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BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Jere Schuler (R)

43rd District

Lancaster County

1983-2002

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Heidi Mays (HM): I'm here today with former Representative Jere Schuler, who served in the 43rd Legislative District, which was Lancaster County -

The Honorable Jere Schuler (JS): Lancaster County, that's correct.

HM: – during the years 1983-2002. Thank you for being here with us today.

JS: Thank you for inviting me.

HM: I'd like to start off by asking you; what kind of influence did your family have on your early life and your future career as a public servant?

JS: Well, to start off, I guess I'd have to attribute my interest in politics to my father. When my brother and I would have lunch or dinner together, dad always brought up a subject of controversy and we would argue over that issue and we never seemed to agree. Either my brother and I didn't agree with dad or dad didn't agree with us, but over a period of time we came to the conclusion we were being baited to bring up discussion and I always remember that quite clearly. So, I have to attribute my interest in politics to my dad who was – he never ran for office, was never interested in office – but he was interested in politics and that was one of his interests that, I guess, permeated through him to us. That's how I got interested in it.

HM: Did you always have political aspirations, then?

JS: No, I never had anything in the background. I was a school teacher and I enjoyed teaching and that's what I wanted to do. I made that decision when I was a junior in high school that I wanted to teach American History and I had some fine teachers through my education career. And I went onto Millersville University and eventually ended up teaching for 27 years. And I did teach some politics in American Government and American History. And with that, the interest somewhat started then. And then in 1980, with reapportionment, the 43rd District was moved from Allegheny County into Lancaster County because our population increased. And I was approached as a possible candidate to run for office, which I did and it was successful.

HM: Well, how did you decide to become a Republican?

JS: Well, I guess that's dad's influence. *(laugh)* And that's one of the things I always felt. And you have to understand Lancaster County, not as much today as it was then, but it was predominantly Republican. And it still is; however, I think there have been some inroads by other Parties into the Lancaster County political spectrum. But, overall, I think it was dad's influence and my own personal feelings about how government should be run and how we should pass legislation that affects our constituents; and against big government. I guess that's the best answer I can give to you.

HM: Did you have any other types of jobs other than being a teacher, before coming to the House?

JS: Well, I had summer jobs; many of those. I started picking potatoes at a very young age out on the farms. I helped cultivate tobacco. I ended up, when I went to Millersville, I worked at Armstrong – it was then called Armstrong Cork Company – it was a linoleum plant, and I worked there for four summers. And one year, I worked at Pennsylvania Power and Light as a meter reader and, eventually, ended up teaching.

HM: Okay. Did you run for any other offices before your House run?

JS: Well, before I ran for office, I was appointed on planning commissions. I got my background in planning in two townships. And then I ran for Township Supervisor, which I was fortunate enough to make the election and win. And also was a committee-man for the Republican Party and then also area-chairman for the Lampeter-Strasburg Republican Committee. But, once I was elected to the House, I resigned all those positions or my term ran out. I wanted to focus all my attention to the House.

HM: You talked about the reapportionment whenever you were getting ready to run; why did you decide to run for the House?

JS: Well, I think I was interested in government. It goes back a long time. One time when we were teaching, Senator Snyder [Richard; State Senator, 1962-1984] – I don't know if you remember him – but, he was a Senator from Lancaster County. And he invited school teachers who were Social Studies teachers to come to Harrisburg and meet with him and other government officials. And we met over in the Senate and he brought

in Secretaries of every Department and it became interesting to me. I think at that time I was only about, maybe, 30 years old. And someone said to me – and I can't remember who it was – we were walking down the hall out here in the Rotunda and somebody said, "Schuler, why don't you come up here someday?" And I never thought about that until later years and I said, "My golly, that was pretty good up there." And I thought I could make a contribution. Because of my education background and my experience in education, I thought I could help in the educational field. And so, I made the decision to run through the help and influence of some other members of the Republican Party in Lancaster County who gave me great support.

HM: Was there anybody that you would like to name, as to helping you get started in your early career?

JS: Well, there were quite a few people; K.L. Shirk, who was in the area. That is basically where I got my start; working for K.L. Shirk. He was a lawyer, but also Chairman of the Republican Party. And he asked me to be his researcher; that was a non-paying job/volunteer from which I gained a lot of experience. So, that's basically where I got my start. Ken Shirk and also I had good support from Marilyn Ware. Marilyn is now Ambassador to Finland, but she was very supportive in my connection. And there many others who gave me their support to run for office, especially from my local area, in the West-Lampeter Township area; Bill Musser, was a lawyer who was – I took his place as committee-man; he was very supportive – so, there were many that I can list, but those, I think, are the ones that really got me started.

HM: Could you describe the 43rd District?

JS: Based on when I had it?

HM: Yes, and the changes.

