fortunate enough to win that one and come down here to Harrisburg to serve the 7<sup>th</sup> District.

**HM:** Did you like to campaign?

**MG:** There's things about a campaign I like, but, to be honest with you, not particularly. We had some pretty tough elections and, you know, its kind-of like running a gauntlet a little bit. I think what's gratifying in a campaign is that last day, the election day, when you're out going around the polls and people are coming up to you saying, "Hey, you're our choice. You're our man. We think you're doing a good job," because once you're an incumbent, that's really what you're doing; you're running, in many respects, against your own record. And by and large, that's how we ran our campaigns. We focused on the things we were able to accomplish for the District, our priorities legislatively, and our concerns for the people in the District, and there were, through the years, a lot of very serious issues in that District with people losing their jobs and, you know, some of our mills, and all of the difficulties that are associated with those types of very difficult problems.

**HM:** What else can you tell me about the 7<sup>th</sup> Legislative District?

**MG:** Well, I think the 7<sup>th</sup> District is one of Pennsylvania's really best kept secrets. A lot of people, you know, have the image of, "Oh, it's a," you know, "a rusty steel town." You know, Sharon and Hermitage and Farrell and Sharpsville and the townships that

surround the area. It's a very diverse area. It really has a very urban center and suburban and rural, with farms and woodlands, and it's a beautiful District, really. By-and-large, the community is made up of very nice neighborhoods, a very good housing stock. We have a pretty good, I think, public school system. The schools are beautiful; they've invested heavily in the physical plants in all of the Districts. We also have some very good private schools in the District, some of the Catholic schools in the District. In the center of the District is located a gift that was given to the community by Frank Buhl<sup>1</sup> who was a very prominent philanthropist from Sharon, and he had a park built. It's a three hundred acre park that virtually sits in the center of all the communities I've just described. It borders on Sharon; it borders on Hermitage; it borders on Sharpsville. And for a smaller sized community, it's really kind-of like the crown gem of the community. It's like something you'd see in a big city setting, and attached to that is, I believe, the only free public golf course in the country. It's a nine hole course, which is very much utilized, and it gives the kids in Sharon the opportunity to learn to golf, so we have a lot of avid golfers, as well as hunters and fishermen and every—you know, that you have everywhere else, but I think that was something that helped to push the golf button in our area. And so, all through there, you know, there's a private country club and several other very nice golf courses. We get a lot of visitors from Cleveland and Pittsburgh, especially in the summer months, who will come up and stay at our hotels and take the weekend or a few days off and enjoy the community.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Buhl was the founder of Sharon Steel Corporation and partner in U.S. Steel Corporation. Some of his contributions to the area were its first hospital, the Oakwood Cemetery, the F.H. Buhl Club, the Buhl-Henderson Library, the Julia F. Buhl Girls Club, St. John's Episcopal Church, the Sharon Country Club, and the F. H. Buhl Farm. He died in 1918.

**HM:** Did reapportionment ever affect your District?

**MG:** It did a little bit. My District had a tendency to lose population in its center, in Sharon and Farrell and then a little bit in Sharpsville, and move eastward, move outward, and so, I picked up a few townships. At one point, I picked up Delaware Township and in the next reapportionment I lost Delaware Township and got another area, and then, in this last reapportionment, I got Delaware Township back again. And it felt good to me when I'd go out there and meet with the local township supervisors; they were always very complimentary. They were always glad when I was their Representative, because I have always said that even the smaller communities that I represented, I tried to treat fairly and didn't, you know, favor one town over another. If people had a good proposal or a good project, we would try to help shepherd that through the process here in Harrisburg and do what we could to bring home some state dollars to help them.

