

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable John H. Broujos (D)

199th District

Adams, Cumberland and York Counties

1983 - 1992

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Heidi Mays (HM): Good morning.

The Honorable John Broujos (JB): Good Morning.

HM: I'm here today with former Representative John Broujos.

JB: That's right.

HM: Okay – who represented the 199th Legislative District from Adams, Cumberland, and York Counties. He served the Legislature from 1983 to 1992. I'm very pleased to have you here with me today.

JB: Thank you.

HM: Thank you. I wanted to start off by asking you about your childhood and your family life and how you feel that they prepared you for public service?

JB: I'm from the state of Delaware and they had no law school in Delaware, so I came to Carlisle, Pennsylvania and as a student here, I was going to go back to Delaware, but I liked Carlisle; I liked Pennsylvania; I liked the small towns and so I stayed.

HM: And you attended Dickinson Law School?

JB: Dickinson Law School, yes.

HM: Okay. Do you remember when you received your degree from Dickinson?

JB: Probably –

HM: About 1958, maybe?

JB: [19]58, [19]59.

HM: Okay. What happened after you received your degree? Were you involved in any other line of work or were you always an attorney?

JB: When I got my degree, I decided I wanted to practice law. I didn't want to go with a big firm, I just wanted to hang out a shingle and that's a rare thing so I'm proud of that. I had a lot of work to do in a small town, but I had clients from the beginning because I participated in a lot of activities within the township and the borough and it was just a matter of becoming involved with the community. As a result, I had a lot of clientele. It wasn't anything special or that I was very good as an attorney, but it was a matter of just being with people.

HM: Did that translate then into your interest in politics?

JB: My interest in politics started in the Depression. It didn't affect me, because I ran and played and was never without work because my father was initially a Greek from Greece and I was able to have a father who loved America and his love for America, I guess you could say, it rubbed off on me because he wanted to fight in World War I and when it came time to walk down Broad Street in Philadelphia, where my father had lived, and the war ended and he was sorry that he couldn't help his country. So, we had a good relationship which meant that dad got up at five in the morning, left at six, came home dead tired and I hardly ever saw him. But I loved him and it was a deep respect.

HM: So, your love of your father's love of the country, I think that translated into you serving in the military.

JB: He wanted to serve and when the Korean War came, I enlisted in the Marine Corps. We had three brothers all together and one of them and I went to the Korean War and my brother couldn't go because he had a medical problem, but I was very happy to represent my party and my friends and my family.

HM: And that was with the Marine Corps?

JB: Marine Corps.

HM: I think you had another career later on with the Naval – were you in the Navy?

JB: Well, the Naval to the extent that I like sailing. I'm a sailor on the Chesapeake Bay and I thought that I would get in the Navy and be able to sail. It wasn't that way. I was just a reservist, and then when the Korean War came, they were going to put me in a naval position, but my brother was smarter than I was, he said, "Let's go to the Marine Corps. Nobody's calling us up." The Navy didn't know how to call people up. Nobody went because they didn't know how to mobilize. The Marine Corps knew how to mobilize, because they immediately mobilized 92 percent of the people that were left from World War II, and I said that's the outfit for me.

HM: When did you retire from your career with the Marines? You were in the Reserves for quite a while, weren't you?

JB: In Reserves, I was in the Korean War and the Vietnam War and I went as far as I could and I retired as a Colonel from a boot Marine.

HM: That's a very impressive career, too, and thank you for your service.

JB: Thank you.

HM: So, coming back to Carlisle, Pennsylvania: could you talk about your political experience and what made you decide to run for the Pennsylvania Legislature?

JB: My political experience was in my parents who were Democrats, like everybody was during World War II, and my mother was very intelligent. She had no education but she read all of Shakespeare, she had all of the principal books, stories and she inspired me to go with the books.

HM: You said your parents were Democrats, so that was how you became a Democrat then?

JB: Well, they were Democrats because everybody was a Democrat.

HM: Okay.

JB: And then they became Republicans later.

HM: Did they?

