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BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Lee A. Donaldson (R)

30th District

Allegheny County

1955-1970

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Heidi Mays, House Archivist
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Transcribed by: Heather Deppen Hillard

Heidi Mays (HM): Good morning.

The Honorable Lee A. Donaldson (LD): Good morning.

HM: I'm here today with Lee Donaldson in his home in Pittsburgh and he served in the Pennsylvania House of Representative from 1955-1970. I'm so happy to be here with you here today to talk about your experiences. Thank you for inviting us to your home.

LD: Well, thank you for coming.

HM: I want to begin by asking about your childhood and your early family life, and how you feel that prepared you for public service?

LD: Well, I was born in the Borough of Etna, which is about seven miles south of here [Allison Park]. One of two children, I was the older, and my father was a pharmacist in Etna and he became, what would now be, a Mayor, was then the Burgess of Etna, was a, you could probably say, political job. And, actually, he ran for the General Assembly in 1934, (*laugh*) but that was not a very good Republican year and he did not win, but that sort-of always was in my system, I think, and that got me interested. And then I graduated from Etna High School, and went on to Allegheny College and the service in the US Army, and to Pitt Law School, and got married and had a family and ran for the General Assembly in 1954. That's right, yeah.

HM: So, would you say your family was active in politics? Your father introduced you?

LD: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, my father was active in politics.

HM: Was your family always Republican?

LD: Yes, that's true.

HM: Is that how you decided to become a Republican?

LD: Oh, I think, (*laugh*) I think undoubtedly that had an influence on me, sure.

HM: Well, what kind of Republican would you say you were – or are? I'm sorry.

LD: I still am, and I think I'm what would now be classified as a Moderate-Republican, the old-style Eastern Republican, which is becoming sort-of a lost species, unfortunately, in my opinion. But, that's likely the story of that.

HM: Could you tell me a little bit more about your schooling and how you feel that your schooling and your career prior to coming to the House of Representatives prepared you for the experiences that you would have there?

LD: Well, at Allegheny I had a history and political science major, and actively followed

the political life in the state and in the nation. And then getting out of law school, I think that, you know, you have court systems and all these quasi-legal things, it's just sort-of a natural event. And what really happened was that, in those days (*laugh*) we had what was 'Multi-Membered Districts.' In other words, all of the Boroughs and Townships (*laugh*) in Allegheny County north of the rivers, from Sewickley all the way up to Tarentum and Harrison Township was one Legislative District with four Members, elected At-Large. This was all a gerrymandering thing that had been set up to assure, in this case, the thought was they'd be four Republican Members and there almost always were. And then they reapportioned in 1953, and the District went from two to four Members, that's what happened. So, that left two wide-open spots and, you know, like a spot to run. And I recall, there were seventeen Republicans running for those four seats in the Primary election of that year, and I was fortunate enough to be one of the nominees, and then was elected in November.

HM: Would you say the Republican Party was very strong? Did they support you?

LD: Oh, absolutely. Well, actually, there was a bitter Primary fight in the Republican Party between the followers of Governor Fine [John S. Fine; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1951-1955], who were on one side, and many other elected officials; the incumbent Congressman and Senator and District Attorney, who were on the other side. It's hard to imagine, but there was a fight down to the District level. Each side had candidates for District Committeeman, all the way down to that level. It's hard to imagine (*laugh*), but they did, and I happened to be chosen for no particular reason, I think, by the side that

prevailed in the thing and that's why I was nominated – Sorry about that. Terry will get that I think. She did – Okay, so, that's how I came on the scene, so to speak.

HM: Okay. Can I ask you about your military experience?

LD: I was in the Army at the end of World War II and served in the Army of Occupation in the 1st Cavalry in Japan, but there was no combat action at that time. The War was over by the time I got there.

HM: Okay. Were there veterans that served with you in the House that had similar – ?

LD: Oh, there were many, many, many veterans, sure, that had a very active service. Many of them.

HM: Do you think that had any role in the Legislature at the time?

LD: Do I think that affected their – ?

HM: Their outlook?

LD: Yeah, I think that it did, to some extent. They formed a kind-of a camaraderie of their own, so to speak. Particularly on our side, in the northern-tier counties, you had Ken Lee [Kenneth B. Lee; State Representative, Sullivan, Susquehanna & Wyoming

Counties, 1957-1974; Speaker of the House, 1967-1968 and 1973-1974], who became Speaker of the House, and Evan Williams [State Representative, Bradford County, 1959-1968] who became a Judge, and Joe Hepford [H. Joseph Hepford; State Representative, Dauphin County, 1963-1976] in Dauphin County, and Warren Spencer [State Representative, McKean, Potter and Tioga Counties, 1963-1984] in Tioga County, they were all, I believe they were all Air Force Officers. And they were very close throughout the whole thing, and formed a, sort-of, Caucus within a Caucus.

HM: Well, I wanted to ask you about, you said you had a bitter Primary; what was the General like, the General election your first time?