**HM:** In which ways did you bring home state dollars?

**MG:** Well, in a variety of ways. From the early days here, there's really a big difference in the programs that are now funded and have been, you know, put into place by the State from what existed in the early days. Prior to my election, communities really relied more heavily on the federal government to fund community development or needs and projects in the area, and that went away. And so, the States have taken a more active role through, you know, all the different programs: the Department of Community and Economic Development, originally called the Department of Community Affairs, I believe, the

Department of Commerce programs, the various loan programs. We had many businesses take advantage of the PITA [Pennsylvania Infrastructure Technology Alliance] program and those types of things to expand or make improvements that their businesses [needed]. And it's a good program because it ties those dollars to either job retention or job growth. And one of the more unusual things that happened [was] in Governor [Richard] Thornburgh's [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1979-1987] term; he proposed in his budget what he called the "Steel Valley Renaissance Initiative," and he was targeting pretty significant dollars. I believe he had picked the Beaver Valley and the Mon Valley and the Allegheny Valley for special targeting, and I got involved in that, and we got the Shenango Valley included in that funding. And that went on for several years, well into the [Robert P.] Casey Administration, [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1987-1995] targeting in most of the budgets, like, a million dollars a year for special needs. And the great thing about that was it was flexible dollars that could be used, you know, for a number of different things and, in fact, a good deal of that money is still in the area. The agency that was chosen to administer those funds decided that one of the good things to do would be to establish a low interest loan fund to kind of help projects along and things like that and, I believe, right now they have three or four million dollars still in that trust fund that's available for use for projects in the District.

**HM:** That's great.

**MG:** So, that was a pretty significant accomplishment for me.

**HM:** I'm just wondering if you could take a step back in time and tell me how you felt during your first Swearing-In Ceremony.

**MG:** Well, I think I felt pretty much the same way as I felt in every one. You know, of course, it's a very gala event here. Flowers are all over the Floor and thousands of people are jammed in the Capitol and it's a celebration, really, because, you know, Members go through, in many cases, some pretty tough campaigns to have that privilege of taking that Oath of Office. And so, I felt proud to be here and looking forward to taking on the challenges of the next term and something that, not everybody has that opportunity. In a State of 12 million people, you know, there're only 203 House Members and 50 Senators, so it's kind of special.

**HM:** Was there anything that surprised you when you first came to Harrisburg?

**MG:** You know, I can't really say that there was anything that really took me back particularly. It was pretty much what I expected, you know? No, I can't really think of anything that took me by surprise.

**HM:** Do you recall your first office in the Capitol Building?

**MG:** Yeah, yeah, it was in this same building [Irvis Office Building]. I shared office space with John Wozniak [State Representative, Cambria County, 1981-1996; State Senator, 1997-present], and the two of us shared the same secretary, the same assistant.

And that lasted for the period of about, I want to say, six, eight months, something like that, and then we were given the opportunity then to have our own, individual assistant. And the young woman that originally came to both of us, John said, “Why don’t you keep Diane [Diane Simpson, Legislative Assistant, 1981-2006] because you have more work than I do, and she’s so good, and I’ll take the next one.” And Diane’s retiring now, as well, after being with me for 25 years, and she did an outstanding job for me and for the people that we represent.

**HM:** Well, I’d like to talk about Mr. Wozniak for a second.

**MG:** Great.

**HM:** What kind of activities do you think produced camaraderie, because I know that you and he were involved in a Walk for Work, and I would like for you to talk about that.

**MG:** Yes, yes we walked together. Well, for one, it really happened by accident because we were thrown together in the same office, and we represented similar types of Districts. John represents the Johnstown area, and then went on to be, of course, elected to the State Senate there. And, you know, in his case, I’ve always enjoyed his great sense of humor and his honesty. What happened with the Walk was, I was watching TV one night and the news came on and said that the two areas in the entire country with the highest unemployment were the Sharon metropolitan area and Johnstown metropolitan area. So, I called John and said, you know, “This is unbelievable, really, it’s just so ironic that we

