

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Franklin L. Kury (D)

108th District

Northumberland & Montour Counties

1967-1972

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May 17, 2006

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Heidi Mays (HM): I'm here today with former State Representative Frank Kury. He served in the 108th District, representing Northumberland and Montour Counties from 1967-1972 in the House of Representatives. Good morning.

The Honorable Franklin L. Kury (FK): Good morning, Heidi.

HM: I wanted to begin asking you about your childhood and your early family life. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

FK: Oh, sure. My grandparents came to the United States from Poland and settled in Shenandoah in about 1908 through 1910. My father and mother were born there in 1910 and 1912 and during the Depression when the coal industry collapsed and there was great unemployment in Schuylkill County, my father and mother came to Sunbury, which is the County Seat of Northumberland County, where my father opened a shoe repair business. So, I was born in 1936 in Sunbury and I had four brothers and a sister and they were all born there; we were born and raised in Sunbury and I graduated from Sunbury High School in 1954. I went away to Trinity College in Connecticut and graduated there in 1958, and then I went to the University of Pennsylvania Law School in Philadelphia, where I graduated in 1961. So that's basically my –

HM: Was anybody in your family involved in politics?

FK: My father was very involved in politics. My father was the Democratic Chairman of Sunbury and he ran for public office a number of times and never made it. He ran twice for the State House of Representatives and was defeated both times. But he was the one, I'd say, most got me involved in politics. When I was in High School, I took touch-typing in the Secretarial Class because I was going away to college and needed to know how to type. Well, my father put me to work as his "Secretary," to help him with press releases and letters for the Democratic Committee of Sunbury. So, I used my typing for that and that kind of got me into the political situation.

HM: So, was your family always Democrat?

FK: Yes. In Sunbury we certainly were, yes.

HM: Did you give it any other thoughts, becoming a Republican or anything?

FK: Well, no. Because of our family background and the Depression, my father and mother were great admirers of Franklin Roosevelt [US President, 1933-1945] – in fact, I was named after President Roosevelt. He made a speech in Sunbury in 1936 about two weeks after I was born and my father decided then [and] there to name me Franklin, and that's how I got Franklin. *(laughs)* But, my father always believe that Roosevelt, what he did during the Depression that the New Deal¹, saved America – so, that made a great Democrat out of him and we never changed from that.

¹ President Franklin Roosevelt's plan to achieve relief, recovery, and reform during the Great Depression [1933-1937]

HM: What kind of Democrat were you?

FK: Well, I don't know what you mean, "What kind?" We were good Democrats. We were active in the Party. My father was a Party leader and I was a candidate and office holder for the Democratic Party. So, we remained pretty good Democrats, although, now I occasionally split my ticket – I don't let the Party think for me. (*laughs*) Generally, if there's any doubt I give the benefit of it to the Democrats.

HM: Could you describe your career before coming to the House?

FK: Well, when I left Law School, I went to work in the Attorney General's Office here in Harrisburg. David Stahl was the Attorney General under Governor [David] Lawrence [1959-1963] and I did a lot of work here. I got to help – in fact, one of the things I did, I was assigned to do research for Democratic Legislators. I remember doing some research on the landlord-tenant law for Representative Toll [Rose Toll; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1971-1976] from Philadelphia and I also did some Constitutional research for a Representative John Gailey [State Representative, York County, 1957-1968] from York County. I did that kind of work for House Democrats as part of my work in the Attorney General's Office. So, I got some acquaintance with the Legislature and also, before I graduated, I worked for the *Sunbury Daily Item* as a political reporter in the summers between my second and third year of Law School and I interviewed the Legislators every week and wrote stories on the Legislature. So, I had all that. I also worked briefly for Congressman George Rhodes [US Representative, 1949-1968] and

learned a lot about how he ran his Congressional office. And then, when I went in the Army in 1962, I came back in [19]63, I went up to Sunbury with my new wife, Elizabeth – Beth – and we settled down and I got involved with Basse Beck, who was a great conservation leader at that time. He was the North Central Chairman of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsman Clubs. And I became his Secretary; we did a lot of work on the Clean Streams Law. And they passed the Clean Streams Law in 1965, which brought the coal company's under the Clean Streams Law completely for the first time in history - they had always been exempt because of their political power here in Harrisburg – and the incumbent, Adam Bower [State Representative, Northumberland County, 1939-1966], was one of six who voted against that bill to bring the coal company's under the Clean Streams Act. Basse Beck and I talked it over and decided I would run for the House and he would head my campaign. And that's how I got into the race.