LD: Oh, let's see. The General election of 1954, there had been, I believe, four successive Republican Governors. Now, in those days, a Governor could not succeed himself, so there were four Republican Governor's, it would be sixteen years. But that year, the Republican candidate was Lloyd Wood [State Senator, Montgomery County, 1946-1950; Lt. Governor of Pennsylvania, 1951-1955; Chief Clerk of the House, 1957-1958], who, I believe was an active Senator – an ex-Lieutenant Governor, I think – and, the Democratic candidate was George Leader [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1955-1959], who was a young, good looking, aggressive Democratic Senator from York County, who represented a change, something different than the status-quo, and, he won pretty easily. So, the Democrats won the House, but in the, then-old 17th Legislative District, the Republican ticket did prevail there.

HM: Well, did you like to campaign?

LD: Did I like to campaign? Well, I never mind – yeah, I liked it, but *(laugh)* the District was so big, to get from one end of it to the other, you know if you had a meeting at Harrison Township and one down below Sewickley, you had a half a day's travel involved. *(laugh)* That's if you can find the place that the meeting was being held. *(laugh)* So, I enjoyed it, yeah, I did enjoy it.

HM: Well, you had, I guess, I think, eleven campaigns, if I counted correctly. What was your campaign process and what types of campaign activities did you involve yourself in?

LD: Well, yeah, you have to remember, that in those days this job did not pay any money to amount to anything. And so, the amount of resources you had available was really quite limited. There was a fairly strong Party organization – the Democratic Party organization was much stronger, because they held the bulk of the city and county offices – but, the Republican organization itself had some funds and made funds available and that's really where the financing, whatever it was, came, which really amounted to slate cards and buttons and that sort of thing. I mean, we never did any television or radio or newspaper or anything like that.

HM: Do you remember, roughly, how much a campaign would have cost in those days?

LD: Would have cost? My personal campaign?

HM: Yeah.

LD: I think maybe when I was Majority Leader, I might have spent something like four or five thousand dollars, maybe. It certainly wouldn't have been any more than that, and in the early days I didn't have any money (*laugh*) to spend any money.

HM: I think we looked at some of the totals and you always came in first and, maybe one time, second whenever it was the At-Large Membership.

LD: Yeah, that's my recollection of it, yeah.

HM: So, you seemed to be a pretty popular candidate.

LD: Well, I had good geography and that's the way the count came.

HM: Okay. Well, could you explain just a little bit more, because I think a lot of people that may be interested in the history of the House; what was it like serving as a Member with four other individuals? Did you have differing opinions on things and how things should be run, as opposed to being one candidate?

LD: In our case, we really got along pretty well and, for the most part, we would ride back-and-forth to Harrisburg together, and we stayed in the same hotel. And, we really got along pretty well. There were two older gentleman and then I was then younger, as was my colleague, Chick Agnew [Willard F. Agnew, Jr.; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1955-1962], who had a brilliant career ahead of him; died, unfortunately, at a very, very young age.

HM: Who were the other two gentleman?

LD: Lawrence Gibb [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1955-1966] from Sewickley and Ray Wilt [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1951-1970] from Ross Township. Ray was the senior guy – he was the incumbent. He was elected for the first time, I believe, in 1950, and he was a grand gentleman, he was quite a good businessman, he was very, very much respected. As a matter of fact, his son served as a State Senator¹ and the last time I was in Harrisburg, which totally amazed me – I took my grandkids down there – and a young man came up to me on the Floor² and said, “Mr. Donaldson, you don’t remember me. You served with my grandfather.” I won’t tell you how that makes you feel. *(laugh)* Kind-of old. *(laugh)*

HM: Yeah. So, what was it like then, whenever they decided to go with the one man/one vote, and you were given the 30th House District?

¹ Roy W. Wilt; State Representative, Mercer County, 1969-1981; State Senator, Crawford, Erie, Mercer & Venango Counties, 1981-1990

² Rod E. Wilt; State Representative, Crawford, Lawrence & Mercer Counties, 1997-2006

LD: Right, that's right. We had moved, actually to this house, we had built this house in Hampton Township and, frankly, one of the reasons that I moved into Hampton Township was, basically in the center of that Legislative District, and I thought no matter which way this goes (*laugh*) I'm going to be in pretty fair shape here.

HM: So, redistricting didn't have any parts of – because it sounds like you centered yourself fairly well.

LD: Yeah, that's right, that's right. Hampton was a good place in for the District at that time.

HM: Do you think it was easier serving, you know, [as] one State Representative?

LD: Oh, I do, I do. Sure, I do, I do, because you were responsible for yourself. You didn't have to, you know, before you were always a little bit worried, what were the other three guys thinking about? And so, I think it was much easier, and I think it's a much better system too. The other way was simply – it was a gerrymandering process, which was used in many places, not just in Pennsylvania.

HM: Well, could you describe this area? What were the people like? What were their issues, politically speaking as well?

LD: In this area?

HM: Yeah.

LD: In the old – still the 30th Legislative District, I guess – you know, you had the mill towns of Etna and Sharpsburg, they were the old mill towns, and then you had the newer suburban districts coming out in Shaler and Hampton, and you had the Fox Chapel area, which was a very exclusive residential area. So, you had a pretty good mixture, and the political registration was always pretty much even. There was usually a slight Democratic edge, but, you know, a one Party county, basically. But, the registration doesn't always count, because people register maybe because they want to be in the majority, but perhaps they vote another way. I think that was true here, because the District has been, with one exception, has elected Republicans ever since.