JB: Because dad was a businessman. I remained a Democrat and I felt very strongly about Roosevelt and particularly Eleanor Roosevelt. She was a special lady in my life.

HM: So, was it hard to remain a Democrat in Cumberland County?

JB: No, because I knew who I was. I knew what I was going to do. I ran for the District Attorney and I was the low man on the totem pole and I didn't give a damn. I went out into the hinterland and I went to places, churches, and things, and I knew the Republicans were all over the place – the judge and everybody else – and I respected them. I went ahead and remained

very strong. And then I met a Democrat, Bill Feuchtenberger, who was the finest gentleman I ever met in politics. He was honest. One time, we had a question as to whether or not we would bring some information and give it to the public against the opponent. The first person they asked was me and I said, “Well I don’t think we ought to say this about that person, but I don’t mind criticizing him for what he did,” and Bill Feuchtenberger said, “No, we’re not going to use either one of them.” He was honest and fair. He taught me a lot and he worked very hard, very hard, and through Bill Feuchtenberger we were able to put a Democrat, Mr. Meyers, who was a Democrat – [his] father was a banker – we were able to put him in, through Bill Feuchtenberger, to put him into office; first time, a long time. When I ran, I ran because I knew politics by losing a long time and not caring that I lost, because we did what was right. And when we did that, we had people come out from all over the district in three counties. I was fortunate to have three counties; you mentioned the three that I came from. I loved going to York, I loved going to Adams County, and of course at home. They thought that they were going to put a man in the office that was a Republican, because he purposely put into the office the districts, three of them, but I took them away simply because I worked with the people and I didn’t care about the political affiliation of the people that supported me.

HM: Now, the district that we are talking about was a new district, wasn’t it?

JB: It was a new district, the 199th. And I’ll tell you an interesting story about [it]. We were able to make the 199th meaningful in the campaign process. Every time we talked, we talked about the 199th. The cards and the signs were “199th.” There’s a candidate today that’s trying to get into the government, the political process, and all it is was a lot of mass of talk. All we said

was, “199th.” And I walked down the street in Carlisle and a young black boy, lovely young child, he looked at me, and he was about 9 years old, and he saw my “199th” he says, “Hey! You’re the 199th.” We had identification and we were really close to the black community, and we were the entire time and we still are. So, we had a lot of people working.

HM: Did you like to campaign?

JB: I loved campaigning. The first time I ran, well, I was a district attorney and I just worked. I knew the people, I knew the Democrats, I knew the Republicans. And then my wife, she was of Arabic descent and there were probably only two Arabs in Carlisle, but it didn’t matter then because everybody loved her. She went to people, she loved people. She just goes to everybody’s house to help them, to do things for them. So, there was a lot of just good company.

HM: Can you talk a little bit about your subsequent campaigns and was it hard to maintain your district, your seat, in the Legislature? Did you have tough fights in the elections?

JB: After the first one? I had five terms. There were, at the time in the area, five legislators. At least two from York, one from Carlisle, that were Democrats. But over the ten-year period, I had an unusual method of campaigning. It was unusual. But over ten periods, I went from 500 people the first time, to 750, to 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 5,000. I went all the way up to a high percentage. All the other Democrats went down because they didn’t know how to campaign. I’m not blaming, I’m just saying what the statistics say. It’s a lesson for people now to

understand; don't worry too much about what's good and what's bad and what's political, what's Democratic, what's Republican; do the right thing. Tell the people and know the people.

HM: So, what can you tell me about your district and the people you represented?