HM: So, you ran against Adam Bower. How old were you at the time?

FK: In 1966 I was 30 years old.

HM: That's quite a challenge because he had been here for almost 30 years.

FK: Yeah, he had 14 terms. He was elected when I was two years old. And he was the Senior Republican in the House. He was the Republican Caucus Chairman and, I think, he was the Republican Appropriations Chairman.

HM: What kind of campaign was it?

FK: Well, in Northumberland County in those days, the politics was dominated by Lark Republican organization, which was run by Henry Lark, which was a very well disciplined organization based on patronage. And, he had a system where people who worked for the County or the State all contributed to the Party as part of their job. He raised a lot of money that way and he always took care of the nominating petitions and the details for his candidates. And he took care of the advertising, and he always wound up his campaigns with a sharp attack on the Democrats. He promulgated the idea that a straight vote is the only safe vote – if you split your ticket you’re going to lose your vote. And it was a pretty tough organization, which had been in power for some time. That’s what I had to run against. So, I decided to do a number of things to challenge – first of all, I got good literature together. I went to Bachrach in Philadelphia for my photograph; we got good pictures. Secondly, we developed an issue; the issue was Clean Streams. What are we going to do to clean up our Rivers and stop the fish kills? Fortunately for me, unfortunately for the River and for Mr. Bower, there was a fish kill that summer. A slug of acid went down the West Branch of the [Susquehanna] River and killed a lot of fish. So, I had an issue handed to me on a platter and I never let up on that – “We have to clean this up.” So, I got a good message; clean up the River. I would do it; he voted against it, he couldn’t do it. We got a lot of help. I got a lot of volunteers. The Sunbury Democratic Women’s Club and other organizations came in to volunteer to help get my mailings out. We got two mailings out to every voter in the 108th District, and the ladies that donated generously of their time, hand-addressed every one of those envelopes. At

that time you didn't have the kind of technology you do now. All of our envelopes were hand-addressed. We had a good message [and] we got it out to everybody. My wife and I knocked on a lot of doors. We'd laid out a plan for visiting every Precinct in the District in proportion to the number of votes in that Precinct. For example, I think our module was a 2,000-vote Precinct. Now, there aren't many of them in that District, but, if there were 500 people in that District, we spent half a day there; if there was 1,000 we'd spend a whole day there. You know, we had it so we'd spent our where the votes were. We knocked on an awful lot of doors. We started in August. We also had a questionnaire that we gave out to people. The Lark organization never asked people, they always told them what was good for them. We thought we'd ask people, so I passed out questionnaires personally, we mailed a lot out and we publicized that I was seeking public opinion. That helped a great deal. The other thing we did, which I think was maybe the single best stroke of luck or insight I had was [the fact that] a Democrat was elected District Attorney of Montour County. His name was Dick Brittain, [and] he was a good friend of mine. And Dick went on the radio with an ad which we wrote for him, which told people that a split ticket was just as valid as a straight ticket. In fact, it was a crime not to count a split ticket and you could vote for Franklin Kury and vote Republican and still, your vote would be 100 percent counted. And he did that ad which we played a lot. I think that helped break down the idea that you had to have only a straight vote – you could only vote a straight ticket to win, or to have your vote counted. So, with all of that and an awful lot of hard working knocking on doors and phone calls and the literature and the message, we won; I won by almost 900 votes. I ran 5,000 votes ahead of Governor [Milton J.] Shapp [Governor, 1971-1979], who was running at that

time – he didn't win, [Raymond P.] Shafer [Governor, 1967-1971] won. But, Shafer won the District by almost 5,000 and I won by 900. So, it was quite a story.

HM: What was your relationship with Adam Bower?