HM: What do you think it's like serving so close to Pittsburgh? Does that pose any special concerns or problems for you?

LD: I think it does because, you know, Pittsburgh is no longer the megalopolis that it once was. The population has gone from 750,000 to 325,000 or something like that. But, there is a consciousness, I think, that Pittsburgh is important, real important to the region, and its Pittsburgh's problems are our problems too. Now, that isn't the most popular view sometimes in the suburbs, but I think it's true and I think it has to be recognized, and I think more and more political figures are recognizing that.

HM: Did you ever have a District office?

LD: Did I ever have a District office?

HM: Yes.

LD: Uh, never had one that was paid for. We had a law office out here that we kind-of used for political, well, we did use for political office, but the Commonwealth didn't pay for it.

HM: We had noticed, I think, maybe, from the Pennsylvania Manual that the First National Bank Building, the Frick Building in Pittsburgh?

LD: That's where I had my first law office.

HM: Okay, maybe –

LD: Yeah, but, that was before I was in the Legislature.

HM: Okay. Okay. Well, how did you stay in touch with your constituents?

LD: With my constituents?

HM: Yes.

LD: Well, you know, you went to political meetings, you went to other meetings not of a political nature, you went to church, you went to – I was very active in the Etna Elks and belong to the American Legion, you did all these kinds of things. You know, you lived in the District and you knew the people.

HM: So, the community leader, would be the –

LD: Yeah, but I mean, as I said before, we didn't have any television or radio or anything of that nature.

HM: No mailings?

LD: We might have done, maybe, a mailing in a campaign, maybe.

HM: Okay. Well, could you describe your experiences during your first Swearing-In Ceremony and how you felt?

LD: I think the first (*laugh*) – my wife, Terry, whom you've just met, we had no idea what was going to happen and I was, apparently, going to be the only Member elected who did not have flowers on his desk and somebody at the last minute (*laugh*) got a hold

of Terry and she got some flowers. But, it was, for me, it was kind-of an awesome experience. You know, all of the greats and near-greats that you had heard of where around there and I think, I think I was the youngest Member of the General Assembly then; I was 29 when I was Sworn-In.

HM: Well, do you recall what your first office was like in Harrisburg?

LD: Office?

HM: Yes. Did you have an office? (*laugh*)

LD: (*laugh*) When we got there, you got six hundred dollars when you were Sworn-In; you got a roll of stamps, I think there were three hundred stamps, there might have been five hundred, I'm not sure of that; you got a locker in a locker room; you got a desk on the Floor of the House. Then, on the first of February, you got six hundred dollars, the first of March you got six hundred dollars, the first of April you got six hundred dollars – we were doing good. But, the last six hundred you didn't get until the end of the Session, which happened to be May of the following year. So, (*laugh*) I think you got a nickel a mile for transportation, and I that became a dime later on. So, we didn't have any office or any secretary or, we didn't have any of that. I know that sounds crazy, but that's the way it was.

HM: So, you answered you own letters? Like, if someone would write you a letter, you would answer it yourself?

LD: Yeah. They had a secretarial pool in Harrisburg, of about, I think of about ten or twelve girls, that presumably you had access to. But, the problem was, as soon as Session ended we went home, because we had to make a living and do things. So, you never had an opportunity, really, to utilize that, unless you lived in Dauphin or one of the nearby counties, you know. So, yeah, if we got letters we answered them. Well, I had a law office and I, obviously, answered them through them.

HM: Okay.

LD: But, most people did it in that fashion.

HM: I think people, especially, you know, that are involved in the Legislature now forget that the Legislature at the time that you served was, presumably, part-time.

LD: Yeah, we did not consider it a full-time position in any way, shape or form. And I've always, sort-of, got a kick out of the Pittsburgh newspapers, and I assume the other metropolitan newspapers, were always for this full-time Legislature; they were always for it. Well, now they have it and they are not very happy about that either. *(laugh)*

HM: *(laugh)* Well, do you have any thoughts on that; is it better to be a part-time Legislature?

LD: It's never going to come back to that part-time, it's just never going to happen. Is there enough legislative business to occupy anybody full-time? I don't think anybody really thinks that. But, they do such great constituent service that I think there's some value to people by having that available to them. And that can keep them busy and, of course, the job now is much more like a full-time occupation and, therefore, people work at it in that fashion.

HM: What was your experience whenever you first viewed the process of the House Floor, the House in action. People up in the gallery sometimes don't understand everything that's going on.

LD: You know, that's understandable. That's completely understandable.

HM: *(laugh)* What did you think as the first time that you witnessed it for yourself?

LD: *(laugh)* Well, let me put it this way; I told you that one of my colleagues was Lawrence Gibb from Sewickley, and he was an old-time politician. He had been a World War I guy and a World War II guy, and I don't think he ever left the government payroll, and he was the greatest exponent of the private enterprise that I ever knew. And he said to me one day, he said, "Boy, if this was the best government ever devised by man, I sure

as hell pity those people who live anyplace else.” *(laugh)* But, that’s an exaggeration, you know, it’s a slow kind-of process and it’s a frustrating process; it’s frustrating if your attempting to run it, and it’s frustrating if your attempting to work within it. And when you see people in the Gallery, *(laugh)* I’m sure they have no idea of what’s happening. And yet, I still think that it probably is the best government *(laugh)* ever devised by man.