JS: Yeah, okay. Well, the 43rd District was a, when it was reapportioned came about, I always accuse my fellow Representatives putting everything in there that they didn't want. And we had some very controversial areas. The first place in the eastern end of the district was the landfill; that was a very controversial issue. I had to deal with that. We had the Route 23, which still isn't built, but that was another issue. But, in the eastern end you had a very conservative – you had a lot of Mennonite groups, you had a lot of Amish. I suspect – I've been told, but I don't know; I guess it's accurate – at that time, I represented about 85 percent of the Amish population in Lancaster County. And as you come into towards the city, you got more suburbia. And then to the west was Millersville and the University. So, it was quite diverse; I go from the Millersville University to the eastern end down to Chester County, at that time, which was very conservative.

HM: What was the political make-up of the district? Do you know what the percentages were?

JS: Well, I would say, I think the percentages were like four to one, Republican.

HM: Okay.

JS: And I think that may have slipped a little bit, but I still think its pretty solid Republican.

HM: Could you describe the aspects of your first campaign?

JS: Well, that's another story. I think I already mentioned to you in our prior discussion there was about, I hear, there were 13 people who wanted this job, and we then moved onto doing our campaign endorsement. And I had a wonderful campaign chairman, Shirley Horn, and she really did a lot of work for me. And we had these 13 candidates, and we had a couple meetings and eliminated some of the ones who didn't do well in the balloting. So, to make a story short, it ended up with three of us. And I think in the second or third meeting of the delegation, the three of us battled it out until two o'clock in the morning, and eventually, I did get the endorsement and then ran. And a Democrat did run against me, but I was successful. And through the efforts of Shirley Horn, who really did the politicking behind the scenes, which I am very appreciative of.

HM: Through our research, we found that that was your only campaign really to speak of; all of your other campaigns you ran unopposed.

JS: That's right. I ran unopposed the rest of my career in the House of Representatives, which I'm very fortunate, and I had a lot of good people who supported me.

HM: Well, what is it like not to have to worry about elections?

JS: Wonderful. Campaigning is not what I enjoy, to be honest with you. I like going and meeting with people in small groups and discussing issues and having good exchange. But, campaign finances and all the paperwork and everything, it's not one of the things – I mean, you have to do it if you're going to run for office, but it's not one of the things that I would enjoy doing all the time; every two years, especially. But, it's time consuming, you know, and I think what has happened today is the amount of money that is spent on campaigns is just a little bit too much. And that would turn me off, I think. So, I was lucky not to have campaigns, so I can't speak with too much authority.

HM: Since you didn't have to worry about your own campaigns, did you help anybody else with theirs?

JS: Oh yeah, sure. I would go out and help with a candidate who was having a little trouble and give him my expertise, whatever it was, in regards to campaigns. But, no, I went out on the streets, I knock on doors for other Representatives who were having some difficulty. And I felt I had that obligation to help them. Of course, times would come and they would help you, too. You know, it's back-and-forth.

HM: Could you describe your relationship with your constituents?

JS: Well, I always felt that I had good relationships with my constituents. Oh, you always have a small group who will be against you no matter what you do, but that's part of the political process. But overall, I think the people I dealt with were very professional, very well informed, and I always enjoyed working with them. And I can't pinpoint any one person that I felt was really arrogant or obnoxious. I also liked to work with the Amish community. Now, a lot of people don't understand the Amish community, but they had a representative; he was the chairman of the Old Order of Amish Steering Committee and he lived in my district. And I would deal with him when the Amish had a problem, whether it be a school or construction or something of that nature, and we'd try to get the problem resolved. But, overall I always felt that my constituency was great.

HM: What were your first impressions on coming to the Capitol Building and to Harrisburg?

JS: Well, my first impression was that, man, I have a lot to learn; first starting with Parliamentary Procedure. Now, I knew some Parliamentary Procedure, but not the one we use in the House of Representatives. So, that was my first obstacle. But, overall I knew a lot, I say, not that it's any great thing, but because of my background in education and local government, I had a running start on a lot of other, newer Members, because of my experience in those two areas. When I first came here, we didn't have cameras in the

House; that came later. And we didn't have as many long-winded speeches as when the cameras came. So, I enjoyed it. You know, it was nice. We had good relationships on both sides of the aisle; with Republicans and Democrats. And we all had our basic principles that we're not going to bend on, but I felt that there was always the opportunity to compromise. And it did work that way. I don't know what's going on now compared to what I read in the paper; it sounds a little bit different, you know?

HM: Could you describe your first office in Harrisburg?