FK: Well, strangely enough, I never met Mr. Bower before the election. After the election, he was named Chief Clerk of the House by the Republicans, because they still controlled the House; I was in the minority. When we came to Harrisburg, I thought he would be holding it against me that I beat him, but he didn't; he was very nice about it, he was very gracious. In fact, on at least one occasion he called me into his office and gave me information about what was going on that my own Party didn't tell me about, which I should have known. So, he was very gracious and I tried to be as nice to him as he was to me. He died four or five years ago – I forget how long it's been since he died, but – a few years ago they dedicated a Fabridam in Sunbury in his name and Representative Merle Phillips [State Representative, Northumberland County, 1980-present] asked me to speak and I did and I was very pleased to speak and to name the dam after Adam Bower. And it proves that in politics, you can be opponents but it doesn't mean you have to be an enemy, and I never looked at him that way. I thought he was a fine gentleman and I have the highest regard for him.

HM: Could you tell me a little bit about the 108th District?

FK: Well, the biggest municipality of the 108th District is the city of Sunbury, which is a

city of third class. There were a number of other municipalities, but they are all boroughs; the Borough of Danville was there; Riverside; the Borough of Northumberland; the Borough of Milton; Watsontown; Washingtonville; and I think as far down as Herndon. It was, basically, a large rural area; a lot of farmers in it. And the towns were basically small mercantile towns. There was a little bit of industry. In Danville, of course, the biggest thing was the Geisinger [Hospital]. They dominate the town. In Sunbury, at that time, we had the silk mill and some other things like that. In Milton there was two steel factories, very small, but they had steel factories. And in Watsontown they had a television company – manufacturer. But, it wasn't really heavy industry except for small pieces of it. But, basically rural and commercial.

HM: Were the people registered Republican or Democrat?

FK: It was basically a Republican District. I think it was about 60/40 Republican. A Democrat hadn't won that House seat since the Roosevelt landslide, so it was basically Republican and the Lark organization pretty well dominated; they controlled the candidates.

HM: How has the District changed through time? Do you still live in the District?

FK: No, I don't. I left the District in 1986.

HM: Okay.

FK: I was offered an opportunity to become a partner in a big law firm – one of Pennsylvania’s major law firm’s, Reed Smith – which I did and that required me to move to Harrisburg. And, I was out of politics anyhow, so it was one of things. My wife and I moved down here in 1986.

HM: Did you see great change in the District, then?

FK: I don’t see great change. I think some of the industry has been lost. I see [that] the malls are bigger and bigger and the downtown businesses have declined a lot. Some of the industries have gone out of business, but I think Chef Boyardee in Milton, I’m not sure that’s still there, I know the television factory that produced television sets, in Watontown, has been closed. But, I think that the industry has declined; it’s more small business. The Geisinger is still thriving, but other than that, it really hasn’t changed greatly.

HM: How did you feel after being elected to the House of Representatives?

FK: Well, I felt exalted. My father had run twice for this against Mr. Bower and lost. We put our heart and soul into and it was very satisfying to get that kind of response from the public that we did. To have 5,000 people vote for Shafer also vote for me was a great, great thing.

HM: Once you arrived on the Hill, did anything surprise you?

FK: Well, I think the Caucus system surprised me; I had no idea how strong that was. I learned an awful lot about Philadelphia in a hurry. (*laughs*) A lot of the Democrats were from Philadelphia and the Party leader, Herb Fineman [State Representative, Philadelphia County 1955-1977; Speaker 1969-1972, 1975-1976], was from Philadelphia. Of course, Leroy Irvis [K. Leroy Irvis; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker 1977-1978, 1983-1988] was from Pittsburgh and I learned a lot about Allegheny, but in Democratic Caucus' – I learned a great deal.

HM: Did you have any mentors when you first started?

FK: Basse Beck to some extent was a very great help. He put me on to environmental issues. He chaired my campaign and he went on the radio too about why they should vote for me because he saw Bower cast a negative vote on the Clean Streams Bill and encouraged people to vote for me– he was very helpful. Here in Harrisburg I think Leroy Irvis was my mentor. Nobody in Harrisburg paid any attention to me when I was a candidate prior to winning, except Leroy Irvis. He called me on the telephone in July when I was running and asked me to come down and have dinner with him, which I did. It was just me and him for dinner and he gave me some advice on how to run the election, things to do. He told me a lot about Bower in Harrisburg and what to look for; what to avoid doing and saying, and what to say. He was very helpful, so when I was elected I felt a great deal of respect and gratitude to Roy Irvis, particularly.

HM: Did you work closely with anyone while you were here?