HM: Do you recall who you sat near on the House Floor?

LD: Yeah, we sat in assigned seats, and we were assigned by county; all the Allegheny guy sat together and the four of us were in four seats. And now, one of the things – they don’t have them anymore, I don’t believe – but, I believe beside each chair was a spittoon.

HM: Yeah, those are no longer there. *(laugh)*

LD: No I’m sure they’re not. *(laugh)* They left in my time, but they were there when I got there.

HM: *(laugh)* Even at the female Members seats?

LD: Oh, you know, I don’t know about that.

HM: Oh, I was just wondering.

LD: There weren't very many of those, by the way. Initially, there weren't very many female Members.

HM: So, as you rose through the ranks, did your seat change?

LD: Oh yeah, right, right. Yeah, we developed the concept that behind the Floor Leader and the Whip, you'd have four seats that were occupied by people you thought were instrumental in attempting to do whatever you were attempting to do. So, I moved up into that area, and then up front beyond that.

HM: Do you feel that anybody mentored you whenever you first came to Harrisburg? Did they show you the ropes?

LD: Senator Bob Fleming [Robert D. Fleming; State Senator, Allegheny County, 1951-1974; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1939-1950] as much as anybody. He was, I think he went to Harrisburg in 1938, and I think he went to the House and then he went to the Senate in 1950, and he was from Aspinwall, which is a couple of miles from where I lived, and I knew him. Yeah, he would have been a mentor.

HM: Did you have the opportunity to mentor anybody?

LD: Did I?

HM: Yes.

LD: Well, I like to think that I mentored Rick Cessar [Richard J. Cessar; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1971-1994] and, in all fairness he did all this himself, but he did come to Harrisburg as my Administrative Assistant and worked in our office for four years, and then when I did not run for re-election he ran and served a long time, very successfully, and was very popular, very well liked and deservedly so.

HM: What role did lobbyist serve during your time there?

LD: Lobbyists were important. They were particularly, we always thought, important in the Senate, with the – what were the three great ones? The Sun Oil and the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Pennsylvania Manufacturers; they had three lobbyists who, as I recall, they sat on the Floor of the Senate. They had seats just like the Senators had. Not quite there, but right beside them. They were never quite that – I don't think they paid that much attention to the House, to tell you the truth. But lobbyists were there from the various industries and, you know, you knew them, particularly the ones – we would know the ones out of Pittsburgh, particularly, representing various corporations, labor unions.

HM: Why do you think they paid more attention to the Senate than to the House?

LD: Well, maybe it was, in a sense, more manageable. Members there tended to serve

for a long time, and everyone knew one another and knew where everybody was going, I think, more so than in the House, which had a kind-of rapid turn-over, at least in the early days, so.

HM: Okay. Well, you acted as Speaker Pro-Temp on several occasions throughout your tenure. What was that like?

LD: Well, that's right; I was Speaker Pro-Temp. You just presided – I didn't exercise any of the powers of the Speaker, other than just handling the debate on the Floor of the House; the business of the House.

HM: But, isn't it quite an honor to be selected to serve as Speaker Pro-Temp?

LD: Well, I –

HM: At least today, in my, you know –

LD: Okay. I just thought we were filling in, to tell you the truth. (*laugh*)

HM: Well, I was wondering, you know, since you're playing it very low-key here, if it was a similar honor that was – ?

LD: Honest, I just never thought about it in that light.

HM: Okay. Well, what was your relationship like with the other Members of the Leadership, at the time?

LD: Who?

HM: The other Members of Leadership at the time? Since you were a Leader yourself.

LD: Well –

HM: What were their leadership styles like, maybe?

LD: You know, particularly when you're the Floor Leader and the Governor is in your Party, you always have a problem, and it was a big problem; your Members think you're being managed by the Governor and the Governor is convinced that you're not upholding his platform as you should be, because you're paying attention to your guys, and in truth, you've got to do both. And that's a difficult balancing act and I'm not sure that I did it as well as it should have been done.

HM: Why do you think that?

LD: Well, in the Shafer [Raymond P. Shafer; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1967-1971] Administration, we had problems; we succeeded a very popular Governor, a deservedly

popular Governor, and the Scranton [William Warren; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1963-1967] Administration initiated many outstanding, fine programs. He never had to pay for them, because they were just being initiated. Then Shafer inherited these beautiful programs (*laugh*) and the bills, and we never, ever, ever could get the money to fund it. That was an ongoing problem the four years that I was in the Leadership.

HM: Then, I think, after you left, I think that is when they had the income tax.

LD: That's right. Well, when I was there it was an article of faith that no Republican would ever be for an income – I don't think that was exactly correct, but that was the way it was deemed.

HM: Well, who was the Speaker whenever you were Majority Leader?

LD: Ken Lee.

HM: What was he like to work with?

LD: Ken and I had a pretty good relationship, but unfortunately, he and the Governor did not have such a good relationship, and that, sort-of, epitomized the attempt to balance the two. But, Ken was, I think, a good Speaker. He was a powerful Speaker, but, by-and-large, we got along well and I had great respect for him as an individual.

HM: And who was your Whip?