JS: Well, it was right over here in the Annex¹ and it was not what I would call – I had a better office in school than I had up here. *(laugh)* But, I was a freshman and you get what's left. And I was in there and Debbie Acor, who was my secretary, she stayed with me for 20 years and she was an excellent secretary. And I have a lot of good things to congratulate her on what she did for me as a secretary; taking care of all the constituent problems and everything else; it saved me a lot of trouble. But, Deb and I were stationed over there and I was there about three weeks and they turned the air conditioning on and the thing blew all my papers all over the floor and everything else. And I got on the phone to Ken Brandt [Kenneth; State Representative, Lancaster County, 1973-1990], who then was from Lancaster County, and he was in charge of offices and I said, "Brandt, get me out of here," and he said, "Two weeks; two weeks and I'll get you over to North Office Building²," which he did; they were remodeling over there and they were

¹ Dedicated in 2004 as the Matthew J. Ryan Building, after the former Speaker (Delaware County, 1963-2003; Speaker, 1981-1982 and 1995-2003).

² Dedicated in 2006 as the K. Leroy Irvis Office Building, after the former Speaker (Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker, 1977-1978 and 1983-1988).

finished. So, Deb and I got moved over to the North Office where we stayed for two terms. Then the Annex was finished and we went in there.

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

JS: Well, I think two people that I liked to watch, well Kenny Brandt was one of them – he was actually the dean of our delegation at that time; he had the most experience – and Sam Hayes [Samuel, Jr.; State Representative, Blair, Centre and Huntingdon Counties 1971-1992]; I always enjoyed Sam Hayes, watching him. And many times, Kenny and I and Sam and a few others, would meet up in Brandt's office and discuss issues and how things worked, and so forth. So, I'd say those two played a part in whatever success I had. Of course, Sam left then after, I forget, I guess I was here four more years after Sam had retired. And Kenny, he left about six years after that.

HM: You talked about the Lancaster Delegation; could you describe how it worked together on legislative issues?

JS: Well, I don't know what's going on now and it's none of my business, but when we worked together – I eventually became dean of the delegation – and we would meet and go over legislation, usually on Monday morning, go over different pieces and work together and we'd work directly with the Senate, with Senator Armstrong [Gib, Sr.; State Representative, Lancaster County, 1977-1984; State Senator, 1985-2008] and Senator Wenger [Noah; State Representative, Lancaster County, 1977-1982; State Senator, 1983-

2008]. And we had a good, I felt, a very cohesive group of people. Now we had disagreements, of course; but overall, we worked together to improve legislation and to effectively work to benefit Lancaster County. So, I always felt we had a very good relationship and, of course, I can't speak for what goes on now; I don't know.

HM: Was there anyone that you felt you were able to mentor whenever –

JS: I can't say that I took one person under my wing and said, "Now, here's how you do it." No, I never did that. But sometimes, some of the newer Members from Lancaster would come to me and ask me – then again, I was the dean – and they would ask me, "What about this? How can we do this? Where do we go with this?" I would work in that capacity, but to say I took one person under my wing, no I didn't do that. I left them come to me when they had questions; I didn't want to get into their involvement unless they asked for it.

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

JS: Well, I found out one thing when I came to Harrisburg; trying to get bills passed is an endless job. So, I started to think, "Well, how can I get some of these things done?" So, I went through the amendment process many times. So, when you say get a bill done – most of mine were through amendments, because getting a bill is a lot more difficult – but, when you asked about bills won, I guess it was my last bill that was to give Stevens College of Technology [Act 187, 2001/02] their independence; similar to the state

system. Prior to that, they were under direct control of the Department of Education. Then, I had some other bills: historical cemeteries [Act 22, 1993/94] and things of that nature, liability issues [Act 73, 1995/96], commodity issues. Then, funding for the state system was one of my big things for the teaching academy [A0959, 1997/98]. [It] came about through funding that I put into the budget. And I believe that's still operational today. And those were some of the ones; there were minor other ones, but I won't go into those.

HM: You talked about some of your accomplishments and in [19]91, [19]92, you sponsored a bill that passed that provided for proper interment in cemeteries and also for the liability of restoration practices to historical cemeteries; what can you tell us about this issue and why was it important?

JS: Well, the first one was the – if I remember correctly, Heidi – it was HB 1099, I think. I'm not sure of that, but that was to preserve historic cemeteries. Now, what was happening; a lot of old cemeteries were being destroyed, being built over, and so forth, and no record was being kept. So, people from Lancaster County, it was a group called Grave Concern, which still operates down there, they approached me and I said, "Yeah, from a historical standpoint that's terrible." So, if we determined that a cemetery was 150 years old that was then a historic cemetery. And anytime that cemetery was going to be overrun or destroyed or whatever, court order had to be given and also record made of the people who were buried there which would go the Historical Museum Commission. But, it was to preserve the cemetery. And what happened then, we had another issue the

liability problem, that people who took care of those cemeteries were always afraid of lawsuits. So, I passed a second bill which, well, the House passed a second bill – and it went to the Senate and the Governor signed it – to prevent them from being sued for maintenance alone. Now, if you had a grave dug and they fell in it, well that’s another story. But, for just minor things, they were exempt from the lawsuits. That was the two bills that handled the cemetery issue and I think it’s still in effect good today, because it preserved those old cemeteries.

