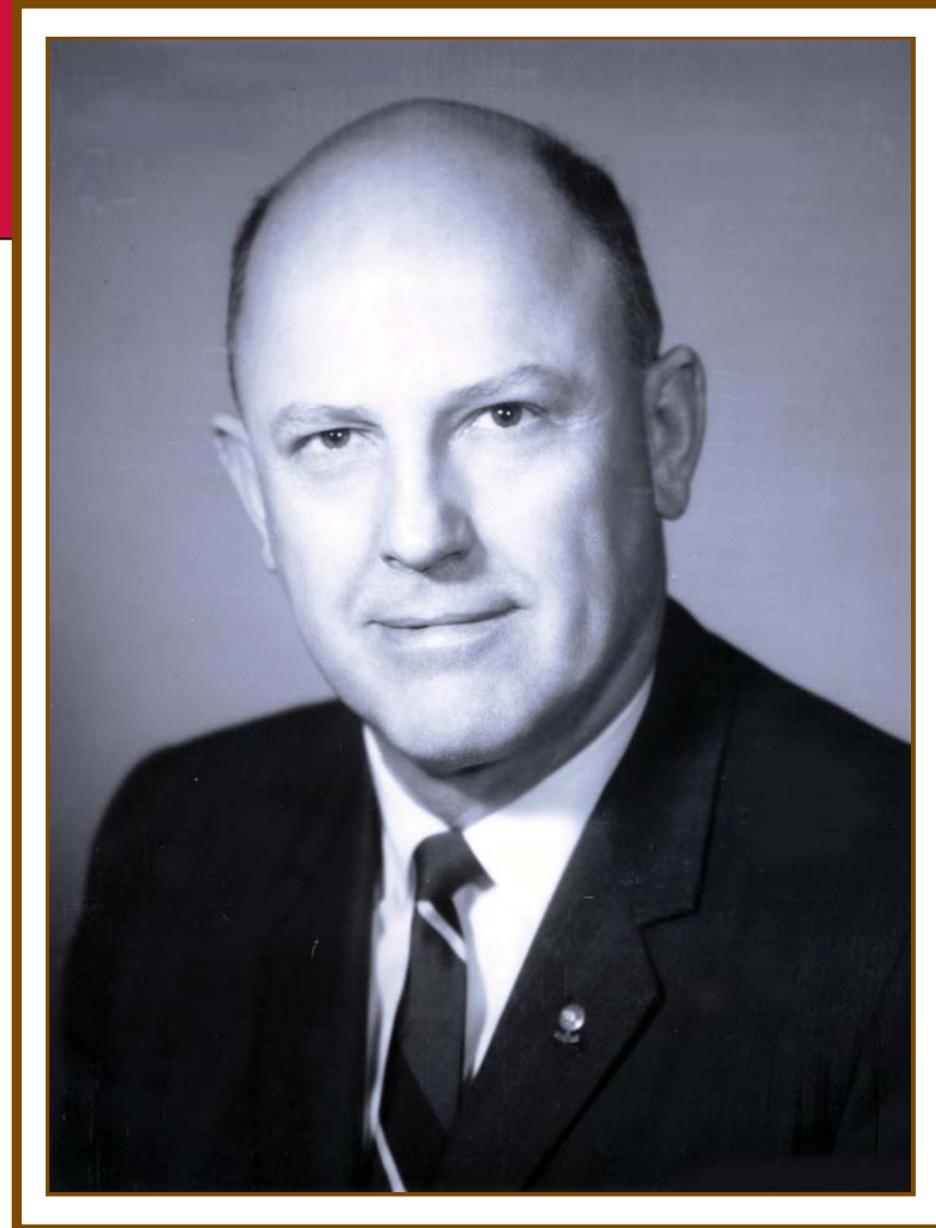


# Don Eldridge



## An Oral History

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Washington State Oral History Program  
Office of the Secretary of State

Don Eldridge

An Oral History

WSOHP



*I've always enjoyed presiding. As caucus chairman, I had the ability to steer discussions and be fair about who I recognized and when to shut off the conversation and get onto something else or vote. I was reasonably successful as the chairman.*

*From the very outset, when I got into the Legislature, I was always apprehensive about the role of the Speaker. I'd sit there and watch Mort Frayn and say, "Oh, boy, I don't think I could ever do that." I think having been the caucus chairman kind of eased that apprehension somewhat.*

# Don Eldridge

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## An Oral History

Interviewed and Edited by Anne Kilgannon

Washington State Oral History Program  
Office of the Secretary of State  
Sam Reed, Secretary of State

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### ***Scout Oath***

*On my honor I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country  
And to obey the Scout law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong,  
Mentally awake, and morally straight.*

### ***Jaycee Creed***

*We believe:*

*That faith in God gives meaning and purpose to human life;  
That the brotherhood of man transcends the sovereignty of nations;  
That economic justice can best be won by free men through free enterprise;  
That government should be of laws rather than of men;  
That Earth's great treasure lies in human personalities;  
And that service to humanity is the best work of life.*

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*Representing the Fortieth District, 1957  
Don Eldridge (far right) with Ralph Rickdall and James Ovenell*

## FOREWORD

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It is a privilege to be part of the Washington State Oral History Program as it recognizes the significant contribution of Don Eldridge to the history of Washington State. I am honored to be asked to participate.

My association with Don Eldridge dates back fifty years to when I was a brand new Scout Executive of the Mount Baker Area Council and Don had his store in Mount Vernon. Don was busy then with the store and the State Legislature, but he always seemed to have time for Scouting, and to introduce me to the people of Skagit, Whatcom and Island counties. His endorsement was of tremendous value to me and my effort as Scout Executive.

When I moved from the Mount Baker Council to a position on the regional staff of Boy Scouts of America, it seemed natural to get Don involved in Scouting on a regional level. This territory included the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and Alaska. Don, in his simple way, took on these expanded responsibilities in stride.

Don served on regional and national committees, including the administration of the great National Scout Jamborees at Valley Forge National Park and at Morain State Park in Pennsylvania. His dedication to Scouting was monumental.

The Scouting movement does have ways of recognizing its outstanding volunteers. The Mount Baker Council awarded Don the Silver Beaver Award, the highest recognition that can be given to a local council Scouter.

It was inevitable, that for his outstanding service, Don would be honored by being awarded the regional award, the Silver Antelope. This award was presented to Don at a national meeting of the Boy Scouts of America.

When I moved to the National staff of the Boy Scouts of America and the administration of the National Jamborees, it just seemed natural to call on Don to help, and of course, he replied.

Recently, it was my pleasure to travel to Olympia to see Don honored by the Distinguished Eagle Award. This rare recognition is given to Eagle Scouts who have made significant contributions to society beyond their service to Scouting.

In over fifty years as a professional Scouter, it has been my privilege to be associated with many outstanding people across this great country. I can easily name those who meant the most to me and probably the first name that would come to mind would be Don Eldridge.

L.S. CHRISTOFERO

## FOREWORD

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After being elected to serve as Don's seatmate, my first conversation with him was short and to the point. He explained that his mission was not to introduce and pass legislation, but rather to kill most new legislation. He was quick to point out that eighty-five percent of what occurred in a given session was the correcting of errors of the past. He suggested that the people back home would be well served if I developed the same approach.

Don was always a participant in community activities. His approach to life was simply to identify the problem and solve it as quickly as possible. He liked to say, "What's the problem here?" He was usually inferring that there wasn't a real problem at all. In every interest or activity that he got involved with he seemed to quickly rise to a position of leadership.

Don was an Eagle Scout and continued to serve the Boy Scouts his entire life. Years after he retired from public life he was honored with Scouting's highest honor for his level of service.

As a young businessman in Mount Vernon, Don served as president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and again moved quickly to the top as state chairman and on to serve as the national president. An outstanding example of commitment to service. I believed Don served as leader of every organization that he was a member of, from service clubs to leadership in the Legislature.

In his legislative career, Don was always asked to serve on any cause or committee of importance. He was a leader in the formation of the "coalition of 1963" which broke a long established leadership in the opposition party. He was recognized for his talent and ability and elected Speaker of the House in 1967 and 1969.

As Speaker of the House, Don had a reputation of running a "tight ship" with no exceptions. He was definitely a "place for everything and everything in its place" type of leader. He was tough but fair. That was his commitment.

Don was asked on more than one occasion to chair the GOP state convention because of his ability to make things work with a minimum of nonsense. His reputation continued to build.

He was appointed by Governor Dan Evans to serve on the Liquor Control Board. Along with two other capable appointees, they were credited with establishing a solid business approach and quieting the controversy as to how the board was managed.

Don was not interested in retiring and continued in the Real Estate business where again success was inevitable. Don made a difference in whatever he undertook. He was a true leader.

DUANE BERENTSON  
Fortieth District Representative 1963-1980

## FOREWORD

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By the time I met Don Eldridge, he was a full-time resident of Olympia. His background as a business owner and legislator from Skagit County, a dedicated leader committed to the Boy Scouts of America, and his political insights and acumen were well known. It was 1975, and as a “rookie” advocate for the timber industry, it was a real pleasure to meet this legendary leader.

At the time, he was—as he has always been—juggling several projects. His knowledge of the legislative arena was but one of the common ground interests we found. Maybe it was as simple as two “Capricorns’ paths crossing,” but however it might be described, there can be no denying that Don Eldridge brought both passion and insight, perseverance and integrity to several critical causes affecting the business community following his retirement from the Legislature.

Together we took on some of the more perplexing issues, forging friendships, dialogue and team spirit throughout the employer networks on issues as diverse as unemployment insurance, industrial insurance, taxes, and more. Don was as comfortable in plush and well appointed board rooms as he was in the corner café’s coffee breaks. He could strike up a conversation with anyone—leading with a smile, offering and gathering input, and pulling it all together.

We’d drive from Olympia to any destination where someone was interested in the issue. Sometimes there would be dozens of people, sometimes but one or two. One drive to Ritzville resulted in just two—but, for us—that was TWO MORE than we’d had before we got there!

Don was never afraid to risk leadership. He not only has the courage to speak up, but the tenacity to cause people to listen. He is tireless—to this day—for the causes and people he cares about.

There have been several times these nearly thirty years where we’ve had the chance to work together. One of the most memorable was when Don Eldridge ran for Thurston County Commissioner against Les Eldridge. There were primarily two things the two Eldridges had in common, and the campaign was not only unique—Don made it fun! Working “for” Don was a treat for all the volunteers, each of whom appreciated his candor, his kindness, and the qualities of his character.

As this is being written, Don remains active in their business, contributing something to everyone with whom he comes in contact. His courage shines along with that twinkle in his eye. Don lives by the Boy Scout motto, as he embraces his duties with honor, his country with pride and participation, and his family with love and affection. He is, truly, a leader of his generation, whose service will be present for generations to come. Don’s legacy of leadership as a business owner should serve as a model for business men and women across this state. His willingness to serve is a worthy pursuit for everyone to follow.

LINDA WOODRUFF MATSON  
Friend and Associate of Don Eldridge

The Washington State Oral History Program was established in 1991 by the Washington State Legislature. It is administered by the Office of the Secretary of State and guided by the Oral History Advisory Committee composed of legislative officers and members.

The purpose of the Program is to document the formation of public policy in Washington State by interviewing persons closely involved with state politics and publishing their edited transcripts. Each oral history is a valuable record of an individual's contributions and convictions, their interpretation of events and their relationships with other participants in the civic life of the state. Read as a series, these oral histories reveal the complex interweaving of the personal and political, the formal and informal processes that are the makings of public policy.

The Oral History Advisory Committee chooses candidates for oral histories. Extensive research is conducted about the life and activities of the prospective interviewee, using legislative journals, newspaper accounts, personal papers and other sources. Then a series of taped interviews is conducted, focusing on the interviewee's political career and contributions. Political values, ideas about public service, interpretation of events and reflections about relationships and the political process are explored. When the interviews have been completed, a verbatim transcript is prepared. These transcripts are edited by program staff to ensure readability and accuracy and then reviewed by the interviewee. Finally, the transcript is published and distributed to libraries, archives and interested individuals. An electronic version of the text is also available on the Secretary of State's Website ([www.secstate.wa.gov](http://www.secstate.wa.gov)).

Oral history recording, while assisted by careful research, is based on individual memory and perspective. Although great effort is expended to insure accuracy, recollection and interpretation of events vary among participants. Oral history documents present uncensored accounts of relationships, actions and events; readers are encouraged to analyze and weigh this primary material as they would any other historical evidence. It is the hope of the Oral History Program that this work will help the citizens of Washington better understand their political legacy and the persons who have contributed years of service to the political life of our state.

WASHINGTON STATE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Washington State Oral History Program wishes to thank all those individuals who contributed to this project.

Representative Don Eldridge gave generously of his time to this project, first throughout the lengthy phase of interviewing and then the painstaking review of the transcripts. Despite coping with the lingering effects of a stroke and suffering injuries from a car accident, he was always cheerful and willing to meet. He readily grasped the nature of the oral history process and understood the efforts of our small team to research and record his life story. His wife Nanci helped with editing and was patient and supportive of the project. They loaned the program dozens of photographs that illustrate Don's life and career, with many rare and difficult-to-locate images of legislative life. Don's meticulously created scrapbooks were a treasure trove of legislative and community memorabilia and information.

The Oral History Advisory Committee recommended Don Eldridge as a candidate for an oral history for his long years of service to the state and role as a two-term Speaker of the House. We would like to thank the members of the Committee for their dedication and steadfast support for the Program: Secretary of State Sam Reed; Secretary of the Senate Milt Doumit; Chief Clerk of the House Rich Nafziger; Senators Don Carlson, Shirley Winsley, Ken Jacobsen and Erik Poulsen; and Representatives Sam Hunt, Brian Hatfield, Beverly Woods and Mary Skinner. Former Senators Robert Bailey, Eugene Prince, Alan Thompson and Dick Hemstad; former Representative Don Brazier; former Chief Clerk Dean Foster; Warren Bishop and David Nicandri gave generously of their time and expertise as ex officio members of the Advisory Committee.

We would like to thank the Washington State Archives and State Library for invaluable assistance with research from their extensive collections of documents, papers and other resources. Both institutions also help the Program distribute copies of the oral histories throughout the state.

Oral History is a collaborative process. Don and Anne worked closely as team to record his experiences and edit the transcripts, but were also assisted by program staffers Sandy Kerr who offered encouragement in the form of good cheer, brownies and coffee for Don, Pat Durham who transcribed the tapes and Lori Baderdeen who formatted the manuscript and oversaw the printing process.

Our oral histories are printed by the State Printer. We would like to thank the helpful and expert staff for their professional assistance in bringing this manuscript to the public.

Finally, we are grateful for the technical assistance and administrative support given by the Office of the Secretary of State. We would like to acknowledge the help of our agency Web master Matthew Edwards for his role in assisting the Program with making this publication available on the Internet. As always, Dan Speigle, the Deputy Secretary of State, gave us his unfailing support, advice and encouragement.

## INTERVIEWER'S REFLECTIONS

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I first met Don Eldridge when he dropped by the Oral History Program office one day to tell me he was ready to begin his interview series. We had been given his name as a candidate some time earlier, but then heard that he had been involved in a serious car accident. He still bore the fresh scars on his forehead that day in silent testimony to his undaunted spirit, as he brushed aside my concerns and set up his first appointment.

We soon fell into a comfortable pattern. While driving him to and from his interviews, which we conducted in the office, Don told me stories about the accomplishments of his children and grandchildren, of whom he was enormously proud, and quizzed me about my own family and activities. I feel we became friends as well as collaborators and that we worked better together for it.

The more we delved into the past and examined all his activities, the more Don was able to remember. He was patient with the work of reconstruction as we stepped back in time and worked our way through the years of his development and advancement. Bringing back memories, we uncovered the story, session by session, of how he learned the legislative process, built relationships, and honed his skills as a negotiator and presiding officer. Don was a team player. As he says, he “carried water for the elephants” which on occasion involved “holding his nose” when called upon to support policies that ran counter to his naturally conservative inclinations. It was his fortune to be a member of the House Republican caucus during some years of remarkable development under the leadership of Dan Evans. As caucus chair and then as Speaker, Don played important roles in the revitalization of the Republican Party and the modernization of the Legislature during that dynamic era.

In his stories and comments, Don was somewhat self-deprecating and unassuming, but also confident and content with his accomplishments. He expressed his clear love of presiding over large meetings and being in the thick of things without falling into the trap of self-aggrandizement. His dry humor and down-home attitude, I suspect, kept his feet solidly on the ground, while his tried-and-true political adages kept him firmly oriented. Though not an active seeker of power, he was comfortable when it came to him. Even in the midst of legal and political turmoil, Don was not shaken or perturbed, believing that all problems would right themselves in due course if one remained true to oneself. And so it turned out in the end. He once identified himself as “an optimistic fatalist,” who accepted the course of events but who expected the outcome to be good.

I learned a great deal while interviewing Don, not just about his life and times, but also about his way of taking life calmly and steadily. I grew to admire his inner certitude and the inspiration he drew from his life-long commitment to the Boy Scouts. He regaled me with stories of idyllic-sounding boyhood adventures which continue to light sparks in his eyes to this day. Whether camping on the shores of the San Juan Islands or banging the gavel at a contentious political convention, Don relished the opportunities that came his way and handled all with a certain aplomb.

## INTERVIEWER'S REFLECTIONS

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More than once, Don expressed the wish that every citizen could spend a session serving in the Legislature. In his mind, the experience would not only deepen an appreciation for the workings of democracy, but it would also provide an inside view of how much skill, knowledge, and the arts of compromise could accomplish when practiced in the cauldron of public debate. He was as exasperated by one-issue candidates as by voters with overly narrow interests or limited understanding of the political process. Don was blessed with good timing, joining the Legislature just as a new generation of legislators, tested by war, came into power and brought with them a wave of fresh ideas and energy. I believe he grew to see his role as tempering and “slowing down” the fast-paced reformation taking place in the Legislature at that time. He said “no” when necessary and brought a measure of careful deliberation to the process, while still assisting with the changes and dreams proffered by the “New Breed” Republicans. With a foot in each camp, Don participated without being caught up in the new look. He retained many of the verities learned at home and in the business world and brought those experiences to the Legislature, following his father’s dictum that small business interests needed more representation. Cautious by nature, yet Don rose to leadership on his ability to bring people together and pursue an agenda even if he didn’t fully agree with it. The account of Don’s legislative experience adds nuance and a different perspective to often-told stories of the Evans years.

Don also served on the Liquor Control Board for nine tumultuous years in the 1970s. He ably described the inner workings of the agency, its reinvention and turmoil. It was a dramatic story affecting him both personally and professionally, when the members of the Board were indicted for grand larceny soon after Don’s appointment. Don tells the story with characteristic dryness and candor, but with flashes of deeper feeling about the opportunism and political betrayal that he believed underlay the case. He and fellow board members rode out the storm, but I couldn’t help but wonder how the experience shaped him. He stayed involved in public affairs, primarily as a consultant and “elder statesman,” only once more dipping his toe into electoral politics, but at the local level. He wisely said, “There’s nothing so past, as a retired legislator.” Instead of hanging around the halls, Don moved on to a new career in property management where he could return to his first passion, woodworking and tinkering.

When I think of Don, I see his legislative career as part of his multifaceted life—a vital and formative part, to be sure, but underneath was the essential man, rooted in family and community, his association with the Boy Scouts, Jaycees and Rotary, grounded by business values and practices and a traditional Republican philosophy. Although he reached a pinnacle of responsibility and authority as Speaker, he was not carried away with his success. At his election, he still joked about being only the chair of the family entertainment committee. It was that solid and unwavering character that he brought to the Legislature, a sense of self and place that informed all his activities. He was a true representative of his district and never forgot it. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to work with him in this long, but always interesting, process of remembering and ordering his past—a gift of experience to us all.

ANNE KILGANNON  
Interviewer and Editor

## BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

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Don Eldridge was born in Mount Vernon, Washington on December 26, 1919. His parents owned first the local newspaper and then a stationary store that served the community. Don was educated in local schools, where he served as President of the Associated Student Body in his senior year of high school, and began his life-long involvement in the Boy Scouts of America, which gave him opportunities for travel and outdoor adventure as well as leadership training. He gained a broad experience holding a series of jobs, which taught him the value of work and commitment as well as honing his business and social skills. He then attended Mount Vernon Junior College of Education, Washington State University, and finally graduated from Western Washington State College with a B.A. degree in Education in 1944. Don's education was punctuated by stints in various branches of the military service, including flying instruction, but his military service was cut short by a medical condition before he could see active service in the Second World War.

