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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Jeffrey E. Piccola (R)

104th District

Dauphin County

1977-1995

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Heidi Mays (HM): I'm here with Jeff Piccola—Senator Jeff Piccola, I guess I should say. I'm sorry.

The Honorable Jeffrey E. Piccola (JP): I answer to anything.

HM: Well, thank you very much. I'm pleased you're here with me today. I wanted to begin by asking you about your childhood and your family life and how that prepared you for public service?

JP: Well, I was born and raised within two blocks, two and a half blocks, from where I live now, and that's, like, four and a half miles from the State Capitol building, so Harrisburg has been a – and the Capitol Complex – has been a central part of my life ever since I can remember. In fact, I have a recollection of when my mother was working – but before I was in school, I stayed with my grandmother – and she worked right across the street, across Third Street, from the Capitol. And occasionally, my dad would come in to pick her up from work, and we would sit in the Capitol Park, waiting for her to come out of the office. So, I have a vivid memory of the Capitol and the fascination with the Capitol. I can remember when I was in the Boy Scouts, one of our projects was on Sunday nights to come in and set up seating because they had a Sunday night, some kind-of a Sunday night worship service or song fest or something out here on Capitol Park. And the Boy Scout project was to set the chairs up and then after this thing was over, take them down. And so, the Capitol in Harrisburg has just been, you know, it's something I

grew up with, and have a very strong interest in the Harrisburg area and particularly, downtown Harrisburg.

HM: Would you say you came from a political family?

JP: No, I wouldn't. My dad was an Italian, well, he wasn't an immigrant; his parents were. He came from Hazelton. My mother's family was born and raised in this area, in Harrisburg, [and] go back a number of generations. To my knowledge, no one was involved in politics, except, I'm told, that my great-grandfather, on my mother's side of the family, ran as a Democrat for Lower Paxton Township Supervisor back in the 1920's and apparently got his clock cleaned because it's not a very Democratic area. And then my dad, he had an interest in politics, but he never really got into it. At the time of his passing, he was serving as a member of the local Township Authority. But I know he had an interest in [politics] because he talked about it quite a bit, but he never really engaged in it very much.

HM: Well, how did you decide to become a part of the Republican Party?

JP: Well, growing up, there wasn't anything but the Republican Party, at least in our household. And I got active in high school in some political campaigns and became very interested in government [and] politics. I can remember having that interest ever since junior high school, and so, when I became 21 – because back then you had to be 21 to register to vote – there was never any doubt in my mind that I would register as a

Republican. In fact, by the time I was 21, I was like a junior in college, so I had already served as the Chairman of the Gettysburg College Republican Club and engaged in some campaigns in Adams County, down in Gettysburg. So, there wasn't a shadow of a doubt as to where I was, where I was headed, and some people say, "Well, you know, doesn't it change in, or evolution in your thinking change?" And maybe that's true for some people, but the longer I have lived and the more I have read and thought through issues, the more convinced I am that the Republican Party is the Party for me and has the right answers for the problems.

HM: Could you talk about your career and your educational experiences before coming to the House of Representatives?

JP: I graduated from Susquehanna Township High School, here in suburban Harrisburg, and went to Gettysburg College. [I] majored in history at Gettysburg College, and continue to have a very abiding interest in history. I think it's important that we learn as much about our history as we possibly can. I think it's vital for our young people to know where they came from and where we came from as a country and as a society. I knew I wanted to do something government-related. And so at some point in time, and I don't exactly remember when, I decided I was going to set my sights on going to law school because, you know, the thinking was, "Well, even if you're practicing law, there's always the opportunities to become involved governmentally in one fashion or another." So, after Gettysburg College, I went to George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C., which, you know, is the epicenter of politics: D.C. At the time, there

was something going on called the Vietnamese War, the Vietnam War, and my contribution for service was in college to become a member of the Air Force ROTC and got a commission when I graduated from college. But in those days, they would give you what they called an “educational delay” to go to graduate school and they gave me that delay to go to law school, but by the time I got out of law school, the war was over. The military was being downsized, dramatically, and they basically just wanted you for three months of active duty, and then you were done. So, when I graduated from law school in 1973, I found myself with a baby. My wife and I had gotten married in 1971 and we had a son in 1973 and so I had a family and a couple of mouths to fill and a roof to put over people’s heads. So, we came back to Harrisburg. My wife is from Hanover, Pennsylvania and I had met her when I was going to college. So, we came back to Harrisburg and set up housekeeping. After about a year and a half, we bought a house, and we had another baby and I engaged in the practice of Law with a local law firm, which I’m still with, as a matter of fact. And at some point in time – I knew I wanted to get involved politically. I had no specific plans. In fact, a funny story: my dad died in 1975, and as I said, he had been a member of the local township authority. And when he died, I went to the Township Commissioners, who were all Republicans, and I thought, “I’d like to serve out my dad’s term on the Township Authority.” “Oh, no, you can’t do that; you don’t live in the right ward.” Now, I lived two blocks away, but it was, you know, the ward wasn’t right. Now, it was no written rule; it was just a custom that they had, and they said no. The next year, 1976, our local State Representative, Joe Hepford [H. Joseph; State Representative, Dauphin County, 1963-1976], who was my predecessor here, announced that he was going to run for Congress, and when that was in the paper, I

came home and I said to my wife, “I wonder who’s going to take Joe Hepford’s place in the General Assembly?” and she said, to her ever-dying regret, “Why don’t you run?” So, now I can blame it on her, and I do frequently, because she says, “Oh, this politics.” And I say, “Hey, this was your idea.” (*laugh*) But anyway, I had four opponents in that election, and the main opponent was a gentleman, a fine gentleman, by the name of Jack Pincus. He was a Township Commissioner in Susquehanna Township. And Jack’s a great guy. In fact, Jack’s still living. He lives in a senior citizen home up in uptown Susquehanna Township. And Jack’s campaign manager was another commissioner, the one who had told me no, I couldn’t be the Township Authority member. So, I was 27 years old during that Primary, and the guys, the three guys running against me, were all in their mid-50’s, about the age I am now, maybe even a little younger. And I just went out, and basically, I out-hustled them. I knocked on doors, and they sat back and didn’t do much and I ended up winning. So, after the election was over – and Jack and I became very good friends and his campaign manager, of course, I’d known for years, and I said, “Boy, you guys could have had me cheap. All you had to do was put me on that Authority, and you know, I would have been yours; but instead, you said no, and I ran.” And, you know, that was a lesson for me in politics, because I always try to encourage young people. There’s a tendency sometimes to say, “No, you’re too young,” you know. “Come back later when you’re more mature.” But, I always try to encourage young people to the extent possible, because I was kind of in that boat and I didn’t think my request to serve on the Township Authority was unreasonable. Even though I was only 27 years old, I was an attorney, and I thought reasonably bright, but they said no and, you know, I kind of showed them. So, I always like to encourage young people and I think if

you connect with the young people, too, you keep yourself and your ideas fresh. I hope I answered your question. (*laugh*)

HM: You talked about some of your early techniques: knocking on doors, meeting people. How has your campaign strategies changed over time?