HM: In the same Session, you attempted to pass legislation restricting gambling and waste disposal sites. These are still two very prominent issues today. Why do you think these issues are still unresolved?

JS: Well, the waste disposal situation came from what was known as the Narvon Mine. Remember in the beginning of our interview here, I mentioned I had a waste dump out in Narvon, Pennsylvania? And it became a real serious problem down there. It finally got resolved, but it took some legislation, and so forth. And the gambling issue, that’s still going on; things haven’t changed. (*laugh*) But, Lancaster County, back in that time, and yeah, I’d still say today, gambling is not – from a political standpoint – is not something you vote for, really. However, I have to mention sometimes Lancaster County, some of the places in Lancaster County, have the highest rate of Lottery purchased tickets. It wasn’t in my district, but there are some places that have that. But, overall gambling is an issue in Lancaster County. But, one of the problems I had, I had a township – it was East Lampeter Township – they voted against small games of chance. But, what

happened was, they put in an Off-Track Betting parlor. So, here you had voting against small games of chance, but yet by law, they were allowed to put in a horse track betting parlor in the district. And there was nothing I could do to stop it. I mean, it was by law; it was legal. A lot of people didn't understand that, but that's the way it was. And from what I understand, I mean they gamble over there, but it has not created any problems with the police department as far as I know. So, that's how the gambling and all this waste got into my discussions.

HM: Other than these two issues, do you think issues in Pennsylvania are cyclical? Do you think that they come up similarly?

JS: What goes around comes around.

HM: Yeah?

JS: I think so, yeah, and that's why – just to give you my own personal experience, and I don't mean this to be smart or sarcastic – but, a lot of the younger Members, at least when I was here, they would come in and have all these big ideas; and that's fine. The only trouble is, we tried them 20 years ago and, you know, they didn't work. You know, it's a learning experience and I was part of that myself sometimes. “Oh, we ought to do this.” “Yeah well Schuler, we did that 10 years ago; it didn't work.” “Oh, why didn't it work?” Well, we'd go into a discussion, you know. So, it's something; that's the learning process, you know. We all come in with very little background in a lot of areas

and that's one of the things as a Representative, you have good staff who can keep you informed as to what the issues are in specific areas, because you can not be a master of all; it's just impossible. And I concentrated on education and aging and youth. I was the Sub-Committee Chairman on Basic Ed[ucation] and also Chairman on Aging and Youth and the Aging and Senior Citizen Benefits; they changed the name after I got to be Chairman. Well, what happened; it became too large. Aging and Youth became a large committee, and it was getting a little bit too much to handle.

HM: You attempted many things in the field of education; why was this field so important to you?

JS: Well, I guess it's my background being a teacher and a Social Studies Department Head. And education, I think, is very important. Without education and an intelligent citizenry, you can not run a democracy. And so, I thought it was very important and I took a strong interest. And the Republican Chairman, there was Matt Ryan and, of course, the committee was my background; they put me on the Education Committee, which I thought I could make a good contribution. I just came out of the classroom and I knew some of the problems that teachers faced, school boards faced, and that was the beginning of my career.

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

JS: Pardon?

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

JS: Getting the votes. (*laugh*) That's the big thing; that's the key. And you have to politic, you got to go out and get the votes. And it may mean going across the aisle. And sometimes that's the only way you can get things done. Many times I had some of my Democratic colleagues give me support and I supported them. I'll give you my first experience with that was with the assisted living bill; we had a Democrat who introduced it, he sat across the aisle from me, and he asked me, "Would you sort-of be a co-sponsor on this and help me out?" I said, "Sure." So, we worked together and the Assisted Living Bill was passed [Act 117, 1987/88] and Governor Thornburgh [Richard; Governor, 1979-1987] invited two of us down to his mansion – and Mrs. [Ginny] Thornburgh was there – and he signed the bill. There was a cooperative effort. I don't know if that goes on today, but back then it did. And even in the last bill I had passed, I got Democratic support. So, the essence is: get the votes. But, I'll tell you one story about the votes, if you don't mind?

HM: Please do.