Don had intended to teach industrial arts, but the early death of his father brought him into the family business in which he made his career until his appointment to the Liquor Control Board in 1970 and subsequent move to Olympia. He married Harriett in 1945 and had four children. Don joined several community groups in Mount Vernon, notably the Junior Chamber of Commerce in which he rose to regional and national prominence, and the Rotary Club where he also rose into leadership positions, as well as the Mount Vernon YWCA, and various regional business associations. He was appointed a trustee of Western Washington State College in 1949 and served for a decade, assuming the chair for the last two years. He was deeply involved in the administration of Boy Scouts, locally, regionally and even internationally as a Council board member, Jamboree camp director and hospitality official. His service to that organization was honored with several awards, the Silver Beaver, Silver Antelope, Order of the Arrow Vigil Award, and finally, the Distinguished Eagle Scout award, a rare honor.

Don first became involved in politics at the precinct level and through campaign activities, but was urged by friends to run for the Legislature in 1952. He won a seat representing the Fortieth District and was re-elected eight times. He served on many committees, including Rules and Appropriations, and notably, the Education Interim Committee that spearheaded the drive to create the system of community colleges that now serve the state. His years of service saw the transformation of the Legislature to a modern institution with an activist agenda, with new facilities and processes. His own Republican Party remade its image during these years, led by Dan Evans and his supporters. Don served as caucus leader and finally as a two-term Speaker of the House in 1967 and 1969, playing his part in the Evans 'revolution' to reform state government.

Don also served his Party twice as a state convention chair and as a delegate to the national Republican convention in 1968. He later acted as chair for the Thurston County Republican convention.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS**

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In 1970, Governor Evans appointed Don to the Liquor Control Board. He brought his retail expertise and legislative experience to his service on the Board for nine, very active years during a period of rapid modernization and liberalization of the laws and rules governing liquor purchasing and consumption in the state. His service, however, was shadowed for most of those years by charges against the Board that were later dismissed.

When his term was finished, Don helped the agency with its legislative agenda for a short while and also performed some legislative liaison work for Puget Power. He was then drawn into a leadership position in two campaigns by the business community to reform the administration of workmen's compensation and unemployment compensation. Don worked on the gubernatorial campaign of his former District mate, Duane Berentson in 1980, but except for an unsuccessful run for Thurston County Commission in 1983, he retired from active political engagements. Still, he was called upon in 1983 to serve on a Congressional redistricting commission, whose successful negotiation helped pave the way for the creation of the Legislative Redistricting Commission which now handles that difficult issue every decade.

Don returned to the world of business with his second wife Nanci in a property management company that brings him full-circle back to his workshop keeping up their extensive properties. He is still active in Boy Scouts and acts as an advisor to local Scout troops. He is a devoted great grandfather of five and grandfather of nine children.

## CHAPTER 1

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### FAMILY BACKGROUND

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wanted to begin our interview series with your parents and how they came to Washington. Before they moved to Mount Vernon, where were they living? Tell me about your family roots.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Kansas. Let me tell you how they got out here. My mother's brother, Merle Thorpe—he was the oldest of the Thorpe youngsters—had come out to Stanford University as a faculty member of the School of Journalism in the early 1900s. Then the University of Washington had him come up to Seattle to establish the School of Journalism there. He just fell in love with the country. My mother had just finished high school and so he talked her into coming out to attend the University of Washington. She spent four years there and her degree was also in journalism. But then, she went back and got a teaching certificate in Kansas and taught school in Ellsworth.

My dad was also a graduate of the University of Kansas, School of Journalism. He was on the staff of the *Kansas City Star*. When World War I started, they promoted him to night editor of the *Star*. During that time he and my mother were married.

My mother's other brother, Ray Thorpe, had been in the newspaper business, but more on the mechanical end of it. So once, when he and my dad got together and, of course, were

doing a little "lyin' and bragging," my mother said, "I think we ought to go up to Washington. There are all kinds of opportunities." So they bought the weekly newspaper in Mount Vernon, *The Argus*.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did they know about that opportunity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose there was a network—my mother having been out here—she was in a journalism class with Sol Lewis who wound up in Lynden with the *Lynden Tribune*. He became quite famous and was syndicated around the country. That may well have been the contact that steered them into Mount Vernon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this uncle came with them, your mother's other brother?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He and his family. He had two daughters. They arrived here, I think, in 1918 and I was born in December of 1919.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are you the oldest?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. My two cousins, Ray Thorpe's girls, were both older. One was, I think, maybe a year older, and the other one was maybe two or three years older.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In your own family, I mean, were you your parents' first child?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And the only one. I'm an only child.

They bought a house in Mount Vernon and we lived there until 1936. Then they bought a lot and built a house and I lived there all through my high school and two years of junior college. After I graduated from junior college, I went over to Washington State and was there for a year. My dad had a series of strokes, and so after that first year I went back to Mount Vernon and spent a year with my mother in the business.

I was prepared to go back over to Washington State but things were still kind of unsettled at home and in the business, so I enrolled up at Western Washington College of Education. I commuted during my senior year—plus that summer, because some of my courses just didn't quite jibe. I graduated, but during that summer when I was in school, my dad passed away, so that really changed things.

I went back to Mount Vernon and my mother and I formed a partnership and together we operated the business until, let's see, it must have been 1970, when I came down to Olympia more or less permanently, after I was appointed to the Liquor Control Board by Governor Dan Evans. Then we sold the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How long did your mother live after that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She passed away in '84. She was ninety-four. She was in good health. Matter of fact, after Nanci and I were married and we purchased our apartment motel complex, we had an apartment there and then we moved my mother down and she had an apartment there, too. We moved Nanci's mother, who was in the early stages of Alzheimer's, there, too. So we had our two mothers with us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where you could look after them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It worked out reasonably well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Being the only child, it does fall to you, doesn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. The buck stops here.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of course, we've skipped most of your life by jumping ahead like this, so we'll have to backtrack a little. I understand that your dad didn't keep the newspaper for very long. Didn't he sell it after only a few years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had the paper for eight or nine years. And then my uncle just couldn't stand the rain, so they decided to sell the newspaper and he went back East and my folks stayed. The unusual thing was, they sold it back to the fellow they bought it from. He thought he wanted to do something else and he found that he wasn't fit to do anything else except run a small town newspaper.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Newspapers were in his blood?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It worked out fine. Ultimately, my parents bought the stationary store. My uncle bought two newspapers in New Jersey, one in Ocean City, New Jersey and one in Atlantic City. He ran those until the Second World War started and then he got into a manufacturing business with a couple of other people. They manufactured canvas goods for the military, such as ammunition bags and duffel bags and all that kind of stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you grow up with those two cousins? Were they like sisters to you while they were in Mount Vernon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They weren't there very long. I remember one of my most embarrassing situations. I was in the first grade and the youngest of the two girls was in the second grade. I remember Miss Turner, who was my first grade teacher—she still wore high buttoned shoes and long, black dresses. She was something else! I don't know what I had done, but she had me just inside the door and was giving me you-know-what, when my cousin walked by and she saw and heard it all, and, of course, she went home and told my mother. So when I got home I got another round.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Everybody already knew about it!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. But my cousins were two really wonderful girls. As a matter of fact, we kept in touch with the oldest one pretty much. She and her family drove out from New Jersey and spent a few days with us. She has two boys and her husband is just a wonderful person. We did the usual tourist things with them. The youngest cousin was a teacher in New Jersey, and just has never been able to get away to come out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a long way to come. Did you ever go there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I did. When I went to the Boy Scout Jamboree, I managed a couple of extra days and I stayed at their home. We went down to the boardwalk in Atlantic City and all that kind of routine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about other family members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Merle Thorpe, who was at the University of Washington, after he got the School of Journalism established there, later became editor of *Nation's Business* in Washington, D.C. He was the editor for ten or twelve years and then went with City Service, which is a petroleum company. He was on their board of directors and also published their magazine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any other cousins left back in Kansas?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My mother's younger sister, Lois, married a fellow who was very interesting, Harper C. Bower. He was a peddler, I guess, a manufacturer's representative. He did all his business on the train. He'd get on at one end of the line and get off at every little town along the way and make his calls and get back on the train. He sold general merchandise; I know he represented Russell Stover Candies and he did real well. Then he decided that he'd like to be in business for himself, so he bought a stationery

store in Ellsworth, Kansas. That's the area that the Eldridges and the Thorpes all had come from. He and his wife used to take turns coming out to Washington. One would come one summer and then the next year the other one would come and they'd spend three or four weeks at least. Someone had to stay and tend the store.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, they did keep up the connection?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. We were real close to them. I was there two or three times, but the only time I recall my mother went back was when her mother passed away and she went back for the funeral.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, she had really become a Northwesterner? She was not going to go back to Kansas? She liked her new life?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. People would say, "Well now, aren't you going back to see some of your relatives in Kansas?" and she said, "No, I didn't leave anything there that I need to go back to."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your parents kept the newspaper for a while then. What kind of scale are we talking about here? How many subscribers would they have had?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You see, when they took over, the circulation was free.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mean just ads paid for the paper?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you'd always have to be hustling for ads?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then they had quite a job-printing operation, too. They used to do the local phone books and all kinds of things like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they have people working for them or did they do it all themselves?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a man and his son who were pretty much the press operators. They had this big flatbed press. They'd feed in a single sheet at a time. And then they'd turn them over and change the type and run it through again. Hand-set type.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you do any of that yourself? Were you brought into the business on the ground floor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a child, I remember going down there and going through the box of paper ends that they trimmed off of colored stock or letterheads and whatever and making 'chains' out of them.

When I joined the Boy Scouts, I thought, well, I'll see what I can do about getting a printing merit badge. The son of one of the two men who were working there at *The Argus* had a print shop. I used to go down and kind of hang around there and when I told him that I'd like to get the merit badge, he said, "Let's see what you have to do," and so we got the requirements and he walked me through that. It just happened that my dad had given him a job for some envelopes and letterheads for, I think, an organization that my dad was involved with, and so Gib said, "Why don't you go ahead and do this?" I set the type and got it in the press and that was a hand feed, too. You had a stack of paper and you'd turn it on and feed it through one sheet at a time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you a little nervous?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. I made a few mistakes. You'd get it in a little crooked or—the press eats it up. There are all kinds of things that can go wrong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it jam up the machine? Was it kind of a quick machine, really whisking the paper away? Could you get your fingers caught in there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I suppose you could, but it would be pretty unlikely.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, it's not like a dangerous thing, just a tricky thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You had to be pretty coordinated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were what, at this time, ten years old or so?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Then, in about 1928, Skagit County built a new courthouse and my dad and his brother bid on all of the furnishings for the courthouse and they got the bid. So they decided that maybe that wasn't such a bad business to be in. So my dad bought the local stationery store. As well as the print shop part of the newspaper business, they also sold office furniture and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was an existing business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. While he didn't do a great deal in furniture, he carried school supplies and then got into gift items.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would he sell office supplies, forms, that sort of thing? Nice pens and all those wonderful stationary supply items?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes, lots of pens. Leases and wills. And then all sorts of bookkeeping equipment and supplies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** While we were researching Mount Vernon, we found some ads in old newspapers. The one that I liked the best showed a gift wrapping class that your store was promoting just before Christmas, I guess, with fancy tissue and ribbons. Customers could come there and you could have this sort of early "Martha Stewart" experience.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Every year we used to put on a gift wrapping school. The company, Chicago Printed String, would send someone out from the factory who would actually do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Show you how to tie those fancy bows?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. All kinds of things. Every year they'd have something a little different to show people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then you'd sell all the special supplies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And our customers really looked forward to that every year.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It looked like lots of fun. What did your mother do? Was she involved in this end of things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. She was very good at that sort of thing, and after the factory representative left town, people would come in the store and she'd show them how.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were she and your father partners in this? Did they both run the store?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think at the outset when they first bought the store, she probably wasn't quite as involved, although I remember her being in the store. At an early age I can remember that she was waiting on customers and doing some of the bookkeeping and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you kind of grow up in the store?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I started out by emptying wastebaskets and sweeping the floor and unpacking merchandise and all that sort of thing. After my dad passed away, I became more directly involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Before that happened, had you planned to do something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was going to be a teacher. I had always envisioned myself as an industrial arts teacher.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand woodworking was one of your hobbies. Was that something that you had taken in school and really took hold of?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. What really got me into it was my father's father who was a small independent contractor back in Kansas, and then he and his wife came out to Washington. He had retired by then and they had a little five-acre spread out north of town. He had a cow and some chickens and always planted a garden. He had a shop in his basement on his place, and I used to follow him around. He was always on some kind of a project.

Then my best friend's father, who lived in our same block in Mount Vernon, was very good with woodworking. I used to go over and watch him. I learned an awful lot from him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this back in the days before power tools? Was this more hand work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In grade school it was all hand work. You learned how to use a chisel and a plane and a hand saw and that sort of thing. And then when I was in high school, I took four years in industrial arts. Then when I graduated from high school I went to Mount Vernon Junior College and by then I had accumulated quite a few of my own power tools. We had moved into a new house with a big basement, and I had a nice shop down there where I did a lot of that kind of thing.

When I finished at the junior college I went over to Washington State and was in industrial arts over there. I was there for a year when my dad became ill and then I came back to Mount Vernon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that hard for you to change course like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I really had my heart set on teaching woodworking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think coming back was just a temporary thing, and you would then continue your plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I really didn't. I knew that when I came back and went into the business, that that's where I was going to wind up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you keep up your woodworking for yourself, just on the side?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I enjoyed it. I built quite a bit of furniture and had a lot of small projects. Then when I got into having a family of my own, I made a lot of things for the kids, a lot of toys. And I still have a pretty complete shop. But in the kind of business we're in now, managing rental properties, there's always some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Something to fix. I can imagine. We've gotten ahead of ourselves again. You mentioned working on badges for Scouts. Let's look at your experience in Scouting now. I know it was a very important activity for you. What brought you into the Scouts? How was it organized?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I got into Scouting in 1928. I was eight years old and there were a couple of Scout troops, and the Mount Baker Council which is Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan and part of Island County at the present time. There were two separate councils, Skagit Council which was Mount Vernon, Sedro Woolley, Burlington, Anacortes, and I guess we had units up in Concrete. And then the Whatcom Council was Bellingham and Ferndale and Sumas and so on. Each council had a summer camp. The Whatcom Council camp was on Silver Lake, and they called it Black Mountain Camp. Then the Skagit camp was on Cypress Island.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where's that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Have you been to Anacortes? Right across the channel from Anacortes is Guemes Island and then just to the west is Cypress Island. So it's right close to there.

The executive from the Skagit Council and my dad—I wouldn't say they were good friends, but they were more than just acquaintances. He saw my dad on the street one day and he said, "We've got some space the first or second week this summer at camp, why don't you let me take Don over for a week?" even though I was only eight years old at the time. So I went over. You had to go by boat from Anacortes. I spent a week at camp, and boy! it was great.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You weren't nervous to be away from home?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't get homesick. As a matter of fact, I would have stayed another week if they'd let me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though you were younger than the other boys, you fit right in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was one other kid who was maybe nine years old who he had contacted his parents, and he was there, too. It was a kid whom I knew, so we kind of did things together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that staying in tents or cabins?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were cabins there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it would be canoeing and crafts and what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And hikes up to the lake at the top of the ridge there on the island. And then the scout camp had a fairly good sized boat that they

ferried people back and forth, and sometimes they'd take a group of campers out to fish or just to kind of cruise around. It was great.

It was kind of an unusual island. Cypress Island is a pretty good sized island, and then there was a narrow neck of land and then outside that there was another body of land that was just a mound, like it had been dropped in there. It was connected to the main island by sand and driftwood.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of a little isthmus?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In between. And the dining hall and the main building of the camp was down on that end. And then up on the hillside here there were cabins. And then over on this little knob there were also cabins there. I think maybe three or four. And then there was a dock that went out from this sandy area, out this way, so it was kind of protected. That's where they kept the boats and that was the swimming beach, and man, that water was cold!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was thinking the Sound water was pretty cold.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. It was terrible. I certainly wasn't too enthused about swimming.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It kind of takes your breath away.

**Mr. Eldridge:** So that was the summer of '28. And then in '29 I didn't do much. And then in 1930, they started the first Cub Pack in Mount Vernon, and I joined.

I remember my first night. There was a stairway that went from the ground floor to this upper level where the Scout troop met. There was a hole in the floor and the stairs went right up there, and I remember very carefully going up the stairs and when I got to the floor level I remember peering over and there were all these kids out there and they were playing a game.

When I finally stood up, they invited me over to take part in the activity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they be kids that you'd already know from school?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some of them. Most of them were older. Boy! I remember the Scoutmaster calling everybody together before they adjourned the meeting and apologizing profusely and telling them that his job was taking him out of the area and he was going to have to resign as the Scoutmaster. So that was my first blow.

What it did—because most of the boys in the troop were older and were pretty close to him—they'd gone through the ranks with him—they drifted off into other things and so we were practically starting from scratch.

In the meantime, the two councils had merged and became the Mount Baker Area Council. They closed the camp on Cypress and everybody went to Black Mountain Camp. I went to camp there the next two years.

And then when I joined the Scouts in December of '29—I was twelve in December—and so I joined Troop One in Mount Vernon and it met in an annex building on the Roosevelt school grounds which was just a block away from where we lived. I could go out our back door and between two houses behind us and hit the school grounds and then diagonally up to the annex building where the Scout troop met.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Real handy, then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it was. That first year I was in the Scouts we got the bulletin about the summer activities and they had the regular Scout camp, and then they had a cruise that you could sign up for. That sounded pretty good so that first year in the Scouts I signed up for the cruise and it was a week. It took us through the San Juans and up to Vancouver Island.

There was a lime kiln that had been closed and they had worker's cabins right on the

beach, so we anchored offshore and rowed in and they put two of us in each cabin, and we stayed there. It was just kind of over the hill from Butchart Gardens. A nice little cove there and we spent the week there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds like boy heaven.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was great. Then that next year I really got into the advancement program and started up the ladder.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were earning all your badges and doing all the different activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Then I went to the regular Scout camp after that at Black Mountain. I guess when I was fifteen or sixteen I was on the staff of the camp. I was the assistant.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You became a counselor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was what they called the dining room steward. I was in charge of the Scouts who were on KP and had to see that they got the pots and pans clean and all that sort of thing. I did that for, I think, two years. One of the other things I had to do was to get up at 5 a.m. and get the fire going in the cook stove in the kitchen, a big range. And then the cook would come along about 6 a.m. and start breakfast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it all depended on you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I didn't think I was going to like that, but it wasn't too bad. You were close to the food all the time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, there's a perk. For a teenage boy that's very important.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then when I was about, I think, seventeen, I became the handicraft director at camp. I showed kids how to carve totem poles and chains, and they did a lot of leather work and braiding lanyards and all that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this about the time you were thinking about being a shop teacher? Did this kind of fall into that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It sort of worked its way in there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's teaching of a sort.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And we had, over a period of three or four years, probably three or four different Scoutmasters. The First Baptist Church was the sponsor and they had just gotten a new minister who came from Idaho, and he had been involved in Scouting over there, so when he got on the job he became the temporary Scoutmaster. Then we had, I think it was about the third one, his name was Elmer Church.

He was a representative of the Curtis Publishing Company. They had *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Country Gentleman*. He told me about the magazine business and how it operated and said that they had an opening for what he called a district manager. In those days they used a lot of young door-to-door salesmen, you might say, and he got me involved. The district manager would distribute magazines to the newsstands, drug stores and the bus depot, hotel and so on. I had about fifteen or twenty kids.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd be the middle man. How old were you, then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, fourteen or fifteen, I suppose. So I got into the magazine distribution business. I remember it was before I could drive and my mother used to drive me down to the dock on the Skagit River, and my magazines would all come up from Seattle by boat, the *Harvester*, a freight sternwheeler that ran between Seattle and Bellingham. They'd stop in Mount Vernon and I'd pick up my magazines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of a big bale of them? How frequently did you do this—once a month or more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** More frequently, because the *Post* was a weekly and the other two were by the month. So there were some times there wouldn't be too many magazines, but there was usually a pretty good load because I had about fifteen retail outlets in the business district that I took care of. With the business ones, I'd take their allotment of say, *The Saturday Evening Post*, then I'd pick up the old issues and take those back to the store and tear the back covers off all of those. Those I'd send in to the next level and then what was left of the magazine I'd just discard or save them for a paper drive or something like that.