JP: Well, actually, when I was in the House, I was in the House for 19 years [and] strategies haven't really changed, didn't change that much. I mean the basic concept of knocking on doors continued. I think I knocked on doors in my district, and I had a pattern. My District didn't change too much geographically over those 19 years. I probably knocked on some doors four or five times. Now, obviously, when you're running in a contested Primary for the first time, it's very intense. You try to get to everybody, but every year I ran, I knocked on doors, at least in some part of my District. And so when you run 10 times, you're going to cover that District several times, and I did and I always found that to be a great part of the campaign. Now, obviously, I had more money later in my career because you were able to raise more money. It costs more money to run campaigns. That first campaign, that Primary campaign in 1976, I spent 15 hundred dollars in a contested Primary. I mean, you can barely file for election for 15 hundred dollars now, but so, in that respect, it's changed. But, I think that the basic concept of face-to-face, people-to-people contact, especially for House Members because your Districts are so small, 60,000 people, that concept is the best ticket to success in politics, at that particular level. Now, when you go to the Senate, you've more than four times, or about four times, multiplied the size of your District, so the knocking on doors –

I do it, but you're never going to cover your whole District, and in the great scheme of things, it's not going to be as effective in a campaign. Now, what I do to try to counterbalance that. You get four years in the Senate, so, what I do in the Senate is I have town meetings. I had them in the House, but I have them over a broader area in the Senate. And almost every month, at least one Saturday, sometimes weekday evenings, I'm at a couple of firehouses or municipal buildings. In fact, this weekend, I'll have three town meetings on Saturday morning, and we send out postcards to folks telling them I'm going to be there. And that face-to-face contact, the ability to talk to people, I think that's what representative democracy is and should be about.

HM: Do you like campaigning?

JP: Yes and no. (*laugh*) There's something that gets, you know, your competitive juices get fired up and I do enjoy going out and meeting people. And speaking, but some of the negative aspects of campaigning, of course, when your integrity's attacked, and your veracity is attacked and your compassion is attacked, you know, you're a hard-hearted person because you didn't vote for this or that. That gets a little nasty, but I can't say I've had any extreme experiences with the negativity. I've had it a little bit, but it's part of the game. I mean, you know, I can fire back as easy as I can take it, so I'm not afraid or shy to come back at an opponent if they're not being accurate on the issues.

HM: Can you describe your House District whenever you served?

JP: The District was primarily suburban and rural. It was suburban Harrisburg and most of Upper Dauphin County, or at one point, there was all of Upper Dauphin County, which is a very rural, small town area, great. Oh, people are the salt of the earth, up there.

When I first was elected, I actually had three wards in the city of Harrisburg, so I had city, suburbs, and rural, but in the 1980 reapportionment, the city's population was shrinking. So, the city district took in the whole city at that point in time. So, I did have some experience representing the city early on, for a couple of terms, but the suburb. The House district was mostly suburban and rural and small towns.

HM: How hard is it to represent people with such different, maybe, backgrounds and issues?

JP: Well, when I had the suburban [and] rural small town, it was very rare that there was a conflict between the two because, on most issues, they were fairly compatible. Now I'm in the Senate, I have a microcosm of the state of Pennsylvania. I have the city of Harrisburg, [an] urban district. I have the suburbs. I have coal regions. We have the coal regions that start up in Upper Dauphin County. You have rural, small town, suburban. We have a declining steel town in Steelton. I mean, we've got it all, and you know, you do have conflicts, periodically, there's no question about it, but this is an example that I always point to because it shows you the similarities of people that, well, you might think are very, very different. One of the problems in urban districts, urban areas, is the housing situation where absentee landlords come in and allow properties to deteriorate and it just destroys neighborhoods. And Mayor Reed [Stephen; State

Representative, Dauphin County, 1975-1980; Mayor of Harrisburg, 1982-2006] came to us a few years ago and asked us to upgrade city code enforcement ability by changing some state laws, and we did that for him. And Governor Ridge [Thomas; Pennsylvania Governor, 1995-2001] signed that bill, or those bills, in a real distressed neighborhood here in the city of Harrisburg. And at the bill signing, we had a lot of the neighbors and people, housing activists from the city of Harrisburg, come to the bill signing. And for the most part, they were mostly African-American folks that were interested in improving the city neighborhoods. And they were very appreciative the Governor was there to sign it, and they were there, you know, trying to improve their neighborhoods. The very next day, I was up in Jefferson Township, which is a rural part of Upper Dauphin County – Carsonville is where it's located – where a developer was planning to put in one of these concentrated agricultural facilities, a hog farm, basically, and the neighbors, people who lived in that vicinity, were upset about the prospect of this hog farm coming in and destroying their quality of life. And we went up there to see what we could do about that, and it struck me, except for the color of their skins, these folks had the same interests. They wanted a good quality of life, good quality of life, and it struck me that, you know, that for all the differences that we may have, and maybe life comes at us from different directions, but that's basically what people want. They want to be able to enjoy their lives, enjoy their neighborhoods, have a good quality of life, have the government perform its core function, which is public safety, and make sure that people abide by the rules. And so, you know, despite of all the differences I always like to find the similarities and connect people.

HM: Well, how hard is it to be a Representative and a Senator in being so close to Harrisburg?

JP: Well, there are blessings and curses to it. Many of my colleagues in the House and in the Senate come from great distances and stay here, so when they're here, they're here. And they can disconnect from their Districts, and they, you know, they can do whatever they need to do in the evenings: have dinner; socialize with their colleagues, and what have you. If I get a call on a Session day from a constituent group or constituent who wants me to attend something on a Session day in the evening, and I can't say, "Well, I'm going to be in Harrisburg." That doesn't mean anything to them. So consequently, I don't have that sociability network with my colleagues, especially when my kids were younger, because when I was in the House, if we were in Session, and I didn't have anything going on with constituents, I was home with the family and/or doing things with the kids. So, it's a blessing in that we were close. I could watch the kids growing up. I didn't have to go away to Harrisburg for three or four days every week and be apart from the family, but it does put a bit of a different kind-of a strain on you, because you're constantly working, but you accommodate yourself to it and, you know, it works.

HM: Could you tell me about your memories of your first Swearing-In in the House?

JP: Oh my God, I thought I died and went to heaven. I mean, here I was, 28 years old, and you know, by the time I was Sworn-In I was 28, and I was being Sworn-In as a Member of the House of Representatives. I mean, that was the pinnacle, I mean

[be]cause I love government, I love politics. I remember my two colleagues from Dauphin County, at the time, Joe Manmiller [Joseph; State Representative, Dauphin County, 1975-1990], who's still living [and] lives out in West Hanover Township¹, Joe sat right next to me, he had the seat that Representative Marsico [Ronald S.; State Representative, Dauphin County, 1991-present] has now, and Joe was an old Dauphin County Republican war horse, and next to him, was former Representative Rudy Dinnini [State Representative, Dauphin County, 1967-1990] who's passed away. And, he went back years and years in Dauphin County politics, Dauphin County Republican politics. So, in terms of getting the opportunity to mentor with some real experienced folks, for local government, I had, you know, I had the best teachers you could possibly get. So, while I was only 28, I was under an intense training program, if you will. On the other side of me, to my right, was a woman that I will never forget: Carmel Sirianni [State Representative, Bradford, Susquehanna, Sullivan and Wyoming Counties, 1975-1990] from Susquehanna County. She was a saint, and Carmel was an old schoolteacher and she had more statewide experience. She was involved in State Committee and she, you know, she could call the Governor an SOB. I mean, she had that kind of familiarity with people. I just got a tremendous statewide education and political education from her. That didn't all happen on Swearing-In day, that was your question but, you know, when I got to know just the three folks on either side of me, it was the opportunity of a lifetime for a kid wet behind the ears.

HM: Did anything surprise you? I mean, being from Harrisburg, were you surprised by how the House operated, maybe?

¹ The Hon. Joseph Manmiller died on October 13, 2008.

JP: You know, I wasn't, very much. I mean, obviously you learned a lot. I had interned for my predecessor, Joe Hepford, when I was a junior in college at Gettysburg. I'd come up for a summer and worked with him, so that had been about 1968. So, that was about eight years before I got elected. A lot had changed from [19]68. I'll never forget, Joe was the chairman of the Judiciary Committee the year I was interning for him, and there were no Sunshine Laws, there was no Open Meeting Laws. I mean, you just called a meeting and you could meet anywhere. And I'll never forget, he would just decide on the spur of the moment to have a Judiciary Committee meeting, and they'd just call enough Republicans to get a quorum and they'd go to some room and meet and report bills out. Sometimes, they didn't even tell the Democrats, as long as they had a majority of the committee. That all changed from 1960s to the [19]70s because you had Sunshine and Open Meetings [Laws] and you had to have quorums. So, that was obviously refreshing, that we had advanced in that respect.

