

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Patricia H. Vance (R)

87th District

Cumberland County

1993-2004

INTERVIEWED CONDUCTED BY: Simon J. Bronner, Ph.D
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Transcribed by: Heather Deppen Hillard

Simon J. Bronner, Ph.D. (SB): Good morning. I'm with Representative Pat Vance of Cumberland County, the 87th District, who served from 1992-2004 in that District and I'd like to welcome you to the Oral History Project.

Representative Patricia H. Vance (PHV): I'm pleased to be here.

SB: And I want to begin by asking you about your childhood -

PHV: My childhood?

SB: – and what experiences you think in your childhood prepared you for the career and life that you had?

PHV: Well, I certainly never started out ever thinking that I would serve an elective office. I was [a] very athletic tomboy growing up. [I] thought I wanted to be, initially, a Phys-Ed [Physical Education] teacher, which my father discouraged strongly, and I always like people a lot, and helping people; and so, I became a nurse.

SB: Well then, how did you get interested in politics?

PHV: A very, very roundabout way. After I was married, I moved into Cumberland County and we bought an old farm and I was a very, very active community volunteer in a lot of different organizations, but [I] started to spend a lot of time in the Recorder of

Deeds office to trace the history of my very old farmhouse. And found out really, almost by accident, that the man who was the Recorder of Deeds was not going to run for re-election and with some prompting thought, “Gee, maybe I’d like to try that.” I’ve always liked a challenge. And at that time, they had never elected a woman to a countywide office, so I did run and was fortunate enough to be elected; and that’s how it started.

SB: Well then, how did you make the decision to run for the State seat?

PHV: Well, the Recorder of Deeds office is a wonderful place to meet and interact with people and I really enjoyed it. However, it was repetitious and when Senator Mowery [Hal; State Representative, Cumberland County, 1977-1990; State Senator, 1993-2004] – who has just retired and whom I will be replacing – left the House, I ran for that seat in a very, very heated four-way Primary. As I said, I’ve always liked a challenge and that was just another challenge to try.

SB: What do you remember about that first campaign?

PHV: Well, I found out very quickly that even though I had run for countywide office before it was very, very difficult to be controversial as Recorder of Deeds; there was really (*laugh*) nothing to have people angry with you about. The media focus, particularly in the Primary, was difficult. I probably have the worst thing that ever happen to me politically; [it] was the weekend before the Primary [and] we were really being outspent by a very, very large margin. Our signs were disappearing and we really

didn't have money to buy anymore. And, right before – I think it was the Thursday night before the election, or Wednesday, it doesn't really matter – my husband put up 10 signs, went and bought a pizza, came back – our last 10 signs, I might say – and they were all gone. So, he went up the Carlisle Pike, which is a very, very busy highway and took one of my opponent's signs; he was arrested. The headlines in the paper were huge, "Candidate's Husband Arrested." It never said, "For taking a sign." And don't misunderstand me; I'm not saying what he did was correct, but he thought he was protecting me. He was later fined \$25. I then found out the media, who I thought were kind, started calling [at] 5:30 in the morning, and the first one said to me, "Well, you just lost this election." Fortunately, I did not; but I learned a lesson that the House of Representatives was going to be far different than being Recorder of Deeds, because every time you vote on an issue, someone is unhappy with you. And I guess it's just human nature, but you never hear from the people who say, "Gee, I really liked your vote," but they are very quick to call and tell you how unintelligent – and I've had more than one say, "Oh, you are so stupid. How could you do this?" – So, it was a new game and I can't say that I didn't enjoy it.

SB: Well, how do you respond to these kinds of representations in the media, typically?

PHV: I've had a really, excellent relationship with the media. I'm always pretty straightforward. I have learned to answer the question that they ask and not feel the need to continue talking about it. As long as you're straightforward with them – I have, really, not had a problem since then.

SB: Well, you've been involved in seven campaigns. How do you compare your later campaigns to these earlier ones?

PHV: Much easier. (*laugh*) The first Primary was much worse and a Primary is always much worse than a General Election. It's like a family fight. People take sides with whom you've worked and known, politically, for a long time. You expect to have a General Election, and that's just par for the course, but a Primary's far worse.