FK: Well, I worked with a lot of people. I tried to work with the House Leadership. I could not do, automatically, what the Leadership wanted because I came from a Republican District. So, I just couldn't do whatever Herb Fineman or Irvis or anybody else saying, "This is the Democratic position." I had to look at it pretty carefully to determine how it helped my District. And sometimes I had to split from the Party; but I always told the Leadership where I was so I didn't surprise them on the Floor. That's the one thing the Party Leadership does not want is thinking they've got your vote; you go on the Floor and then you vote the opposite way or speak against them. I never did that; if I had a problem with what they wanted, then I told them. For example, Herb Fineman had a bill to require the registration of rifles and shotguns. Well, in my District that just wouldn't go--that was just a simple "no" vote and I told him that. And he knew that up front; I wouldn't surprise him.

HM: When you recount your experience in the House, did you have any favorite stories?

FK: Well, there's a lot of stories. I have no particular favorite story, I mean, I have a lot of good stories about the House.

HM: Okay. What was the hardest issue that you ever faced as a Representative?

FK: Well, I think voting for taxes under Governor Shapp. I'll never forget, we voted for a tax to raise money by putting a tax on insurance premiums. The Democratic and Republican Leaders in the House agreed to it – this was the one time they stopped fighting and agreed [that] this was the way to balance our budget – and it was a tax on insurance premiums. And the storm that hit was furious; we voted for it and three weeks later we repealed it. That was a tough one. But, I went on the radio and I talked about it and listened to people and I had voted for it, I voted to repeal it. I think we handled it well, but it was a, generally, bipartisan effort to try to solve the budget problem. Because as people know, in Pennsylvania, unlike Congress, you've got to balance the budget; you can't spend what you don't have. There's no deficit spending in Pennsylvania for operational purposes; only for capital purposes. *(laughs)*

HM: You attempted to pass an amendment – it was in House Bill 509 in 1969 – that would set term limits of four years for both House Members and Senate Members. What is your opinion of term limits now?

FK: Well, that's a good question. I have a great question about whether people should be here too long. There are people who stay here quite awhile and make quite a contribution, but on the other hand, if you stay here too long – I think – sometimes you get away from why you're here. I never came to the Capitol with the idea of making a career of being a Legislator. There were certain things I wanted to get done and when they were done I thought it was time for me to leave, and I left voluntarily. I had my own self-imposed term limits; I had three terms in the House and two in the Senate and

figured that was long enough. I'd probably not be for term limits now, but I think we ought to do more to keep it so that people do not look on this as a career, but as an opportunity to serve and then move on.

HM: Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution was quite a great achievement for a Legislator.

FK: Well, yes, as I look back on my Legislative career, I think that's the thing in which I take the most pride.

HM: Could you first describe the process of getting the Constitution amended?

FK: Let me tell you, first, at how I got the idea of doing this. Strangely enough, the greatest idea I think I ever had in the House, or in the Legislature for 14 years, was as a freshman Representative. I was reading the *New York Times*, in the fall of 1968, when I was running for re-election, and I saw that the New York people were about to enact an amendment to the New York Constitution, and suddenly it hit me; why doesn't Pennsylvania have something like that? We can pass a lot of bills – and we were passing a lot of environmental bills – but Legislatures come and go and they can repeal and pass anything. And what they pass today can be repealed tomorrow. So, it occurred to me that we need a Constitutional Amendment to guarantee certain things. So, we overturned this past century of exploitation of our natural resources by the coal companies and the steel companies and the railroad companies, who really ravished our State of their natural