work together, literally in the same office.” We weren’t even separated at the time by walls. You know, I’d hear all of his conversations on the phone and he would hear all of mine, and I said, “I think we need to do something about this.” And he said, “What do you have in mind?” I said, “Why don’t we walk to Washington? We’ll go in a few weeks or,” you know, I forget exactly the timing, but I said we’d shoot for, like, early April, I think it was. “The weather should be decent, and we can try to make a point of the fact that not everybody’s enjoying the comeback in this economy.” And so we did it. We set out from the Capitol here, and in five days, we walked down. We got to meet with Tip O’Neill [Thomas Phillip O’Neill, Jr.; US Representative, Massachusetts, 1953-1987; Speaker of the US House, 1977-1986] and Jim Wright [James Claude Wright, Jr.; US Representative, Texas, 1955-1989; Speaker of the House, 1987-1990] in the Speaker’s office, which was very unusual. They actually let the media, the TV cameras and everything, into the Speaker’s office and one of the reporters there said it was very, very unusual that they let the cameras into his inner office in the Capitol. I doubt that that would happen today because of all the security concerns and that. We might not even get into the Capitol today. But it was really quite an experience, and we just, basically, we found a lot of support along the way. We were in the rural areas and farmers would go by because we had a van nearby that people could see that we were the guys doing this. And we’d gotten a lot of media attention, all the local newspapers and—really all over the country; we made the front page of the *Chicago Sun Times*, you know. It was kind of a big deal and it sort-of took on a life of its own. But, farmers and locals would beep their horns and say, “Go ahead, you guys,” you know; it was good. And I remember walking through Baltimore, and some of the locals, you know, through the

streets of Baltimore, and the locals there stopping and saying “Hey, man, are you those guys walking to Washington?” and we’d say, “Yeah.” “You go tell them, man,” you know. It’s just the different, all segments of society, in other words, that we passed. We were given the keys to the city, a proclamation by, I believe it was Mayor Hunter at the time, who was the mayor of Baltimore, and they had a big thing there at the City Building in Baltimore, and it was quite an experience, really.

**HM:** So, did it raise awareness, though?

**MG:** I think it really did, and the thing that struck me was that a lot of decisions aren’t just made by Legislators and Governors, and what I felt it did, at least for my area, was a lot of the people that work within state government who make big decisions on where dollars are going to get directed through various programs and where money’s going to go. I felt that some of our Departments – what we did helped to let people here know where Sharon and Farrell and Johnstown were, and that these were Districts that were struggling, that had a lot of people put out of work and needed help.

**HM:** That’s a wonderful story, and I appreciate you sharing.

**MG:** It was quite an experience, really. We had one funny experience, if you want to hear it. We had several, but one; we were walking up through the hills in very rural Maryland. I didn’t realize at the time how hilly that country is, and what we found was, going down the hills was harder than going up them. It was hard on your knees. But we

stopped at this rural tavern and restaurant to get a sandwich, and there was an old guy, he must have been, oh, in his late 70s, working on a shot and a beer, and the other people were interested in what we were all about. We basically ordered some food there and had a sandwich and we're talking about what we were doing and this old man was sitting there the whole time, you know, not saying anything across the bar there. And finally, as we got up to leave, he looked up and looked at us and he says, "Hey, boys, I hope you get that job." He knew it had something to do with work but wasn't exactly focused on what it was, but it was really pretty funny at the time.

**HM:** Can you talk about any other camaraderie in the House or any other special close relationships?

**MG:** Oh, I've made great friends here with, you know, a lot of current Members and a lot of their predecessors. But, you know, a lot of really good people have come through here and, you know, just so many different things. You know, I used to play a lot of basketball with the guys on certain Monday or Tuesday nights. We'd go out to the gym, and we played softball and actually, for a while, we had a House football team that I was a member and we'd play Ohio State. They were the ones that kind of initiated it because when Penn State first got into the Big Ten and that, they said, "Well, we have a football team, a legislative football team, and we want to challenge you." And those things were a lot of fun, going to Columbus and playing them up there and meeting the legislators from there and representing our state. But so many things, so many functions, and just even the work around the Capitol; there are a lot of very entertaining Members here, and

like, sometimes people would say, “Well, hey, have you heard any good jokes lately?” because you get them from all over the state in this building, you know.