JB: Well, it's an intelligent community because it's a colonial community. It's a community that is a county seat. It's a community that had major issues in politics in history, particularly historical, because we had people that were involved in the Declaration [of Independence] and the Constitution and we had people that were academics with Dickinson College. Just an extraordinary institution and it's getting more extraordinary under the President, [William G.] Durdin, in Dickinson College now. We had a lot of things going for us. My wife was a teacher, I was an attorney; we were involved in the community, and we looked to what was right and not what was political. I had one case in which, in Adams County, a Republican came up to me and said, "Now, the Governor has done this and he's hurting the Republicans and the farmers," he said, "but I better not be talking to you because you're a Democrat." I said, "You're asking me to do it, and I'll do it. Two years later we had a law on the books for different types, for one type particularly, of commodity marketing. I got it done within two years before the Republicans even knew I was doing it. The Republicans and the Governor were trying to give the power over commodity marketing to the Governor, a Republican, and we took it away from them in two years to give it back to the farmers. The Republicans in the Adams County area and Cumberland, to an extent, but mostly in Adams, decided to give me a [inaudible], a recognition, but it wasn't strong enough for all the Republicans so there were about three people there. But I didn't care, because I did the right thing and I told him so, and it's there in the books right now.

HM: I'd like to talk a little bit about your first Swearing-In: Do you recall how you felt whenever you first came to Harrisburg and took the oath of office?

JB: No.

HM: No.

JB: I just came. I had a job to do.

HM: Okay.

JB: I had great guys. The caliber of them, the Legislators, that were there at the time. Manderino [James J.; State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1967-1989; Speaker, 1989]; extraordinary guy. The problem with him, at the beginning, he tried to put me on the problem and say, "Why did you vote on that bill?" I said, "Because it's not necessary to do it the other way," and he came and apologized, because he knew that I was doing what I was doing out of my heart and soul. That guided me for a long time. That man had a great wife, very special.

HM: So, did you make friends, then, whenever you were in Harrisburg? The camaraderie, would you say, was strong?

JB: Oh, it was good. I'll tell you why it was good; because, when I would have a bill, I worked very hard to get support in the bill itself before it had a vote, from both Parties. On several bills,

I had almost as many Democrats and Republicans at the same time. There was one bill, I have to think of it – well, I can't think of it. I'll think of it later – but, what I did, I worked real hard and I had in one bill, only nine Republicans were against the bill and after having nine against it, you'd think that I'd probably get it – well, that was in the House – but, the Republican side just didn't want it, and as a result, they stopped it and held it up and we lost it because we didn't have any control over the Senate, but the Republicans were with us up to nine only that did not support us.

HM: So, if it's a good bill it doesn't matter?

JB: Well, It doesn't matter if one Party [*cough*], one Party opposes the bill and that's a sad thing, it's a really sad thing, because it was – and I'll think of it shortly and I'll tell you before you are through. Go ahead.

HM: I wanted to talk a little bit about whenever you were a Representative; you still maintained your law practice in Carlisle?

JB: I did and I [*cough*] know that's always a concern. People would say, "Well, you're doing work on the outside. How can you do both?" And I simply said, "The first thing I do is take care of my constituents and the issues. Beyond that, I'll work hard as an attorney because I won't do it this long and I don't want to do it this long. Because, I don't want to be there more than five years, six years, seven years. I had no idea I would go to ten years and I finally did and I think that's good. The Patriot News gave me recognition for not staying in the House and it

was written by one of the greatest gentlemen. He complimented me for withdrawing so that others could follow.

HM: So, you imposed term limits on yourself?

JB: Oh yes, oh yes. And I don't believe in limitation; I want the people to decide. They got to have enough intelligence, but in part of the job that people have is the limitation, but at the same time, some people should remain – like Manderino. My gosh, what a brilliant man and he took care of people, and as a result, we had good government.

HM: Can we talk a little bit about your committees that you served on?

JB: The first committee that I asked for was Agriculture [*cough*] and people – legislators, other legislators, smart legislators, intelligent legislators – said, “Why do you want to support the farmers? There aren't enough votes there.” I said, “They're the strongest, largest organization for assets and government and, “ – well, I can't think of the name to call it, but it was – the gross national product was greater for farming than other ways, and so, that didn't bother me at all. It made me feel so good because farmers are the salt of the earth.

HM: And then the other committees you were appointed to?

JB: The other one – Military?

HM: Military and Veterans Affairs.

JB: Military because of my association with the Marine Corps, and I was involved for a long time, two wars, six and a half years, Reserves, and I continue to take active account of the services, all of them.