LD: Bob Butera. [Robert J. Butera; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1963-1977]

HM: Bob Butera? Good relationship with Bob?

LD: Oh, absolutely, (*laugh*) absolutely.

HM: Okay.

LD: He had, I think, probably the right idea about things. He never seemed to get too worked up or too upset, and he kept a low profile basically, but he was very bright and very good, and I think he's still on the scene in Harrisburg, to some extent. I haven't talked to him in a long awhile, but again, a great respect for him.

HM: What about on the Democratic side?

LD: The Democratic side, Herb Fineman [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1977; Speaker of the House, 1969-1972 and 1975-1977] was the Democratic Leader and then the Speaker. And then, [K.] Leroy Irvis [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker of the House, 1977-1978 and 1983-1988] was

the Whip and then the Floor Leader, you know, in the four years that I was the Floor Leader.

HM: And you –

LD: And they were both very, very able guys; very, very able guys. I had a good personal relationship with Lee Irvis. In fact, by-and-large, the Allegheny County Members, R's and D's, got along well. They would disagree on measures and they'd vote differently on measures, but they would get along; they were personally friendly. Speaker Fineman was a little bit different; he could be abrasive at times. He was a very good Leader for his Party, did a good job for them. He was a very tough competitor.

HM: You had several debates with him, I think.

LD: Oh, I'm sure we did; I'm sure we did.

HM: *(laugh)* I was going to say, two Attorneys on the Floor.

LD: But, as hard as it was to debate Herb Fineman – and it was – Herb, he would make these wonderful speeches, you know, and I would look at my guys, “What am I going to do now?” *(laugh)* But, you know, you had to come up with something. *(laugh)*

HM: Now, do you think it was easier for you to be a Minority Leader or a Majority Leader? We've talked to people who have been both and –

LD: Oh, I'd far rather be the Majority Leader. I'd far rather be the Majority Leader. Easier, yeah, it's easier to be the Majority Leader.

HM: How about whenever the Governor is of a different Party?

LD: Well, see, I never had that experience personally. The only four years that I was the Majority Leader there was a Republican Governor.

HM: Okay.

LD: Whom, I think, really never got the credit he deserved. As I say, he really inherited a debt that wasn't of his making and that was like a ball-and-chain around him all the four years. We never did get over it.

HM: Well, how did you decide to run for Leadership?

LD: Oh, I suppose everybody, (*laugh*) I'm sure that every Member there would like to be Leader. You know, it's a natural thing, I think. Yeah, just a natural thing. I don't know that there was any great human demand that I be the Leader, but that's the way it worked out.

HM: Did you have any Leadership posts before becoming Leader?

LD: Yeah, we had what we called a Policy Committee on the Republican side, and I was the Chairman of that for a couple of years.

HM: Well, what was it like in Caucus at the time that you served? What were your Caucus's like?

LD: *(laugh)* Well, they were very difficult; they were very, very difficult. Always on this, almost always on the finance problem; if we couldn't get the money we really couldn't operate and so we'd come up with these marvelous ideas and present them to the Caucus. I think we only had 102 or 103 Members, we had a bare majority, and we had a couple of guys who were not going to vote for any taxes; I mean, they weren't, you know. So, we'd go through this whole litany of things and everybody would make speeches, and then we'd take the roll call; no, no, no. An, yep, there you go again.
(laugh)

HM: *(laugh)* So, would you say that, basically, the financial crisis was the major concern of your time?

LD: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I think, and I guess I said this so many times that, I have a plaque that the Republican Caucus presented to me when I left. I would always say, well, you know, “Not today,” – on the Floor of the House – “but someday; someday.”

HM: Well, what do you think the schedule of a Leader is? What types of activities did you involve yourself in, like, on a day-to-day basis? You know, did you have lots of meetings with the Governor’s staff?

LD: Oh yeah, sure. Oh, yeah, you were always meeting. Sure, you were always meeting with the Governor and then, of course, particularly when you had a Democratic controlled House, you had to meet either with them individually or with meet with them more often, [or] meet with them with the Governor in an attempt to work out something on legislation. And you worked on the Calendar all the time, because you always had bills on the Calendar that, maybe, the Administration wasn’t concerned about or I wasn’t concerned about, but I had Members who were gung-ho about them and, you know, you got to do that too. *(laugh)* So, yeah, you were busy with the Calendar. I was very busy with that, I know that.

HM: Well, I want to read you something; In your farewell speech you mentioned that, “...the lack of continuity in Leadership is a problem for the organization of the House and the Parties.” Do you still feel that way and could you explain your comment at the time?

LD: I don't have any recollection of –

HM: Okay.

LD: - making that statement.

HM: I wasn't sure if there was a lot of change in the Leadership at the time.

LD: No, no, there really – well, no, there really wasn't a lot of change, as I recall it.

HM: Okay.

LD: I don't know where, if you're quoting, I guess, correctly – I'm sure, correctly – but, I just don't recall it.

HM: Okay.

LD: That was a pretty good speech, by-and-large, I thought, even though that part of it I don't remember.

HM: Oh, I'm sorry. I wanted to ask you about the changes in the House structure while you were there. Were you a witness to any of those?