SB: When you entered into the House, were there surprises for you?

PHV: Oh, there were lots of surprises. First of all, I had not been in any part of state government, so to come in and not really understand how to get from one floor to the other – I mean, it's kind-of amazing that the floors don't necessarily run straight across from the House and Senate, and it was kind-of embarrassing, I think, to think that you'd been elected to make laws and you couldn't even find your way around the place.

SB: Did you have a mentor, or mentors, in your early experience in the House?

PHV: Absolutely, I did. I'd say three stand out in mind. First of all was Elinor Taylor [State Representative, Chester County, 1977-2006], who really took me under her wing and helped me a lot. Sam Hayes [Samuel, Jr.; State Representative, Blair, Centre & Huntingdon Counties, 1971-1992; PA Secretary of Agriculture, 1997-2003] really was

very helpful; and I will always be deeply indebted to Matt Ryan [Matthew J.; State Representative, Delaware County, 1963-2003; Speaker, 1981-1982, 1995-2003].

SB: In your first two terms you sat behind Matt Ryan. Can you describe what your relationship was?

PHV: It was wonderful. Matt had a wonderful, wonderful Irish wit. He was always entertaining. I really was very fond of him. He just had a very unique talent that I don't think we see come our way very often.

SB: Well, you also served as Speaker Pro-Tem. Could you describe how that occurred?

PHV: (*laugh*) That occurred as a great surprise. Matt had had health problems and when he sat in front of me – or, I sat behind him, which is probably much more appropriate – since my background was as a nurse, we often used to talk about his health problems. And after he became Speaker, he was up in the Chair and Roger Nick¹, who was a wonderful man, came down and said, “Matt wants to talk to you,” so I assumed that Matt did not feel well. And I went up and he handed me the gavel and said, “Here.” So, that was my first introduction. I was very, very fortunate. I can't tell you how blessed I was to be able to act as Speaker Pro-Tem over a number of years. When John Perzel [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1979-present; Speaker 2003-2006] came in he allowed me to continue to do that and that was a very, very great honor, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

¹ Chief of Staff for Speaker Matt Ryan; Chief Clerk of the House (2006-2009).

SB: Did you ever consider running for that position?

PHV: Not the way that things are set up here, for many reasons. First of all, that just would not be possible. One of the down sides of things here are that, in Leadership, you are supposed to make the “tough votes.” Now, I don’t mind making tough votes, but what they consider is, for instance, getting pay raises for Members and that kind of thing; I would never do. And, I wasn’t willing to sell my soul to accomplish that kind of thing.

SB: Well, the *Patriot News* also said that you were a very influential non-leadership Member of the House. What do you attribute that influence to?

PHV: Perhaps because of my healthcare background and there were no other people with a healthcare background. I hopefully, because they had gotten to respect me, I’m pretty straightforward and I would never play games. If they ask me a question, I told them truthfully. I can remember when John Perzel was running against Jeff Piccola [Jeffrey; State Representative, Dauphin County, 1977-1995; State Senator, 1995-present] for Leadership – and I was a Central Pennsylvanian, as was Jeff – and I was supporting Jeff, but that did not mean I did not like John Perzel; I did. And I can remember he and Tommy McCormick – who was his Aide at the time, whom I dearly loved – came over to my District and I said, “John I really like you but I can’t support you. I promised Jeff and I wish I could, but I can’t.” And he told me after the election, “You were the only one that looked me in the eye and told me that you wouldn’t vote for me. Everybody else lied

to me.” So, we had a very, very good relationship. I’m pretty straightforward and so is he.

SB: Well, what do you consider your major accomplishments in your service in the House?