**HM:** Whenever you first came to Harrisburg, did anybody mentor you?

**MG:** Well, I think, in a way, a lot of different people. I was close to some of the Legislators from my own area, you know, Tom Fee [Thomas J.; State Representative, Lawrence County, 1969-1994] from the Lawrence County area, and he would tell me, you know, just share his thoughts on different things and how to approach different things and on some issues that he felt the District would be more sensitive than they might be in other areas. Roy Wilt [State Representative, Mercer County, 1969-1982; State Senator, 1983-1990], who was a Representative and then almost immediately went over to the Senate. He was in the House for a few years with me, as I recall it, and I always looked up to him. He was kind of a statesman of a Rep[resentative], you know, very articulate, very level-headed. I would say those two, you know. But at the same time, you know, you went to Jim Manderino [James J.; State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1967-1989; Speaker of the House, 1989] and sat down with him or K. Leroy Irvis [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker of the House, 1977-1978, 1983-1988], and they would—I remember one year we were doing a budget. This was a Casey budget and there were, I don’t know how many, hundreds of amendments being proposed, and everybody knew that wasn’t going to happen, and I was in the back of the House talking to some of the Republicans. We were in the majority at the time. Mr. Irvis was the Speaker and I said, you know, “I’ll move the previous

question,” which is a pretty dramatic thing. It doesn’t happen here very often, particularly in a budget, and I made the motion—some of the Republican members said, “If you do, we’ll give you the votes to pass this budget.” And Mr. Irvis called me up to the rostrum up in the front. He said, “Son, I don’t want to see you get embarrassed here on this vote because this is a big vote.” And I said, “I think I have the votes, Mr. Irvis.” He says, “Are you sure you have the votes, son?” I said, “I think so.” And we did and 10 minutes later we passed that budget, so that was something.

**HM:** So, how did you feel going up to talk to Mr. Irvis like that?

**MG:** Well, he gave me pause to think, you know, “Are these guys going to back down on me?” But they said, “No, we’re with you on this. We don’t need to go through all this to pass this budget,” and it was [a] good budget.

**HM:** What was your relationship like with Leadership and other – ?

**MG:** Very good. It’s always been good with Leadership on both sides of the aisle and with the Senate, as well. I’ve had good relationships with Members over there. They’ve helped me with a number of things.

**HM:** Can you tell me, have you had the opportunity to mentor anybody while you were here?

**MG:** Well, I've tried to, you know, be a good friend if somebody came to me for advice and I wouldn't call myself a mentor, per se. But, you know, if anybody's ever asked – I always tell the Members that are newly elected, especially from our area – that one of the most important things is to just be very careful on the road. People lose sight of the fact that most of the Members coming from Western Pennsylvania, you know, are driving four hours plus to get to the Capitol, oftentimes in very trying conditions, snowing, or sleeting, or raining hard, or you know. We get bad weather in Pennsylvania and a lot of truck traffic because there's really only two major routes that you can take to get here. And that's usually the first piece of advice I give new Members: that the most important thing to do is be careful and be attentive on the road.

**HM:** That's good advice coming from – is it four hours?

**MG:** It's a four hour drive. If the capital of Ohio was the capital of Pennsylvania, I'd have an hour less to drive one way, two hours less round trip. From my District, I can be in Detroit in the same amount of time as I can be here.

**HM:** Isn't that amazing?

**MG:** Yeah. Pennsylvania's a bigger state than you think of it.

**HM:** Yeah. What committees were you involved in, and did you enjoy your roles in those committees?

**MG:** I served on almost all of the committees, and I enjoyed my time on Appropriations. I was fortunate; I believe I was on that committee the very first term. And Transportation I enjoyed because, as I mentioned before, transportation was an issue for me in trying to get things turned around in our area. Consumer Affairs, Game and Fisheries, Professional Licensure. I served as the Democratic Chairman on Game and Fisheries Committee for a number of years, as Democratic Chairman of the State Government Committee for a number of years, and finally, as the Democratic Chairman of the Children and Youth Committee, which was also a learning experience with the all the different programs and all the different issues that involved, you know, our young people, which is really our future.

**HM:** So, can you tell me a little bit about your legislation and your issues?

**MG:** Well, I've had a lot of different issues. A lot of my biggest issues have been, though, to try to promote economic recovery and jobs. I've always felt that the best, if you want to call it, welfare reform or crime reform, is to provide young people with decent jobs that they can support themselves, that they're not – you know, what's the old expression? "An idle mind is the devil's workshop," kind-of thing. And it actually bothers me because I have a whole generation of young people who have grown up and I have been their Representative, so when I read in the paper some promising youngster that maybe had been a football or basketball star, or whatever they were involved in, any of them have gotten themselves in a lot of trouble, it bothers me because, you know, I