Then, of course, I'd have to collect from the merchant for the ones he sold. I didn't have too much trouble with the merchants. There were a couple of them who had some kind of song and dance when I'd come in to collect. But it was a good kind of business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this was hundreds of magazines?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. They were all packaged and we'd go down and get those and we'd take them to the store. I had a little space in the back room and I'd get them all out and sort them out for each of the carriers. About every four months the district manager would get a carton of canvas bags and then you'd put maybe three *Saturday Evening Posts* and a couple of *Ladies Home Journals* and a *Country Gentleman* in there. Each area had a group of young people who had regular routes that they would take the magazines on an individual basis. You'd get kids as they came out of school to take a bag and say, "I'll meet you this time next week, and if you sell all of these, we will give you a pocket knife, or a watch," or whatever it happened to be.

Some of those who were successful would take more magazines, and then they'd sign up to every month get magazines to do their route. The kids would come in to the store and I'd have their magazines all sorted out for them and then

they'd take them. A week later when they came back, they'd settle up and then take another batch of magazines.

We had little certificates, "greenies" and "brownies" and for so many magazines sold, you'd get a "brownie." If you sold more than that, you'd get a "greenie." And then those were redeemable for other items of merchandise.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the kids paid, or they just got these prizes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They got so much out of each sale.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Magazines didn't just come in the mail the way they do now? That's a really complicated way to sell something.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They had to hand-carry them. A different concept. That's why they don't do it any more.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you train and mentor the kids how to approach people and how to collect the money? It was more than just handing them a bunch of magazines?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had to manage all that? So for you, you were developing organizational skills, management skills, money skills—all that accounting. You were hitting almost all the aspects of the business world.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a good training ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You must have ended up with quite a bit of pocket change yourself.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. But it was a great experience. Some of those boys that sold the magazines, they made good money. If you really worked at it, it was pretty good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those were the big magazines of that time. Everybody wanted those.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Before I got into that, I don't know how I got roped into it, but I tried selling *Literary Digest*.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little bit more highbrow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It wasn't what you'd call a great popular magazine. There were some select people. I think the only customer I had on a regular basis was my third grade teacher. I delivered one to her for a couple of years and that wasn't a very productive endeavor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you weren't able to elevate the cultural scene in Mount Vernon very much. Not quite mass circulation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It wasn't like *The Saturday Evening Post*.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How long did you do this distribution business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think probably three years. I don't remember what I made in commissions, but it was worthwhile. I wasn't buying any automobiles or skis or anything like that, but it was pretty good.

A lot of kids worked in the fields in the summertime picking berries. My kids all worked in the summer, every summer. They started out picking strawberries and then the girls drove pea trucks and my oldest boy was a foreman with a crew. They went through the fields of peas and pulled out the rows. The two younger ones picked berries until they were in high school. I don't recall we had to help them financially very much with their college expenses. So there's quite a lot of work. But now, of course, they've got these regulations. They can't do this and they can't do that. It's ridiculous.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's a little harder to pass on that value of an early work experience?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It deprives kids of an opportunity, not only to make a little money, but to get the experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I meant to ask you. You were an Eagle Scout. Did you earn that distinction in your high school days?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But we really didn't have a set project like they do now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was it in your day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the requirements as far as merit badges and so on are pretty much the same as today. It was, I think, more based on leadership to your troop or maybe you were on the staff at summer camp.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's how you would demonstrate that you—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Had leadership ability.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many badges—do you still have your shirt? Would you be just covered with badges by this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We have a sash that the merit badges are put on. It takes twenty-one for your Eagle award, and I suppose I wound up with maybe thirty-five to forty just because there were some things I was kind of interested in but they weren't required.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that allow you to try a lot of different kinds of things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember what your favorites were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The first one I ever got was carpentry. Then there was one on wood carving and woodworking and I had both of those. Then the hiking and cooking and that sort of thing, the outdoors, I liked those.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd be pretty close to the mountains. That would be perfect.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. We had just all kinds of places to hike and camp.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine there would be more accessible wilderness in your day than now? Without too much effort you're out there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of the area had been logged off and the second growth was beginning to come in. So, yes, we could go out and be in wilderness. My mother used to pile five or six of us into her car and drive us off to the end of the road and dump us off, and say, "I'll see you in a couple of days." Then she'd come back and pick us up. I had some great times up in the hills.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In those days, it was before Gore-Tex and all the equipment...

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Most of the time, I don't ever recall putting up a tent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just sleeping under the stars?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We'd have maybe a poncho that you'd put down and fold over your sleeping bag.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In case it rained. A little bit more rugged than what people do these days. What would you take to eat? Cans of food?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Today people don't take canned food.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No, of course not. They take all that freeze dried stuff. Would you go fishing and pick berries?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Lots of times our hiking would be to a lake or a stream for fishing, but sometimes we'd just go to get away from town.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To be out there. Were you a hunter at some point in your life?

**Mr. Eldridge:** During my junior college days I did some hunting. I never did hunt deer. Ducks, yes. I went pheasant hunting a few times, but primarily duck hunting. It was excellent hunting up in the Skagit Valley.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that something that you've continued to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I haven't had a gun in my hands for years. I just was never enthused about it. My dad was not an outdoors person, so I didn't get too involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, when you wanted to go camping you had to do this with the Scouts or somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's great that it was out there available for you.

Now, you didn't just go camping. Can you tell me about the things you did in Scouts that allowed you to travel? I know you went to Holland, for instance.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Well, in 1935 a national Scout Jamboree was scheduled in Washington, D.C. and they put together a troop from our council to attend. There were thirty of us with three adult leaders. We had our itinerary and the whole works and we got on the train. They started in Bellingham and they picked up the

Scouts all the way through. We went into Seattle and we were in the train station when one of the leaders called the parents just to let somebody know that we'd made it to Seattle all right. Well, they got the report that the Jamboree had been canceled because of a polio scare!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, there you were already in Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And we had all of our gear and everything. So the leaders had a little conference and they said, "Well, let us call your parents and see if it's all right if we just go ahead and take the trip anyway," because we had scheduled stops in Chicago and Greenfield Village and New York.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tell me a little about polio scares. Would it be dangerous for you to do this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, in those days it was early on as far as polio was concerned and I don't think they knew too much about whether it was contagious.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, going to the Jamboree was considered a problem, but traveling and going anywhere else was considered okay or not dangerous?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was the large concentration of kids that was the thing they were concerned about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. So, did you get to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They called and everybody said, "Sure, that's fine." So we piled on the train and headed for Chicago, our first stop.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get off the train and go into Chicago and do things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, it was really an elaborate plan. I can imagine ditching it would be pretty painful.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. They had reservations at hotels and all that. Anyway, two years later they rescheduled the national Jamboree. That was the same year that the international Jamboree was to be held in Holland, so the national Jamboree that they had postponed was just before that. So we started all over again.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to raise money to go that far?

**Mr. Eldridge:** On that trip we were gone virtually all the summer of 1937. My folks, when I was just a year or two old, had started an education fund for me. That matured when I graduated from high school and we had a little family get together and decided that maybe this trip would be worth a year in college, so we spent the college money for the Jamboree. I was gone a month and it was about one thousand dollars.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you take the train all the way across the country again?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We spent a week in Washington, D.C. at the national Jamboree, and then we went from there up to Montreal and we sailed from there down the Saint Lawrence and across the Atlantic and landed in Southampton, England.

We spent ten days in southern England. We had two buses and two drivers and all of our stuff, and we camped out each night.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you saw what kind of things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was this TV show just within the last few weeks, *Miss Avonlea*, and they talked about King Arthur. We were in that area. Glastonbury Castle, which was pretty much

a ruin, but then we were out on the Salisbury Plain where Stonehenge is.

But one of the real interesting things—we pulled into, I guess you could call it a farm, there was quite a lot of acreage, and our leaders had asked if we could camp there overnight. The fellow said, “Sure,” and he came over and showed him where to set up camp. We did, and in the evening we’d had our evening meal and we were just sitting around, singing songs and things you usually do at a Scout camp, and this land owner came over and sat down and we all got to visiting. It was James Hilton. We were camped on his land.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tell me who he is?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You’ve heard of *Lost Horizons*? He was the author, and it was quite a book. I don’t know how many of us had read it but there were some who had, but we knew of James Hilton.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a boys’ book, or just a really good book that everybody had read?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was about a plane that crashed, and then the people set up camp.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like a survival type story?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Although it really wasn’t the outdoor survival type thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Something to catch your imagination at any rate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And here he was, this kind of famous person to you, just by chance.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I know they made one movie and I think maybe there have been a couple others. He was quite a famous author.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go into London?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We were in London, and we saw Ann Hathaway’s house and Shakespeare’s birthplace and the Shakespeare Theatre. Big Ben.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is a big trip.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy! I’ll say. I was seventeen. Nineteen-thirty-seven. Just before the war.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any hint of what was to come? Were you aware of it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We were only allowed to spend three days in Germany and we couldn’t go into Spain at all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, no. They were having a civil war there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** So we didn’t want to go there. But anyway, I can remember being in the lower level of our hotel in Germany one night and looking out and there was kind of a commotion, and here down the street came one of Hitler’s youth organizations: goose-stepping and the swastika and they went on down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you an avid reader of newspapers? Did you know what was happening over there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t think any of us were really too conscious or concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But very soon... You’re going to be hearing about it when you come back home, and then you can remember things you saw, perhaps, and make the connection.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I remember after I did get home, I was at the store and I was washing the display windows when this fellow came along and said, “You’re the young fellow who just got

back from the Scout meeting in Europe.” I said, “Yes,” and he said, “Did you go into Germany?” and I said, “We were there for just three days.” I don’t know how it happened but I had a gray shirt on and he said, “What do you think about what’s going on in Germany?” I said, “I know they’ve banned the Boy Scouts in Germany.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I didn’t know that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They just closed them down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They only wanted their own organizations? Was that sort of a tip-off that something not so nice was happening?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, but you see, this guy was—I gather now—sympathetic to what Hitler was doing. And I think he may have thought that I had been involved or I was now more interested in that aspect. Anyway, later on—because he was quite a letter writer to the newspaper—I figured he was just up to no good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happens at a Jamboree? Lots of kids from all over the world?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Thirty thousand. Everybody camps out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Thirty thousand! That’s virtually a small town.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. They had their own fire station and hospital. They put utilities in, water and electricity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this in some big field? Where would you put thirty thousand kids?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When we were in Washington, D.C. our camp was practically at the base of the Washington Monument. They were spread out. Where the Pentagon is now, that was just kind of an open area and there were a lot of groups that were located over there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about in Holland? Did they have that much open space? They just rented some field?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of open space. It was out in a rural area. It was right on the railroad line. They had all these campsites laid out and they just hauled all the gear in by truck and stacked it up on each plot. When the Scouts got there, they’d get their tents and everything set up. They had all kinds of activities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get to meet kids from all over the world?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the most exotic places Scouts would have come from? Scouting is a real international organization, isn’t it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really is. There was a group of about twenty from China. Those kids were all just spit and polish; they were sharp looking. Most everybody from around the world spoke a little English so you could get by pretty well.

I remember when we were on the boat, we decided that we’d paint our tents. Put some kind of murals on them. So before we left Canada we bought brushes and paint and so forth. We spread our tents out on the decks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you put symbols from your home area, fir trees and things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Mountains and trees and flowers. Some of them were pretty good. We got to the Jamboree in Holland and some of the tents hadn’t been completed and so a couple of us were commissioned to go into town to get some more brushes and paint and so on. Well, we got on the train and you know they go so fast and everything is so close—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, my! Where did you end up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Belgium. So we got back on the train and went back.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you know where you were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We did when we got there. We knew it was the wrong place. We got off the train and I think it must have been in Haarlem, which is a fairly good sized place, it was the first major town. We got off there and we went into what I perceived to be a hardware store and tried to explain to them what we wanted. Oh boy! We drew pictures and we made gestures and the poor sales clerk was bringing us everything from toilet brushes to eye brushes. We finally got what we needed and headed back to camp.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you lost? Did you know how to get back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As long as you stayed fairly close to the railroad, you were all right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were on the train—did you know where to get off at that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We did by then.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that turned into quite an adventure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. After we finished our ten days in England, we took the boat across the English Channel from Harwich to the Hook of Holland and I tell you, that crossing is something else. We had our group on there and there were a lot of just general people going back and forth, and I'll bet ninety percent on board were sick.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it stormy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That can be the roughest crossing in the channel. We had a lot of our kids who were just sicker than dogs. And you know the

accommodations on those boats are just virtually wooden benches and the sick people were all lying down on the benches and so those who were half-way well didn't have any place to sit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't suppose you'd want to sit with people who were throwing up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I know. It was a mess. It was terrible.

But anyway, we got back over there and out to the campsite, and once we got set up, things were pretty good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go right to the Jamboree or did you tour around—when did you do the German part of the trip?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was after the Jamboree. There were thirty of us and we divided into three groups. The group that I was with went into Switzerland for ten days and did some climbing and all that. One group went into Italy, and the third group spent more time in France. The Exposition was on in Paris, and except for the fact that the weather was terrible, that was kind of interesting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get to go to Paris or did you just do Switzerland?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I went to Paris for a couple of days. But I didn't go to Italy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, everybody got to do some of it? It would have been interesting to see Italy just before the war and see what was going on there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** My son, Ray, when he got to be Scout age, went to the Jamboree in Greece. They went to Italy before going to Greece. He had a wonderful experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Besides seeing the Hitler Youth, what kind of shape was Europe in? They had an economic depression too, so did you see evidence of great hardship?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everything seemed to be okay. Of course, at that age you don't go looking for poverty, and I didn't notice any real extreme situations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe the worst of it was over by then. You've come, basically, kind of an innocent kid from the West. What was it like for you to see a bit of European civilization?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I enjoyed the English countryside. Those people are pretty relaxed. It was mostly small towns and little farms. You'd walk down the road and there'd be an old woman herding sheep or cattle or something.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it seem romantic to you? What was your vision of Europe?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought Switzerland was just great. I can remember taking a little hike out from Zermatt and being up on the side of a hill and just sitting there with all the wild flowers and looking out across the valley, and there's the Matterhorn. Oh, boy! If I were to go back to Europe, that's really the only place I'd be interested in. I'd go—as long as I was there—to France and England and probably Germany and maybe back to Holland and Belgium. But Switzerland, I would make a special effort to go back there because I just really liked it.

The thing that I always remember was out in the rural areas of these little villages, the houses were really just huts—with thatched roofs and then with big boulders to keep the roof from blowing off. Everybody had a cow or two and a few chickens running around. The other thing that impressed me was all their trails were about four feet wide and perfect. Smooth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A different vision, isn't it? Americans at that time were somewhat isolationist, but I was wondering if these travels and experiences brought the world closer to you? That you had a better idea of these places than maybe a lot of grownups would have had?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just on my own I was an isolationist. I had thought during those days that we ought to stay where we are and not mess with anybody else, and mind our own business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you went over there, did that change anything for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I felt more comfortable with these people even though I didn't speak their language or couldn't read the newspapers. They were all very pleasant and I was impressed with the people in Europe.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if it created a sense of connection for you, so that when the war began—within a few years you're reading about places that you've actually been in—if it had a different feeling for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. You look at it from a little different perspective.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see. You did this big trip and then you came back home. Is that when you started junior college, after this trip?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So junior college, was it comparable to what community colleges are now?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They just changed the name, is all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it easier to attend a junior college than, say WSU? A little bit less expensive? You could live at home?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Considerably less expensive. I could live at home and I was beginning to get involved with the business, so that was part of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you did have one year at WSU?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I had a full year over there and then I was out a year and then I went back, and I was only there less than a full quarter. I had a short stint in the service and then when I came back, that's when I went from Mount Vernon on up to Western.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tell me about WSU. About how big was it then? That was before it was a university. It was still a college, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Oh, gosh, I don't know, I suppose there were ten thousand students.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You lived in the dorms?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I lived in a fraternity house.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you choose a fraternity, or were you chosen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** One of our close friends in Mount Vernon, a family that lived across the street from us, they had a son and a daughter and both of them were at Washington State. The son was a very good athlete. He played basketball for Washington State and they were the northern division champs a couple of years before I went over. He was a Phi Delta, and so I had made up my mind that that's what I was going to do. I wasn't really all that keen on the fraternity system, but I did go and live in the house for a year. It was a little difficult because, you see, I went over as a junior and I was in a pledge class that was all freshmen, and they didn't want to have anything to do with me because I was a junior.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were betwixt and between.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I sure was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was your friend still there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. He was ahead of me. He was probably eight or nine years older. But anyway, I lived through that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you involved in activities in college besides your classes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Boy Scouts of America has a service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega, and they do all kinds of service projects in the communities and on the campuses where they're located. They had a chapter at Washington State.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why didn't you go into that fraternity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did, but it's not a residence fraternity. It's just a group. A community service fraternity. Every year they did fingerprinting projects. They set up shop and fingerprinted all the students. That was quite a popular project. They'd help families and just a general organization that did service projects.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you participate in school politics or debate clubs? Any of that kind of activity? Music?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In junior college I was in one play and then I was on the debate squad. In high school I played in the band for four years. Drums. Then I lettered in track in high school and also in junior college, but at Washington State I really wasn't involved in any activities like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you know your time there was going to be kind of limited?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I really went over there with the idea of graduating and getting a teaching job and settling in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you plan to go back to Mount Vernon in any case?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really hadn't given that too much thought. I was pretty flexible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But then you did come back. What year that would have been? It's getting close to the war years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I graduated from the community college in 1940, and then I was at Washington State for a year.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you there during Pearl Harbor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was at home. I remember vividly—it was on a Sunday morning, and my mother, Dad and I had gotten in the car and were driving over to Whidbey Island where we had a cabin. We had the radio on and the announcement came on as we were driving over. I tell you, that was something.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you understand what that meant? The implication that there would be war?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I understood that. I couldn't understand what led up to it and how it evolved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was just kind of out of the blue? You kept going to the island, though? There must have been quite a discussion in the car.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We did. My dad hadn't been directly in the military during the First World War because he was the night editor on the *Kansas City Star* and consequently those people were probably exempt.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were considered "essential?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The media people, it sometimes seems like they are sort of a special group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see, it's been FDR—Franklin Roosevelt—as the president for most of your life practically, your conscious life at any rate. What were your parents' opinions of him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Both my mother and father were pretty conservative and I think they had probably voted Republican since they were able to vote.

Of course, my dad, being in a small business, was always grumbling about how the small businessman was the one who was always getting the short end of the stick. Quite frankly, that's one of the things that got me into the Legislature, because he'd always say, "We don't have anybody down there who's speaking for the small business person."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had your family weathered the Depression pretty well? You were okay?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was tight. I know my mother had a cigar box on her desk and as the business during the day would come in, the money would go in the cigar box. When there was enough money in there to pay the rent then they'd start thinking about other things. But she always had a handout for bums who would come to the door.

My dad was president of the Red Cross chapter and I can remember him printing out a program where he got seeds of all kinds and packaged them, and then he'd give those out to people and they'd plant their own garden. So he had kind of a program going there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, it was more of an ethic of "help yourself and help your neighbor," but do it yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Not depend on the government to come in and help you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More the community helping through neighbors?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Community oriented, right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Given the large scale of the Depression, I just wonder how that would work. In Mount Vernon, what was the employment situation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Being a rural community, it seemed like there was always work on the farms around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some communities were harder hit than others, so maybe Mount Vernon had enough going on to take care of people who might be in need?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. Now, Anacortes and Sedro Woolley were both more timber oriented, as well as fishing in Anacortes; they had a pretty tough time. In the early 1920s there was quite a communist movement through the labor unions and the IWW.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they be up in that area with those farms? Or in the lumber camps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I know that when I was growing up, I remember seeing a big truck with a load of men standing in it and they all had red flags and this was a group from Anacortes that had come over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What were they doing there? Were they going somewhere for a rally?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Could be. They were just demonstrating, I guess.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your parents talk about things like that? Would that be the kind of thing you'd know about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Of course, being in the newspaper business.