HM: Do you recall your first office whenever you came to Harrisburg?

JP: Oh, yes, oh. It was down in the basement of the Capitol. It was a large room, and there were four of us in it, one in each corner. Representative Tony Cimini [Anthony J.; State Representative, Lycoming County, 1975-1990] from Lycoming County was in one corner. Joe Manmiller, Representative Manmiller, was in another corner, and a newly elected Dennis O'Brien [State Representative, Philadelphia County; 1977-1980, 1983-present; Speaker, 2007-2008] from Philadelphia was in the fourth corner, and that was in

1977, and we shared secretaries—two of us shared a secretary. Representative Manmiller and I had the same secretary. That was all the staff you had, 1977 this is, I think. Representative O'Brien will confirm this. He's from Philly and they have a different political environment down there than we have here in Dauphin County. That was the year we didn't vote for the budget. There were only 85 Republicans in the House in 1977. Shapp [Milton J. Shapp, Governor of Pennsylvania, 1971-1979] was Governor, and he needed a huge tax increase to pass a budget. And in spite of the fact they had 118 Democrats, they couldn't get a majority for a budget until, wow, toward the end of August. It was almost like 1991 and, in some respects, it was worse, because people really weren't getting paid in welfare that wasn't going out, and it was getting kind-of ugly by the middle, end of July. And in fact, Representative O'Brien, who was from Philly and was voting no on the budget as a Republican, was getting death threats and bomb threats. And one day, I came in and there's a bomb sniffing dog going through our offices because Denny O'Brien was getting bomb threats and they were going out to start his car for him because they weren't sure what was going on. So, it was an interesting year, but I'll never forget that year. That was, you know, the first desk I had. And I, you know, thought it was great. I had no problem with it at all. Now, one thing I had done [that] I'd failed to mention, when I was down at—in 1969, I interned for a Congressman, Herman Schneebeli, [U.S. Representative, 1959-1966] in Washington, and then when I went to law school, I worked in his office part-time, so I had a sense of how I wanted to set up a legislative office, you know, responding to constituents, putting out a newsletter, all the things that you think of. So, I had a pretty good sense and hit the ground running on that. But that was 'new school' back in 1977. Some of the older Representatives

didn't do any of that kind-of stuff. They never returned mail. They would call somebody. They get a letter from somebody; they call. You know, now you write a letter back, and newsletters were just coming onto the scene back in those days. They were relatively rare, so, and in all of the pamphlets and stuff that the House Members and the Senators have today, that just wasn't even heard of. I mean, we would get maps from the Department of Transportation; that was about it.

HM: When did you start your district offices?

JP: Well, you know, I did those town meetings [be]cause I never knew where to put the district office [be]cause I had like, two-thirds of Upper Dauphin County and I had suburbs of Harrisburg that sort of went around the city. And I thought, "Well, where do I put it?" I have a law office right here in Harrisburg, so I did the town meetings in Upper Dauphin County and didn't have a District office. In fact, that was something else that was just coming on in the [19]70s; there weren't many District offices. A lot of members didn't have them. Some came from other backgrounds, insurance, or law, whatever, and they used those offices as their District offices. After the [19]80 reapportionment, I got all of Upper Dauphin County in my District and so what I decided to do, and the [19]82 election was really when we first represented all that area. So, in 1983, I did put a District office, my first District office, in Upper Dauphin County in Elizabethville and it was there for, geez, over 20 years at almost the same location; I think we moved a couple of blocks, or a couple of stores down. But I had to move it recently because they took most of Upper Dauphin County away from me, so I had to move it down to Halifax. But,

1983 was the first District office and it really hasn't changed much [be]cause I don't have a District office other than the one in Halifax, now.

HM: Could you talk a little bit about Leadership through the years? What was your relationship like with them?

JP: Well, when I was first elected, Bob Butera [Robert J.; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1963-1978] was our Floor Leader and well, as I said, we were woefully in the minority, 85 members. And I had a great relationship with Bob Butera. In fact, Bob ran for Governor in 1978 and I was an enthusiastic supporter of his for Governor. I thought that he would make a great Governor, had he been elected. He resigned, though. In fact, it was interesting; that first year was kind-of – that 1977 was kind of traumatic for the House because, in May of that year, Herb Fineman² [Herbert; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1977; Speaker, 1969-1972 and 1974-1977], who was a long-time serving Speaker, was convicted of, and I can't recall offhand what the crimes were, but he had to resign from the House. And so, K. Leroy Irvis [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker, 1977-1978 and 1983-1988], who, another great Pennsylvanian, was elevated to the Speakership, and then at the end of 1977, in December, Bob Butera, the Minority Leader, resigned because he was going to run full time for Governor. And so, he was gone. Jack Seltzer [H. Jack; State Representative, Lebanon County, 1957-1980; Speaker, 1979-1980] moved up from Appropriations Committee to the Minority Leadership. Matt Ryan [Matthew J.; State

² Herbert Fineman was convicted by the Philadelphia U.S. District Court for obstructing a Federal probe into allegations that he received kick-backs for getting students into professional school. He resigned from the House of Representatives and his position as Speaker in 1977.

Representative, Delaware County, 1965-2003; Speaker, 1995-2003] and Jack butted heads in that election, I can remember that, and, of course, I was from Central Pennsylvania, so I was supporting Jack. We supported one of our own in that election. So, Matt stayed on as the Minority Whip. Well, Jack served the rest of that year, and we got the majority in 1978 in that election, something you don't see much of anymore. Eighteen seats shifted in that election, from Democrat to Republican. And so we elected Jack Seltzer as our Speaker and Matt Ryan became the Majority Leader. And Jack served two terms and I loved serving with Jack. Matt was a great Floor Leader; he became Speaker. Sam Hayes [Samuel E., Jr.; Blair, Centre and Huntingdon Counties, 1971-1992] when I came in, [he] was the Caucus Chairman, moved up to the Whip when we went into the majority, and became the Floor Leader for one term when Matt was the Speaker. And then in [19]82, we dropped back to the minority for another 12 years and it was kind-of static [be]cause Matt was the Minority Leader for those 12 years and most of them, I believe, Sam Hayes was the Minority Whip. But, they kind-of shared the power. Sam sort-of represented the rural parts of the state and Matt was southeast, and it worked pretty well, it worked pretty well.

HM: Did you ever consider running for House Leadership?

JP: Well, actually I did. In fact, John Perzel [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1979-present; Speaker, 2003-2006] will tell you this story, I think. John and I ran against each other in 1992, the first time, we ran for Minority Whip, because Sam Hayes had retired. Yeah, he retired in [19]92, so I ran for Minority Whip, [and] John ran for

Minority Whip. We tied on the first ballot and, of course, on the second ballot – I wasn't even planning for a second ballot, but John, coming from Philadelphia, he was probably planning for a second, third, and fourth ballots, [be]cause I know they think these things through a lot further than we do – so, he won by a handful, you know, one or two votes, I guess, after that first ballot. And then we butted heads again for Majority Leader in [19]94, and he won by a few votes in [19]94, although I've always thanked him for beating me, because I wouldn't have had the opportunity to run for the Senate if I would have won. It was never a personal contest. We were never antagonistic toward each other; it was probably more regional and issue oriented than anything else. And, John's done a fabulous job, I mean, you know, the good Lord has a plan. He knew what He was doing making John the Leader, and now the Speaker. So, he was sending me on another mission somewhere.

HM: Now you're a Leader in the Senate.

JP: Yes, yes.

HM: And what kind of Leader would you say you are?