PHV: Probably the most difficult legislation I passed was Domestic Violence legislation [Act 24-1996]. I was a relatively new Member and, I think, in order to be effective you have to have other Members respect you or believe that you know about what you speak. That got easier as I was here longer, but that was a very controversial issue. I had a young woman come to see me who had been battered by her husband and she was battered so badly that she had to go to see a physician and he documented everything as well, and when she left her husband she applied for life, health and disability insurance and was turned down – I think the thing that surprised me – in writing, by three very large Insurance Companies in Pennsylvania, saying, “We will not insure you because you’ve been a victim of domestic violence.” After investigation, I found out that more than 100 companies use this as underwriting criteria. At that time, there was a woman [Pennsylvania State] Insurance Commissioner – not the present one, I want to make that very clear, but another one² – and I thought she would be empathetic, and she didn’t even want to talk about it. So, we had to go the Hearing route to introduce the Legislation. It was very, very difficult to get it out of the Insurance Committee. I don’t think I would have had I not had some help from [Speaker] Matt Ryan, truthfully. And the day that it was going to come up in [the Insurance] Committee, I did something I had never done

² Current PA State Insurance Commissioner (at the time of the interview) is M. Diane Koken (1997-2007).

before – and have never done since – I went up to the press core and I said, “Please come down. Please watch this,” because I believed – I hoped, I should say better than believed – I hoped, that under the bright lights they might be willing to vote “yes,” and it did pass. It did become Law and the Insurance Department has been very good at following up with companies by fining them if they continue to do that and [I’m] very pleased to say it does not occur in Pennsylvania anymore.

SB: Why do you think that was difficult to get through?

PHV: The perception by many of the male Members was, “Well, if those women would just leave, there wouldn’t be a problem.” In a very perverse way the O.J. Simpson trial³ helped to enlighten some people. Things have changed dramatically in that area, in the number of years that have ensued since then.

SB: Well, you also were involved in some other health-related Legislation, such as the Tobacco Settlement and PACE [Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly]. Could you describe your involvement in that?

PHV: Well, the Tobacco Settlement [Act 55-2004], yes, I certainly didn’t do that by myself. The whole Central Pennsylvania Caucus was very adamant. Initially, the money that was being allocated for research was going to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and all of us in the Central Pennsylvania Caucus were adamant that some money had to come to

³ A California murder trial, where former professional football player, O. J. Simpson, was accused of killing his ex-wife and her friend (1995).

Central Pennsylvania, and it did; it came to Hershey Medical Center. And that was certainly not an individual effort at all.

SB: Well, I hope you can speak about the Central Pennsylvania Caucus and what its activities are. There are a lot of Caucuses; do you consider that one an influential Caucus?

PHV: Influential, but not as influential as it should be, given our large number of Members. There are 32 of us. Sometimes it's very difficult – the old saying about hurting cats – it's very difficult to get all of us together to be unified on one subject, but since we – I think we are probably the largest Caucus here, this is the Central Pennsylvania Republican Caucus, of course.

SB: Well, what issues were they successful [with]?

PHV: The one I would cite most of all would be the Tobacco Settlement. We've, sometimes, had a hard time speaking with one voice. We had been very strong in trying to get funding for Hershey Medical Center for their Cancer Center, as well.

SB: At one point, you were critical of the Governor [Edward G. Rendell, 1993-2011] for putting money into the [Dickinson] Law School rather than into the Hershey Medical Center. What was the reaction there?

PHV: That was not the Governor. That was the President of Penn State, Graham Spanier. I felt to have 60 million dollars available to him to build a new Law School on the campus at State College and try and remove the one in Carlisle [Dickinson Law School] was unconscionable when no one could find 32 million dollars to build the Cancer Center in Hershey.

SB: Were you also an advocate, though, for keeping the [Dickinson] Law School in Carlisle?

PHV: Very strong advocate. Absolutely.

SB: How did you find out about that and how did you get involved in that controversy?

PHV: Well, first of all, I live in and represent Cumberland County. At the time, I didn't represent all of Cumberland County. But, that doesn't mean that I'm not concerned. To remove the [Dickinson] Law School out of Carlisle – and there's always the possibility that under the next brack, that the Army War College⁴ may leave – would be an economic devastation for that community. And, I've always been involved in healthcare issues, so I was very aware of what was going on in Hershey.

SB: How about the AMP⁵ [Inc.] closing [in 1999]?

⁴ The United States Army War College campus is located on the Carlisle Barracks, which was a military post dating back to the 1770s. It is the Army's most senior military educational institution in the country.

⁵ Manufacturer of electronic connectors; now, part of Tyco Electronics.