This is kind of an interesting story. I mentioned that my grandfather had a little five-acre place. Well, there was a family that lived

next to him and they were very strong Catholics. I remember one evening my dad herded my mother and me into the old Model T and we drove south of town, and there was a big Ku Klux Klan cross burning in a field down south of town. My dad was there doing some writing for the newspaper—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And he brought you with him to see this? He thought you should see this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We just sat in the car and watched what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you think?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In those days, when they'd log, they'd have these big pyramids of stumps and things that couldn't be run through the saws, and they'd burn them. I just kind of equated that with the other—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they wearing the hoods and all that stuff?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But anyway, what happened was, that next week I was out at my grandfather's place and I was talking to the kids next door, as you do, and I mentioned something about being down at the KKK gathering. Well, they, of course, immediately went into their folks and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That had a different meaning for them. They'd likely be at the target end of that one.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And they thought that I was talking about that we were down there as members. So my folks kind of had to straighten that out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would get the brunt of such activities in the Mount Vernon area? The Catholics? What other groups would there be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were no minorities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the dominant ethnic group up there? In parts of Seattle, it was heavily Scandinavian. Who was in Mount Vernon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the rural area, primarily Scandinavian: Norwegians, Swedes and quite a few German. The German Lutheran Church is pretty strong in that area up there. But I would say that the Catholic Church is pretty dominant.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, that would be the biggest minority group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But in Mount Vernon I would say that the Protestants were probably outnumbering everybody else. And there was a wide range. They had the Methodists and the Presbyterians and the Baptists and the Episcopalians.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's the church your family went to, isn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, the Methodist/Episcopal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be a kind of social structure attached to what kind of church you attended?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't really think so. I think that the Catholic Church, their people as a group probably did more things together and were more interactive than maybe any of the other denominations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know that the KKK were active throughout the state in the 1920s. Did that kind of thing just sort of fade away after a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think it was a little bit kooky or mysterious? How were you taught in your family to view things like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We pretty much treated everybody the same. I suppose maybe because I wasn't too old at that time, but it was just something kind of unusual. Different.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering if your parents specifically taught you about how to treat other people—what was acceptable behavior or not something that you did in your family?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I think they were very tolerant of minorities and people who were different. I know my grandmother related a story that her mother told her. They lived in Hume, Missouri which was right on the Kansas/Missouri border. She recalled a black man being chased and she said, "I just kept praying to God that he'd get across the state line." Because he'd be in Kansas then. They apparently helped quite a number of them get across.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, Kansas, of course, was just a hotbed of Lincoln-type Republicans. It has a fascinating pre Civil War history: the Kansas question of which side—slave or free—would be in charge there. I wonder how long the vestiges of that struggle were apparent? If you were a Republican from Kansas, I suppose you'd have your roots back in those conflicts. Were there any family stories?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, none that I know of. Both my mother's and father's families were in Ellsworth, which is right dead center in Kansas. It's on the Chisholm Trail, so they had the cattle drives coming through from Texas to the rail head. They'd get the cattle on the cars and ship them to Chicago and Kansas City.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that tornado country?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Light. I don't think, as I recall, they had any real heavy tornadoes, but they had dust storms. I sure wouldn't want to live there. It's cold in the winter and hot in the summer—

and dusty. I remember when I was visiting my uncle there. He liked to play golf and they had a little nine-hole golf course in Ellsworth that ran along the railroad right-of-way. He wanted me to go out with him and so I did. The railway was raised somewhat and so we were kind of down in a hole, and I'll bet it was one hundred and fifty degrees! They had sand greens.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just dirt?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You'd have to rake it before you putted and it was terrible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** After Pearl Harbor, did you feel that you should enlist? You were about that age.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was. In junior college, my second year, they had a civilian pilot training program and I got into that. I completed that course which gave me a private pilot's license and then also it became the first phase of pilot training for the Army Air Corps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tell me about learning to fly. They'd be those little planes, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was great. This was a Taylor Craft side-by-side, two seats. The first time I ever flew in an airplane it was an open cockpit. I remember just leaning over the side a little bit and that wind hitting you and the tears came and I couldn't see.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had to be kind of cold up there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it was cold, but it was a great experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Flying was not taken for granted in those days, not like now. Was that the first time you'd been in an airplane?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The first time was in this open cockpit plane and then I wasn't in an airplane again until I signed up for this civilian pilot training.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What attracted you to that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was always interested in flying and I had built model airplanes when I was a kid and all that kind of stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you follow Lindbergh and other early fliers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. And every once in a while there'd be a barnstorming pilot that would come in with his plane and he'd make arrangement with some farmer to land in his field.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever go up with one of those or did you just watch?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We just watched. I just went up that one time. How I got that ride was the manager of the local theater had commissioned one of these barnstorming pilots to drop leaflets. They used to do that in those days. Now you couldn't get away with it. Anyway, they also had a program where they had us deliver hand-to-hand these leaflets in the downtown business area. I got into that routine and it didn't pay anything but they took you for an airplane ride. So that was great. I remember they had these two Waco biplanes and then they had a Ford Tri-motor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a little bit bigger?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite a bit bigger. I always remember they had wicker seats and they were considerably larger. They were maybe eight-passenger planes.

This class at the junior college, the flight instructor was a former pilot with Northwest Airlines. He flew their Spokane, Billings, Bozeman route into North Dakota, and I guess, ultimately, into Minnesota. He was a good pilot, and then

the ground school instructor was a former pilot from World War I who owned the local theater. He was a good instructor. So we had two men who handled the classes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How big would the class have been?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were twelve of us who signed up for class.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this be all boys?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would at that time. But I think in the class that followed me there was a brother-sister combination.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, a girl could learn to fly if she wanted to?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. She did, and she was a good pilot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is just a course you're taking, or was it part of a whole program?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a program and for some it was just to get the preliminaries out of the way—they were going to go right on into the Army Air Corps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you think you wanted to do with this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had hoped that I could do that, but when I finished the primary course at the junior college and they didn't have a secondary program there, another fellow and I signed up for the secondary program. It was in Klamath Falls, Oregon so we went down there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is after war started, so you're trying to train for the war?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We figured that once we got through that secondary course then we could go directly into the Army Air Corps. After I'd been there maybe two weeks, I was having a little difficulty with a maneuver and the instructor, when we got back down on the ground, he said, "Are you feeling all right?" and I said, "Yes, I feel fine." He said, "You seem to be a little erratic," and I said, "I hadn't noticed it." He said, "I'll tell you what I want you to do. Go down to Dr. So-and-so. He does all of our medical exams and have him check you out." So the next day I did. I went downtown and found his office and went in and he checked me over and he said, "Do you know you've got a bad heart?" And I said, "No, I sure don't know that." He said, "You've got a heart problem and I don't think you ought to be flying."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was wrong? Did he tell you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And to this day nobody knows. So anyway, they sent me home.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You must have been so disappointed!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy! I sure was. After they had sent me home from Klamath Falls, I was put on inactive duty with the Army Air Corps reserve. After that, I decided I'd try to go back to school again. I went back over to Pullman and enrolled and went to classes about ten days and then I got a letter from the War Department that said, "Please report to Fresno, California." Enclosed was a railway ticket. So I packed my suitcase and got on the train again and went down to Fresno. It was in May and the weather wasn't too bad. But you know, in the morning you'd get up and it would be cold so you'd put on a jacket and the whole works and by one o'clock it would be hot. Once you were dressed, that was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they know about your heart?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They couldn't find anything wrong. But, like all military units, you had to do a certain amount of KP. We ate on these divided metal trays that they throw everything on there at one time and then you sit down to eat and then take your tray back and stack it up and the men on KP would take those and wash them. They used double laundry sinks and at breakfast they always had eggs of some kind and when we'd wash those dishes the egg would come off in the water and I'd get my hands in there and they broke out. I was really allergic to eggs. So I got off KP duty at least.

So anyway, I went through eight weeks down there and then they assigned me to a bomber squadron in Tampa, Florida, McDill Field. So I got on the train again and went to Florida. I got down there and one day the commanding officer called me in and he said, "Eldridge, how in the hell did you ever get in the Air Corps?" I went through this explanation and he said, "Well, look at this," and he threw my service record across and it had my name and my serial number and that was all that was in there. He said, "We're about ready to ship you out and it doesn't look like you ever had a physical exam." I said, "Well, I went to this local doctor who told me I had a bad heart." He said, "I'm going to send you down to the base hospital and they'll check you out." So I went down to the hospital and they got the list out and they said, "Have you ever had any allergies?" I said, "I'm allergic to eggs," which I am, and all this other stuff. He said, "Boy! You're allergic to eggs?" I said, "Yes, I have been," and I related two or three instances—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would happen if you ate eggs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just chokes me right off. I could feel it across my shoulders and then up into my throat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this is not something to ignore.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. So he said, "We can't use you. If you get shot down on a desert island and all there is to eat is bird's eggs, you're going to be in trouble. I'm going to have to recommend that you be discharged." And they sent me to the hospital and I was in a ward that had nothing but soldiers who had allergies of some kind. Some of them were allergic to foods like butter or milk, or they were allergic to wool blankets or uniforms. And then there were others who were allergic to high octane gasoline—if they had to refuel a plane with five-gallon containers, some would splash on their hands and they'd break out. So they had a lot of trouble.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would you be in the hospital? Were they just testing you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They put me on an egg-free diet so instead of having to hike down to the mess hall two miles they'd bring me a special meal. It was just the military way of doing things. We could move around and go outside, but this hospital had been built on a swamp. They'd filled it in and there were rattlesnakes, and if you went out far enough there were alligators. It was a terrible place. I was in there about thirty days.

I was in there and the doctor who was in charge of this ward was an allergy specialist from Philadelphia, and so he knew about all of this. One day he said, "Well, I've got the CDD Board coming through." This is a board where they determine whether or not they're going to discharge you medically or whatever. In a couple of days he appeared and he had this Major and a nurse with him and they started down the aisle in the ward and they were talking to each one of the soldiers who was in there for some kind of allergy—you stand at the foot of your bed—and they got down in front of my bed and he looked at the chart and he said, "Oh, allergic to eggs, huh?" He turned to the nurse and said, "Another

SOB trying to get out of the service.” Then he said, “Here,” and she handed him a water glass—like this—and he handed it to me and said, “Here, drink this.” I said, “What’s that, sir?” And he said, “That’s an eggnog.” I said, “You’re kidding, sir?” Anyway, I took the thing and I took just two sips and I could tell what was going to happen—the muscles in my throat just begin to choke off—and I just hit the floor. Fortunately the doctor, the allergist, knew what to expect and he gave me two shots of adrenaline and when I came to, here was this Major leaning over me—he was just as white as a sheet—and he said, “Where do I sign?”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you weren’t exactly kidding. Was he just testing you? That’s pretty cruel.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t think he knew what he was doing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He could have killed you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I had some real experiences with eggs. When I was real little my mother had a party and she had baked an angel food cake and after the guests had left—I was just barely tall enough to reach up on to the table—I grabbed a piece of that and ate it and that almost killed me. She got me to the doctor and he gave me a shot of adrenaline.

And then another time my folks had friends who lived on a good sized chicken ranch. The woman called my mother and said, “Bring Don down and we can go in the incubator and he can see all the little chicks.” So, they were huge, you know. We went in there and there was all this fuzzy down from these chicks, and breathing that stuff, the same thing happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A protein maybe from the chickens?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’ve had the skin tests for allergies, both inhalants and foods and when you get to “egg” my arm swells up like a balloon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Anything else, just eggs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s all. Well, house dust I get a little reaction and dog dander some, but not anything serious.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nothing that dramatic.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember, I think it was the first time I went to Scout camp, and went into the mess hall for breakfast. They had French toast and I said to the kid next to me, “What’s that?” He said, “That’s French toast,” and I’d never seen that before, you know. I said, “How do you eat it?” He said, “Put it on a plate and put some syrup on it. It’s real good.” So I did. And boy! It just knocked me flatter than a pancake.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were people as sensitive about allergies back then? Was there very much awareness in your day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did people know what an allergy was, really, other than the people who had them? Like teachers and your school friends’ parents, would they know about not giving you foods with eggs as an ingredient?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All my friends’ mothers knew that I couldn’t eat cookies or cake that had eggs in them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be a hardship.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think after all these years I must be getting a little immune because I know I’m eating some things that have egg in them. But I know that I’ve had some cookies and cakes that have egg in them, although I think they’re using a lot of egg substitute, because eggs are pretty expensive and if they can substitute something else, why they’d probably do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Eggs are kind of ubiquitous. So you must have been trained from an early age that there were a lot of things that you weren't supposed to eat?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'd go to a birthday party and I'd always ask, "Is there egg in this? I'm sorry I can't have that."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel left out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, not really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose the pain of eating eggs would be enough to keep you on the straight and narrow.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then, of course, my mother was aware of it and always cooked things that I could eat, and so I just never had any problem being denied some foods.

I remember going to a church dinner one time—Scandinavians, of course—and I was just beginning to occasionally drink a little coffee, and I had a cup of coffee and immediately got sick.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh! They put egg shells in the coffee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And then they filter it through the eggs shells. That keeps it clear. And boy! It sure cleared me out in a hurry.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you wouldn't be thinking about eggs if you're drinking coffee, that's true. That would be something you'd have to really watch. So you got sent home again after your bad experience in Tampa?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They discharged me right on the spot. When I got back home, we had two reserve units in Mount Vernon, the National Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and so I got into that and was there for about six months.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be more training?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just basic stuff. With a wooden gun.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No real equipment?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We'd report once a week to Anacortes and either patrol the waterfront in jeeps or in boats along the shoreline. There were always rumors about Japanese submarines and all that, you know. And people had these silhouettes so they could match up planes that were flying in the sky. There were lots of reports that there were Japanese bombers or reconnaissance planes.

We were under alert most of the time. You had to have window shades, blackout curtains and all that. They had air wardens and neighborhood watches. There was quite a lot of preparation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would you have done if you'd seen something? What were you supposed to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Get on the radio and call the station. It was kind of hokey.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But if they hadn't prepared and something happened, they would have been terribly remiss.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know we had quite a number of Japanese families in the Skagit Valley. They were farmers and they were relocated. Most of them came back.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could they reclaim their farms or were they lost?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those that I knew of came back to their original property. In retrospect, it was probably safer for them. Japanese people all look alike, and how are you going to tell if it's a Japanese from Japan or whether it was one of your neighbors?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they threatened? Were people taking vigilante action? What would have happened if they had stayed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was probably the right move. It was difficult for those families, there's no question about it. But I think it was as much for their protection as it was for ours. Because all it would take is some hothead to go out and cause some problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** War brings out that sort of thing in people. That's a dark page in our history.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it is. The kids were in school. In high school we had a number of Japanese students and they were all good students and took part in the activities. But as I say, I think they almost all came back. And we still have some of those families there. The kids who were in high school then are now on the farm and have families of their own.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's heartening to think about. Were you upset that you were not able to serve more actively? There was a lot of pressure to do so, I know.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really had kind of looking forward to going overseas. But I was so busy, and then being in the auxiliary kind of bridged the gap a little bit. And I had a lot of friends who were in the service, one branch or the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know it was such a big experience for many in your generation, so I just wanted to make sure I understood how that would be for you, missing that experience. But you were also needed at home, so that would be a recognized situation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When I came back home, I stopped in Pullman on my way and registered at WSU, figuring I'd go back. I got home and my dad was worse and so I called them and said, "I'm sorry, I just won't be able to get back over."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've had one disappointment after another.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I wanted to finish college, so I went up to Bellingham and talked to them at Western and got in. I figured that I could probably commute and still spend some time in the store, which I did. Then my dad passed away that summer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then, did it seem like you really had better stay?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just figured that that's where I was going to wind up and I might just as well make the best of it and get on board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What year was this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** This would have been '43, '44. As a matter of fact, I got married in '45. I had finished, graduated and my bride-to-be graduated the next year and we were married and we lived in Mount Vernon. My wife and I lived at my mother's house. She had a big house there, and we were building about the same time. So as soon as we got our house completed we moved there. It was about three blocks away, I guess, and that's where we raised our family. Then I got involved in the Junior Chamber of Commerce about that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you meet your wife?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She was at Western. That's where I met her. She was going to be a teacher. Her family lived in Vancouver, Washington. Her dad was the manager of an automobile agency down there. We were married for twenty-six years, had four youngsters, and she still lives in Mount Vernon. One of our daughters and her family still live in Mount Vernon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So back then, you were starting your family and starting out helping your mom in

the business and getting involved in the community and making friends and building your house. How old were you when you got married?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was twenty-five.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you start to have children pretty quickly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think within the first two years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People did, then—got going on things. Did your wife ever get to use her degree? I was thinking, here you want to teach, she wants to teach. Do either of you ever get to teach?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She got her degree but hadn't taught. However, after we were divorced, she started teaching and, as a matter of fact, stayed long enough so she had tenure. She is now retired, but the last few years has done some substitute teaching. She really enjoyed teaching and is very good with youngsters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That happened to so many women after the war; whatever it was they had prepared themselves to do, they mostly got married and had children and looked after the home. But in her case, she also helped with the family business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, she did. And when the kids got to be high school age they all spent some time in the store.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another generation coming up in the business.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had hoped that they would have just stepped in and taken over but none of them were really interested in the business. Three of them are teachers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somebody's teaching, at least.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. My oldest son taught and was a coach in Concrete for about ten years and then decided that he'd like to try something else, so he packed up his wife and two small youngsters and drove back to the University of Ohio and got a degree in sports management. He finished that, came back to Seattle, and he "sat on the doorstep" where they were building the Kingdome until they hired him. He worked as the events manager at the Kingdome until they blew it up.

That was kind of a traumatic experience because he really enjoyed what he was doing there. And he was just within a couple of years of retirement. He has stayed on with the county and he's been involved with a school program having to do, actually, with water resources. But it's part of their environmental department with the county.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was able to reinvent himself at that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he didn't think he was going to like it when he started, but he said, "I've got to get two more years in." But now that he's there, he's enjoying it.