JP: Well, I mean, there's no doubt where I stand on issues. I mean, that's one thing people sometimes criticize me for. They say I'm, like, too conservative or I have too many fixed views on subjects. Well, I would believe that's why we come here; we come here to represent a point of view; we come here to represent a district; we come here to

solve problems, in a certain way. So, in that respect, the criticism is valid. But on the other hand, I'm not, "It's my way or the highway," kind-of a person. I mean, I realize I can't get my way all of the time, and that's not what this process is all about, getting my way all the time. I mean, I'll make my point, I'll make my pitch, but if I can't get the votes we're going to have to do it a different way. But, let's just try to move the ball forward. So, I try to make a point of view and then, you know, see where everybody is and if we can't go my way, we'll deviate to try to go in a direction that will get a good result without taking steps backwards, and then try to accommodate as many points of view as we possibly can. The problem is, sometimes people look at Leadership as trying to accommodate everybody and I don't view Leadership that way because when you accommodate everybody, you really haven't accomplished anything because, you know, nothing will move forward. There's always got to be a majority and a minority and again, that's why I'm a Republican; because I happen to think our point of view, generally speaking, is the best way to proceed. But, I think that's what a Leader needs to do: stake out a position; try to draw people to it, knowing that you're never going to probably do it completely. But, you know, get something accomplished, push the envelope, move the ball forward.

HM: You served in the Legislature for many years. Have you had the opportunity to mentor anyone?

JP: Oh, I have a number of staff people that have gone onto bigger and better things over the years. And like I said, we were talking about the young folks earlier on I just

think it's an invaluable opportunity to come on a legislative staff. I mean, I had that opportunity in a very, very small way and think I benefited greatly from it. So, I've had well over 20, well, now 30 years of public service, and I've had a number of staffers who are serving in various capacities in state government, local government, lobbyists. I mean, it's a terrific opportunity and to see them grow and to see them succeed.

HM: Could you tell me what committees you were involved in your House career?

JP: House career? My big love in the House was the Judiciary Committee. I kind-of followed Mike Fisher³ [D. Michael; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1975-1980; State Senator, 1980-1996] up through the ranks. He was the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime and Corrections. I don't even know if they have that anymore, but then, I served in that capacity. And then, when Nick Moehlmann [Nicholas; State Representative, Berks, Lebanon, Lancaster Counties, 1975-1990] lost in Lebanon County, Matt Ryan appointed me the Minority Chairman of the Judiciary Committee and that was a tremendous opportunity. And then in 1994, when we did get into the majority, I failed in my Leadership attempt, but I was appointed Majority Chairman of the Judiciary Committee for that Special Session on Crime. And it was kind-of neat in 1995, you know, I wasn't sure where I was headed in the House. I had the opportunity to run for the Senate, but during that entire year, I chaired a really, really important committee during a very important Special Session. We got like 30-some bills passed into law on criminal justice issues, so it was a kind-of a neat crowning point. So, Judiciary was my

³ After serving in the Legislature, D. Michael Fisher was elected Pennsylvania Attorney General from 1997-2004, and then became a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit from 2004 to the present.

focus. I had also served as Minority Chairman of the Labor Relations Committee for a couple of terms, and that was interesting, you know, getting involved in some business issues. And, oh, another interesting story; in my second term, when we were in the majority in 1979-[19]80, I was appointed Vice Chairman of the, then-called, Federal-State Relations Committee. I'm not sure it exists anymore, but it wasn't a very active committee. It was a committee that kind-of took resolutions for the most part, but we had one bill in that committee, it was a Constitutional amendment, which would have allowed the District of Columbia to elect Senators and Representatives to the United States Congress. And so, that bill came to our committee and the committee chairman at the time, and I won't mention any names, but [he] got himself into a little trouble, and I won't even go into detail there, but he was forced to take a leave of absence from the House. And Jack Seltzer was Speaker, and I think Jack didn't want to bring somebody new in as Chairman [be]cause he didn't know when this guy was going to come back or if he was going to come back. So, I'm the Vice Chairman, he appoints me. I'm in my second term, acting Chairman of a Standing House Committee. I get an extra staff person, I get a parking place on the plaza, a little sign that has my name on it. I, you know, I'm living high in 1979—well, into [19]79 into 1980. Of course, in 1981 then we come back into reality, and I'm back in as a rank-and-file, but I'm one of the few second term members who ever got the Chairmanship of a Standing Committee.

HM: Would you say your Senate Committees were similar to – ?

JP: Well, I'm on Judiciary, but you know, I developed another interest over in the Senate that probably has surpassed the criminal. I still have an interest in criminal justice, but we solved a lot of the problems with the Ridge Administration and the Special Session that we don't have to focus on that as much. And I still have an interest in tort reform, which generally comes out at Judiciary, but for some reason, and I don't know, Bob Jubelirer [Robert; State Senator, 1975-2006] appointed me Vice Chairman of the Education Committee when I went over there. And so, I started getting involved in the education issues, and as you know, Governor Ridge had education reform as one of his top priorities. And I had started to work on education issues and really got engaged in a lot of the things that the Governor wanted to do. And over here in the House, I really never paid a lot of attention to education. I mean, I wanted to make sure my school districts were adequately funded and supported, you know, the good legislation that we needed, but I never really delved into it. But over there, I had the opportunity serving on that committee, to become much more engaged in education reform. So, I think that's actually eclipsed my criminal justice interests right now and I've gotten really involved in education. Harrisburg School District's take over by the Mayor under the Empowerment Law [Act 16 of 2000] is probably one of the pieces of legislation I'm most proud of because it's making a real difference in a lot of kids' lives.

HM: I wanted to ask you: who decides the placement of committees? Do you have any input on which—?

JP: You mean which committees you sit on?

HM: Yes.

JP: Well, at that time, I didn't. When you move in a Special Election, you get whatever's available because everybody else has assignments. But, at the beginning of each term, and I think it's the same way here in the House, you fill out a sheet that you list your committee preferences, which ones you want to be on in the order of your preference and they try to accommodate you, as best they can. And it's a difficult task [be]cause some committees everybody wants on and other committees nobody wants on, so it's a difficult task. So, you have the ability to request. If you've been on a committee, and you've developed an expertise, the odds are you're going to get reappointed. And I think that's a good thing if you have the interest and you're really an active member of that committee.

HM: Did your interests direct you to, maybe, committees, or did your committees' issues direct you to issues?

JP: Well, both. I'm an attorney, so when I came here, I tried to get on Judiciary. I wasn't successful in my first term, but Matt Ryan, who was our Leader, and Jack, well, Jack Seltzer, who was the Speaker, and Matt, appointed me to Judiciary on my second term when we went into the majority. And that was an exciting time, because Dick

Thornburgh⁴ [Pennsylvania Governor, 1979-1987] was coming in as Governor and he was doing laws on mandatory minimum sentencing and he was a prosecutor, so he was interested in criminal justice, so being on Judiciary was really neat in 1979-[19]80. And so, my interest in criminal justice issues and tort reform and court reform and things of that nature, sort-of pushed me toward the Judiciary. On the other side, education, I didn't, you know, I really hadn't focused on that very much, but I was appointed to the committee and delved into it. So, you know, it works both ways, it works both ways.

HM: How do you feel about the seniority system?