JS: I was in State Government Committee and it was my first bill that I had and Bud Lehr [Stephen; State Representative, York County, 1969-1984] from York County; he was the Chairman. And he called up my bill and the bill, he told me the night before he was going to call it up, and I said, "Fine." So he said, "Do you have the votes?" I said,

“Yeah, I have the votes.” “Okay.” So, he called it up, “Go ahead, Representative Schuler.” And I started talking about this thing and talking about it and talking about it. Finally, it passed out of committee, so going out the door, Bud put his hand on my shoulder and said, “Jere, let me give you some advice: when you have the votes shut your mouth.” I never forgot that. And I always remembered that; not to be talking all the time, you know. And sometimes you talk too much you lose votes. But, I’ll never forget that was my first experience with my first bill, and I never forgot. Bud’s gone now, but he was a fine gentleman.

HM: Is it frustrating at times whenever a bill doesn’t get the attention it deserves?

JS: Yes, it is. And one of the last, Sharon Schwartz who was then – she still is; she’s Executive Director of the Aging and Older Adult Services – and one of the bills I wanted to get passed was to have a classification of Assisted Living [HB 1930, 1999/00]. And when you ask people, “What is Assisted Living?” you can get a variety of opinions. And that is wanted to get qualified and defined. And it was very frustrating. We could never get it through the Senate. And to this day, I don’t know why. And I just talked to Sharon out here in the hall before you came, and she said they’re still working on it and that’s four years later. But, yet we don’t have a good definition of what you mean by Assisted Living. And you got all kinds of things going around. So, and they put up these placards “Assisted Living.” Well that’s fine, but what is it? And in the State Law, there is no definition. So, it’s left to each individual group to define what they think is Assisted Living.

HM: How did it feel to preside as Speaker Pro Tem at the end of your career, whenever you were giving your farewell address?

JS: Oh, well a couple times Matt left me – Matt Ryan, I’m speaking of – left me preside over the House, but he caught me off guard on that one when there was a break in the Session, in the deliberations, and so we had some time there and all of a sudden the Page come down and says, “The Speaker wants you to come up and give your farewell address.” So, I said, “Oh my gosh, I’m not ready.” So, I went up and I ran the House for a – they came back into Session – and then I presided over the House for about a half hour. And then finally, Matt came up and I gave them my farewell speech. It was sort-of sad, in a way. You know, you’ve been with these men and women for 20 years and you’re going to go now, but it didn’t last long.

HM: Could you describe some of the important issues or aspects of your committee work throughout your tenure in the House? You served on many committees.

JS: Well, I think Appropriations Committee – I served on that, I don’t know, 16 years, I guess – and it was very difficult. You know, you have all these people who want benefits, they want this, they want that and you only have “x” number of dollars and it gets a little difficult. But, the final decision, of course, is made by the Leadership, as you well know, after they hear from all the Representatives and the Senators and they put all of this together and try to come up with a Conference Committee Report. But, that’s one

of the most frustrating, because a lot of these groups and their organizations are well; they're good, they're good groups, but, you only have "x" number of dollars. I was a little frustrated in the Education, because we could not get certain things done with special education, which is always a problem. I had some very difficult problems with my President and "No Child Left Behind." I still think that's a problem, even though it has shown some advantages; but on the other hand, the funding hasn't come along with it to the extent it should. There has been funding. I don't mean to say there has been no funding, but it should be much more. Those were some of the things. And the thing, of course, with the Aging, with my bill that never got passed [HB 1930, 1999/00], that's frustrating, you know?

HM: You were also Chairman of the Education Sub-Committee on Basic Education from 1989-1998 and the Aging and Older Adult Services from 1990-2002. What was your experience like being Chairman?

JS: Well, that is a new experience. It took me quite a few years to get there because my name starts with an "S." I always used to kid Leroy Zimmerman [State Representative, Lancaster County, 1995-2002], he used to sit next to me on the Floor of the House, Leroy's name started with a "Z" and I said, "Leroy you may never see a Chairmanship." But, no, going into the Chairmanship, it was interesting; you meet all kinds of people; you hear different sides of the story. And the problem, you have to try to get the committee to come to some kind of a consensus; yes or no, but let's get some kind of an answer here. And also you have to work with all the members of the committee and I

always enjoyed that. Either Democrat or Republican, it made no difference; let's work together and do what's best for the senior citizens or what's best for education. And I always felt that was the way to work and I think a lot of the Members respected that. And that's something that I think you have to cultivate; respect. And I thought, through this method, we could get the Members together. Sure, you're going to have basic principles you're not going to bend on and I agree; I respect that. But there are other things where, let's say, compromise a little bit here; don't be so rigid and see if we can't come up with some solution, because we're trying to help students, we're trying to help senior citizens, we're trying to help the university system. So, let's not become so belligerent that we won't even discuss it. Then you lost everything, you know.

HM: What role does seniority play in the House?