believe there are opportunities. It's not a perfect world, but one of things that I learned as the Chair on the Children and Youth Committee was that the more you can do with youngsters, especially those that are struggling at a young age and in school or have behavioral problems or whatever, the more you can do in the long run, it's a good investment. You know, when I was first elected, I think we had somewhere around 10,000 inmates. It may have been less than that. I'm not exactly sure of the number, but I think today we have 50,000. We have almost a Legislative District, and that's a very – all these things dovetail together. But that's something our Appropriations people have had to wrestle with each and every budget is this expanding corrections budget that we face. And it's just something that has to be reversed, it's got to be reversed, and I think that creating employment opportunities is the top way of doing that.

**HM:** So, how are the roads now in Mercer County?

**MG:** The roads are the best they've been since I was a child, maybe better. In fact, this summer was something; I don't know if it was a going away present for me, or what, but people were complaining because of the delays because of all the paving that was going on, and I've always paid attention to that. The state system is really in pretty good shape, and we have a number of – other than the maintenance and that type of thing – we've gotten some very nice projects approved. Some smaller, you know, some maybe just a few hundred thousand, maybe a couple million dollars, and bridges that the community has sought for years. Probably the highlight for me was, as part of what I called “Shenango Valley Renaissance,” going way back to Governor Thornburgh, I proposed a

number of different projects and different types of initiatives to try to move the District in a positive direction, and one of them was to make a significant, major improvement to one of the main state highways that runs through the District. If not the main road, the second: Route 62 that runs through the Valley and Route 18. Two very important arteries and Route 18 was in dire need of upgrading, and ultimately we got it done in two phases. The first phase was under Governor Casey because it was very expensive project, it was about a 50 million dollar deal, and the second phase was under Governor Ridge. And so, now we have a beautiful five lane corridor that runs through the city of Hermitage in the heart of the District and a lot of new development is occurring along that highway now which, of course, brings in jobs and brings in revenues to the local municipality and the school district and the property taxes that these multimillion dollar projects have generated.

**HM:** Well, most of your issues seem like they're very similar; economic growth, economic enhancements.

**MG:** That's been important, you know, and in line with that, I've been probably someone you would describe as a more District-oriented individual, working pretty closely with my local governments and the folks back home, trying to get as much help from the state back to that far away District, and I'm satisfied with the job we've done. In fact, Governor [Edward G.] Rendell [Governor of Pennsylvania, 2003-2011], just in his time – he was in the county a few months back and was talking about all – just on his watch, and I forget the exact number, 34 million dollars – the various things in Mercer

County that have come through just, you know, in the last year or two. So, I think we've made our mark.

**HM:** That's good. What aspect of your job do you think you enjoyed the most?

**MG:** I think the aspect that I enjoyed the most was just what I'm talking about when you get something accomplished that you can lay your hands on and see. We had a project running in the heart of the city of Sharon. Again, it was another highway project and the city had always been interested in getting turning lanes and just vamping that up because you'd drive and you get stopped by somebody turning off on one of the side streets and this and that, and frequent accidents because, you know, of all the stopping and going. And that stretch of road is – on each side of that road are really two nice neighborhoods, large, kind-of the heart of Sharon, and so when that little project – it was a couple million dollar project, but I felt good when that was finished. And you could actually say, you know, all the people living on either side of that highway, their whole neighborhood has been enhanced. It looked better and it was safer to drive through. It's nice, you know, and I got a lot of satisfaction out of those things, right down to just helping out some individual that, you know, had a problem with the state or something, a grievance that you can intervene on their behalf and get it straightened out. Those types of things.

**HM:** What did you not like about your job?

**MG:** The driving, that was—I have to say, there were some days in the fall when the sun was shining, and, you know, driving through Pennsylvania is beautiful, and that’s probably more true for somebody that’s on vacation and they’ve never driven through Pennsylvania and they’re taking in all the colors and all that. But when every week you get in the car and drive through the blizzards and the fog and, you know, everything that goes with it, that takes a lot out of you.