PHV: That was absolutely the most difficult vote I have ever made. I believe that the employees of AMP [Inc.] were being misled. The Board did not want to ask the stockholders whether or not they wanted to merge with another company; a shareholder right. It absolutely was not our job to do that. They didn't particularly want to have the courage to do it and they wanted the Legislature to do it. Most of the business people, most of the community, all of the Central Pennsylvania Legislators, except myself, supported that. They circulated a paper around with everyone's signatures on it, of course mine was notably absent, so every employee from AMP, I think, came to see me. I had a lot of empathy for them; I thought they were being used and I think that time has proved that, perhaps, that was correct. The leaders in AMP got wonderful golden parachutes and it has not turned out so well for the employees. That's the only time I ever had a death threat and that was during that.

SB: And how did you deal with that?

PHV: Well, it was on my machine at work. I still have that tape. Fortunately, as you can see, I'm still here, so (*laugh*) it was never carried out. But, it's very difficult. It's fine to talk about moral fiber and doing what you think is right, but I was really out there by myself and it's not a pleasant sensation. But, I must say, that that's one of the advantages of coming into the Legislature when you're not 21, because it's just much easier to do that.

SB: Well, let me ask you too, then, whether you had disappointments in your service?

PHV: Not totally – always disappointment with people’s strength of character, with pettiness, with things that I think should have happened and didn’t, with people’s greed both in and out of the Legislature. But overall, it has been a wonderful, wonderful experience. The best thing has been that I am never bored. Every day and every time I think I have heard every problem in the world I hear a new one. And I really like people so I enjoy doing what I do.

SB: What are your fondest memories?

PHV: The ability to help people who thought that Government would never help them. And we’re not talking about Legislative memories; now, I’m talking about interaction with people in the District. To have somebody refused a bone marrow transplant by the Insurance company and being able to make sure that that does happen – those are the kind of good memories, that’s what Legislation is about just as much as making Laws.

SB: How about the balance between working with your constituents and the work here? How did you manage that?

PHV: Well, I had a group of very well informed constituents. My District was right across the [Susquehanna] River from the Capitol. Many of the people who lived in my District also worked here. I often joked when I talked to other Members, they’d say, “My constituents don’t have any idea what goes on in Harrisburg.” And I always said, “My

constituents not only know everything that goes on they think they know how to do it better.” So, I had lots of chiefs and very few Indians in my District; meaning, I had a lot of very highly educated and very good people. I mean, it’s a wonderful, wonderful District.

SB: Well, one of the things that you were known for was of conducting surveys with your constituents. Can you say how that came about and what its effectiveness was for you?

PHV: It was very effective. I always would do my own questionnaires. From the House Public Relations you could get a pat questionnaire and I never used that; I always used my own questions, predicated upon either Legislation I thought was going to come up in the next session or inquiries that we had had consistently from a lot of people in the District. And we’d send this out once a year, and I was always amazed; the day that it would hit in people’s mailboxes, we had people walking in the District [office] to give us back their filled out questionnaire. And I was really encouraged by the fact that many of them took the time to write, like, a two-page letter that they wanted to tell me about other issues. It was very, very helpful to know what the people in the District actually thought.

SB: Did your District change significantly in the 12 years that you served it?

PHV: A little bit. Under reapportionment, like, what I would call the back-end of the District, dropped off, so I had almost no farmers anymore. I had a highly educated,

upwardly mobile area, which is nice except that, for instance, if you represent an older community that the people have lived there for years, you really get to know them. And a couple of my municipalities they moved in, [and in] two or three years later, they left [because] they were promoted. I mean, it was good, but then you had to get to know people all again. So, it really required a lot of effort to make sure that you stayed involved in the communities.

SB: One of the other quotes that I have here is from the *Carlisle Sentinel*, where it quoted you as saying that you considered the process of the House very slow. I wonder if you would explain that?

PHV: Well, it's slow – and I think I'm about to find that the process in the Senate is slower, but that's neither here nor there – sometimes, I would have legislation passed in the House and it would go to the Senate and never pass. And, you know, we have a two year session, so what didn't happen, you'd have to start all over again in the new session. The House was slow but probably they ground exceedingly fine and, maybe, that was for the best, so that we didn't do anything impetuously; however, things could move quickly if the desire was there. But, the whole process sometimes was very, very slow.