He goes out to primarily all the elementary schools in King County and he has a program and he's developed, of course, the materials, and he also has field trips and everything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's pretty versatile. From events at the Kingdome to that is quite a change.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But it kind of takes him back to when he was teaching.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Full circle. Did you feel like you had a very close association with the Kingdome after it was built?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

## CHAPTER 2

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### SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

**Mr. Eldridge:** I married Harriett in 1945. We had four children: two boys and two girls. Ray, Jean, Sally and Jon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The perfect post war family.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess that's right. After my father died, my mother and I took the business over and then Harriett worked occasionally. And she was a wonderful mother. She was pretty busy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did she get involved with other things? PTA and that sort of thing? I was wondering how big a swath the Eldridges together cut in the community. If she also had community activities in which she was involved.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, somewhat. She was always involved in the United Way drives. She was a little active in the political party, but not a great deal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if she was a partner with you in all of those things you got involved in or just did some of the activities, or if she had her own interests that she pursued?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She didn't have a lot of extensive activities that she was a real zealot on. But she was involved and participated in a lot of things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some couples, especially political couples, are really knit together and

others—the life—that's not what the wife wants to do. It's always interesting to know just how that works out for the one who's not that involved.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I'm not sure she was particularly interested in the politics of it, but together we went to a lot of functions and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She enjoyed the social aspects perhaps? Was she outgoing? I mean, some wives hate it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** She really wasn't—I know lots of wives who are just in there with both feet and flailing around and making decisions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes that's an asset and sometimes it's not so good.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right, and I've seen it both ways.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You know the saying that in back of every successful man is a good wife. Understanding the role that the wife decides for herself is always a piece of this story. Your mother, was she a club woman type of person?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, a little bit. Although, after my father died, she was a businesswoman. She was one of the first women members in the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She was running a business, but a lot of the things you were involved in were men-only. What did the businesswomen do? Was there something for them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She and Bertha Pederson who, with her husband, had a bakery in Mount Vernon were two of the movers and shakers of the Chamber. I don't think either one of them ever served as president, but they were in there mixing it up and directing traffic and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had such an extraordinary list of things that you were involved in, I was wondering if it was part of your family tradition? Did your parents see themselves as leaders in the community and responsible for making things happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so, no.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you ever involved in civic politics? City elections?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only in supporting like-minded people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But not necessarily in the thick of it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you got involved, you rose to the top pretty quickly. I'm trying to understand your place in the community. In the 1940s, very soon after you got married and settled down, you joined the Rotary. Do you want to explain what that group is for people who may not be familiar with that organization?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Rotary Club is one of the oldest service clubs in the country and is set up on the basis, originally, of one member for each of the professions that are in the community. My classification was retail stationery because we had a stationery store.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the classifications are quite particular, not broad like just "retailer," so you would get quite a mixture of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there rival stationery stores in Mount Vernon, or did you have the only one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There were a couple of others.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And were you bigger? Did you specialize in different things, or were you in different parts of town?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Our business was on the main street at one end. One of the others was down at the other end and the third one was a younger fellow and he was a block over off the main street. As I recall, one of them was a member of the Kiwanis Club and the other a member of the Lions Club. So we had it covered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know only a small amount about the Rotary Club. I know you do scholarships and things of that kind now. Did they do that then, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had a number of fundraising events for scholarships. As a matter of fact, when I was growing up the first prize I ever won was collecting the most newspapers for the Rotary Club paper drive. I remember my mother driving me around to all these places and picking up bundles of paper and delivering them to the Rotary warehouse where they were collecting them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you get for your prize?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ten dollars. And that was big money! The only other time I won anything was at the Pet Parade. Boy! I'd probably be thrown in jail now. I had a black dog that was part cocker spaniel. A real neat dog. I bought him for a dollar because he was the runt of the outfit. So we got a baby carriage and we put a youngster's nightgown on him with a nightcap that we had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was patient with this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I wheeled him down the street in the parade. And I dressed up like a Negro mammy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That doesn't really pass muster much anymore, does it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, no, it sure doesn't. So I got the ten dollar prize there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get the idea because your dog was black?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And in the Junior Chamber for a couple of years we had minstrel shows. Of course, that would be a no-no now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just shows how much things have changed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes, they sure have.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was acceptable then is not so good now. That's part of history, that change.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. That's the only thing certain—change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How much of your time were you involved in the Rotary?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. They had weekly luncheon meetings. My dad had been in the Rotary Club, but when he became ill he dropped out. And of course, he was no longer involved directly in the business. But it wasn't until after I'd been in the Junior Chamber for two or three years at least that I was asked to join the Rotary Club.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that at one point you were the president, also. What did that involve?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You preside at all of the membership meetings, and at the board meetings. They usually met a couple of times a month.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you help set the program?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I appointed committee chairmen and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many people would be involved in that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let's see. I think the Mount Vernon Rotary Club had between sixty and seventy members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A fair sized group. Would a lot of these be the same people as would join the Jaycees? Was there much of a crossover?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be more apt for people who were in the Junior Chamber and who were really active—if they were in business for themselves—then they would likely either join the Rotary or Kiwanis or Lions Club. The Lions Club was probably a little more younger group and the Kiwanis and Rotary were more established people in the business sector.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be the attraction? As a young guy coming in, why would you choose Rotary over, say, the Lions, other than the fact that the other stationer had cornered that organization for his own? Was it a chance to meet some older established men?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, and to associate with, you might say, the top business leaders in the community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think you did that consciously?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that it just evolved. Of course with Rotary, you have to be invited to

join. Although if you express an interest to somebody, ordinarily there isn't a problem. I had been asked on a number of occasions; I was president of the Junior Chamber when I was first asked, and I declined. I said, "I've just got too much to handle." Then when I was on the Board of Trustees up at Western I was asked again and I think I declined then. But then the next year after that—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your first involvement was really in the Jaycees, then, or was there something else that's even earlier?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as the political aspect, I was president of my high school junior class and then I was president of the Associated Students my senior year in high school. But in community activities, it was the Jaycees and the Rotary Club.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The first meeting of the Jaycees in Mount Vernon was in 1944 or thereabouts. Were you at that very first meeting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was the year that I graduated from Western.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Chamber of Commerce sponsored this Junior Chamber of Commerce meeting and invited Mearns T. Gates, who was the national president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, come and give a presentation. Can you first tell me what the difference is between the Junior Chamber and the Chamber of Commerce?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Junior Chamber really isn't junior and it isn't a Chamber of Commerce. It's more of a service club than it is a Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce is business and industrial leaders of a community who, in those days, promoted tourism in the community and industrial development. They covered a lot of things that now they have individual organizations for.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they promoted economic growth in the community? Anything that would foster that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that the first Junior Chamber of Commerce formed about 1920 or so in Saint Louis, and it had more to do with good works and service and fellowship and that sort of thing. Then it spread all over the country and came to Washington State. I don't know if Mount Vernon was the first in Washington or which town had the first club.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure. It was one of the first. Mearns Gates was originally from Concrete.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of things did he say, do you remember, to help you think, "Yes, this is a group I really want to get involved in?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy! I can't remember any profound statements that he made.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What made this the group that you put so much energy into?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was more the people involved. One of the Van Lierops, who had the bulb farm out on the Yelm Highway, were involved originally. We did have quite a number of agriculture people because that was quite a big agricultural community in the area. One of the other fellows was the son-in-law of Alf Christenson, who was one of the largest seed growers up there in the Valley. He became real interested. As a matter of fact, he was our first president locally, and then I followed him the next year.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were these people already friends of yours, or just people you wanted to know?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of them I had known who were either in school when I was or were in business. And there were a couple who were active in the Republican Party, although that didn't have anything to do with the Jaycees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that become important to you later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Later it did, yes. I'd go to meetings where candidates were introduced and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right away you seemed to become very involved; almost immediately you're taking a leadership position in the Jaycees. I know your group did fundraising for cancer, a "Christmas cheer" kind of drive, that sort of thing. Do you remember some of the early activities that you enjoyed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We used to have a jay-walking problem in Mount Vernon. The streets were fairly narrow and people were just going back and forth in the middle of the street. And so we put on an anti jay-walking campaign. In Mount Vernon originally they had diagonal parking and it got so narrow and so much traffic that they had to institute parallel parking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's harder.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. For a lot of people it's really difficult. A lot of fender benders.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The cancer drive seemed to be a big thing. Was there a growing awareness that there was a lot of cancer and that this was a problem, so people were starting to address it with research? And fund raising? I don't imagine that people were aware of the relationship of smoking to cancer at that stage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And there wasn't that much of an anti-smoking movement. As a matter of fact,

one of my uncles who had been in Alaska for a number of years had throat cancer. He came down to go to the hospital in Seattle and stayed with us in Mount Vernon for awhile waiting for his appointment. His treatment at that point was to gargle with Lavoris.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Chemotherapy and all the treatments we have now had not yet been invented? I don't imagine Lavoris helped him!

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It may have soothed it a little, but it sure didn't do anything medically. But he really had a tough time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of the issue, then, that if you had cancer you just died? Kind of horribly, I imagine. I don't think there was much they could do then for anybody.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I think that's a pretty good statement. But you know, he still smoked, because there wasn't any correlation at that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the other things the Jaycees were doing involved decorating the town for Christmas and taking things to the orphanages and things like that. Were you involved in those activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We collected toys and that sort of thing and then we decorated the main street for Christmas. We did all the lamp posts. I remember we band-sawed brackets that came out and then we made huge wreathes to hang on each of the brackets so each of the light posts had a wreath.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go out in the forest and cut boughs and things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be a little easier to do then. There weren't as many regulations.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be pretty tough now, but we did have one member who lived right on the fringe of Mount Vernon and he had quite a grove of cedar trees so he'd just have us come out and trim 'em. One of the fellows worked for Pictsweet Frozen Foods and they had quite a machine shop in conjunction with the packing plant and so he got the company to give us rebar and we bent those into hoops and then fastened the fronds of cedar on those—wired them on. I think the first year we might have put a string of lights on each one of them. But we did that only once, maybe twice at the most. Mount Vernon always had a lot of residential Christmas decorations and a lot of lights. People would drive around through the neighborhoods and it was quite festive.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just struck as you mentioned that—when did electric Christmas lights become the fashion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can remember when I was just a little kid, I suppose maybe five or so, we had little holders with candles in them. Some places got burned down, too. And then after that, I presume that in the mid to late twenties electric lights came into use.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you organized parades and dances. Were those fundraisers also or just for fun?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had just club functions, but a few times we had fundraising dances.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For the cancer drive, would you go door-to-door or did you put on activities to earn money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The minstrel shows that we had, those were fundraisers for the Cancer Society.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One thing I thought was pretty interesting was that you had contests for children.

You had quite a movement that was called, "I Speak for Democracy." This was the beginning of the Cold War, that era. There seemed to be quite an emphasis in the literature you showed me about 'Americanism' as it was called, and speaking against communism and a certain consciousness of—just a kind of heightened awareness—of what America stood for and then this challenging perspective. Do you recall much about how that was spoken of in those days?

**Mr. Eldridge:** "I Speak for Democracy"—the fellow who represented the state of Washington was from the Seattle club and his speech won the national contest. It was a powerful speech. He started out by saying the time was twelve-0-one, and then went on from there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he referring to the big clock that measured—I don't know if it always meant this—but at some point "midnight" was nuclear annihilation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. That we were bordering right on at that point where it could happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of a flash point? Did it really feel like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of tension, particularly among people who were aware of things. I don't know that the man on the street had too much feeling about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was Churchill's speech about the Iron Curtain. There was the Berlin Airlift then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of things going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's this sort of edginess to things: Europe was teetering. What did you think of the Marshall Plan? Did the Jaycees discuss that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that we ever really spent any time talking about it, even among the individual members. I've always been a little leery of bureaucracy being involved in anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had been in Europe, so—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was certainly aware of the Hitler movement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were some celebrated spy cases just then, and the Alger Hiss trial. Was there a kind of feeling that there was a danger, that American society was being subverted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was generally accepted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Mount Vernon is far away from some of these things, but was there a feeling that there were people undermining the country and that there really was a problem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was the feeling, but I don't think it was to the point of that they wanted to go out and parade up and down the street or blow up buildings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On the one hand, Mount Vernon is this very nice little community, pretty safe. Probably your biggest issue is jaywalking. I'm just wondering how you felt about those bigger issues. Did you feel somewhat isolated from them or did it feel that these troubling events might impact your community, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was more just a general feeling. I don't think anyone ever really felt that we were threatened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just something wrong?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a big part of being a Jaycee in the literature you gave me. What struck

me is that other communities were having these parades and these contests to promote Americanism. Part of it seemed to be wrapped up in the idea that small business is the heart of America—that seemed to be part of the message. Would that resonate with what Jaycees stood for?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a pretty fearful time for some people. Also, another of the things that seemed to be very important was commemorating the Second World War. There was a lot of gathering of funds to create a memorial and a building that would be the national headquarters for the Jaycees.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was built there, and a lot of local clubs put up memorials to the Second World War.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting that the war has not been as commemorated as some other ones. Were people just too busy getting on with life?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I think there's that, and then I think that generation of young people were more interested in doing their own thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet this is a huge era of joining. Everybody was joining things. It just seemed like the war was over and people got right back into life and didn't look back.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. But you know, that's one of the things I had always said about the Junior Chamber: it was established at the right place at the right time, because all these young guys were coming out of the Service and trying to get established, either in a factory job or opening their own business or going back to the farm, or whatever. They were just looking for something to use some of that energy that they had pent up. I think that was why it was so successful for a number of years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it, of the things you could join, one of the more dynamic organizations where you could really get out there and do things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. It was the most active organization in town.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the people who were really 'go-getters' went to the Jaycees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And if they weren't go-getters when they went in, they were when they came out!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just because there were lots of opportunities, or was that really the message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Leadership training was always kind of the byword, and it certainly did produce a lot of leaders.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did the group go about doing that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just through projects and taking responsibility for different things that they were involved in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Create leaders by creating opportunities for community involvement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There you go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I noticed that there was some connection with Toastmasters.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think most of the Junior Chamber members ultimately went into Toastmasters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel like you already knew how to do public speaking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just felt like I had enough on my plate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. But later on, public speaking was a big part of your life. Being the president of the local Jaycees would give you lots of opportunities to learn public speaking.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Then I had been on the debate team in junior college which helped some, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So maybe this is something you didn't really need?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always took advantage of any opportunities because I always figured that the more I did this sort of thing the better I could become, and the better prepared.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you aiming at something in particular, or just generally out there getting experience?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just enjoyed being with people and with people who were successful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you looking for models? Were you trying to figure out how to run your business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I certainly wasn't looking for them but I took advantage of them when they were there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the other way around? Were you mentoring other young men who are just maybe coming on, because you were already established?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, some of the younger people that came into the organization and also through Scouting. I hope I did have some effect. And I hope good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You attended at least one national convention in the early days, Colorado Springs, that I found a trace of in your notes. Were there many opportunities to travel like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I went to a convention in Chicago. That's where I was elected a national vice president of the Jaycees. And I went to one in Miami, Florida.

That Colorado Springs convention was an interesting one. Our group from Washington State had a caravan go down from here. It was a long drive and it was something! Red Bohart was our "wagon master" going across the prairies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was before freeways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. There was a string of thirty or forty cars and I was in the second car from the lead car and Red was the end car. Just kind of riding herd on everybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To make sure there were no stragglers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he had printed up a list of how you were to drive and so on, so everybody had their marching orders. We were driving along fifty miles an hour and all of a sudden I noticed Red's big, blue Cadillac convertible coming right up the line. Irv Stimpson was in the lead car and he leaned over when Red got alongside and he said, "What's the matter?" and Red says, "You're driving too fast," and Irv says, "I'm driving just what you wrote on the paper, fifty miles an hour." And Red says, "I know, but the time it gets back down to me, it's too fast!"

Then there was Dutch McBeath and his wife from Bellingham. They were driving in their car, and had stopped for gasoline someplace. Dutch stopped at the service station and his wife got out and went into the restroom. He came out, jumped in the car and took off and he was down the road about twenty miles and he looked around and she wasn't there. So he turned around and had to come back.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'll bet she wasn't too happy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, no, she wasn't too happy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had lots of fun? Did you make this a family vacation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But, it was fun. And they always had a lot of activities. In Colorado Springs they had a barbecue every night. It would be a big crowd. And the elections were always real exciting because they were run just like a national political convention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you were nominated for vice president, did you run a campaign?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had a campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was really your first political campaign in a way, except for high school and college?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. When I ran for state president was probably my first real campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We should back up and talk about your rise to "fame and fortune."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was kind of pushed into the local presidency. I hadn't given it any thought. And I hadn't really watched other local presidents to see how you were supposed to operate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You must have done something right? So you were your local Mount Vernon president, and then what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then I was elected regional vice president. It was probably twenty clubs. Skagit and part of Whatcom.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, not really too big geographically. Just a couple of counties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just the numbers that were involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was involved in getting to that stage? You just identify yourself as wanting to do it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There again, this was all part of the state convention. Electing the vice president and the president. Then, after that, I was chairman of Christmas activities for the state. That involved outlining possible things for clubs to do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to travel around the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I went to close-by meetings and that sort of thing. At the end of that year there were four of us driving back to Mount Vernon from Seattle after a meeting and it was fairly late at night. A fellow from Bellingham had indicated at the Seattle meeting that he was going to run for state president. I was driving and the other three guys in the car kept saying, "Oh, we just can't have him as the president," and by the time we got to Mount Vernon they had talked me into running.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This might be hard for you to say, but what was it about you that made you stand out so that people were saying to you, you should be the president?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I got along well with everybody and I wasn't what you'd call a domineering person. Never have been. My philosophy has always been that if my head sticks up above the crowd and you select me, that's fine, but I'm not climbing up on any stool or ladder.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were just more congenial?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I probably just didn't talk too much!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are you one of those people that are just—forgive me—but very competent and get things done and are organized so that people naturally turn to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I do a lot of things on my own. I'm really not a very good organizer. I'd just rather do it myself.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are you just very straight forward and trustworthy? You're the kind of person, you give your word and it gets done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think I am that. And I think that's one of the things that they used as a guideline.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering if there was a set of Jaycee-type values that somehow you fit. You went pretty far in Jaycees, so there must be a good match there that makes you stand out as a good Jaycee. Maybe that's a hard question.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is a little hard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess I'm trying to get you to assess your own success.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I'm not sure I can do that! But anyway, one of the interesting things about this campaign, by the time we got to Mount Vernon they had convinced me to run. The state convention was starting the next day in Bellingham.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On this guy's home territory?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wasn't that a little awkward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. So, anyway, we got into Mount Vernon and they said, "We've got to have some election folders and some badges and so

on.” So I said, “Well, let’s swing by my friend, the printer’s house.” So we went by his house and he happened to still be up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this the middle of the night?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Middle of the night. And I said, “Boy! We’ve got a rush job here.” So he put on his clothes and went down to the shop and we kind of outlined what we wanted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a platform? Did you have a statement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’m sure there was something there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You stood for something presumably. What would be a campaign promise or statement that a person could make? What would you be for or against?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My thrust was that we needed to have district meetings rather than try to get everybody in the state to come in to one big convention type meeting. We needed to have a number of them around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More grass roots?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I indicated that I would organize that and I would be there. So that was one of the things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People are pretty busy. It would be hard to run up to Seattle or wherever.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had our one state convention each spring, but other than that we had these local meetings which worked out real well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, when you got this office, did that mean that you were then committed to traveling around the state and meeting with a lot of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, I figured I traveled about seventy-thousand miles.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s a lot. But you were successful in doing what you promised?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, what I said I’d do, I did. And I had three other guys who traveled with me, and one of them was my long-time friend from Mount Vernon who served as the secretary/treasurer of the organization. Then I had a fellow who I consider my mentor, Irv Stimpson. He was in the advertising and public relations business in Seattle. He and an accountant for Puget Power, Ray Schutt, traveled with us. Irv became the state president the year after I did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you tell me a little more about him? What made him someone you looked to? Was he a bit older than you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A few years. When I first met him, he was in the Junior Chamber in Seattle and he was Safeway’s public relations person. He and his wife and me with my wife became real close friends and we did quite a few things together. They had two youngsters and we used to go on picnics together with the kids. He was just a wonderful person and we stayed in touch long after we both got out of the Junior Chamber. Matter of fact, he put together my first legislative campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What were his qualities that you particularly admired?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He had a tremendous sense of humor. Oh boy! He was in demand as a toastmaster by everyone. But he was sharp and he was quite active in the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. He was commander of the Legion Post in Seattle. I don’t think he was ever in a service club besides the Jaycees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let’s see. We’ve got you being the state president and then where did you go from there? Did you do that for one year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a one-year term. Then I ran for national vice president. That covered Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Alaska.