resources and left us with all these acres and acres of mine land, abandoned and scarred; and with dirty water, like in Shamokin Creek, that was absolutely polluted for a century. So, I came up with the idea, but the New York Constitutional Amendment was too detailed. So I thought we ought to have a simple, basic statement of broad general principles. This is where my experience as a lawyer, as a politician and historian came together. I used my Constitutional Law training from Penn Law School, [and] I used my knowledge of Pennsylvania history. When I was in Northumberland County, I did a lot of legal work searching titles and I'll never forget searching a title in Kulpmont, Pennsylvania. And I found the deed from the Pottsville and Reading Railroad Company to Monroe Kulp who founded the Borough of Kulpmont, which is just east of Shamokin. In that deed, the Coal Company reserved the right forever to discharge into the waters of Shamokin Creek its pollution, its dirt, its refuge, and its waste. I thought that was outrageous. I thought that should be made invalid Constitutionally. So, that and my knowledge of Constitutional Law, helped get the Amendment together. We drafted an Amendment which basically said that the public natural resources of Pennsylvania belonged to all generations of Pennsylvanians, and that the people of Pennsylvania have certain basic rights; a clean environment, clean water, clean air and historic values of the environment. And I then said in the next sentence that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania shall act as a trustee of these rights for the people of Pennsylvania. So, what we did then, we drafted a bill. I got a lot of co-sponsors and I introduced it. Just like a regular bill, you have to introduce it. Then it has to go through the House and the Senate for one session. Then the next session, it's got to be reintroduced and go through in exactly the same form as it passed the first time. Now, in the first go-around you can

make amendments, but in the second session you can't take amendments. So, in the first session – I'll never forget it – we had a meeting with Herb Fineman and Leroy Irvis and John Laudadio [State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1963-1978], who was a very active conservation leader. In fact, he was Chairman of the Committee²; he was the outstanding environmental leader in Pennsylvania and the House of Representatives. He was Chairman of the Committee and I was Secretary of the Committee and the four of us had a meeting and we worked out some amendments to the bill. Fineman, for example, was concerned that one of the phrases, "in their natural state," would preclude urban renewal projects in Philadelphia. So, he wanted to take that word, "natural" out; well, I agreed to that. There were some other things like that; we tweaked it. It went to the Senate and Dr. [Maurice K.] Goddard³ wanted to make a change or two, so we tweaked it. But, it passed both the House and the Senate and then in [19]70 or [19]71 we passed it again, and then it had to go on the ballot to be approved by the voters. And there were five or six amendments on the ballot that year, that primary. Two or three of them were defeated, but my environmental amendment won hands down – two or three to one. The rest of them were much closer and two were defeated, but this one won because the people of Pennsylvania really were ready for this; they wanted it and they got it, and I feel very good about it.

HM: Was there any opposition in the House or the Senate to this?

FK: Not as such. There was – I think most people realize the environmental tide was

² Conservation and Natural Resources Committee.

³ Secretary of Pennsylvania's Department of Forests and Waters, 1955-1971.

very strong and I don't think anybody wanted to be perceived as being against these broad principles. There were some tweaks in it, some changes, but I don't think there was any outright opposition. I think we caught the tide when it was rising and I think that's important in politics; you have to know which way the tide is going and what boat you want to sail on. We had the right boat and the right tide and we sailed and I felt very good about it.

HM: Were there other pieces of environmental legislation at this time that were being introduced?

FK: Oh, sure. In the six years I was in the House, we passed more environmental legislation than in all of Pennsylvania history prior to that time or since, I think. We passed, for example, a major rewriting of the Clean Streams Bill [Act 222, 1970], which was the reason I was elected. I campaigned for a stronger, much tougher Clean Streams Law; we did that. We passed the bill to create the Department of Environmental Protection [Act 275, 1970]; we passed the Scenic Rivers bill [Act 283, 1972], which I was the chief sponsor of, modeled after the Federal Law; we did the Clean Air bill [Act 245, 1972]; we did a Solid Waste Management bill; we did a \$500 million bond issue. So, we passed six or seven major pieces of environmental legislation in those six years while I was on the Environmental Committee as Secretary.

HM: Why did the environmental tide turn, so to speak?

FK: You mean, why it suddenly came out of the past?

HM: Yeah.

FK: I think television had a lot to do with it. Television enabled people to see what was going on. They saw, I think in California there were whales and other wildlife killed on the shores there, because of the oil spills in California. And people would see that on their television sets in their home. And they began to see more and more of the eyesores around Pennsylvania; the acres of abandoned coal mines in Northumberland, Schuylkill and Carbon and Luzerne County. People began to become aware of that. Being aware how badly polluted Shamokin Creek was and a lot of other Creeks like that. So I think the whole thing just kind of hit. There was the Earth Day movement and I think television had a lot to do with it, just like television had a lot to do with the Civil Rights Movement⁴. When Martin Luther King went to Alabama and the sheriffs and the dogs beat him up, it was on National television and people were outraged, as they should have been. But they saw it; it wasn't just something you could keep quiet in the South. And you couldn't keep quiet about environmental problems anymore either. And that helped it.