LD: Oh, yeah. I think we were just getting into the concept of a full-time legislator, the money; the Caucus's would have money, and the Leaders would have money. And I think Herb Fineman and Bob Fleming were, really, key players in that. Both of them saw the independence of the, you know, of the House or of the Senate – or at least of their Caucus in the House or Senate – as being very, very important, and that's when they started to create these funds for various purposes that we never had before. When I became Floor Leader, the Floor Leader wasn't even paid. They had a contingent fund of six thousand dollars, I think it was, and nobody really knew what that was for; nobody knew what that was for. Whether you took somebody to dinner with that, or whether you did this or that or the other thing, nobody quite knew, and that was terrible. I was glad – we finally did get that converted into – I think that was the salary, six thousand dollars, and the Whip got \$2500, or something like that, and I think that was a far better system. They get a little more money than that now, I assume?

HM: Yeah. What about the professionalization; did you staff increase at all? Did you get any more staff, since you had none?

LD: Yeah, yeah, oh, they were starting to build staff; they were starting to build staff. If the one side got staff, it was always pretty well understood that the other guys would get about the same. You know, the staffing began to increase. When I first got there, there wasn't anybody there; it didn't amount to anything. I think, when Stu Helm [W. Stuart Helm; State Representative, Armstrong County, 1941-1964; Speaker of the House, 1957-

1958 & 1963-1964] was Speaker of the House, I think he had a Page and a Secretary, and I think that was it. (*laugh*)

HM: Well, how many staff did you have whenever you were a Leader?

LD: (*cough*) Oh, I'd say I don't have any idea. I don't have any idea anymore.

HM: Okay.

LD: They weren't all mine either; they would be assigned to different committees and that sort-of thing.

HM: Okay.

LD: I don't recall my own staff being significantly large.

HM: Now, I've heard about, you know, the professionalization and, kind-of, creating these Special Funds so that the Legislature could stand independent of the Governor.

LD: Right, right, that's the idea of it.

HM: Do you think there's merit there?

LD: I think there's some merit there; I think there's some merit there, yeah. I think there's always a danger that they become havens for political hangers-on too, and I think some of that happens, or, I shouldn't say, I don't know what happens now, some of it was happening back then.

HM: I'd like to talk a little bit about the Constitutional Convention [of 1968], if you wouldn't mind? What was your involvement and what was going on?

LD: Well, that was [Governor] Shafer's idea. I think he felt, and I think rightfully so, that this was a thing that he could do, that other Governors had been unable to do, even as popular as Governor as Bill Scranton was unable to achieve that. Then the question became how you are going to do it. Initially, I think everybody thought it would be a complete Constitutional Convention. Well, it became apparent we couldn't get that passed. There's always opposition to change, and there was very strong opposition, particularly in the Senate, to any Constitutional Convention at all. And, George Haudenshield [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1970] was one of the guys who helped to work out the differences, because we had to work out differences with the Democrats and with the Senate, and they came up with this idea for a limited Constitutional Convention, to attack what was felt were the major problems with the existing Pennsylvania Constitution. And, as it turned out, I don't think it was a bad idea, because we got it done. And then, the other side had a brilliant idea; electing Delegates from three – I think there were three from each Senatorial District, two Majority and one Minority. That was all, you know, euchred into the thing and that worked out okay. And

then we put the Legislative Leadership in as Delegates. *(laugh)* We just did that; I think there were, maybe, ten or twelve Legislative Delegates in the thing. But when it first met, we, in the Legislature, thought we'd run this thing just like we ran the House and the Senate; that's what we thought we'd do. Well, these citizen soldiers who came *(laugh)*, they weren't going by that. Many of them were, they were really against the Legislature, and that's understandable. And, Lt. Governor Broderick [Raymond J. Broderick, Lt. Governor of Pennsylvania, 1967-1971] – I think we Caucused once as Republicans; I think we Caucused once. We assumed we'd be Caucusing every day, and I don't know if the Democrats Caucused any more than that, I don't know. And, Broderick, that to his credit, he let us know bright and early that this wasn't the way it was going to be; that there were going to be Co-Chairmen – we never heard of such a thing; we had a Majority, you know, *(laugh)* we would to run it. But, we had Co-Chairmen of the various committees and I think, by-and-large, that it worked out very well. I think that Ray Shafer really deserved a lot of credit that he never received, because that Convention did modernize the Pennsylvania Constitution to some extent.

HM: Well, what were the issues that they were trying to – ?

LD: Well, the issues were finance, you know, we had some ridiculous debt limitation; you had to go out and borrow bond money all the time and we got rid of that. We did some things in the Local Government area. Now, many people thought that the big thing was the size of the General Assembly – that was a hot topic, of course – and, I'm sure that there were a majority in that Convention that really wanted to see the size of the

Legislation reduced, but they could never quite get their ducks in order and, you know, the Legislative Members weren't going to be for that. Philosophically, you could certainly make good arguments for it but, you know, if you are the Leader of your 102 or 103, they didn't want to go down to 68 or 70. So, nothing was accomplished there. We modernized the Judiciary, unified the Judiciary, and that's worked well, I believe. Probably might have been better had we gone to some kind-of manner of selecting, at least, Appellate Court Judges, in some merit fashion, rather than election at the polls, but that was never accomplished either. So, all-in-all, I think it was a pretty successful operation. It did, I mean, let the Governor delude a lot of the political capital as an incoming Executive he had, because some of the people went along with that did so very reluctantly, with the idea that weren't going to go any next steps down the way. But, that's the way it worked out.