SB: Were there things that you could do as an influential legislator to try to move that along?

PHV: I don't know how influential I was, but, on some issues, like healthcare, I was able to move things along; and some areas involving Insurance, in which, in essence, in many cases was healthcare, I wasn't nearly as successful.

SB: If things do get bottled up, either did you get frustrated, or can you do things to try to "un-bottle" them?

PHV: I'm pretty tenacious; I'm never willing to give up. I may be frustrated, but I like to put that into action. You need to convince the Chairman [of a Committee], because the way things are, the Chairman can move a bill or not move a bill. Or, you can sometimes talk to people in Leadership to have them realize how important something is.

SB: And did you have good relations with Leadership?

PHV: Yeah, I did.

SB: Another thing that I saw is that you made public statements encouraging more women to become involved in politics. One of the questions I would have is: what was your experience as a woman in the House? And then, why do you think there are not more women in the House?

PHV: Well, I'd like to go back to the first time I ran for a County Office. At that time, I got a lot more questions. It was much more difficult to run as a woman then than it is

now. I really don't even think about it anymore. I prefer to be gender blind and I have never run and said, "Vote for me because I'm a woman." I want to say, "Vote for me because I can do the job, et cetera, et cetera." Why do I think there are not more women? For several reasons; first of all, especially for those women who do not live locally, to be away a good part of the week with small children would be incredibly difficult. I've seen several young women who have been elected with small children that have chosen not to run just because of the burdens. Secondly, a lot of women don't choose to open their pocketbooks and write checks to other women and I think the need to prove yourself, essentially the first time, it's very difficult for women to raise money. That's no longer a problem, I don't think, once you've proven yourself, but initially, it is. And I don't think this happens as much anymore. But, for instance, let's say we had a well-funded incumbent in a District that the registration figures favored that incumbent, and they needed someone as a sacrificial lamb, they would sometimes get women to do that and then they would say, "See, I told you women can't win." But, I think that's happening less and less. If you look at the number of women at the county and local levels, there are so many of them that I think, eventually, that should not matter; however, having said that, if 52 percent of the registered voters in Pennsylvania are women – we now have 11 percent – we'll have in the House 11 percent of women who are Representatives. So, it's certainly not equitable by a long-shot.

SB: You've also encouraged people to run who have "life experiences" –

PHV: Absolutely.

SB: – that’s your term. Are you implying that you think better legislators are senior legislators?

PHV: Not necessarily senior, but I think they are far better, far wiser, if they have some experiences in what I’d like to call the “real world” before they come here. I have seen many good, young people unduly influenced by saying, “If you just make this vote, oh, you’re going to be a Leader someday.” And I think when you get a little older and a little wiser, you just, kind-of, tend to ignore that kind of rhetoric.

SB: I have some photographs from your experiences in the House and I wonder if you could comment on some of them that I have here. You should see them in the monitor.

PHV: Okay.

SB: The first one is a bill signing and I was wondering if you realized that this made history?

PHV: The bill signing itself?

SB: Yes.

PHV: I don’t think so.

SB: That, this was the first time that two women were present –

PHV: Oh dear.

SB: - at this signing. Do you remember this?

PHV: I do remember it. I mostly remember that two of my most favorite people are there, and that is Matt Ryan and Elinor Taylor. And, of course, the Governor.⁶ .

SB: The next one,

PHV: *(laugh)* Okay.

SB: Can you describe this scene here?

PHV: If I recall correctly, that was Elder Abuse legislation [Act 13-1997] that we had done and that's in the Cumberland County Nursing Home, and Representative [Elinor] Taylor had done one of the bills and I had done the other and we were, really, pretty pleased that we had been able to do that. Ironically, the Supreme Court struck down that bill, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and we're now in the process of redoing it.

(laugh) That bill [signing] was at Polyclinic Hospital [in Harrisburg], which is now part of Pinnacle [Health]. That was the HMO Bill of Rights . That's – on the far right, from the way I'm looking at – is Tim Murphy [State Senator, 1997-2003; U.S. Representative,

⁶ PA Governor, Thomas Ridge (1995-2001)

2003-present], who is now a Congressman. That was a long-fought battle. That was the most tedious bill I ever worked on, just because it so detailed and so many special interests were involved. It was very difficult to get that bill done.