⁴ 1955-1968; Reform movements aimed at abolishing public and private acts of discrimination against African Americans.

HM: There was a connection with Earth Day in the Legislation, wasn't there?

FK: Oh yes. On the first Earth Day, Senator Gaylord Nelson [US Senator, 1963-1980] of Wisconsin came in at Speaker Fineman's request to be the main Speaker and that was the day we finally approved in the Legislature the Environmental Amendment to the State Constitution and I had the honor of moving its adoption. We did it and we passed it and we sent it on to the voters and the voters gave it an overwhelming approval.

HM: There were natural and unnatural disasters that occurred during your tenure as Representative and Senator, such as the Johnstown Flood of [19]77 and Three Mile Island in [19]79. Do you feel that the State has fulfilled its obligation to the people in regarding the Environmental Bill of Rights after these events?

FK: Well, I think the State of Pennsylvania has not done the job it has to do on flooding, in particular, flood control. In 1972 Hurricane Agnes struck and that devastated the Susquehanna Valley. We lost millions and millions of dollars to damage, but lives were lost too; a couple of lives were lost in my House District. One of my high school classmates was washed away in the flood and one or two were killed in Lewisburg, I believe, and here in Harrisburg. So, when I got the Senate one of my big goals was to get a Flood Plain Bill passed that would stop people from building in the flood zones. And, after six years we did that, we passed the bill [Act 166, 1978]. We also passed a Storm Water Management bill [Act 167, 1978] to get developers to hold water back. Now, the Flood Plain bill has worked reasonably well. What that says is, people going into the

flood plain – if you want to build you can't build unless you get flood insurance. And to get flood insurance, the municipality has to zone it to keep you from building in a flood zone, where there's a chance of a 100 year flood. So, that slows down people from building there and I think that has worked reasonably well. The Storm Water bill has not been well enforced. It's still lagging and I think the State Legislature and State Government should do a lot more to get people to stop building where there is a chance of a flood and for developers to hold back water. When they turn a cornfield into a parking lot, they ought to be required to hold that water back and not just discharge in a flash flood, because that makes it even worse. So, I would say we have not done what we need to do on Flood Plain and Storm Water Management. We still have work to do there.

HM: In a statement on the House Floor in [19]69, you said that “The real capital of the Nation and of our State is its God-given natural resources.” Thirty-five years later is that still a true statement?

FK: Oh yes. Pennsylvania has a great deal of natural resources. We have a great deal – our streams are now much cleaner; we have a lot of forest land, game land; I think we're doing a lot more with Clean and Green and preserving scenic areas; we have a lot of wildlife areas. We've come a long way and I still think that's true. But, we still have a lot of damage to undo. Don't forget, for 100 years – from the Civil War until the 1960's, our natural resources were pretty well ravaged and exploited by the coal companies and the steel companies and the railroad companies. We're still paying a price for that, but I think we've come a long way; I think we've got to keep going and finish the job.

HM: Did your constituents have any influence on your debates regarding absentee voting legislation in [19]67 and [19]68?

FK: Oh sure. In Northumberland County, one of the things the Lark organization perfected was using the absentee to get votes. They used to have the County Sheriff go out to visit the County Nursing Home and bring back the absentee ballot applications and they would always come back straight Republican – even when one of the Democratic candidates had an Aunt living there, it came back straight Republican. So, I knew it wasn't being played according to the proper rules so, I teamed up with Representative Luger [Charles Luger; State Representative, Lackawanna County, 1967-1968] from Lackawanna County who was Republican who had the same thing up there and we put together some absentee ballot legislation to clean that up so you couldn't have County Officials carrying out the ballots or the applications; they had to do it by mail.

HM: As a freshman Legislator in 1967, did you find it difficult to get your legislation passed?

FK: Well, first of all I was in the Minority Party, so whether I was a freshman or had been there for three or four terms it would have been difficult. Yeah, it was difficult but I didn't have – we worked on the Clean Streams legislation, but I knew when the Democrats won again in two years we could do even better. So, I put some bills in but it

was harder. But it wasn't because so much I was a freshman; it was because I was in the Minority Party and the Republicans had the majority.