HM: And the other one that you served on was the Local Government Committee.

JB: Local Government Committee because it's so important. I've always supported a strong local government. Townships, boroughs; we should keep that, but it should be modified. We have today, in Carlisle, big massive buildings, trucking, that are just killing the land, and the use of land and the beauty of land. But, that should be turned over to the counties to control the land that's there and is being wasted, because now the trucks aren't there as they used to be. There's a lot of things that should be done but the small, small government is good because it brings out in people the opportunity to see the supervisors. I was a solicitor for about three organizations, but the important thing is that we should have small units of government at the bottom of the pile in order to give an opportunity to people. Not to wait and have people that are old, long, doing something else, controlling everything.

HM: What do you think the hardest issue you faced as a Representative was?

JB: Well, I'm used to hitting hard things, so it didn't bother me. I would state it and if I lost it, there's nothing I can do about it. Well, I'm a strong Democrat and I believe in all the principles and I study assiduously Thomas Paine and all the great people during the Revolution.

HM: Would you like to discuss some of your more important pieces of legislation? I'll open it up to you first if you'd like to talk about which pieces of legislation you're most proud of.

JB: Well there are several; one didn't pass it. I had a good friend, a brilliant man, John Mahar, who was the Dean of the Dickinson School of Law; John Mahar came to me and said, "Pennsylvania does not have a monopoly law that helps the people to have in the State level what the nation has as national level." He told me that, so it took me two years to get a bill in because the Republicans opposed it. The Republicans opposed it because the Republicans are concerned with big business and big companies and as a result, they don't want an anti-trust bill. So, I lost it but I carried again. I carried again a high degree of Republicans that were shunted by themselves, because the Republicans in the Senate cut it out, did not pass the bill, did not give the bill opportunity to be considered. Then, I mentioned the commodity marketing bill and that worked, it worked good. And there's other bills that I passed. Do you have a list of them?

HM: I have some, that you were active in protecting Pennsylvania's farming communities; lots of legislation where you worked with Representative Morris [Samuel; State Representative, Chester County, 1971-1990] on the Agricultural Security Act and with Representative Bowser's [Harry E.; State Representative, Erie County, 1979-1990] legislation. And the grape growers bill. We have lots of legislation that you were involved in.

JB: Well, the things were there to be done and I was able to get them through because I worked hard. I went to Republicans to join me and they did it. It's the leadership that fails to permit the people within their bailiwick to put good legislation out.

HM: And you talked about the commodities legislation: would that require farmers to receive prompt payments? Was that a provision of it?

JB: It's an interesting arrangement. All the people of the apple orchards are asked voluntarily to provide so many pounds, or units, to put into a fund that provides an opportunity to have administrative and other dollars put in to the good use for, well, just the good use for agriculture.

HM: I have listed that you had 12 pieces of legislation that were enacted, which is quite an accomplishment in itself. Is there any one that you think you might be particularly fond of?

JB: Well, I liked the commodity marketing.

HM: Okay.

JB: There were a number of small bills, and I say small – not too much to talk about it – but there's a lot of things that can get done if you persevere and if you get the people that are in the Legislature that you can't reject this, you've got to support it and they would do it. And there's Republicans will tell you that's what happened.

HM: If you don't mind, I'm going to brag on your behalf, okay? In 1983-1984, you had three Acts passed. The one was Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association Act, which provided for the coverage to paid firemen when acting as volunteer firemen during off-duty hours. The next one was the Surface Mining and Conservation Reclamation Act, which exempted municipalities from the bond requirement relating to the operation of gravel pits, providing for self-insurance, and changing the effective date [*cough*] of application of certain provisions to noncoal mining activities.