SB: Did you find lobbying difficult to deal with in your –

PHV: No.

SB: – service in the House?

PHV: I didn't find it difficult to deal with because, I think, that lobbyists tend to – if they come to see you and you'll say, "Oh, I don't really know what I think." But, I have never found any of them to be anything less than up front if I'd say, "This is where I am." I wasn't very good at playing games. If I was for something, I said I was; if I needed more information, I wanted it. There's only one lobbyist that I won't deal with any longer who did not tell me the truth. Because, as far as I'm concerned, the only thing lobbyists have is knowledge and credibility.

SB: Can you say who that is?

PHV: No.

SB: And with the HMO Bill, did the HMO's present a formidable Lobby?

PHV: Not any more than a lot of other groups. No, not really – I mean, yes, they had something to say, but I’m always willing to listen to both sides. So, no, I didn’t think that they were untoward or terrible at all.

SB: We also show you at a few rallies, which is part of life at the Capitol, and I’m wondering if you could talk about your roles here?

PHV: I’m very proud of those roles. I really did become a spokesperson for nurses, especially Advanced Practice Nurses. Before this, nurses were always dually licensed, meaning they came under the Board of Medicine and the Board of Nursing, which was kind-of ludicrous. They were the only Profession that was dually licensed. And, Advanced Practice Nurses did not have prescriptive powers; 48 other States already did, but when this came up it was like this was something horrendous, this couldn’t happen in Pennsylvania. I was very happy and proud to be a voice for nurses in Pennsylvania.

SB: Did you enjoy these kinds of rallies?

PHV: Oh, that was a lot of fun – that rally. A lot of the rallies, realistically – I’m surprised when I’d go home at night and hear that there was a rally in the Rotunda, because a lot of those rallies are specifically designed for the media, and as a legislator, you may be totally unaware that they are even going on.

SB: How about this one, also concerning nurses?

PHV: We have done a lot of bills on nursing and I'd have to think about what that one was, truthfully. We have done a Nursing Rally every year, particularly – Advanced Practice Nurses are much better organized and united. Many nurses are uncomfortable lobbying and don't feel that they should be advocating for themselves.

SB: Were you also involved in the malpractice, some say, crisis – I don't know if you consider it a crisis – or emergency in Pennsylvania?

PHV: I certainly was involved in that. As with any other issue, there are multiple sides. I don't think anybody there was totally right, but we did do the abatement and so that physicians are getting part of their malpractice premiums paid for, but as part of that – and I did do the amendment; that they would have to stay in Pennsylvania for that year. And I really don't think there's anything wrong with that, if in fact, their premiums are going to be paid then we want them to stay in Pennsylvania. That's the whole idea.

SB: Here is “Domestic Violence Day,” in which you spoke. And, how did you feel about your role as a spokesperson for this issue?

PHV: Very comfortable. I still am intrigued by the fact that domestic violence used to be a subject that no one spoke about. Younger people embrace that; they understand. I'm always still surprised when I talk to an older group, like AARP [American

Association of Retired Persons], and if I mention domestic violence, I see all the eyes drop; no body wants to talk about it yet. It's like a dirty little secret, and it can't be. We just have to keep talking until they realize that it's wrong regardless of the age group that's affected.

SB: Is this a case where media attention did get positive results?

PHV: Absolutely. It really did.

SB: Here you are getting an award – a PANPHA [Pennsylvania Nonprofit Health Association for Aging] award. Can you describe the award and the circumstances around it?

PHV: I've done lots of Legislation regarding elder abuse, probably because earlier in my life, I was a Charge Nurse in a long-term care facility. I did have the opportunity to see: A) that not every patient is loved, and there were years and years, sometimes, that some of the residents got no visitors at all. I also realized that some of the residents, because of dementia or other things, were very difficult to deal with. And so, part of the legislation we did was that Nurse Aides would have to have more training to understand that if somebody was going to hit them or spit on them – unfortunately sometimes your reaction would be you want to retaliate in kind and you can't do that. So, it was increasing their understanding of what causes people to act this way.