JS: Very much; even where you park your car. I don't know what it is now, but when I was here I used to park my car down at the Welfare Building. The reason for that was the garage was not built yet where the Annex is located. So, my parking space was down, I got the lowest of the low offices as a freshman. And as you achieve more seniority, you move up the ladder; you get a better office, a better parking space. When I retired, I was parked right out front of the Main Capitol. And so, it does play a very, very important role and I think a lot of the people don't realize the importance of seniority in the democratic process here in Harrisburg or in Washington [D.C.], in fact. It plays a very important role and some people disregard that, but I think it's something that they have to consider. I always use the analogy: if you look at Washington, a lot of your Chairman

are Southerners. Why? Because they gain seniority, and their people keep re-electing them; Strom Thurmond and – they keep re-electing them and they become chairman and that's something; that's important. And the more chairman you have the more influence you have. So, yes, seniority plays a very important part.

HM: Do you recall how you or the House dealt with major events that affected the way that Pennsylvanians lived, such as the War, Three Mile Island, any of those?

JS: Well, none of those were around when I was here. Three Mile Island happened, I think, a couple years before I arrived here, so I can't speak with anything on any experience there. I do remember one major was the welfare reform.

HM: Oh yeah.

JS: It's when the welfare people took over the Rotunda [1982] and they were hanging their wash out. And it was a little testy at that time. In fact, if I recall correctly, we were on the Floor – Leroy Irvis [K. Leroy; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker, 1977-1978 and 19853-1988] was then the Speaker of the House – he said, "Gentlemen, we are going to adjourn for a short time." And about that time, I don't know, a whole host of State Policemen came down the aisle and they formed lines outside the back part of the House there for us to walk through to get to our – they [protesters] were trying to get into Governor Thornburgh's office at that time. And I remember that very distinctly. That's one of the major problems we had here at the

Capitol. You know, that's some of the things that occurred, but I don't think anything ever happened after that. What happened, I think, some Sunday – and the brass doors to the main Capitol were slammed shut and that was the end of the demonstration. Oh, you always had demonstrations, but I think one of the other issues was the abortion issue when Steve Freind [State Representative, Delaware County, 1976-1992], and Manderino [James; State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1967-1989; Speaker, 1989], and Matt Ryan and we'd get in there to discussions. I always enjoyed Manderino/Ryan debates; they were always good. Those were some of the highlights I can think of.

HM: Did you see any professionalization from the time that you started? Meaning, did your staff improve? Did your district offices improve? These are some of the themes that we've been looking at.

JS: Well, no, I can't say there was any difference from the time I went in to the time I left. I had one staff person back in my district office and Debbie – and that was Sharon Hershey – and there were a couple of other ladies before that, but Sharon was with me for about 16 years. And then Deb Acor, who was staff person; she was here before I was. Thank goodness for Deb when that phone started ringing and I'd say, "What do I do Deb?" She'd say, "I'll take care of it." And so, those are the people that make you or break you. They're people who have the first contact and they were very, very professional. I had no problem with that. My district office was in an old, well it was in a Municipal Building, and my office up here, of course, we went through that. But, I don't see much change at that time. Now, we had the computers brought on; that was a

big technological change. And they were installed in our office, and they did save time and energy, a lot of paperwork. And you could get on the computer and pull up bills very quickly. You know, a constituent would call and say, “Well, would you support House Bill 22?” Well, I don’t know what House Bill 22 is; I mean, you have 300 to 400 bills. Now, unless you worked directly with House Bill 22, you know what’s in it; but, you get on the computer quick and you find what it is and what it’s all about. So, that was one of the technological advantages. Now, of course, in the House we went from passing amendments down the aisle to computers, which was really a nice move, because papers would fly – I remember one story, this one Representative, he would stack these amendment papers in his desk and he sat at the end of the aisle and he’d pick out one and pass it down. Now, that amendment that he passed down was circulated three weeks ago. And he’d pass these things down and guys would never look at the date on them as they go down the aisle. He’d clean his desk out that way. *(laugh)* It finally dawned on them, “Hey, this was three weeks ago.” “Oh, yeah, okay.” That was one of the little gestures that was done in the House of Representatives.

HM: Oh dear. What did you think about the process on the House Floor? The way the debates were handled; just watching, I mean from an outsiders view, it looks like chaos down there.

JS: Yeah, I know. I’ve heard that from a lot of my constituents, “You guys know what’s going on down there?” You know what’s going on. Let’s be honest about it. A lot of that has been discussed in Caucus and you already know basically what you’re going to

do, unless there is some new evidence presented or amendments are made to the bill that you didn't count on. So, you have a pretty good idea how you're going to vote. Now, I did not get in the habit of getting up and speaking and I'll tell you why and I found this to be true: the more you speak, the more they don't listen to you. When you get up to speak, have something to say, and you listen. I remember my first speech on the Floor of the House; Senator Armstrong, well, he was then Representative Armstrong – and it had something to do with voting in Washington D.C.; I forget what it was – and I got up and I was giving my presentation, I was speaking on final passage, and the place got quiet. I thought, gee, so I finished and I sat down and I said to Gib, “That speech wasn't that good.” He said, “No, it wasn't, but that's your first speech and they keep quiet to hear you speak the first time.” I said, “Oh, thank you.” (*laugh*) And so, I always remembered that little story. But, the thing is, it looks like chaos, but you know what's going on.