HM: Well, right now, as you know, the House is looking at reforming itself in Harrisburg.

LD: Yeah, I think they're coming up with some good ideas too. Are they going to reduce the size? I'll be surprised if they do that. I'll be surprised if they do that. But, maybe they will.

HM: Well, I just think it's interesting that these same issues continue to come up.

LD: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Sure, sure.

HM: Well, let me see. I'd like to talk a little bit about your legislation now that you were involved in; I'm going to just ask you if there is anything that you are particularly proud of or that you would like to discuss?

LD: I'm proud of the Constitutional Convention and I think, I think I played a significant role in getting that into being. There were a lot of other people also, but I feel I was instrumental in that.

HM: Well, can I ask you how you feel you were instrumental? What was your role?

LD: Well, in getting a bill crafted and getting it passed in the Legislature. And, we worked long and hard at that because many Republican Members weren't very enthusiastic about this. We had a lot of Members from smaller, rural counties that felt that this was probably going to mean a reduction in the size [of the Legislature], which was going to affect them. So, it was tough to get that through. But, I think that was a big thing. I think, and I don't think Ray Shafer would agree with me on this particularly, but I think that the Public Employees Relations Act was an important thing. It certainly was not a perfect bill, and we knew it was not a perfect bill, but, what was happening was school teachers were striking, and a dear friend of mine was President of the Fox Chapel School Board and the Fox Chapel teachers – this was a very important school district– went on strike and I remember he got on television and he said, you know, “they come back to work on they go to jail,” you know. I said, “That just ain't gonna happen. It just

isn't going to happen." (*laugh*) So, the existing law wasn't working. The one we crafted had some defects. It's been improved since then and I think it's as good as any in the nation, really. That was a hard-sell for Republicans because, you know, it looked like it was going to be the end of patronage, maybe, if we were going to go over this kind-of route. I think one of the things that I was very interested in and I do think we did do a good job on, was clean streams and environmental things. In both the Scranton and the Shafer Administration we were very cognizant of what should be done there and then we really attempted to do some things, and I'm very proud of that.

HM: Well, you served on several committees as well. The committees; did you have a favorite committee that you were particularly fond of?

LD: I suppose the Judiciary Committee.

HM: Was that because of your background?

LD: I think so, yeah. I think so, sure.

HM: Okay. Do you recall any of the bills or any of the issues that were being dealt with in committee?

LD: Well, one of the most horrendous, difficult issues that we faced was transportation for non-public school children. That was a bitter divisive issue, and it got to be almost a

church versus church kind-of thing, because obviously the practical effect of the bill was to aid parochial schools. There were other private schools, but the vast majority were parochial schools, and I was representing public school districts at the time, and I had a lot of trouble with that one. *(laugh)* In particular, they found out that the bill, as passed, not only included the parochial schools, which everybody understood, but it also included the private schools like Shadyside Academy, *(laugh)* and when these school directors out in Hampton Township found out that they were transporting kids to Shadyside Academy that didn't make them very happy.

HM: Well, did you belong to any informal Caucus's? Was there any Allegheny County Caucus?

LD: Well, we would meet once in a while, yeah, we would meet once in a while. I wouldn't call it a Caucus, but we would meet once in a while. At one time, we had eighteen Republican Members from Allegheny County. Nobody could imagine that today, but we had eighteen, it was in the Eisenhower election of 1956 [Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States, 1953-1961]. It was a big Republican year, and we had it well gerrymandered; we had four in the South Hills, four in the North Hills, four in the East Hills and four in the city of Pittsburgh. *(laugh)*

HM: Wow. How many Democratic Members were there?

LD: I think - I could be wrong about this – but, I think there were maybe twelve or thirteen. I think, but I may be wrong. I believe we had more than they did for that –

HM: Wow.

LD: – short period of time.

HM: Well, we were just looking at some of the topics that you dealt with in your legislation and it looked like you dealt with a lot insurance issues as well, the civil service and appropriations and many others. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about legislatively or with the committees?

LD: No, but it is kind-of funny how the problems really do reoccur; they come back again. The idea of the ‘lame duck’ session, that’s a bad idea. I don’t think we ever did that. We might have, but I don’ think we did. I don’t think we ever met after the November election, even though the term didn’t expire. And I think that’s a terrible idea, and I understand that’s one of the reforms that they are considering and I think that would be a very, very good one. Reduction in the size of the Legislature would make some sense. You know, in this day with transportation and communications the way it is, I mean, the arguments for that large block – when I first got there, there was one Member for every county, so that Forest County – which I dearly love; we have a place up there – with five thousand residents had a Member, and you know, you can’t really justify that.

HM: Well, we were reading some of your debates on the House Floor with Stu Helm, Herb Fineman, Josh Eilberg [Joshua Eilberg; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1966] –

LD: Josh, yeah.

HM: – and Leroy Irvis. Did you recall any of those debates and did you have a particular favorite debater?

LD: Oh, Lee Irvis. He was much better than I was. He was much more eloquent. But that was a real challenge.