There were two other nominees and we visited with all the different delegations from those states and I think the thing that tipped it to me was I said that if I were elected I would establish a state organization in Alaska, because we had some local clubs up there but they didn't have an organization. So anyway, we put on a campaign there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go to Alaska to campaign, or just at the convention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just at the convention. I was elected and my local club—we had two or three guys in there who were retired military and they'd been in the Alaska communications system. So we put together a new club in Juneau and one in Anchorage and then the state organization, all by telephone on somebody else's nickel.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you do that? Just phoning people up and sending them things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We got to some key people, and when they had their conventions, then they put in the motion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there packets you could send people, "how to be a Jaycee," how to start a club?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But then about 1948 you went to Alaska. Was this when you were regional vice president?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We chartered the state organization, the Anchorage and the Juneau clubs. I went with Bob Graham, an attorney from Seattle who been a national vice president and was a

real eager Jaycee, and we had Warren Averill, who was with United Airlines—although we flew Pan Am up and back. That was quite a flight. We flew from Seattle to Whitehorse and then from there on to Fairbanks. There wasn't a direct flight at that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Alaska was not yet a state. It was still a territory, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was leading up to statehood, though? Getting organized and getting all these groups together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And Ernest Gruening was the governor then.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He'd be a territorial governor. It's hard to remember that it's not really a part of the country yet in the late 1940s. He gave a speech at your convention. About how many people would be able to come in and have a convention? Those are far flung places.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose there were maybe one hundred people there, which was pretty good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that the first time you'd been to Alaska?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What time of year was it? It wasn't winter, was it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was fifty below zero. I remember walking out of the hotel in Fairbanks and the river was frozen over out in front and all I did was walk out and walk back and I froze my ear! When I got home, it was just like I'd been sunburned; it all peeled. It was something!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That's serious cold. Did you have to get some parkas and things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had fairly heavy jackets with us, or coats, but I don't think we had any special fur-lined or anything like that. But you know, the thing that always amazed me was that the women were wearing silk stockings and reasonably short skirts, and with that cold I don't know how they stood it. I guess you get used to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you went and had all these ceremonies and things and gave talks and spread the Jaycee message. And the governor spoke and it was quite a big deal. You got to tour around a bit too, didn't you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, we took the Alaska railroad from Anchorage to Fairbanks and we stopped at Mount McKinley.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go to any of the gold rush sites?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We went out where they were doing dredging, but I don't recall any small sites.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the oil industry already active?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was Alaska like in those days?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty rough.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was fishing a big activity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Lots of commercial fishing close to southeastern Alaska and then in the interior a lot of wild game: moose, deer and bear.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a frontier still. For fledging Jaycees up there, would that be a big deal to have a group to join and have this connection with the lower forty-eight?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But a lot of those people came out to Seattle at least once a year, so they were around quite a bit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's quite an adventure. How long were you up there, a week or so?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, no. It was maybe five or six days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you got them started in Alaska. What else did you manage to do in that position?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As vice president, I traveled to each of the five states that were involved in my district and I attended either their state convention or one of their other statewide meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a pretty homogeneous group? Every state would be doing the same kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, pretty much, but different state organizations were more known for one thing than another just because of their different activities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the message have been somewhat the same that you would carry from state to state, just making connections with people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it kind of a 'cheer leader' position? You'd get people active and keep them going, doing what they're doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's some of that, but like most organizations, our national office and the national officers had quite a paper mill going and we had a real good publication called *Future* that went to all individual members. Most of the stuff generated by the national office went primarily to the state organizations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So your role was just to keep things organized? Help people feel they're part of a larger effort?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that's probably the basic mission.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a regional vice president, then, did you go to national meetings and connect up with people at that level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Our national board of directors met three or four times a year, and then we always had an executive committee meeting at our national convention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be themes that you would follow from year to year? One year would it be, maybe, emphasizing some particular project?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most everything is pretty much done at the local club level where they'd get involved in a project where there's a community need and all their effort will be towards that and their fundraising. But the cancer drive was the one major countrywide effort.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you would make quite a difference if a whole group of your members was doing the same thing. I noticed the 'Americanism' theme in your literature, and I wondered how long that lasted as a focus. And there was a big campaign to spray everything with DDT. A real "get out and kill every bug" effort. That's something that people don't do anymore.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Too toxic!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was the miracle invention that had been used during the war to fight malaria. I remember seeing photographs of trucks going right through residential neighborhoods spraying kids who were standing there eating hot dogs and such. Just clouds of it coming through, right where

people are standing around. There wasn't any idea that this was a little bit dangerous. Did you do things like that in your area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because it was an agriculture area, a lot of the growers of various types of fruits and vegetables and whatever used sprays of all kinds. We had a couple of members of our club in Mount Vernon who were air sprayers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Crop dusters?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Crop dusters. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like the black-face minstrel entertainments, there are just certain things that kind of jump off the page where you say to yourself, "Well, they don't do that anymore."

There was a report of a talk in one of your club meetings about race relations that a minister gave in 1946. I thought that was quite early for that issue. That was quite remarkable.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall the specific incident, but we had a number of ministers who were quite outspoken about various social issues, particularly. And well regarded. They weren't activist types; they just came down off the pulpit and gave the message.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also a Jaycee wives club. I imagine that all the Jaycees were men, so this was, perhaps, some avenue for the wives to also be active? Your wife was a vice president in 1948.

**Mr. Eldridge:** She was involved a little bit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What sorts of things did the wives do? Was it more support activities? Did their activities mirror yours, or were they quite separate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Basically, I would say that most of them had to do with kids. Although they did

put on some fundraising things. They had an organization and they had a statewide organization. They had a state president and conventions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they interested in education issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somewhere in the literature it said that women were not considered for full membership until 1984. When you were talking about your mother being a businesswoman, I was curious—this is a kind of business club—why it took them so long to admit women.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was after I left. In my time, here weren't very many women who were involved in that age group. But there were women, wives of Jaycees, who were on the school boards and there were a couple of city council members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there were other avenues for women to be active in the community?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were into those things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You said after a while you weren't so involved. Do you remember when it turned, ran out of steam for you, or you got busy doing other things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My first session in the Legislature, it really began to taper off there. You know the time requirement for a member of the Legislature is so great that if you're going to do the job well you have to spend a lot of time at it. It cuts into your business and your family and your community activities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was your main activity for quite a few years, but did you ever become a member of the Chamber of Commerce? Wasn't there an age limit for the Junior Chamber?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Between twenty-one and thirty-five.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So after a while you're not eligible? Do you then graduate to the Chamber of Commerce?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, you don't really graduate. I became a member of the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce after I really got involved in our business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, that's really a different thing altogether? It's confusing because it looks like there ought to be more of a relationship there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Pretty much so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's look at some of your other involvements. You were on the Board of Trustees at Western from about 1949 to '59. How did that appointment come about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was appointed by Governor Langlie. I suppose that was the result of my being involved in Republican activities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it wasn't because you were well-known as a Jaycee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that certainly was the catalyst, because the person who may have recommended me to Governor Langlie had been an active Jaycee in Seattle and we'd been together on a number of projects.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's quite an honor. You seem quite young to be a college trustee. You're exactly thirty. Maybe that's a misunderstanding on my part.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think I was one of the youngest. We used to have five members of the board of trustees and regents. We'd meet once a year.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be your duties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had authority over the budget for the college and the hiring of professors and so on. We'd get a recommendation from a faculty committee, but we signed the bottom line. We were involved directly in selecting the college president.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that happen during your time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would you be looking for there? What kind of person?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was looking for someone a little different than maybe some of the others. I was looking for someone who was fairly business oriented and someone who was reasonably conservative.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Define "reasonably conservative" in this case. What would that be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At one time they got rid of a college president up there who they figured bordered a little on the ultra liberal, even toward the socialistic. At one time before I arrived on the scene, even as a student, there was quite a ruckus. They had the townspeople in an uproar.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was happening?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was because of some of the people they brought on campus and some of their statements.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose Depression era college politics—there definitely were some radical people on campuses who had ultra liberal points of view and would be propagating that. Would that be the kind of thing you would be referring to?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As I say, I wasn't directly involved or aware, but it's my understanding that this one president was on the edge of being radical.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Canwell Commission had just been putting the University of Washington through its paces. Did they operate also at Western?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know, but Al Canwell very well could have made some cuts at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that the kind of thing you meant? Were you following what the Canwell Commission was doing at the UW, and then looking at your own campus to see if you had the same problems?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you follow that, what was going on in Seattle? What did you think of it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Somewhat. After the war I think many, particularly ex-servicemen, were kind of edgy about the ultra liberal and the Communist influence and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The hearings themselves were controversial, not just for what they were looking for, but their method.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Procedure-wise. But in those years I really wasn't too concerned or really too interested.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering if, when you're a trustee, if you thought about what had happened on other campuses. This anti-communist furor was sweeping the whole country, not just the UW. It was a national issue. I wondered if there were discussions along those lines at Western, say, when you had to hire someone? Were there loyalty oaths and things like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was in that time frame, but I don't recall that we ever pursued a loyalty oath situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You served in that office for a whole decade. You were even the chair in 1957 and '59. But was this a huge involvement for you? How many times a year would you meet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We met once a month regularly, and then there'd be other times when meetings would be called.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, there would be a fair number of issues to consider?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was fairly time consuming. I enjoyed it very much because during the time I was involved, we were in quite a building program there. We built a new auditorium and another classroom building and did a lot of remodeling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were universities bursting at the seams in these years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were growing. When I attended college there I think there were about three hundred and fifty students. I think in our graduating class there were maybe nine or ten.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Really! So when did it move from being a college to a university? Was it during your time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, it changed from Western Washington College of Education to Western Washington College, and then eventually became Western Washington University.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** From a teacher's college to a general college, and then a university? Is that right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's the sequence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it was still a college when you were a trustee, not a university? Were you building towards being a university? Was that a program that you supported?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't one that the trustees were involved in, but I'm sure there were some faculty groups working on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By the time you left in '59, it was a much bigger place?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I would hesitate to hazard a figure, but I would say there were about eleven or twelve hundred students.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, it doubled at least? That was a big responsibility to bring all that on. So there would be quite a lot of hiring?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But in the academic organization, the faculty committees have a great deal to say about hiring. Of course, then they went to the president and then he came to the Board and got final approval.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you're not just a rubber stamp? You've got some point of view yourselves?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you all somewhat like-minded, or was there a range of opinion among the board members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When I went on the board we had an attorney, Burton Kingsbury and there was Harry Binzer who had been in the state Senate one term and was an officer with a paper company in Bellingham. The Legislature, in their wisdom, at some point, expanded the number from three to five and we got two new members. One was an attorney in Bellingham and the other one was a stockbroker from Seattle, a young fellow.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you all graduates of the institution, or did you have any connection?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The trustees were not necessarily graduates, although I was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if that was one of the requirements.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The next person who came on the Board, after Burton Kingsbury's term ended, was a woman who was appointed. She was a practicing teacher.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wasn't that what that college was all about at this point? You'd think you'd have some educators there. Did she bring a fresh look at this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let's say a different look. She wasn't too reasonable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did she want to do that was different?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She reflected an ultra liberal university mentality and was always pushing in that direction. I got along real well with her, and she was no dummy. They usually aren't. I think she served just one term, or part of one term.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess I'm still curious. What kind of things would she want that would be different? Different services or different kinds of hires? I'm not sure how this would be expressed. For instance, you're more business oriented and although a college is not a business enterprise, do you mean efficiency? What would that mean in this case?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the budget process—the evolving of a budget from the individual classroom on up through the departments.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Keeping track of things. So, she was paying less attention to that part of the responsibility?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She was never bashful about wanting to throw money at things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you be more inclined to say, "Now wait a minute, where's the money coming from?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** That and how much and in what areas?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's one of those behind-the-scenes things that are hard to get a picture of. When you finished your term as a trustee, you were the chair and then you stepped down. You wanted to do something else or the commitment was too great?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had run for the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to be re-appointed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As a matter of fact, I was appointed to fill out the remainder of a six-year term. And then I was re-appointed. I actually served four years of the first six-year term and then was re-appointed for six years. So it was a total of ten years that I was on the Board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then, did you want to be re-appointed and you weren't, or you had just done your part and were ready to move on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By then, wasn't Governor Rosellini in office? Do you think you would have been re-appointed by a Democratic governor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not. No. It's a political appointment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So your term was up. But ten years was a good, long time to do something. It sounds like you took it seriously and you attended to your duties.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I spent a lot of time. But I think probably one of the things that I was most interested in and concerned about was the construction projects that were going on. They represented a sizeable amount of money and I wanted to be sure we had good contractors and that the money was well spent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's important. Now, would the trustees be from up in your area or were they from all over? How are people chosen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that they try to have some geographical representation. We've had a fellow from Seattle who's been on the Board up there and I think right now there are, out of the five, probably three of them are from out of the area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you keep in touch? Do you keep up any contact with the college?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The most recent president has had the current and previous members of the board of trustees come together for dinner or college activities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if when it was over it was totally over, or if there was some kind of continuing relationship.

We've touched on it a little bit, but during our discussion of the Jaycees and other activities, it sounds like you are getting involved in politics. We're going to keep that thread going, but there's still a couple of other groups that you were involved in during the fifties and sixties when you're already in politics and beyond, but I just wanted to explore them before we head into the political field.

You were involved with the YMCA for at least a decade starting in the fifties.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was on the Board. That was a new experience because we did not have a YMCA when I was growing up, so I wasn't involved in the Y like many young people are where they have a Y.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When did the Y come to Mount Vernon? Pre-war, after the war?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was there before the war. I think they had some military activity going on there. I went on the Board shortly after I came home out of the Army Air Corps. My four kids all belonged to the Y and all swam.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of what drew you to the Y? It was a good place for your kids to be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was on the Board before they were old enough to really participate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this the kind of up-and-coming organization that you thought was a good idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. One of the early business people in Mount Vernon had left a sum in his will and designated that it was to build a YMCA. So there was a lot of planning going on and they finally set up the skeleton of the organization, and then they determined what they'd need for a building and then built it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A swimming pool. What else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A gymnasium. Nice kitchen and meeting rooms. It was a pretty nice building. They have since enlarged it considerably. It was a great addition to the community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Both boys and girls could go there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a YWCA in Mount Vernon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think they have one now, either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it the only swimming pool in town?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it would be a big center. What would be your duties? Would you have taken part in the planning of the building, or was that already done by the time you joined?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just about that time that I was elected to the Board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did someone invite you or did you 'select' yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was approached by someone and asked if I'd be interested in being on the Board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Lots of meetings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a regular monthly meeting and then you'd have a few in between, depending on what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this more fund raising with events and campaigns?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was some of that all right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this some of the same people that you're already working with in the Jaycees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And the Rotary. There were a number of people on the Y Board who were also active in the Rotary Club.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think that, especially in smaller cities, that probably happens, that there would be an interlocking leadership group that gets things done.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you did fund drives, did you also do events, or just plain ask for money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Y would have dinners and pancake breakfasts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is a lot of activity.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were all kinds of things like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this something your wife could be involved in, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And she participated in quite a number of those activities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see, you did that for about ten years and then the other big commitment for you, of course, was the Boy Scouts. Was there a time when you were not active in the Boy Scouts, or was this constant all the way through your life? After you're not a Boy Scout yourself any more, then did you ever become a leader of a troop?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When did that start for you? How old were you when you were doing that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When I was still in the Scout troop I was probably the oldest boy and we didn't have a Scoutmaster at the time, and so I virtually was the Scoutmaster even though I wasn't old enough to be, officially. Then, when I became old enough, I was the Scoutmaster for a short period of time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This would be in your twenties or so? How old do you have to be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In those days you had to be twenty-one, I think. Now, it's eighteen. And then, when I got out of the service and back into business, I was elected to the council executive

board and that was for four counties. Then I was president of the Mount Baker Council for two years. And then I did not hold an office for the next two years, and then I was back in for another two years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it supposed to rotate? Is that part of the plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They try to have different people. The second time I went in because the person that had been elected passed away and so they wanted to get somebody in quickly and I said I'd do it for another session, which I did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that more running around and meeting and encouraging people and getting things organized and fundraising and that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. All of those things. Then, of course, at the council level you have the additional responsibility of operating a summer camp. Our camp was on Silver Lake, which is just off the Mount Baker Highway near Deming at the base of Black Mountain.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Running the camp involves hiring the counselors, and making sure they've got the food and everything? Maintaining the buildings? Is that what you did?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And we had work parties, plus, usually we'd have one or two executive committee meetings at camp.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you get to go out there and do camp things yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, on a number of occasions. And then when I was an older Scout, like high school age, I was on the camp staff for four or maybe five years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The president of the Mount Baker Council, that's in the 1950s and early

sixties, and then also in that timeframe, you're part of this western regional committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then on the list you gave me, you said "assistant camp director for the national jamboree." And that was in 1960, '64 and again in '69. So that would be the big, nationwide gatherings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Countrywide. The first one I went to as a Scout was in Washington, D.C. and we camped right at the base of the Washington Monument. We had ours at Colorado Springs and Valley Forge, a military camp in Virginia.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you in charge of a whole bunch of kids? What was your responsibility?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When I was camp director at one of the camps, there were about fifteen hundred boys. But you see, there were thirty thousand total. A lot of kids!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, the organization is somewhat mind-boggling. To get everyone there safely, feed them and organize activities. Would they stay in tents or barracks or what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Each troop of thirty boys would have their own campsite and they'd bring their own tents and sleeping bags and their camp kitchens.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They'd be self-contained and take care of their own stuff?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be your job? Just to make sure it went smoothly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then we'd have activities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can just picture this hive of boys. Did you have to take care of discipline issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Occasionally, if we had a problem, they'd call the kid in and we'd talk to him. I think most of it was caused by homesickness as much as anything. A lot of these kids had never been away from home at all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it would be more like a fatherly chat?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just sounds really big. Another time you were a "hospitality director" at a world jamboree in 1963.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was at Farragut, out of Spokane.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not that far away. I thought maybe a world jamboree would be in some exotic place.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But we had Scouts from all over the world there. My particular job on this one was ferrying dignitaries from foreign countries from the airport to the campsite.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you would have to know all the protocol and all that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And a little about the countryside.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have interpreters? Did everyone speak English?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most everybody spoke some English, so it wasn't too difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's just a matter of being a host?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Bow and scrape!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can't quite tell, but it sounds like you got way up in the organization and then later you became more—well, there's the Area One jamboree chairman in '75. Is that a smaller area? Were you kind of getting more localized again in your activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it always at the local level, but sometimes you did these "world" things or these national things, but from your region? Is that how it works?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It just progresses.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Again, you were the director of the daily program for the national jamboree in 1977. It seems like you're keeping your hand in it over the years with these jamborees. You get pretty experienced with that. But you're also on the executive board from your local council here in the Tumwater/Olympia area where you moved in the 1970s.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct. And I've been president of this council also.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For your local council, you're still active, aren't you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was also president of the Tumwater Council for two years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your own sons get involved in Scouting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My oldest son, Ray, is an Eagle Scout and he went to a couple of jamborees—one in Greece and that was a great experience for him. He was real active and a number of his friends were in the troop. Then his two sons were both in Cub Scouts. My oldest grandson liked the outdoor part. His troop went on a fifty-mile canoe trip and his father and I went with him.

That was six days on the upper Columbia River, where the Spokane River comes in and we went clear up to Kettle Falls. The river is so wide there, it flows fairly slowly. It was a good long paddle. Every night we'd camp and head out the next day. I think we had sixteen canoes and thirty-five kids. They had a really great time; it was a great trip.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about your daughters? Were they Girl Scouts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were in Campfire. Both of them were real active and my youngest daughter went on a Campfire trip one summer and really enjoyed that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this something that you talked about a lot, that you wanted to pass on, or did you kind of leave it up to them to see if it would take?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I pretty much left those kinds of decisions to them. I'd certainly support them if they wanted to go to summer camp or some of those other activities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was such a big part of your life, and still is, of course.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's funny how over the years there have been incidents. When my wife and I advertised for a maintenance man for our real estate business, this young fellow applied and we hired him. I had an Eagle Scout Association decal on the rear window of my car in the parking lot. He and I were walking across the parking lot and he looked at it and said, "Oh, you're an Eagle Scout." And I said, "Yes," and he said, "So am I." And I said, "I know you are. How do you think you got this job?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was written on his résumé? So it's a kind of a stamp: "this kind of person."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was on his résumé. And now he has graduated from law school and is a local attorney. The thing that always impressed me when I first joined the Boy Scouts was the Scout handbook. It had a history about Eagle Scouts which said that during the First World War when being in the Air Corps required one year of college, young men who were Eagle Scouts were given credit for one year of college. I know a lot of people, like President Ford and the astronaut, if they're making speeches, they always make some reference to the fact that being an Eagle Scout looks pretty good on their résumé. So it has had some effect.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sure. Later on, of course, you get involved with another Eagle Scout, Dan Evans. Did that form a bond for you in a way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We often used to make mention of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed to come up quite a bit. Were there others in that group of legislators who were Eagle Scouts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, I'm not sure about Eagles. There were any number who were Scouts or involved in Scouting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some kind of bond there. I was just curious.