HM: Could you describe your relationship with the media?

JS: I didn't have problems with the media. I never got too much involved with them. If they wanted something and they called me, fine, we'd discuss it or go over it. But, I never sent out all these memorandums, you know. Some of my writers used to get mad at me because, you know, if I had a bill passed – now, I'm not trying to be smart about it – but, that's my job. And I never dealt with them that much other than local issues. They may call me, and I was always very responsive and tried to be fair and I have to say they were fair with me. I mean, they may argue over a bill, but that's part of the game. I mean,

that's fine; do it respectfully and let's get together. And I never had trouble with the media.

HM: What was your relationship like with lobbyists?

JS: I never had any problems with lobbyists. A lot of people get upset about lobbyists and they make a big thing out of it. But, lobbyists play an important role in the whole process. Like I mentioned earlier, they're a lot of subjects you don't have the background of information. Lobbyists do provide some of that information. And a good lobbyist, I think if you don't agree with their philosophy or what they're trying to do, they respect that. And they'll say, "Hey, maybe next time you'll be with us; you can help us on this because you believe in it." But, I always felt them to be very professional, very upfront. They'd come in, "Here's our position and here's why we have taken this position. Now, do you have any questions?" Then, we'd start the discussion and at the end, "Well, fellas/ladies, I can't support that." "Oh, fine, we understand. Maybe sometime later we'll have something we can get your support on. Thank you." And that's it. Now, you hear all kinds of other things and maybe they go on, I don't know. I always dealt with a lobbyist from an educational standpoint and I enjoyed it.

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

JS: The aspect I liked the most I think was being on the Floor and getting moved legislation, you know. I like the inter-personal relationships you develop and the

excitement of getting your bill through, and so forth. I did not like to hear all the long speeches, you know. Since the cameras came somebody has to get up on every bill and give a speech. That, I didn't get too enthused about. But, no, legislation on the Floor was very exciting. And I liked to meet with my constituents in, like I said earlier, in smaller groups and really have a give-and-take. And you know what I found in most people, not all, but I'd say the majority of people: they may disagree with you, but they'll respect your opinion if you let them know why you support this piece of legislation or why you're opposed. They may be in support of it, but I can give one example it was a voucher. Now, I didn't support the voucher system because I think it was, first; unconstitutional; second, and that's not a decision to be made by me that's just my opinion, but I also thought that private schools have something that the public schools didn't have: independence. And I used to tell this to some of the private schools that I had. And in fact, I had two of the largest in Lancaster County. And my argument was: you start taking Federal or State money; you're going to have restrictions. And they said, "Yeah, you're right." Well, for example, now busing, the first restriction you can haul private school kids but ten miles. So, there's your first restriction. So, it will get worse. And some of my private schools didn't go along with that. They said, "We don't want that money. We'll run our own show." My Amish people, they didn't want anything to do with it, you know. They don't want to get a government handout, is what they called it. But, overall if you tell the people why you oppose it or why you're for it, they may not still agree with you, but they'll respect you for it. Well, I had that issue over the abortion, when I ran the first time. I'm a pro-life individual and I supported that. And when talking about the committee meetings, one of the questions, "Where are you on the

abortion issue?” I said, “I’m pro-life.” And I had quite a few committee-people come up and say, “Jere, I disagree with you, but you told us like it is and we know where you stand, you have my vote,” and I respected that. And I guess if you hee-haw around sometimes and say absolutely nothing, you’re going to danger yourself.

HM: Well what aspect did you like the least?

JS: Well, fundraising, but I didn’t have that much to do. But, I didn’t like going around asking for money, to be honest with you. I still had to keep a campaign going even though I didn’t have an opponent. You got to keep your name out there. But, I did not enjoy that type of thing. I didn’t enjoy the late hours in the morning when you’re doing the budget. It’s three or four o’clock in the morning, you’re I guess – I’ll tell you the one story; my first term, we didn’t get a budget until August. And my wife, she said, “There you are, you were teaching you got paid every two weeks. You’re up there six months and now we don’t have a pay,” because we didn’t get paid. She was kidding, of course; at least, I think she was. (*laugh*) But, those types of things weren’t very helpful, you know. You get stuck up in those types of things, and so forth.

HM: Well, how did you feel about going to chicken dinners and all those firehouse meetings?