SB: And, here you are in the position of Speaker Pro-Tem. Can you say something about your responsibilities here as Pro-Tem?

PHV: That's a job I really loved doing. Clancy Myer [1983-2006], as the Parliamentarian, is superb. You never have to worry that if you don't know, Clancy does. The longer I did it, the more comfortable I became doing it. When Members stand up you need to know all their names and where they're from and you need to really, really pay attention to what's going on. But still, it's quite a high honor to do that.

SB: You also have a role, do you not – at one time there was a nurse stationed in the House and CPR [Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation] available. Can you say how that discussion occurred and what happened to it?

PHV: Actually, it probably came about because we had a group of visitors – I don't even remember from which Trade Association they were – and I do remember that I happened to be Speaker Pro-Tem, and someone came up and said, "You need to come back here right away," and there was a man that was convulsing. And, I think, that probably made us all realize how important it was to have someone that had some training that knew how to handle these kind of things. So, that's probably how we started to have nurses. And they now have nurses here – hired by the Institution, not just the House – who have more training and do that kind of thing.

SB: Well, what contributed to your decision to leave the House and run for the Senate?

PHV: That was actually a hard decision in many ways because I have loved serving in the House. It was an opportunity, hopefully, to be a stronger voice in a smaller group; Senator Mowery was retiring and not seeking election; unfortunately, my husband died last October [2003]. Had he been alive, I would not have run, because we're talking about four times the area. I have never been one – if you're not going to do the job right, don't do it. So, it's going to require a lot more time. Unfortunately, my life circumstances dictate that it's probably okay now; I have that time to do [it], and I'm not very good at just sitting around, so, I view it as another challenge.

SB: You were also a Member of the House during 9/11 [September 11, 2001]. Could you describe where you were and whether you think that changed the House?

PHV: I don't know that it dramatically changed the House, per se. It certainly made security much more obvious, for good or bad. I assume that we need the security, but I'm a strong believer that citizens should have access to Government and it's become more difficult for them to do that – necessary, but more difficult. In that regard, it has changed things, the security procedures; otherwise I don't know that it has, although it certainly made us much more aware, even in Pennsylvania, how vulnerable we are. I was on a Task Force about securing water supplies. I live in an area where the water plant is right down the road from me and it's out in the middle of country. I mean, it would be very

vulnerable to attack and it's probably something I would never have thought about prior to that.

SB: In your 12 years, what do you consider the crisis or great events that occurred?

PHV: Great events, good or bad. All Sine Die⁷ sessions, I think, are bad; I hate them. I would rather we did not do them. It has been more difficult since we have the new Governor,⁸ only because this is the first time in anybody's memory that we have the House and Senate of one Party and the Governor of another. So, that has been difficult. It was a joy to work with Governor Ridge, because I had been a strong backer of his, and so that was very, very nice. But, each experience in life is new and I think that we have to realize that we're only going around once and we better cherish everything, good or bad, and hopefully, learn from things that are good and bad.

SB: And if you have advice for new legislators, what would it be?

PHV: First of all, to be true to yourself. I think the thing that I always wanted to do was, at the end of the day you have to look at yourself in the mirror and know that you did the right thing. There are a lot of people that want to be your friends once you're elected, but I think you're wise to remember people who are your true friends before you got here. And, not be enthralled by all the trappings that may be very, very temporary.

⁷ Latin for "without day," which occurs when an organized body's existence terminates; Regarding the PA House of Representatives, it is the time period between the election date and next Swearing-In date.

⁸ PA Governor, Edward G. Rendell (2003-2011).

SB: And, do you have plans for your Senate role that are different from those in the House?

PHV: Well, first of all, you're one of only 50. I certainly hope to be a strong voice for healthcare. I'm always looking for new challenges, new things to do and to expand your horizons. It's already a much different District than the kind of District that I represented before; I had a very suburban District before, I've now added a lot of rural, I've added another county. So, there's going to be a lot of new challenges, but I welcome that. I think we have to think that life is an adventure everyday.

SB: Well, with that I want to thank you for participating in the project and I wish you well in your new role.

PHV: Thank you so much. You did a lot of research; you kind-of surprised me. Thank you so much.