**HM:** What were the major changes that you’ve seen in the House since you’ve been here?

**MG:** Well, I think the whole Capitol. The House and the Senate Leadership, deserve a lot of credit for what they’ve done here in terms of upgrading. The Capitol was starting to look a little run down when I first got here. And the Leadership said, “We can’t allow this to happen.” And a lot of restoration was taking place and a lot of the buildings—what’s now the Matt Ryan Building, was just a classic old building, and there was even talk of them maybe tearing it down, it was so bad, and they’ve restored it so beautifully. You know, it’s a gem, and the Capitol, itself, and the addition of the East Wing. You know, we got criticized for the East Wing when it was being proposed and this and that, but the truth is that it’s as much of the people’s building as it is the people’s who work here. And I was talking to a girl that runs one of the coffee shops over there, and she said, “When people come in,” she said, “they love this, they’re very proud of this building.” And I said, “Well, they should be.” Because every week we have thousands of people in here – just about every week, especially when Members are here – and she

said, “People from Pennsylvania love this Capitol.” We’ve been given, I think, better staff and more staff to help us do the job. Of course, you know, the Members, when I came, were jammed up on the fifth floor in the Capitol building, and everybody really has, now, their own nice office and at least one staff person when they start. So, all these little things, you know, I think have added up to making the job a little easier and enabling Members to be a little more effective for their areas.

**HM:** Has technology impacted you at all?

**MG:** Oh, technology, as well. You know, I’m still learning on the computer, but sure, you know, we all have computers on our desks now, you know.

**HM:** What do you think the most memorable event that occurred during your tenure was?

**MG:** Well, there’s good events and there’s bad events. I suppose for these purposes – the photographer was here earlier, and she mentioned about going to Philadelphia for the big anniversary celebration of the state, the Sesquicentennial, and that was a big event, that was pretty – everybody was there. The House actually went into Session there. I think it was in a tent, I’m not sure, but that was pretty. There have been a number of things. There have been sad things, you know, Members passing that, you know, seemed perfectly healthy maybe a few weeks before and then you get word that something’s

happened. The most tragic thing, I think, was the Budd Dwyer<sup>2</sup> situation that was shocking and sad and should've never happened. But, you know, there've been just so many different, like, social type events and those things that have been enjoyable.

**HM:** Do you have any fondest memory?

**MG:** There're a lot of good memories that, you know, I'm trying to think of. I think one of my fondest memories was the year when we passed the budget and I got that money in the budget for the Valley and driving home, feeling pretty good about it.

**HM:** Do you have any future plans?

**MG:** Yeah, I'm a lawyer by trade and I have a few clients that have offered me some work to do for them and I'm looking forward to doing that. [I'm] going to get re-acclimated to it. I'll be general counsel for an organization back home that I've already been doing a little bit of work for, but they want to expand my role with their organization.

**HM:** You may have already alluded to this a little bit, but what would you say your advice is for new Members?

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<sup>2</sup> Robert "Budd" Dwyer served as a Member of the House for Crawford County from 1965-1970 and as a Pennsylvania Senator from 1971-1981. While serving as State Treasurer (1981-1987), Dwyer was accused of accepting bribes. The day before his sentencing, he committed suicide during a televised press conference on January 22, 1987.

**MG:** Well, I think, be careful. And the other thing is that you keep your promises, and sometimes that's hard to do. I can remember we had a real tough gas tax fee increase vote for PennDOT and I had told the District, "I'm going to support it. I'm going to vote for it." Well, there were some people here that didn't think that was a very good idea and I was put under a lot of pressure to be against it, but I concluded that I was on the record and I was going to do it. And it's not always easy to keep your promises, but I think when you do that, in the end, people respect what you're doing and even, you know, you try to be helpful, too, you know. That's the other thing. I think that sometimes we'll get calls from people, and I'll tell them, you know, "I don't have a magic wand here to fix this problem. We'll look into it, and I'll try to help guide you through this situation you're in," but I think people appreciate the good faith effort.

**HM:** My last question: how would you like your tenure as State Representative to be remembered?

**MG:** Well, I'd like to be thought of as somebody who improved his District, made it a better place to live; who treated people fairly and set a good example, I guess, for the people that follow, the younger people.

**HM:** I thank you very much.

**MG:** Thank you, thank you.

**HM:** Representative, I appreciate you taking the time to be with us today.

**MG:** My pleasure. Good enough.