JS: Well, I enjoyed it, you know, if you didn’t get too many in one week. But, overall I enjoyed it. You can get in there and mix it up with the people and get to hear what they

have to say, and so forth. And they get to hear what you have to say. And I enjoyed those little types of things.

HM: Did you take your family with you?

JS: A lot of times I did. Now, my children, at that time, were mostly grown-up by then. My son was, well, my daughter, she was in college and the boy was playing professional baseball with the St. Louis Cardinals organization. So, it was just Peggy – my first wife she passed away in 1990, but – she would travel with me and we would go to different receptions down in the firehalls, as you say. And you get to see the people and I think that's good.

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

JS: Well, the fondest memory I guess is I would say my last bill with Stevens College [Act 187, 2001/02]. And I worked hard on that and we finally got it passed and I was happy. I guess because it was the end of my career it stands out as one of the happy – but, I enjoyed conventions that we went to. They were very informative. Some people like to blast those, and so forth, but I found them very, very informative; going to meet Members of different State Legislatures from all over the United States and getting their prospective. And you know, you would talk to one gentleman about a certain bill, “Yeah we did that two years ago in Idaho,” or wherever. And you get a different prospective and I enjoyed that type of thing. There are other things I can remember some of the

incidents on the Floor that were funny, but it was enjoyable. And I'll always remember, I think he's retiring this year, Gaynor Cawley [State Representative, Lackawanna County, 1981-2006]. Gaynor was sort of a – when we'd get into those long things – Gaynor would keep us entertained. He sat across the aisle from me and I always enjoyed his humor. And he was a good Representative and he and Tommy Tigue [State Representative, Luzerne County, 1981-2006] from both up in that area. And he [Gaynor] was a former professional ballplayer, so that's how we got sort of together on some of these things. But, those were some of the enjoyable things that happened.

HM: In your farewell address you said that you would miss the people here in Harrisburg along with serving the needs of your constituents; who are those people that you're going to miss, or that you miss?

JS: Well, the people, I think all the Representatives; my friends, both Democrat and Republican. In fact, I just met Joe Markosek [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1983-present] on Saturday night at the ball game. I was sitting there and Joe comes down – he was up here in Harrisburg, but he's from the western part of the State – and he saw me sitting down there and he came down and I said, “Gee whiz Joe.” He and I came in together, that's how – and you miss that type of thing . And my staff, you know, you work with them for, well like Deb, for 20 years, but we keep in touch. And she comes down sometimes to shop at the shopping malls down there and stops in. And my wife and I go out, and so forth. But, overall they're good people. And the constituents, you know, I still see them so. But, you know, you miss your people up here. After you work

here for 20 years and you make some good relationships, some good friendships, you know, all of a sudden, it stops. And it takes awhile to get accustomed.

HM: Is there anything you would have done differently?

JS: Not really. I think I did everything that I wanted to do. There were certain things I didn't get accomplished, like the Assisted Living thing, but overall, I felt pretty well satisfied.

HM: Are you still active in politics?

JS: No. *(laugh)* No, I've not taken a, oh, I mean I read and I watch Channel 18 [Pennsylvania Cable Network, or PCN] when the House is in Session. And my wife sort-of gives me the dirt about that. She says, "There you are, 20 years and you're still watching that." And I said, "Yes, Renee, but there's one difference – click – I can turn it off when I want to and go to bed." But, no, I've not taken any active part in politics. Since I was, well on the Planning Commission and 20 years here, I have about 35 years, so I figured that's enough; let the younger generation take over.

HM: So, you're officially retired.

JS: I'm officially, well, don't say that to my wife. *(laugh)* I do volunteer work. I volunteer down at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. I work back in the restoration

shop restoring railroad equipment. And I'm Director of the Lancaster County Historical Society and the Heritage Center, which is downtown Lancaster, and the Quilt Museum.

And those three keep me busy.

HM: How would you like to be remembered?

JS: Oh, gee.

HM: Now, I'm catching you off guard.

JS: Well, that's alright. I just – a Representative who respected his constituents and did his job as he knew best; it's as simple as that. I don't want any big – I guess, well, basically, that's it. No big deal.

HM: Lastly, do you have any advice for new Members that are going to be starting here?

JS: Yeah, when you have the votes, shut your mouth. (*laugh*) No, that is true though, but I think my advice to the new Members: sit back, listen, learn and then start doing what you have to do. If you come in here like gang-busters, I think you're doing yourself a disservice. Now, some people would disagree with that. But, I've seen some younger Members come in and they're going to change the whole world and it doesn't work that way. So, you better just sit and listen, learn the ropes, then start moving forward. And I think you'll have a lot more respect that way.

HM: Well, thank you very much.

JS: Thank you.

HM: This concludes our interview.

JS: Thank you so much; I enjoyed it.