One other thing that we haven't discussed yet was that you were a member of the Episcopal Church. In one of your biographical pieces that you gave me, you said you were on the Bishop's Committee. What did that involve?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's part of the administration. It's more an advisory group of parishioners. We were involved with the planning and building of a new church, which was kind of interesting and challenging. We took a number of trips to visit other churches that had been built and interviewed three or four different architects.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this about the same time you were also doing building projects for Western? You're getting quite a body of experience here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a little bit of overlap there. It was about the same time. We went to Bellevue and they had just built a new church there. We went to another church in Seattle, I think it was in West Seattle, that had just recently been built.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a new era in architecture for churches? There's the sort of traditional looking church, but somewhere around that time period churches start to take on a new look.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, they did. And the architects that we visited with were all of this new breed, and I wasn't too enthused about that. I remember sitting across the table from one of these architects and he gave us all these potential designs and I just point-blank said, "Can't you design a building that looks like a church?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he look at you blankly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. He designed a building that looked like a church. One with a nice sanctuary. Also, I've always been a great believer in a strong Sunday school program, so you'd want some sort of a layout that would provide appropriate rooms.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More traditional?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Although it had a lot of the newer construction things and new materials, which is fine with me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you stay involved in church activities or was that increasingly difficult as your time in the Legislature filled up your schedule?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. I did through the time my youngsters were involved in Sunday school and they were Altar boys and participated. My first wife was very active, and still is, in the church.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you say that was a big part of your life?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not, although time-wise I'm sure that I put in as much or more time than a lot of the people in the church.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I also wanted to ask you a little bit about the different business groups that you were involved in, although this activity comes at a later period in your life. As a small business owner, you had a certain background and somehow you became, a field advisor for the Small Business Administration in 1953. Can you tell me what that was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was strictly an advisory type position, and it was an appointive position and as I recall, we only met four or five times during my term.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a federal appointment? Who would have appointed you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think the bottom line is the president, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But not personally? That would have been Eisenhower. So he had people out finding appropriate local people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I think it was because of my work with the Junior Chamber.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That makes sense, yes. A field advisor does what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Our group would get together and review businesses that were applying for loans or grants, for example, and I think on just one occasion were we actually involved in the

selection process. It was primarily just a pass-through group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was regional, I gather?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did this for ten years. Even if you didn't meet that often, you served for quite a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you decide yourself to go off it, or what happened there? How long were the appointments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was an open end.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you re-appointed every once in awhile?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think ultimately when there was a change in administration and somebody else was appointed. I got 'the word.'

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those positions are politically connected, and by then there was a Democratic president? I suppose by the time he looks around and notices he's got a Republican in there, he might do something about it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In 1958 or so, you became the president of the Skagit Development Association. Were you just a member before and then president that year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm really not quite sure. I think they just went down the street and stopped at my place of business and said, "We're looking for somebody to head up this Skagit Development Association, and this is the sort of thing we're looking for."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And there you were. Was that for the whole county? To look at economic development and get together with other community leaders and try to develop what—industry?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Encourage businesses to come into the area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you remember any particular things you did with that group? Did you do economic studies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember we hired somebody who was, I think, a professor at the University of Washington, and he put together a very comprehensive study. We tapped the county commissioners for one thousand dollars and we had one conservative member of the commission who just didn't see any sense to that and thought it was a waste of money. He said, "It'll just sit on somebody's shelf for twenty years."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But did you think that planning was an essential part of development?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I was just beginning to become exposed to planning and while I'm basically not all enthused about it, surprisingly enough, a lot of the things in that study have taken place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's not just a dusty old thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It worked. It took a while.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This would be analyzing what industry is present, and what structure exists, and maybe where the gaps are and what you could do to promote growth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It looked into the agricultural community and logging, mining and fishing and retail business. That's the sort of thing we thought maybe we could make some suggestions on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pulling together a lot of information. I guess we take that for granted now as step one. As I understand it, planning was kind of a new thing in the 1950s.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. A businessman would go out and do something and if it worked, fine, and if it didn't why he'd try something else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But not necessarily ask why and what he might have done differently? Interesting.

A little later in time, in the early 1960s, you were a member of the executive committee of the Washington Retail Council. Was that, again, small businesses, stores, or was it a bigger thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was an offshoot of the Association of Washington Industry, which became the Association of Washington Business. Then the Washington Retail Council broke off from that, and now they're a separate organization entirely.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Their issues were bigger, different?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Theirs today deal primarily with taxes and regulations and that sort of thing as it pertains to retail businesses. One of the complaints with the Association of Washington Business was that they were always concerned with big business and didn't have time for the little store on Main Street.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if you're not Boeing, just go away?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of. Although they used to have a saying, "What affects General Motors, affects you."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Still, don't small places employ more people than big places, overall?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, totally, yes. But because they're so fragmented and have so many different problems and interests, it's pretty hard to get them to agree on anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In this sort of organization that would be one of your goals, I guess, would be to get people together and get them to act in concert rather than all in their own little store fronts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And that was one of the things that got me into the Legislature was the fact that the small businessperson just wasn't well represented.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you got to the Legislature, did that actually turn out to be true? That there were teachers, lawyers, farmers, and that your particular path that there weren't that many of you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct. Although that was just about the point where they were beginning to increase in numbers and the outside organizations that were involved in small business were beginning to be heard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you were part of a wave?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are these new organizations—the Washington Retail Council—that are just beginning to get together about the time you're getting involved in this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then, lastly, just after that, you are a member of the Association of Washington Business. On the Board of Directors for five years or so in the later sixties. Was that an outgrowth of the Retail Council, or is that a shift in activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Some of that, but I think primarily it's because I was in the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this is a broader, statewide association for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

## CHAPTER 3

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### MOVING INTO THE POLITICAL ARENA

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All of your working life you've been in business, at one level or another. Did these development groups with which you served—the Washington Retail Council, the Association of Washington Industry—more or less represent your point of view, or you theirs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think basically the philosophies of those groups pretty well jibe with mine. I'm conservative fiscally and socially. Because I was associated with Dan Evans for so many years, I've become a bit more moderate in the social scheme of things. Although I still get a little edgy about the way some things are headed. But I think the initial thrust was my concern about taxes and spending.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For you, I would hazard a guess, the fewer taxes the better, and the less spending the better, or is that too broad a statement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't mind voting for taxes in the Legislature as long as I could see that the money was being spent for the purpose it was sold on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Before we leave the business arena, I wanted to ask you to reflect about the role of business in society. I think many business people see that business is kind of the creative

edge in American life. It's where you get new things started, provide new services, products, whatever—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Jobs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What does business have to teach people about community, how the world works?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think business people have a real opportunity to do that because, particularly in the retail sector, you're dealing with people—customers—all the time. I don't think that business people ought to be negative about everything, but I think that they ought to point out some things business has done in the community and in the state and in the nation.

Then, I think there is an obligation to also point out some of the hardships that regulation, taxes and so on have had on business over the years. It's an educational process and it just depends a lot, particularly in a small community, on the people that are involved and who are sending out the message.

I think we've got to have a new direction in our schools. We're throwing a lot of responsibilities onto the school system and I think a lot of the things that we're passing to them—quite frankly—are pretty liberal. I don't think that these young minds are getting the full picture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know that school curriculums get cluttered up with every cause in the world.

**Mr. Eldridge:** All kinds of stuff. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think business should somehow pick up more of that agenda?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they should be headed in that direction. The Association of Washington Business had "Business Week," where one week a year they gather students from all around the state and take them to Eastern Washington

University or Central or wherever, and they divide them up into groups where they have speakers and they give them problems to solve having to do with business, and I think that's helped a lot. They started that in the late fifties, early sixties and I think they're still doing it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Business people, by being involved in schools, then, in their communities, in different walks of life can bring forward this way of looking at things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think some of these programs that encourage businesses to hire one student a year or something like that, those are good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Keep the relationships going, yes.

You have told me a lot about your feelings about unions in other conversations. That's the other side of some of these questions. I'd like to go back to that now. You started by saying about how your father felt about unions and union recruiting in your store particularly, and how your thoughts about unions developed from your experiences.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We really didn't pay too much attention, because Mount Vernon was pretty much an agriculture/commercial center for the area. Although in the early twenties and into the Depression era—because we were timber oriented to some extent: there were mills in Anacortes and the logging companies operated a lot of them in the Sedro Woolley area—there were some really radical union groups, particularly in the Anacortes area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would those be the Wobbly types? The IWWs [International Workers of the World]?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Every once in a while they'd load a bunch of those union people on trucks

and they'd come over to the Mount Vernon area and drive around through the residential areas and they'd be waving the red flags and just kind of taunting the housewives.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would they do that? Sort of, "Here we are. What are you going to do about it?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess so. I was pretty young at the time but I was aware of the activity. But I didn't really know too much of the background.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would these be kind of scary looking people to you? Sort of hooligan types?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They looked like they'd just come out of the woods or out of the mill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of rough?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Big, burly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You told me that at one point some group came and tried to unionize your store. First of all, how many employees did you have? I thought you were kind of small.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We were real small. We had two women clerks, plus we always had a high school boy who swept and emptied the garbage and washed the windows, that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would anyone attempt to unionize such a tiny operation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When they started coming in, their excuse was that Safeway wasn't paying what they should and they were working their people long hours and all that. So they came in and that's where they hit. They organized the Safeway employees and then they just kept spreading out and hit everybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What union would that be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was the retail clerks. We had any number of incidents. When they came to our place of business, they found we always paid our clerks more than the union wage, and if one of the clerks needed a day off for whatever reason, that was fine; we didn't get into a contest about it. Then there might be a time when we wanted them to stay an hour later in the evening, for example.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little give-and-take?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And we always just worked that out. We didn't make a contest out of it by once a year saying, "This is what you have to do and this is what we have to do."

By and large, I believe ninety-nine percent of the employers operated that way. If there was any organization push on the part of the business people it was through the Chamber of Commerce. In other words, once a year they'd probably talk about what the minimum wage ought to be and the hours and that sort of thing. It was never a problem.

To the best of my knowledge, it was probably not a problem with Safeway either. They may have been paying the lowest level, but then they weren't getting the best people either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there enough mobility that the better people could find better jobs, or were they a little bit trapped?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that there were quite a few opportunities for good people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Earlier you told me a story about union carpenters and your store. Could you tell me that again for the record?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. My dad had passed away and my mother and I decided that we wanted to put new fixtures in, shelving and display tables and so on. So we went to three or four different places around the state to look at new installations

and finally decided what we wanted. We contacted the fixture company and they came in with a plan and we said, fine, we'd go with it. They built all the fixtures in their plant in Tacoma and on the appointed day, first thing in the morning, up rolled this big semi truck with all the fixtures in it and a van with two carpenters and some of the smaller items.

Before they came in to unload the fixtures and get them set, they went over to the union hall and then they came back and said, "We can't install these fixtures. You're on the unfair list over at the union hall." So they got in their van and went back to Tacoma.

We called the company, and said, "We've got a semi load of furniture here that needs to be unloaded and set up in our store, and we've got a signed contract here that says that's what's going to happen." They were kind of caught in the middle.

So, anyway, he said, "We can get a couple of our salesmen to come up and they can help install if you can get some help unloading," and so on. I called on three or four of my Junior Chamber friends—there was a banker, an insurance man and a couple of retailers and they appeared. Four of them got in the truck and they'd set these pieces of furniture and shelving off on the sidewalk and the others would just take them and push them into the store.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have your whole store kind of pulled apart to make space for this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had taken the merchandise off the shelving all along one side and then the first row of tables.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a lot of work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. My mother and my wife and the two clerks did that and they got all the merchandise over to the other side of the store. We had cleared about one-third of the space.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're poised to go. You can't just have the truck drive away.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That's right. As fast as they unloaded it, the fellows would bring it into the space and just put it down because the two salespeople were there and they knew where it would go and how to put it together and all that. So we got the shelving in first and just as soon as we'd get a section of shelves in, my mother and the other women would clean everything and put it on the shelf.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you're moving through your storage sections making way. This is a highly coordinated effort.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And the next morning we were open for business. The union guys were across the street in the tavern all the time, just kind of grinding their hands, "Boy! We got 'em this time." We just put coverings up over the display windows so they couldn't see what was going on inside. Boy! When we opened up the next morning, they were really surprised.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have given you a certain amount of satisfaction.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure, but I didn't like that kind of confrontation. Right after that we opened again, they put pickets on the street in front of the store. Of course, the Teamsters wouldn't cross the picket lines so it shut off our incoming merchandise. So we'd go and pick it up and go in the alley and unload it in the back. Then they put a picket on the back door of the place.

There was a school teacher, who went home to Seattle one weekend and got to talking around the table about this to her brother who was, I suppose, college age. And he said, "I'd like to go up and give them a hand." So he came up and the two of them decided that he would dress up like a Negro mammy and go out and just walk right with the picket. During the course of about three weekends I think he wore out about six pickets. They just couldn't stand it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he out there kind of joking and fooling around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. And skipping along with them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For them that's a serious activity. So he's just out there making fun of them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. The other union people began to kid the pickets and that didn't set too well with them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The issue was that they wanted to unionize your store. What did your clerks think of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They didn't think it was necessary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What if you had allowed the union people to come in, don't your clerks have to vote on this? Whether they want to join the union?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In those days it was pretty loose, and they'd just decide to come in. There was not a retail clerks organization of any kind. The Safeway clerks may have had a loosely knit group that would bargain with Safeway management, but the rest of us just did it on a one-to-one basis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if there wasn't a way of going through the process and be done with it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know with my dad it was just a matter of principle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you finally resolve this? Did they just get tired and go away?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All the time that we owned the business we never were unionized.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they keep coming back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** On occasion they'd take a run at us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Dave Beck was a force to be reckoned with in the fifties as the head of the Teamsters. He was big in Seattle; does his reach include places like Mount Vernon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some. But because we really didn't have any industry there, well, quite frankly, most people were sympathetic to us. Even the agricultural community, those people had no use for the unions. As a matter of fact, we had farmers come in who had never been in the store before and say, "Just wrap up some empty boxes and we'll carry 'em out just like we'd been in here buying a lot of stuff," which they did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just making a kind of statement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Too bad they didn't actually purchase something. That would have been even more help.

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of them did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. Did you cross the picket line?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This has obviously had a big impression on you over the years. Can you see any use for unions, say in industry or other kinds of enterprises?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably in places like the garment industry in New York, that sort of thing. I don't know about the Bon Marché or Nordstrom, because I've never been involved

with a larger entity. I just know that we had never had a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Unions are, in general, associated with large units, huge industries or very large operations of one kind or another, say, making automobiles or steel or coal mining. So that's a different thing all together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a different breed of cat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Moving on from your thoughts on unions, what did you see as the role of government as another big entity in life? How things are organized? How did you view what government should do or not do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Back in those days, you knew that there was a government and that if you had trouble with garbage not being picked up, you knew who to call. Or if you had a burglary or a break-in, you knew who to call. If your business or your home was on fire, you knew who to call. But you didn't have all the government people calling on you, wanting to check this and check that and inspect this and inspect that. Where now there isn't a day goes by that somebody comes and says, "We're from the government and we're here to help you."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you say to yourself, "sure!" Is it the proliferation of regulations that you're most concerned about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a big part of it, and I think that's the one thing that business people really get put upon with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the difference between a government serving people and regulating them, is that where you like to draw the line?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a good way to put it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those things you talked about before are pretty direct services: fire protection, police, street, sewers, water, things like that. Would this be the kind of idea you would bring to the Legislature? “This is what government should do, and this is where it should not be?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that’s probably the philosophy that I carried with me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of course, you were coming in to office right about when government is about to explode in its size and reach.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It’s interesting to see that this is what you start with; we’ll see what happens later on when you’re actually in the midst of decisions and policy-making.

Just before we get into talking about your political involvement, I want to create a bit of a picture as to what Mount Vernon and Skagit County looked like just about that time, in the early 1950s. Was your economy much impacted by the war?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a lot of people in the Skagit County area who worked to build the Naval Air Station on Whidbey Island. And then a lot of them worked as civilian employees once it was operating.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there nothing there before? Was that a new development?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was brand new. It’s a tremendous plant. A lot of new people came into the area and a lot of them stayed and a lot of them are still there. My family had a cabin on Whidbey Island near Coupeville, so when we’d go to the beach we’d drive through that Oak Harbor area and so we followed the issue along. There were a lot of people who lived in Mount Vernon and worked in Oak Harbor. They drove back and forth, and it had quite an influence on the area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** About how many new people do you think there would have been? What kind of population increase are we looking at here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oak Harbor was—I’m just guessing—in the early days, probably one thousand. I suppose there are twenty thousand or more there now. There was a lot of building, both in the downtown area and also housing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s pretty substantial then. It’s not just the naval base; it’s all the services and schools and roads and things that those people need.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the farmers? During the war years farming was a booming enterprise because people needed to produce a lot of food. And farming took a leap at that time in mechanization and production.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much. And the other thing was that farmers were able to get gasoline and building materials and all of the things that they needed so they could carry on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there new plants and machinery brought in for processing the food? Did it spill out into that kind of industrial development?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, there were some expansions and some consolidations of plants.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, there was a kind of a little economic jolt there. Did it carry on or was there a downturn after the war?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because of the influx of people and the number who stayed on in the area it held up pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Transformed things a bit. There's also the baby boom. The Depression was over, the war's over, "now let's get down to living." There must have been a certain impact with that too; when you were in the Legislature one of the things you had to deal with was schools that were crowded with all these new children.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of school building in those days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. So there's a kind of influx and activity here. Post-war housing was also a real problem. There was such a backlog of people wanting houses that as soon as the wartime restrictions were released and there was any kind of money for houses, there just weren't enough building materials to keep up with what people wanted. One of your Rotary magazine pieces, in their discussion of the issue, said, "We've got to somehow get this coordinated here."

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was certainly a shortage of materials, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's logging in your area, too. Would that be booming then, too, because of the housing industry boom?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In Bellingham, there were some mills where they turned out finish materials. But most of the mills in our area were rough; they were sawmills. They took the logs and sawed them into big cants and then a lot of it went to Japan and they'd manufacture it over there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it sounds like the area was fairly prosperous?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Even during the Depression.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wasn't too hard hit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But there were people who were out going door-to-door for a handout. My

dad was chairman of the Red Cross for two or three years at that time and I can remember him getting seed from the seed growers. It's a big seed area. Lots of cabbage and turnip and beet seed and they shipped it all over the world. But anyway, they'd give the Red Cross bulk seeds, huge quantities, and I can remember my dad putting those into individual little packets and then those they'd give to people who were having a problem, didn't have enough to eat, and they'd plant their gardens. So there was always something like that.

And then farmers who had apples and pears and so on would let people come in and pick the windfalls. And there was some milk surplus in those days, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think of the big dairy area as being more up by Lynden. That was also down in your area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In Skagit County they go more for—I don't want to say prize or perfection—but the leading dairymen there grow for production. They ship their cows all over the world.

My grandfather had a little five-acre farm just on the outskirts of Mount Vernon and he had one, maybe two, cows at the most and chickens and a big garden. The dairy truck would stop by every day and he had a milk stand out on the road and they'd pick up a can of milk maybe every day or two, and he'd get a little check at the end of the month.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It all helped.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. The people did get along pretty well. But people didn't have much cash to spend in the store, so it was difficult. I remember my mother had a cigar box on the desk and she'd take the day's receipts and put them in the cigar box and she'd count it every night. And when she got enough to pay the rent, then they'd begin to spend it for something else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your store ever take bartered goods instead of money during the Depression?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I believe we did. We took chickens and I think we took rabbits on occasion. I remember eating a lot of rabbit meat, and I always liked it. But we got along pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the war years and just afterwards when the area and community are growing and changing, did your store also take on a new level of development at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We expanded some. We had been a stationery store, kind of a broad-base, little bit of everything in that line. During the war years and after, we got more into office furniture and all kinds of record keeping equipment and paper supplies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were new things being invented for office work then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. We were just getting into computer punch cards and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you follow along with all those developments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to any great extent, but we did carry a lot of the supplies. It became pretty specialized and then we got more into the gift items. If I had stayed in the business, I would have gone into that even more because it's a high ticket item and the profit is good and it's fairly easy to handle. We had a line of top grade glassware and pottery, and we did picture framing and we sold framed pictures.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were really branching out, yes. It would be kind of fun to do the purchasing for all that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We used to go to the gift shows in Seattle and occasionally down to Portland to select merchandise.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mentioned how your father was always saying that small business was not well represented. You also—perhaps inadvertently, not with this in mind—had been creating quite a name for yourself in the community. Did that begin to translate into political involvement and thoughts of running for the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The legislative situation was that in 1950 I had been the local campaign chairman for Walter Williams, the former state senator's father. He was running against Warren Magnuson for the U.S. Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you happen to do that? Were you already involved in Republican politics?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was a precinct committeeman and I had, even in college, passed out leaflets and had campaign signs and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would have been the candidates in those years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Wendell Wilkie was the presidential candidate and Art Langlie was governor during part of that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** About when did you become involved in precinct level politics?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the late forties.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** About the same time you're beginning to do all these other things we've discussed? What does a precinct chairperson do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The first thing that they tell you to do is canvass your precinct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Get to know everybody?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Get to know everybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How big is a precinct in your case?