HM: And what were some of the issues you debated?

LD: Well, by-and-large they would be, you know, money for minorities or for inner-cities and that sort-of thing. Of course, that's an allocation of funds and everybody recognizes that there are problems there. But, Lee was so good and so eloquent when he would express them and I always felt, you know, I was doing the best I could, but I had a tough hand to play, I thought.

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

LD: The hardest issue? You know, I think it was that school busing. I think I lost

friends who were friends of mine who stood on one side or the other of that issue. That was unfortunate, but that's the way it sometimes goes.

HM: Do you think people sometimes took it personally, you being a State Representative, you know, and the issues you had to face in Harrisburg? Do you think that sometimes effected – ?

LD: I think so, sure.

HM: Well, what aspect did you enjoy the most about being a Representative?

LD: I enjoyed the, sort-of the, fellowship of the thing, the getting together, particularly if you were making a legitimate effort to solve a legitimate problem across Party lines, which we oft times were doing. It doesn't sometimes seem that way, but we oft times were doing, and the give-and-take in that regard. I enjoyed that very, very much.

HM: Do you feel that there was camaraderie?

LD: Yes, right. I do, I do, I do.

HM: Are you still friendly with any of the people that you served with?

LD: Yeah, some. I'm not unfriendly with any of them, but there aren't many of them around anymore. Remember that's a long time ago.

HM: Do you keep in touch with anybody at all?

LD: I did for a long time, but now I really, other than maybe George Haudenshield I see from time-to-time, I see Rick Cessar from time-to-time, and that's really about all.

HM: Well, what aspect of being a Member did you not like?

LD: Well, I didn't like being away from home three or four nights a week. I didn't like that at all. I particularly didn't like it – when you were the Leader, you usually had to stay an extra day and there was nobody around (*laugh*) and I really didn't like that at all.

HM: Well, how did you travel back-and-forth?

LD: We drove initially, and sometimes two or three of us would drive together, and then there was a period of time when we flew, and I believe, I'm almost certain, that we flew for twenty-nine dollars one way, but you had to buy another ticket, so you always had an extra ticket. I didn't quite understand it, so you always had another twenty-nine dollars tied up, but we flew a lot, and that was convenient. And there were lots of flights in those days and, you know, you got to know the airline people and you never knew what time

you were coming home and they tried to accommodate you, even though you got there at the last minute. So, that's the way we did it.

HM: Oh, that's nice.

LD: And then later on, airline fares got way out of control and we drove again.

HM: *(laugh)* Well, do you recall any humorous stories that you might be able to share with us of, maybe, late night sessions, or – ?

LD: Oh, there were lots of late night sessions and, oh, there were lots of humorous things that I'm just, sort-of, at a loss to think of anything specific right now. Maybe something will occur to me, but it hasn't right at the moment.

HM: Okay. Well, what would you say your fondest memory of serving in the House would be?

LD: My fondest memory of serving in the House? Oh, I think having what I thought I had, the respect of my colleagues and the respect I had for them. I think that would be it.

HM: How would you like your tenure to be remembered?

LD: Well, as somebody who tried to utilize whatever abilities he had to do something for the public good, as opposed to things for Special Interests or that kind of activity. We thought that the House Leadership, of which I was a part that was evolving over the years I was there, we thought we were something special. We thought we were a little more above the other guys, to tell you the truth, in that we were less likely to follow the dictates of Special Interest groups, whether they were labor guys, or railroad guys or Sun Oil guys, or whatever they were. We certainly weren't perfect in that regard, but I think we made an effort and I think we made some success.

HM: Well, can you tell me what you've been doing since you've left the House? It's been –

LD: Well, I left the House in 1970. Now, that's thirty-seven years.

HM: Right.

LD: Well, I served for a short while as a Judge in Allegheny County and I found that a very strange position, because I had come out of the Legislature with all this camaraderie, which was important to me, which I liked, and you went on the bench and all at once you were all alone. I mean, you were all alone. You know, the other lawyers didn't really want to associate with you much and there wasn't much among the Judges, and I really felt very lonely on that bench. (*laugh*) It was an interesting challenge and I enjoyed doing it, but I left early on in that career. And since then I practiced law with my brother

and some other fellows until he retired in 1988, then I went a very nice law firm and stayed with them until I retired in 2000.

HM: So, you are basically retired now?

LD: Oh, yeah.

HM: Okay.

LD: Tomorrow I'm going to go in and be an arbitrator in the Court of Common Pleas, but that's a one day shot, you know.

HM: Are you politically active still?

LD: No, no. I go to an occasional meeting, but I'm not active at all.

HM: Okay. Well, I usually ask, what would your advice be for new Members? With your experiences, it's always nice to hear what you might offer to them.

LD: Well, (*cough*) I think it would be to keep your feet on the ground, to look around and listen and learn. You don't know it all, and none of them know it all either, but you've got a constituency back there that you've got to be responsible to, and be the kind

of guy you ought to be to get elected, don't let that make you something else that you're not.

HM: Well, thank you very much for joining us here.

LD: Oh, my pleasure to have you. I hope I didn't bore you to tears –

HM: Not at all.

LD: – but that's about the best I can do out of that.

HM: Well, appreciate it.

LD: Okay, well, thank you very much.