JP: Well, I think seniority is important because seniority, I mean, it shouldn't be simply a numbers game, because if people are here a long time, they have obtained a wealth of information, a wealth of strategic thinking, you know. You don't have to think about the – you just know how bills work their way through the process. Somebody mentions this, and immediately say, “Well, you better check this, this, this, and this.” I had a lobbyist in my office this morning who wants to try to get something accomplished – for something local – before the end of this Session, and I said, “Well, here's the three or four things you got to check, because any one of those three could just stymie you right there.” And so, these things – and that only comes with seniority. I mean, you don't know that stuff. Sometimes you do if you're a staff person and then move into the Legislature, but not everybody's in that position. So, there's a lot of benefits to it, but sometimes people that are long-serving become stale. They get burned out, and I think it's on a case by case

⁴ Before serving as Governor of Pennsylvania, Dick Thornburgh's legal career included working at the Kirkpatrick and Lockhart law firm, as a United States Attorney and Assistant Attorney General in Western Pennsylvania.

basis. I don't think that happens as much as some people think it does, but, ultimately, that's the decision of the people that elect our Representatives and our Senators. They're going to have to decide if that person that's serving them is burned out or not, and I don't think it happens very much, but it does happen on occasion. So, I don't think seniority should be the only thing – and I've benefited from seniority, and then I've also benefited from leaders who plucked me and put me ahead of other people because they saw some ability or they saw a particular – I'll give you a good example; back in, I don't remember the year, Seltzer was Speaker; I know that. I was asked to serve on the Insurance Committee, which is a prime committee here in the House. A lot of people had wanted it, but the reason was, there was a tort reform bill going through that Jack Seltzer wanted to see, at least given the opportunity to have a chance. And I can't remember what subject exactly, but I know it was tort reform. And Jack knew I was an attorney, and Jack knew I was a supporter of tort reform, so he encouraged one member to get off of that committee and to put me on it because he wanted somebody on there, number one, who was in favor of it, but also who was an attorney who could, you know, talk about – because tort reform is a dry, legal subject. I mean, it just bores most people to tears and unless you're an attorney, you really don't understand some of the nuances of it. So, he took me, jumped me way over top of a lot of other people [who] probably would have liked to have been on that committee, because he had a particular job for me to do. So, I've benefited from, you know, leaders ignoring seniority, but I've also benefited from seniority. So it, you know, it's a strange world.

HM: Well, how much work would you say goes on in committee as, as opposed to the debates on the House Floor?

JP: From my service in the House, my recollection is most of the work goes on in committee and I don't know if that's changed. I get the sense that it hasn't changed much. I think more work goes on in committee in terms of massaging bills and mending bills and getting the language right. Probably not as quite as much as it used to be because right now you have [a] different set of rules relative to concurrence votes that go back to [the] Rules Committee and [that the] Rules Committee can amend, but you can't amend on the Floor. And this is both in the House and the Senate, so there's probably more massaging done in Rules Committees than there used to be. See, when I was here, we had a rule that said if a bill came back to the House on concurrence with Senate amendments, it went right on the House Calendar. It didn't go to the Rules Committee. So, it was an up or down vote. You either concurred, or you didn't concur. Now, sometimes bills will fly back and forth several times and a lot of "massaging," as I call it, amending, goes on in Rules that didn't happen when I was here. So, it's kind of hard to say, but I think the committees – that's why we have them, I think. And I'm a strong believer in the committee system because, I think, more work should be done in committees because on the Floor you're, you know, you can't become familiar with every subject intimately and in great detail. I know, for example, when I was in the House, and still now in the Senate, on some issues I looked to other Members who I agree with philosophically, but who I know know more about a particular subject than I do for advice and direction. And I know they rely on me when there's an issue that I'm

an expert on. In fact, that's one of the things I tried to tell new members when they come to the House [*inaudible*] to areas and become the recognized expert on that subject.

You'll have a lot more influence because people are going to start to look to you and say, "Oh." Like on criminal justice. By the time I got out of here, I was kind-of the guru on criminal justice and, you know, if you're a law-and-order type in the House, you say, "What does Piccola think?" "I'm with him," you know, that kind of thing. So, that kind of work only happens in committees. The people that get up on the Floor and talk about every subject that comes down; no influence whatsoever, but committees, you can develop the issue and you can develop relationships, too, with other Members, people that agree with you, people that are opposed to you but maybe you can work across Party lines or across philosophical lines on parts of issues. And that can only really happen in committees. It's very difficult in a, especially, in the House with such a large Chamber.

HM: What were the major pieces of legislation and issues that you were involved in?

JP: In the House?

HM: We'll start with the House.

JP: Well, okay, well, yeah. Well, I'll try to go back in reverse order. The Special Session on Crime, which as I said, had 30-some pieces of legislation that became law, and a number of others that didn't become law; that was probably my crowning achievement. We did Megan's Law [Act 24 of 1995]; we did a lot of juvenile justice

stuff; we did some death penalty stuff. That was very, very satisfying to get that kind of stuff accomplished. That was, you know, it was kind of tough because for 12 years we were in the minority and I don't think I had my name on a bill that was signed into law for over 12 years because, you know, the Democrats wouldn't send a Piccola bill to the Governor, which doesn't bother me. As long as my ideas are there, I don't really care. In fact, I was able to get one bill, which was primarily my product – a domestic violence victims piece of legislation Governor Casey [Robert P.; Pennsylvania Governor, 1987-1995] signed it, in the early 1990s – that was something I worked on, developed the expertise [and] had the staff. I was the Minority Chairman of Judiciary. Democrats supported it, but I can't say they did a whole lot of work on it. Probably took a lot of credit for it, but I was happy because we got the subject passed into law. Probably two other satisfying pieces of legislation, very small items, they don't mean a lot to very many people in the state, but they're important for us here in our region. Number one was, my first bill that I had with my name on it signed into law was the bill [HB 1843, Act 18 of 1979] that designated Stoney Creek, up in Middle Paxton Township, as a wild scenic river, which protected it from development and encroachment. And, just to show you how things sometimes come around full boar, that law now is actually being used. The military wants to expand Indiantown Gap into this protected area for target practice for a new weapon that they're using in Indiantown Gap, and the environmental folks and the sportsmen are trying to use the law that I had passed to keep the Federal Government from encroaching on this protected piece of mountain land up in Stoney Valley. So, even though it's some 20-some, almost 30 years ago, it still has relevance today. Second thing that I remember getting passed in the House was a bill that allowed School Directors who

were Civil Service employees to run for School Director. The Hatch Act⁵ prohibited that. If you were a state employee under Civil Service, you couldn't run for School Director. And we had a young, or, not a young man, a middle-aged man, I guess he was at the time, who was running for school director. He had won the election and then he took a Civil Service job and could not serve because he had a Civil Service position and I thought that was wrong. And we have so many Civil Service employees in the Harrisburg region that I – so, I got a bill passed. The Governor signed it, that for School Directors only – which is kind of a nonpartisan, nonpaying position – that if you are a State Civil Service employee, you can run in an election and get elected and serve on a Pennsylvania school board. And we've had a number of folks who've benefited from that law here in the Harrisburg area and, I guess, around the state. So, those are the things in the House that stick out in my mind.

HM: Would you like to talk about your Senate career?

JP: Okay, well, the Senate –

HM: You're still a Senator, too.

JP: Yeah, here's an interesting one. Independent Counsel Bill [Act 19 of 1998], which has actually been sunseted – it's no longer in effect but, it was in effect for about five years – I had that bill introduced in the House – no wait, maybe it wasn't that, might have

⁵ The Hatch Act of 1939 was “An Act to prevent pernicious political activities,” and was named for its sponsor, Senator Carl Hatch of New Mexico.

been another bill – but I had one bill that was introduced, passed the House while I was in the House. So when I got elected to the Senate in [19]95 – oh, I know what it was, it was the Jen and Dave’s Law [Act 119 of 1996]; I had gotten that passed in the House. When I got to the Senate, there on the Senate Calendar one day is “Representative Piccola’s Bill,” and Senator Piccola was able to vote on it. So, it was an interesting – it doesn’t happen very often, does happen every once in a while, but doesn’t happen very often – so, yeah, Jen and Dave’s Law was one of them. That’s a law that protects children who are subject to custody orders. We had a terrible incident in this Harrisburg area that a father who had temporary visitation with his two children, but was under some criminal investigation and charges in another county, murdered these children and committed suicide on Christmas Eve. And the mother found them and had she known of these criminal charges and these criminal activities in Lancaster County, she would have never dropped the children off. But, she had no way of knowing, and so this law allows parents who have their children subject to visitation or custody orders to check on a hotline to see whether there are criminal charges pending against the other party anywhere in the state or perhaps anywhere in the country. So, that was something that we worked on with some local folks and the local victims to promulgate. As I mentioned earlier, Educational Empowerment Law, which Governor Ridge proposed, but to which I added the Harrisburg School District component. I mentioned Independent Counsel. I did get that accomplished in the Senate for a period of time, sort of as an outgrowth of former Attorney General Preate’s⁶ problems and no one was in a position to investigate or prosecute a sitting Attorney General or employees of the Attorney General, other than the

⁶ Ernest Preate, elected Pennsylvania Attorney General, 1989-1995, was sent to prison for mail fraud in connection with political contributions from video poker machine vendors in 1995.