HM: Okay. Could you describe your career after leaving the House of Representatives?

FK: Well, in 1972 the incumbent [Republican] State Senator, Preston Davis [1963-1972], announced that he was not going to run for re-election and I knew that if I ever wanted to go the Senate that was my opportunity because it was an open seat. So, I ran for the Senate in 1972 and I won, and I went over to the Senate and served two terms there and then in 1980 I decided, "I've done what I want to do in Harrisburg. It's time to go onto other things in my life," and I did; I left, voluntarily. I retired and returned to law practice and wound up as a Partner in Reed Smith, which is a law firm with offices in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Philadelphia and in those days, all around the country. So, it was a big law firm and I enjoyed that.

HM: What are you doing now?

FK: Now, I'm retired from law practice and I'm working for Malady and Wooten, which is a Government Affairs firm here in Harrisburg, where I advise and counsel and lobby for the firm's clients and my clients.

HM: Okay. And you're still involved in environmental issues?

FK: Yes, occasionally for clients. And I'm on the Board of Directors for Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association and I occasionally contribute to other environmental organizations, but that's the extent of it.

HM: Could you talk a little bit about what your office was like as a Representative when you were serving?

FK: Well, when I got to Harrisburg I had no office. The only seat was my seat on the Floor of the House. There were no offices; no secretaries. There was one phone which everybody could take turns using, and that was it. Eventually, the next year, we got a secretary for 20 of us and then when Herb Fineman became the Democratic Leader and then the Speaker, he wanted to modernize; he was the one that really led the revolution to get us offices and secretaries. I wound up on the fifth floor of the Capitol in my last year there and there were four of us in one office and we had a secretary. We each had our own phone, so it was a great improvement. But, that was – it took six years to get that. We had no District offices. Now, fortunately, my wife and I practiced law in Sunbury, so we had a law office and I was able to use that as a District office, unofficially. So, that was it.

HM: So, things kind-of improved the longer you served?

FK: Oh yes. Even when I went to the Senate I finally got a District office. I was a Committee Chairman in the Senate and I had a staff there of five or six people. It was a lot different; a lot better. In the House, it was just me and my briefcase when I got there.

HM: How would you want your tenure as State Representative to be remembered?

FK: Well, I'd like to be remembered as someone who proved that you can be effective in politics if you get a lot of people in your District to get to work with you and, first of all, get you elected. I mean, you have to win. But you need to do that, you need to get a lot of people. Politics is a team activity; you can't do it by yourself. I was blessed to have a lot of people help me, starting with my wife who knocked on as many doors as I did, and the Democratic women of Sunbury who addressed all those envelopes for me. And also some Labor Organizations helped me at the Steel plants, the Steel Worker's Union and others, and I had a lot of people from different organizations that helped me, and I think you need to do that. But then, I found I could be very effective if I worked realistically and with the Leadership. So, I'd like to be remembered as somebody who came to town with the idea of trying to improve our laws dealing with the environment and succeeded. I feel very good about the role I played in enacting a tough Clean Streams Law, the Scenic Rivers bill and, of course most of all, the Environmental Amendment to the State Constitution; that I feel very, very, very proud of. So, when my children ask me what I did when I was in the House, I'm going to hand them a copy of Article I, Section 27. *(laughs)*

HM: Lastly, do you have any advice for new Members?

FK: Well, yes. My advice is--remember who sent you. You are elected, you are an agent; you're not a principal. That means, you're there to speak for other people. That doesn't mean you have to be an automatic mouthpiece for anything, but it means you have to have a decent respect for the people who elected you and you have to represent them and if you disagree with them you've got to say why and be clear about it and I think they'll respect you. I don't think the people expect you to be everything they want. I'll never forget when I left, somebody stopped me on the street and they said, "Senator Kury, I want to tell you something; I didn't always agree with you but I respected you because you told me what you were thinking and I gave you some credit for that I respected that." And I think that's the most important thing I would tell new Legislators; have respect for who sent you here and if you disagree with them, tell them openly and candidly. Don't do anything that isn't open and above board.

HM: Well, thank you very much. This concludes our interview.

FK: Well, thank you. I'm delighted to be here.

HM: We appreciate you taking the time out of your schedule to be here with us.

FK: Okay. My pleasure.