JB: Oh, it was an amazing event that occurred. At the time the importance of having Republicans and Democrats insist on an issue, a Republican was asked to help somebody do some work and he said, "Go see John Broujos; he'll work on it for you." There were two persons who were legislators in this general area; they wouldn't do it, because it was against the Republican contingent, and they came to me and said, "Can you help us?" And I said, "Well I'll put a bill in." When I put the bill in, the Republicans didn't pick it up and they passed the bill under their nose because I persisted, and it took two terms to get it out. Now, I'm saying that as a matter of fact because it happened. And it's something that means a lot to me because they were saying, "Here's something that's good, but we can't do it because we're in a political problem." The details of that are amazing.

HM: From 1983 and 1984, you also had an Act amending the public school code that would require public hearings prior to school closings, further providing for an alternative payment plan for illness or accidental injury and authorizing the State Treasury to recover Social Security

overpayments on behalf of school employees. In 1985 and [19]86, you talked about this, an Act providing for the provisions of poultry and egg contracts and imposing civil penalties. Also in [19]85 and [19]86, an Act known as the "Noncoal Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act," so that was – you said, it was passed here and you did it again the next session – which authorized additional exemptions from the definition of "surface mining." In 1987 and [19]88, you had an Act amending the "Pennsylvania Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act of 1968," changing the name of the advisory boards to commodity marketing boards and further providing for powers and duties of said boards, and further providing for the powers and duties of the Secretary of Agriculture. Also in 1987 and [19]88, you had an Act which was known as the "Electric Cooperative Corporation Act," to further provide for directors' liability and indemnification.

JB: That was because of a special group of people that wanted that work. It was an organization, a Democratic organization that achieved that.

HM: You also had an Act designating LeTort Spring Run as a component of the Pennsylvania Scenic Rivers System in accordance with the Pennsylvania Scenic Rivers Act, providing for cooperation and coordination in its protection and use and of responsible use and its management. And then in 1989 and 1990 you had an Act known as "The Borough Code," which was to further provide for the sale of borough real property. And you had the "Solid Waste Management Act," which further provided for certain limits and permits, providing that no bond shall be required as a condition for issuance for a permit or license to a municipality or a municipal authority.

JB: Yeah, why should there be?

HM: So, some just made sense, huh? *(laugh)*

JB: *(laugh)* A lot of them make sense.

HM: And then in 1991 and [19]92, which was your last term, you had an Act providing for the payments by the Commonwealth to municipalities which have expended money to acquire and construct sewage treatment plants in accordance with the Clean Streams Program. You also had, the last one, was an Act conferring limited residency status on military personnel and their dependents assigned to an active duty station in Pennsylvania, further providing for rates of tuition for certain military personnel and their dependents.

JB: Yeah, there's a lot of small, I say small because it's not too important to a lot of people, but it is to the servicemen.

HM: And probably to the people it really impacts.

JB: Yeah, Oh, I had a ball.

HM: Well, I think if anyone came to you with an issue, it sounds like you were very responsive to the needs of what needed to be done.

JB: Well, one time down in Adams County – and I went out to the farmers all the time – and I met this one guy – I don’t know whether I told you this one – this guy said, “I don’t know whether I ought to talk to you about this, you’re a Democrat,” I say, “No, don’t worry about it. I’ll do it if it’s right.” This was a Republican, and he couldn’t get anywhere close to Governor Thornburgh, strike. He said, “You know, my brother is the prothonotary of Adams County.” I said, “That’s fine.” [*cough*] These people were, to an extent, joyous in having me talk to them and not being afraid that I got to go to see the boss. It was – I enjoyed it. When I left, people said, “Well, I guess you’re glad,” I said, “Hell no, I was having fun.”

HM: You talked about it being a fun ten years: what would you say may be your fondest memories were of serving in the House?

JB: The fondest memories were working with guys like – I don’t remember the names of people – anyway, working with good guys that wanted to work, and I got a lot of them that did and they were thankful that I was doing these things, because it was happening and it happened. Men like, Tom Michlovic [Thomas A.; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1979-2002], they just smile at you, say, “Yeah, let’s do it,” and he goes on about his business. Okay.

HM: Well, I just wanted to thank you so much for taking the time to come and talk to me today. I appreciate so much and I hope you had an enjoyable experience.

JB: Oh, I did. I enjoyed it.