U.S. Attorney. I got that passed, but it wasn't used very frequently primarily [be]cause we've had good Attorney Generals. So, it passed out of existence and the public outcry for it hasn't forced us to reenact it into law. So, I hope it never does. I hope we continue to elect quality folks as Attorney General. We don't need that. You know, those are the ones that stick out the most in the Senate. I mean, there's always legislation—Eminent Domain [Act 35 of 2006]; that was a good one. Just recently, in response to the Kelo case,⁷ my bill was signed by Governor Rendell [Edward G.; Pennsylvania Governor, 2003-2011] to restrict the powers of local government in the eminent domain area in terms of economic blight. And we really had the opportunity to work together with the House on that. Representative Grell [Glen; State Representative, Cumberland County, 2004-present] was instrumental in getting that through the House. A good example of House-Senate cooperation.

HM: Could you tell me how the amendment process works, and were you able to maybe get some laws passed through that process?

JP: Well, when you're in the minority, especially in the House, it's about the only chance you have [be]cause they generally don't report your bills out. But the amendment process is, I think, more extensively used, and I know more extensively used in the House. And I guess they all have laptops now. We never had laptops; we had piles of amendments, paper amendments, and I guess it's easier to sort through them now. But, the amendment process is usually the way, either somebody who hasn't been able to

⁷ Kelo v. City of New London, [CT] decided, with a vote of 5-4 by the U.S. Supreme Court, that the general benefits that a community enjoyed from economic growth, as part of a comprehensive redevelopment plan, justified the use of eminent domain from a private landowner.

effectuate their position in committee is able to at least bring the issue to the Floor or something may come up that's relatively unrelated and they can't even move their bill out of a committee, so they try to get it in on the Floor. Obviously, the other reason is, you know, there's just some things that the committees missed or need to be massaged or technical amendments, and so the amendment process is a pretty open process in the Pennsylvania Legislature. It's relatively unrestricted, and I think that can be a good thing and it can be a bad thing. It can tie up the legislative process [be]cause people who are interested in killing legislation can use the amendment process to kill it sometimes by just offering all these amendments that, you know, we'd probably pass and go in but weigh the bill down to the point it would never pass in that form, finally. So, there's a whole process by which one House tries to straighten out what the other House does and I know this, having served in the House. The House is usually the one doing that amendment process, so it's left to the Senate to try to clean it up. And it's interesting because Members who've never served in the House, Senate Members who've never served in the House, don't fully understand what goes on over in the House. And I kiddingly tell my Members, some of my colleagues, I say, "There ought to be a requirement that you have to serve in the House a couple of terms before you can be elected to the Senate because you have to understand what goes on over there." But obviously, that's not a serious proposal, but it is interesting to watch Members of the Senate who've never served in the House and their reaction to their understanding of what really happens in the House. They're two different institutions and it's a fascinating. Somebody should do a study on that at some point. I'm not sure anybody would read it, but it would be an interesting study.

HM: I wanted to ask you about another issue that came to your attention while you were serving in the House; the Rolf Larsen impeachment trial.⁸

JP: Oh, yes. Yes.

HM: I believe you were a prosecutor during that. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

JP: Well, for a guy who was a History major, who was a lawyer and who loved politics and government, being involved in an impeachment proceeding was like dying and going to heaven. I mean, you know, you read about these things in the history books and to think that you had the opportunity to participate, not that you really wanted to because it was a sad chapter in Pennsylvania history, given what occurred, but the opportunity to set the precedent, to do the research, to do the prosecution. As you may know, Justice Larsen made some allegations about the Supreme Court and some of his colleagues and there was a Grand Jury and panel to investigate them. And they made a report and it was clear that out of that report a whole lot of stuff kind-of flew back on Justice Larsen. And, I won't go into the details, but it rose to the level, it clearly rose to the level of an impeachable offense. And so we had to form, we had to put a Resolution in to the Judiciary Committee. We reported it out, [and] we recommended that the Justice be impeached and there was a debate on the Floor and, I think, it passed with all but one

⁸ Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Rolf Larsen was ousted from the bench by the Pennsylvania Senate in 1994, and barred from holding any public office, after being tried and found guilty of two counts of criminal conspiracy.

vote. I think there were seven charges. The process, which goes back – I think the last time we did that in Pennsylvania was the 1830s, so we didn't have a whole lot of precedent to go on. We had appointed five managers from the House to prosecute the case in front of the Senate and I was the Minority Chairman and Representative Dermody [Frank; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1991-present] was the Majority Chairman of the Committee of Managers. We hired outside counsel to do the investigation and to do the prosecution and to do most of the legal work. We actually had a trial over in the Senate. They cleared the Senate Floor. The Senate appointed a committee to hear the evidence, although the full Senate had to vote on the actual impeachment charges. It took almost all summer. In 1994, we tried a case and brought witnesses in and heard evidence from them, documentary evidence, and it was kind-of interesting because, like, I think it was in October of [19]94, I had to help make closing arguments to the full Senate. I stood in front of the full Senate and argued why they should adopt these seven articles of impeachment and a year and a month later, I was sworn into that Senate. That was the next time I appeared on the Senate Floor, was when I got Sworn-In. So, it was a whirlwind year, you could say, but that was one of the high points I would say, of my – not that you wanted to be involved in it, I don't mean to wish any ill upon anybody, but – it was just a fascinating process because there were issues of judicial reform, what's appropriate for judges to do, which I think that was helpful for Pennsylvanians to understand how their courts operated, particularly the Supreme Court. It sort of opened up the Supreme Court to scrutiny, which, God knows, they needed, not that you don't want an independent judiciary, but you want a judiciary that's accountable to the people and that process helped in that regard, as well.

HM: Thank you. Well, you talked about a month later being Sworn-In to the Senate: what made you decide to run for the Senate?

JP: Well, as I told you, I had run for Majority Leader and had come up short and Speaker Ryan appointed me Chairman of the Judiciary Committee for that Special Session and the regular Session. And I wasn't sure where I was going. I mean, you know, you don't decide you're going to run for reelection or run for anything until the elections are upon you, and this is 1995. And my predecessor in the Senate, John Shumaker [Dauphin and Northumberland Counties, 1983-1995], experienced some health problems in 1995 and he announced in, I think it was in May of [19]95, that he was not going to—he was going to resign from the Senate a year early, [at the] end of August. I had actually tried to run for the Senate once before, back in 1983. Congressman Gekas [George; State Representative, Dauphin and Lebanon Counties, 1966-1974; State Senator, 1977-1982; U.S. Representative, 1983-2002] who was our Senator, and he got elected to Congress and right in the middle of his term, so there had to be a Special Election, and I went to the Party to ask for the nomination, but they had nominated Senator John Shumaker. So, this is my second shot at moving to the Senate and this time, the Party said, “Yeah, sure, do it. Go for it.” So, I guess it was early September about a week or two after John Shumaker resigned, [be]cause you couldn't do anything until you officially resigned. They nominated me. It was a real short campaign, about a month and a half, which was great. I love those short campaigns. It was kind of a natural for me. Your question was what made me decide? You know, I figured I'd probably reached the

pinnacle of my influence and abilities in the House and it was an opportunity that opened up, and it just felt right doing it and people said, “Yeah, you’re the right guy for the job.” So, it just happened, and I like to think the good Lord has a plan for all of us and we don’t know what it is and sometimes we resist. But, I think He’ll shut doors on you when you’re not going down His road, but He’ll open other doors for you, so you just have to be ready to walk through them, and so I walked through.

HM: I think you may have already touched on some of this before, but how was serving in the Senate different than serving in the House?

JP: Oh, in myriad ways. Well, I think I mentioned the larger District gives you more diversity, so you have to be in touch with more issues from a variety of different points of view. I never really thought too much about urban issues and slumlord stuff and as I told you earlier, I got involved in that issue; urban education. Mayor Reed and I had been working on that together, so you have an opportunity to get involved in more things. You’re serving more committees; you’re on five or six committees in the Senate. Over in the House, you’re on two, maybe three. Even if you’re in Leadership in the Senate, you’re on committees and even some leaders are Committee Chairmen, depending upon which position they have. So, the opportunity for serving on committees, which as I said is an important function and a lot of stuff happens in those committees, is the opportunity to serve on those committees is expanded greatly in the Senate. The power of confirmation in the Senate is something I was never, ever experienced in the House [be]cause we don’t confirm anybody in the House. And it was funny, because I could

count on one hand in my 19 years in the House, how many times I had a Cabinet Secretary in my office. I had one in my office every week in the Senate because they have to get confirmed by the Senate, so you see Cabinet officials personally a whole lot more than you do in the House. So, that's a big difference. The staffing is different. You've got more of a personal staff in the Senate. You do in Leadership, I think, in the House, but the rank-and-file members, even the Committee Chairs, it's more of a Caucus staff, pools, research pools for the committees. And, obviously, everybody works for the Caucus and you do get some choices in terms of who you want to hire but, at least when I was here, you're working for him and you're working for him, and you didn't have choices back in the early days, at least my early days. There's the ability to get involved in a lot more issues. The temptation is there to violate my rule, which is to try to become expert on only a few issues because you get exposed to so many over in the Senate, so the temptation is greater to violate the rules. But, if you really want to do a good job, you just won't have the time unless you devote yourself to one or two or three subjects. So, that's a difference over in the Senate. It's interesting, and only House Members who have gone to the Senate will understand it. I didn't change when I walked across the Rotunda to the other side, but my colleagues all of a sudden viewed me differently. I can't explain it in words, but you become a different person, not in your own mind and not really, but for House Members, they look at you differently. Although, I told my staff when I went over there and I had mostly folks from the Senate that I took with me or that I hired in my Senate staff, I said, "This will be the rule. Thou shalt treat House Members as they would want to be treated," because sometimes House Members get the back of the hand from Members of the Senate, and I said, "We're going to keep a good

relationship with our colleagues in the other Chamber because they're important to this process." And so, I think that's an advantage you have when you serve in both Chambers. Oh, there are a lot of other differences. You tend to be looked at in your county or your particular region as more of a leader. House Members, because their geographic area is so small – I think I was one of four from Dauphin County, and for many years I was the junior member from Dauphin County – you tend not to be viewed as a political leader in your region. I mean, you are to some extent, but in the Senate you become immediately a figure that's, you know, looked at for some leadership in your region. And so, that's a little bit different and its part of that expanded geographic area that you have. You get a lot more invitations, but you have a four year term, which I like. Although it's funny, because my biological political clock was set to running every two years and I ran in a Special Election in [19]95, I had to run for the full term in [19]96. I had already run in [19]94 in a Primary and a General election, so 1996 comes along, and I'm ready to run, and I don't have to run, and I'm thinking, "What am I going to do?" Not [19]96, I'm sorry, [19]98, I was right in the middle of the Senate term, first Senate term, and it literally threw my body off, because I was running at least every two years for 20 years and I didn't have to in 1998. So, it took a little bit of adjustment, but I have to say, I did adjust.

HM: What would you say were the major changes that you've seen in the Capitol, maybe not the building, but just the Legislature in general?

JP: Well, I do want to mention the building because the building – and I want to give Matt Ryan a lot of credit for this, God bless him, because he’s from Delaware County. He didn’t have to pay any attention to the physical plan of this Capitol, but he, I think it was in [19]82, he established the Capitol Preservation Committee, and this building is named after him, and that’s very appropriate – which has revamped this Capitol. Not revamped it, that’s not a good word; renovated, restored is the word, to as close to its original condition as possible. And that has changed [be]cause when I came here, these offices were chopped up. You know, ceilings were lowered, artwork was allowed to deteriorate and Matt, to his credit, saw that and set in motion a process to correct that. And I’ve had the benefit over 30 years of watching that improve and so I don’t want to denigrate the building. We’ve had the big addition, also, in the back, that I was involved in that, too. The granite, the great granite scandal of 1985-[19]86—another time when Matt Ryan plucked me, moved me ahead of everybody because of a particular talent. The Thornburgh Administration had embarked on this 127 million dollar addition to the State. the East Wing, and there was an issue relative to the granite that was used. They wanted to use the same granite in the original building and there’s only one place you can get that, up in Vermont, I think. So, they did a no bid contract and all of a sudden, because of one thing or another, it became a political issue in 1986 during the election year that year. I guess they wanted to embarrass the Republicans. The Democrats were in the majority in the House. Well, they had this committee, this Select Committee that was investigating this, and it was getting out-of-hand, from my perspective anyway, but I was on it. Matt called me into his office one day and he says, “I’m taking,” I forget who, “off as Chairman. I want you on as Chairman because you’re an attorney, you’ve got

legal skills, [be]cause this is going to get down and dirty, and we need somebody in there who can think on their feet from a legal point of view.” So, he stuck me in on that, and we just went toe-to-toe. I mean, that was for about nine or ten months, we just went toe to toe. It got real partisan for awhile and then, of course, the election came by and everything blew over. It was no longer an issue and there was no wrongdoing ever found in the construction. Wally Baran, Secretary of General Services, and he once told me he said, “They told me this was going to happen. Every time you try to build a major public building associated with the Capitol, there are all kinds of charges of politics and crime.” He says, “I didn’t believe it, [be]cause we did everything on the up-and-up, but it happened. It just happened.” So, that was part of the change, this building. Technology is the big thing; I mean, here we are in a video room. We didn’t have video in 1977; I don’t even remember when we started getting video. Oh, we had radio broadcasts. I remember going up to the fifth floor and we’d sit in front of this old antique microphone with a tape recorder and we’d record our radio broadcasts. And then they’d have to physically take the tape and either mail it or hand deliver it to the various radio stations. Now you uplink on satellites, I don’t know what all you do, I mean, but the technology’s incredible. Email, computers, internet, that’s just, I mean, the technology has just revolutionized the ability to get information, to transmit information. The quality of the staff is greatly improved. The legislative support staff in the [19]70s was just beginning to come up. We had some real good people, but then were a lot of people that, you know, it was clearly a political job and, you know, they did what they could, but it wasn’t top notch product. I would have to say now, House and Senate, from what I’ve observed is the quality of the staff has just dramatically improved. I mean, we have access to some

of the brightest people that are around to try to get – and if our staffs don't have it, we can access it through other sources that have improved greatly. So, I'd say those are the things that I've seen the greatest changes in.

HM: What aspect of your job do you like the most?

JP: Oh, boy, well, I think the aspect I like about it the most is it is not the same thing every day; there's no two days alike. People say, "What's a typical legislative day?" I say, "There is no such thing." That's what makes this such a great job. One day you're doing this, one day you're doing that. I mentioned the, you know, slumlords in the city of Harrisburg, hog farms in Jefferson Township, I mean, night and day, but similarities. The aspect of the job that I enjoy is the diversity of the job.

HM: Okay, so what do you like the least?

JP: Well, probably, there are some constituents, some groups, some people that you just can never please, and you try to be polite, and you try, because – and some people try to please everybody. And my philosophy is you can't please everybody because you're not doing your job as a Representative because you can't please everybody, if you're trying to. And so, I try to tell people the way it is. Like in my town meetings; somebody will come up and want me to take a position on an issue that I know I'm not in favor of and I'll tell them, "I respectfully disagree with you. I can't, and here are the reasons why." Nine times out of ten, while they're not happy, at least they're satisfied. They know

they've had their opportunity that they know you've thought it through, but there's that one in ten who just will not let it go and they come back at you, and they can be very obnoxious and trying sometimes. They say, "Oh." Those folks you just, you know, I don't know, you just – it's hard to deal with that, because I know my, you know, Representatives in Congress, my United States Senators, are not going to agree with me all the time. They couldn't possibly, but I'm not going to browbeat them every time I disagree with them and so, I guess, that's the one thing that you get disappointed, but that's human nature. You have that anywhere.

HM: What do you think the hardest issue you ever had to face was?

JP: Oh, boy, let's see. I'll tell you one of the hardest issues that I wrestled with the most was school choice. The issue first surfaced in the early [19]90s when Governor Casey was in office, and the thing was circulating, percolating in the House. And I wrestled with whether I was for it or against it. I came out of a public school background. My kids up, until right around that time, had gone to public schools, and we all moved my son into a parochial school for a variety of reasons. So, I could see benefits of choice, but I didn't want to undermine public schools. But, the more I talked with people in the Ridge Administration, the more I started examining these educational issues that we talked about earlier, the more I became convinced that school choice was something that was beneficial, not just to the private schools, but to all schools. And I could see that as a benefit for education, generally for the kids. So, I guess that's one of the big issues that I wrestled with not early in my career, but I'd say starting around 1990 and advancing

through the [19]90s. But now I'm, you know, I'm firmly on board with school choice. I think we can have school choice. I think, I was helpful in writing the Charter School Law over in the Senate, and with Governor Ridge, as I said, I was for empowerment, and the educational tax credit program is something I strongly support and try to get increased every year. So, you know, once I've defeated that wrestling contest opponent, I'm usually fairly firm in my positions.

HM: Do you have a fondest memory of serving in the House?

JP: Oh, there are a lot of those. A lot of late night Sessions talking with Carmel and Joe Manmiller and Rudy Dinnini and, there's so many colleagues around that, oh, well, I'll tell you a funny one. This may not be the fondest, but it's kind of humorous; this was in 1977, and State workers were not getting paid, welfare recipients weren't getting paid because we didn't have a budget, and it was probably like, mid to late July. And we were in Session late one night, the Democrats were in the majority, and they're trying to get the votes for a budget and couldn't do it. And at the time, Rudy Dinnini was up on the fifth floor where there are no windows. I don't know how you get there now, but there was only one way in and one way out. So, we went up there (I don't think I should say this on camera), but Representatives back in those days used to have a drink, so he invited us up for a drink [be]cause we weren't doing anything. It was evening, so we were sitting there and talking and all of a sudden, these four or five state Correctional Officers came in to his office looking for him because they were constituents. And they weren't getting paid and they were angry and they knew Representative Dinnini was

voting 'no,' and they were big guys, and I said, "Rudy," I said, "we're kind of trapped in here." "Don't worry." He invited them in, sat around the table, invited them to have a drink, talked to them and he starts blaming the Governor. He says, "That Governor won't," you know, "the Governor won't do this and the Governor won't do that." And by a half hour later, he had those guys so fired up, they went down to the Governor's office to lobby the Governor and Rudy had given them the whole thing. And it was a very, very interesting process how he turned the angry constituents around.

HM: Well, we do ask for funny stories, and you've already shared one. I must say, though, we found in our research that you challenged Senator John Shumaker to a manure pitching contest. Do you remember that?

JP: Oh, actually, somewhere I have that on video. I didn't challenge him; that's a myth. We were challenged to compete against one another, up in Halifax; Paul Clarkston's farm. I'll never forget it, and WHTM, I don't know if it was WHTM back then, it was Channel 27, Mike Ross⁹ covered it. And the idea was, you had a pile of manure, two piles of manure and about 10 or 15 feet away was a bucket and you had to pitch as much manure as you could into that bucket in a minute and the guy who got the most into the bucket was the winner. Well, I didn't think that was fair [be]cause John Shumaker, as you may know, lived on a farm. He lived out in Grantville on a farm and I figured, "Well, he's got it all over me. He knows how to pitch this stuff." Plus, he was in the Senate and, you know, House Members knew what House Members know, so I entered the contest and we got up there and didn't I win. So, there was some benefit to House

⁹ Anchor, news director, and reporter for WHTM-TV Channel 27 News, 1956-2002

service. John, I think, pitched more manure, but I got more in the bucket. I think that's how it – he was faster, but I was more accurate. I think that's how it worked.

HM: How would you like your tenure in the State House to be remembered?

JP: Well, I would like to be remembered as somebody who got some things accomplished, that benefited my constituents that I served in the 104th District as well as the whole state of Pennsylvania. I'll never forget one of the things that K. Leroy Irvis left in my head about public service, and I don't remember where or when he said this, but I know he said it, and I've used it in speeches on the Floor of the House and on the Floor of the Senate. He said, "Fight for your district, fight for your beliefs, fight for your views, but vote for Pennsylvania." So, I'm hoping that my tenure in the House and in the Senate is that I voted for Pennsylvania.

HM: Well, there's a lot of change going on in the Senate coming up soon. I don't know if you have future plans?

JP: Always have future plans.

HM: Okay.

JP: Yeah, lots of future plans. I have no idea what's going to happen, but yeah, it's really a challenge. I mean, it's sad, in some respects, because some very good public

servants are going to be departing, some voluntarily, some not and that's always sad because [of] personal relationships. And, you don't like to see people hurt, but there's a lot of hurt as part of the political process and that hurt is part of life. But the opportunities for change, positive change, I think are also there. So, I think I'll go back to the good Lord has a plan, and I think this is all going to work out for the best, and I'm confident that it will work out for the best for the people of Pennsylvania.

HM: This is where we ask if you would have any advice for new Members, if you'd like to share any.

JP: Think before you speak. Listen and not just to people you agree with but people that you don't agree with. You can learn, in fact, you probably learn a lot more from the people you don't agree with than the people you agree with [be]cause if you agree with them, you already know what they know. Don't ridicule or dismiss another Member because of their attitude, their ideology, their point of view. They legitimately come to this Chamber, or any legislative Chamber, with a constituency and a point of view and they're entitled to the dignity of being able to voice that. You can have your private thoughts about it, but, you know, don't ridicule them for it. Stick to your convictions. You came with a set of principles and ideology and point of view and don't be too quick to compromise. I mean, you're going to have to compromise, sooner or later, but certainly don't compromise your principles. Don't do something wrong for your own private benefit and don't think you're going to privately benefit from this job. You may just indirectly get private benefits, certainly your esteem in the community will rise as a

Member of the Legislature, but don't try to parlay a public office into private gain. Those are some words of wisdom; I don't know. I probably would have some more if I thought about it longer.

HM: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

JP: Well, I would like to say that I think this project that you're embarking on, this Archives, is marvelous. And I don't know if they've shared it with you, but I have a wall of files from my House service and you're more than welcome to go through them at any time you want; pull out what you would like to keep. I have no idea what's in there. I haven't looked in them in years, but I just think, you know, the project to preserve history, to me, is –I'm a History major, so I just think what you're doing is terrific and I commend you for it.

HM: I appreciate that. Thank you.

JP: Maybe we'll try to get something like that started in the Senate next year.

HM: Oh, good. Thank you very much.

JP: Thank you.