**Mr. Eldridge:** About three-hundred and fifty.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Houses or people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** People—voters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You probably already knew a lot of them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's not too onerous, I guess. So, would you walk up and knock on doors or what would you do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's what you're supposed to do. I got together with my mother and a couple of neighbors and we just went through the phone book and put an R or D by those that we knew. Then, if you inquire around you can usually get people pegged. When you get into the filing period you ordinarily work actively for two or three different candidates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be on all levels, city council and up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Ordinarily, a good, active precinct committee person would probably have materials and a telephone list for the presidential candidate, the governor, Congress, whoever. Maybe the local legislative candidate and then, of course, the county offices: sheriff and county commissioner, auditor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** School board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not so much on nonpartisan races.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a little bit different. I imagine in a town the size of Mount Vernon it would be no real secret what party people were, even for the nonpartisan races.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You would call people up and ask them to vote, or what would be your responsibility then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Then what I did for a couple of elections was I developed a list of all the registered voters in the precinct and then I put together that list with a copy. And then I had someone at every polling place, when someone would vote, they'd check them off. And then about four in the afternoon I'd go around and pick up all those lists and then we'd call the people who hadn't voted. Then about seven o'clock we'd go back and check them again.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To see if your call did any good?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And at that point if there were still people who hadn't voted, we'd volunteer to pick them up and get them to the polls.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just a little extra help there. Did people appreciate that, or was that a little pushy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, most people said, "Oh boy! I forgot. I'm sure glad that you called." Then there were others who'd say, "Oh, I'm not voting. There's nobody that's any good," or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At that point do you try to talk them into it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not particularly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a lot of work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Really working your precinct takes some time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd really get to know people, though. So, you're involved in that and you start to work on campaigns. Was the Walter Williams campaign your first one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was the first one where I was directly responsible for organizing the campaign committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you'd probably watched a few campaigns and got a sense of how to do it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the main ways of reaching people? Back then, was there much use of television?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Very little. We'd invite the candidates to come to town and we'd set up meetings for them to attend.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you'd address all the different groups?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I remember on Walter Williams' campaign, he was going to make a swing through town and wanted to get some people together, so I thought, boy! I'll show him how we do things here. I went down and I rented the Moose Hall and I had them set up three hundred chairs. Then I got our most notorious local attorney, who always liked to hear himself talk, to introduce Walter Williams. And I also got the high school band to be there to be playing when the folks were arriving. In those days for ten dollars the high school band would play for most anything. They played for a lot of political meetings, you know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think that happens anymore.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Gosh, no. But, you know, ten dollars for the band fund and they could make a few dollars for band trips or uniforms or whatever. Anyway, it went into the fund. The meeting was scheduled for 8:00 p.m. and I got there a little before eight and walked in the door, and there wasn't a single person there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you breaking into a cold sweat at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was a little concerned, yes. Walter Williams arrived with his driver. The fellow who was going to do the introduction arrived and gradually a few people trickled in and at the appointed hour we had about seventy people there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not three hundred.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not three hundred. So we had a lot of empty chairs in the room. Then the person who was going to introduce Walter, I introduced him and welcomed everybody. He got up there and it took him twenty minutes to introduce Walter Williams. He was one of these guys who just really liked to hear himself talk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you waiting for that vaudeville cane to kind of give him a yank off the stage at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was about ready to throttle him. We had a platform there and the three of us were on the platform and he introduced Walter and Walter greeted the folks, and he said, "I'm not going to stand up here on this platform. I want to be down with the voters." So he got down off the platform and kind of wandered around through the crowd and gave his remarks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a nice touch? Was that warm?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it was. He was well received and I kept thinking, “Oh, man, I wish we’d have had this building full of people.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you’re just up there in agony?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn’t too pleasant. But it was a good experience and I learned a lot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You never did that again, I guess.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I didn’t.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I once heard Joel Pritchard say that the way to do a successful event like that is to get a hall that is much smaller than you need, and don’t set up a whole lot of chairs so that people see you visibly hauling out chairs so it will look like you’re having a smashing event. Did you then switch to that line of thinking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I used a smaller hall.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don’t know what was regular then, but getting that many people out now is hard, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. It’s tough to get people out. And TV has made a real change in how you do things these days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** TV was still a new medium. Did you use radio?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. When I was campaigning from 1952 on, we always developed and used a few radio spots. Radio wasn’t too expensive in those days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you’ve got some main centers in your district, you don’t have to hit everybody?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We must have had eight or ten weekly newspapers in the district. I used to always make it a practice in my own elections before the primary campaign to write a check to every one of the weekly newspapers, and then hand deliver it to them and say, “We’ll be placing some ads, but we wanted you to have this in advance.” That was always good for a story, you know. The fact that a politician would pay in advance. Because a lot of times people would come in and decide they were going to run for office and place all this advertising and then after the election they’d be gone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So paying up front is a goodwill gesture, then? It’s just a mark of integrity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And if they’ve only so much space in their edition for political stories and so on, you’re apt to get the edge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, I see. Now at this time, you’re a precinct person, but you’re also a Jaycee. In 1946, there was an Initiative 166 concerning the acquisition of private power properties by PUDs, asking should the people be allowed to vote first before such an acquisition happens. It seems like the Jaycees got at least somewhat involved in that campaign.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think a lot depended on where they were located, because we had a lot of strong Jaycee chapters in PUD counties, Clark County, Snohomish County, Chelan County. It was more on the individual basis, not as the club.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it be, then, more sort of civic issue? “Let’s all discuss this and be aware of this issue and get out the vote,” rather than take sides? Would it be more along those lines?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of it was, yes. And you didn’t find individual clubs taking side with candidates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They wouldn't endorse?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But would you have candidate forums? "Get out the information."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. Just an informative type. Although the Jaycees did get involved in the daylight saving time issue. Of course, that went crosswise with some of our rural clubs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why that particular issue? What is it about daylight savings time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a lot of guys that had come out of the service and they'd been in the warm climates and liked the long evenings and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So when they'd get off work there's some evening left? Whereas farmers are ready to pack it in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And, of course, the farmers always say, "We need to start later in the day so that the dew had a chance to dry off the fields."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why couldn't they just start whenever they wanted to? I guess I'm a little confused.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The dairy farmers always said, "Well, you know the cows are ready to milk," and everybody said, "Do the clock thing." Of course, once it got into effect they adjusted pretty easily.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I remember reading about that and thinking, "Why can't you just milk your cows when you are ready to? What's it got to do with the clock?" But maybe the delivery schedule with the trucks, and what have you, is somehow tied in here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And then, of course, the other thing is, if some farmers do and others don't, why then everything's out of whack.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And there's also that people don't like change. "We're happy. Leave us alone."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that was probably the biggest thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's another big issue in 1948, Initiative 172, which seems to get a lot of press throughout the area. It was being pushed by the Washington Commonwealth Federation to expand pensions and welfare, which of course rippled into the state budget pretty heavily. Would the Jaycees, or would your precinct group, or would you yourself have gotten involved in those sorts of discussions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There were some business groups that were directly involved, but here again, it was kind of a philosophical thing with the general public. You had two or three real radical types in the state that were out pushing this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like William Pennock?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pennock and Rabbit and I can't think of the other one. In the Legislature there were some ultra liberal, radical types.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. They'd gotten in there during the Depression years. Would this be something that you would be working against?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was a little before I really got involved in issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was in 1948. So that's perhaps a bit early. What about the presidential election that year of Governor Dewey against President Truman? Would you have been involved on any level with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Only that the people around my group in Mount Vernon in the business community were all pretty much supporting Dewey. I can recall election eve being with my good friend Don Kallstrom and we were extolling the fact that Dewey had been elected and then all of a sudden, that ain't the way it was!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were reading the headlines. That seemed to come as a great surprise to an awful lot of people, including President Truman.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly Governor Dewey must have been surprised. He seemed quite unaware of the tide. Governor Langlie was re-elected that year; it was his second term, I believe, after an interruption in service.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, he was on the ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was quite a lot of activity in that period. Also, in 1948—and I was wondering if this had any impact on your district politics—the state bought the ferry system from the Black Ball Company to prevent a shut-down of the system. They needed higher rates and they weren't getting them approved. The wages had gone up but the ferry rates were not keeping pace, or something to that effect. You're at the jump-off point for the San Juan Islands, your county. Did that impact your area very much?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that it did. The people who lived in the islands have to have transportation regardless of who does it and what it costs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess it got a little dicey there for awhile where it looked like there wasn't going to be a system. I was just wondering how that played out in your area. Whether people were relieved that the government took it over?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of animosity towards Black Ball. They felt the service wasn't good and the rates were too high.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of gouging people a little?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All of that. But then once the government took over they found that maybe it wasn't so bad after all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's kind of a natural monopoly no matter who's running it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It almost has to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was also the period of the Korean War, getting into the early fifties and the McCarthy era and some events on the national level. Were you tracking any of this? Did this interest you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seemed far away?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Very far away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the Korean War? I know in some parts of the Sound that stimulated the economy with all the different activities. Did that have an impact in your area, at the naval base?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that it was any great impact. Things were going on and troops were moving through the area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't really know the scale of the crowds of military personnel who were being processed, through those ports. Maybe it was just a continuation rather than an upsurge?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's more like it. I don't think it was anything on a great scale.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you follow international events much? Was that an area of interest for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know some Republicans were very keen on watching General MacArthur and what happened there. Relieving him of his command, his duties in Korea. That became kind of a celebrated issue for some people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I recall we had one attorney who was strong for the military and who thought what happened to MacArthur was a terrible thing. He supported him for the presidential nomination. I remember going to a number of forum-type meetings and he'd get up and bang the table and extol MacArthur's qualifications and qualities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** His position didn't take with you, I gather.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I was for Eisenhower, although at this point I would have been at a loss to remember exactly why.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was something about him. He had that charisma or almost a mystique in a way that drew people to him.

**Mr. Eldridge:** After it was all over, I was really disappointed. He ran on the Republican ticket, but he certainly wasn't a Republican. I think he just figured, "I've got the name and the background and let's do it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know you mentioned to me once that you didn't think he had any coattails, that he didn't help other Republicans; he just got himself in there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He didn't do anything for the Party that I could tell.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people just don't see that part, although he's the head of the Party, I imagine, being president. What about Richard Nixon? He was a real Party activist. Did he ever come through your area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was in Seattle, and then I met him in 1968 at the Republican National Convention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you think of him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was a little concerned about how brash he was. But now that he's over the falls and out of the picture, I think he should go down as one of the great presidents. He really had a keen understanding of a lot of things that people didn't give him credit for.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was certainly a foreign policy expert.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He really was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think from what I've read that's what he would most like to be remembered for. Opening China.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That may have been a mistake! What goes around comes around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But then, he was just getting started, really, back in the early fifties. He was an eager young Congressman out to make his name, suddenly catapulted into the vice presidency.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was one of those situations where he was at the right place at the right time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Seemed to be, yes. Let's see, what would have been the big issues for your district in these early years? What would be the things that Walter Williams, say, could come in and tell Skagit County that it would want to hear?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think this was kind of the era of the ‘good government’ pitch.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Good means what: efficient, progressive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Honest.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As opposed to say, Mon Wallgren? People coming in with a new message are always sort of reacting to what is. I was just wondering what the contrast would be.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Mon was kind of tarred with Magnuson, Truman, Jimmy Hoffa. They always talk about Mon and his bourbon and poker get-togethers in the basement of the governor’s mansion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little bit too colorful, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Whereas Langlie was—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Langlie took the bar out of the basement and put in milkshake machines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There’s a contrast. So, that was more your type of governor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, yes, although I like a drink as well as the next person. But, yes, there was a real contrast there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Walter Williams ran against George Kinnear and a woman, Janet Tourtelotte.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Incidentally, her husband was the regional Small Business administrator.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that help her get out her name?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Or visa versa. Because she had long been involved in Republican politics.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** George Kinnear was well-known in the Seattle area. Was he as well-known outside of Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not as well-known, but he was fairly well-known outside of Seattle because he got around the state quite a bit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Kinnear was a really big political name in Washington. And also, Albert Canwell was involved in that race.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Al Canwell from Spokane. Of course, Al Canwell was the local—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Joe McCarthy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That’s just what I was thinking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would these candidates all appear on panels together? How would you help Walter Williams stand out from these other people? I guess I think of him as being very much like George Kinnear.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were quite a lot alike. Walter Williams was very active in his church and with the YMCA and he’d been out on the speaking circuit for both his church and for the Y. He was also well-known around the state. He was a mortgage banker and well regarded with an excellent reputation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the Republican platform in those days? Just the “good government” kind of issues? I was wondering if there was anything that stood out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The platform was against an income tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Langlie was supporting a bit of an income tax for schools. Two percent or something like that. Though it doesn’t go anywhere.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. A flat income tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you get to know Walter Williams? Were you just a local person that he hooked up with or did you already know him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't know him at all, but Bob Graham, who was an attorney in Seattle and active with me in the Junior Chamber, was also quite active in the Seattle Chamber. He was sort of a behind-the-scenes guy and he knew all the movers and shakers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he just come to you and say, "Hey, I've got this great candidate. Can you spearhead this in your area?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's kind of the way it worked out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering how you chose Walter Williams over George Kinnear; weren't they a very similar kind of Republican?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was the association.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Besides renting the Moose Hall, did you do anything else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Nothing spectacular like that!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You shot your wad there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He did win in Skagit County, I believe, over the other candidates, but not in the wider race.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, perhaps you didn't injure him in any way. Did you enjoy that involvement? Some people get hooked on campaigning.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tell you, I certainly didn't. I didn't particularly like campaigning for somebody else. Even worse was campaigning for myself.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you were learning how to do it, at any rate. Were you at all thinking of going into politics yourself at this date?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Had no inkling at all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people see this as training; other people just do it with no thought or plan. You told me something about the Jack Westland campaign in 1952. Did you play a role in that, or is that just something that you watched from the sidelines?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were both on the ballot and both campaigning in the same places, because Skagit was in that congressional district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that wasn't something you actually got involved in yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you endorse each other or any of that kind of thing, or was that not really applicable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably we did—informally.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was someone who was congenial to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For those who've never heard of Jack Westland, could you give me a thumbnail sketch of who he was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was an Everett insurance person and his notoriety came when he won the US amateur golf championship. That put him on every sport page in the state and he was well

known, very personable. He learned politics pretty fast. After he was elected, he spent most of his time in the Washington, D.C. area playing golf with members of Congress and the business tycoons. He probably would have served a longer tenure if he had paid a little more attention to his district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People notice that kind of thing after a while.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I always enjoyed associating with him. We drove to many campaign meetings around Skagit County together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I have a map here of Skagit County, of District Forty, which was your district. It includes all of the San Juan Islands and it had Mount Vernon, Sedro Woolley, Concrete, I can't think of all the different towns, but it goes clear over to the Cascades.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The crest of the Cascades. It was a good sized district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As you were saying earlier, it had fishing, farming, forestry, some industry, some towns with a retail base. I don't know about other districts, but that seems to be quite a wide range of people. Was there something that united all these kinds of people? Do they have a similar kind of background? When you'd go out, what would be your message to all these different kinds of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The thread that went pretty well through all the areas of the county would be agriculture. There's some agriculture in all parts of the county. Even though it might be in an area where they're primarily logging, there would still be some agriculture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're not a farmer; what's your message to farmers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** "Get the government out of your pocket."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Don't the farmers get a lot of help from the government?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Subsidies and that sort of thing, but it's surprising, at least in our area, a lot of them just weren't too enthused about that. They'd rather be left alone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a maxim for many farmers: the independence of your own place.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the loggers have a similar perspective on issues? The ideal of the western way of life, the rugged kind out there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think to some extent you'd probably find that. Independent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And fishermen? They'd also have the same kind of outlook?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a pretty outdoorsy kind of place by the sounds of things. What was the condition of the roads while you were out there running around meeting with all these people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not too bad. I'll say this, our county commissioners over the years have always taken care of the roads.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would roads be a big issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it would be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you get over to the San Juans? Would you go over there quite a bit or is that almost like a different thing all together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's different all right, but you'd take the ferry or a private boat, and on occasion you'd take a seaplane over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Have the San Juans have changed considerably? Parts of it are getting to be a little bit overrun with rather well-to-do people who use it as a retreat. What was it like back then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was getting that way. As I said, it was quite an agricultural county, but we did have some fairly wealthy people in the San Juans. Some of them went into dairying or they grew peas or whatever, and built lovely homes. They became involved in campaigns over there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It must have been rather time consuming. It's a pretty big district. Getting over to the San Juans is not easy, even today. Although maybe you didn't have the ferry lineups then that you do now just to get there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It took a lot of time to get out and around. But I had a friend who was in a flying club and he had a seaplane that was available. I recall that I and my good friend, Bob McDonald, who was a seed grower, and Bill Bannister, an attorney, took off early one morning off the Skagit River and flew to the islands. We'd just run the plane up on the beach and Bob and I would jump out with our handful of signs and put them up wherever it was handy and then we'd have our pamphlets and go up to the local store and the few houses that were around, so we covered quite a lot of territory in a day's time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That sounds exciting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, it was fun.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you doorbell a lot? Was that a method that you used?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't personally, but I had a lot of people who were out doorbelling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wasn't that a big way of "meeting and greeting," to get out there and knock on doors?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about endorsements in the paper and that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Lots of newspaper advertisements.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And speaking to groups and going to picnics? Glad-handing everyone and kissing all the babies? What was your style?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All that sort of thing. I went to a lot of meetings. I'd visit all the Rotary Clubs in the legislative district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We skipped over how you came to be a candidate in the first place. How did you choose to run? There's a difference between campaigning for other people and being the candidate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It goes back to Jack Westland in a way. There was a group of us in the Mount Vernon, La Conner, Burlington area that got together every couple of weeks and we'd sit around trying to figure out who we could get to run for Congress. We went through a whole list of people and we even interviewed a number of them.

Then we got Jack Westland on the list and he came in and we sat down and spent an evening with him and everybody was pretty impressed. We broke up and got together one more time and all these people kept looking at me and said, "Why don't you run for Congress?" I said, "No way! I might get elected and then I'd have to go to Washington, D.C. and I wouldn't do that for anybody." "Okay." I said, "Someday, I might run for the Legislature," and about ten days later a little delegation came to see me and said, "Well, you said you'd run for the Legislature, now's the time."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your words came back to bite you!

**Mr. Eldridge:** So what happened was, we had a three-seat district and at that point in time we had two Republicans, Jim Ovenell and Grant Sisson, and one Democrat, Emma Abbott Ridgway. She'd been there for quite awhile. Grant Sisson had been there for quite awhile. His dad had been there before him. Jim Ovenell had been a county commissioner, and a good one, and he was a very popular person. He had a couple of farms, one down in the Burlington area, and one up on the Skagit River above Concrete.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were supposed to take on Emma Abbott Ridgway?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. They said, "We haven't had any luck finding anybody who wants to run, and we think maybe this is the year that we can take her out."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was she like? If you could pause for a minute and give some notion of her.

**Mr. Eldridge:** She was quite active in Sedro Woolley in civic affairs and so on. Her husband was in the insurance business. She was pretty liberal and quite active in Democratic politics. She could be a little caustic at times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A pretty strong figure? No lightweight.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. She was a tough old gal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were pretty young—in your early thirties. Was she older?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was older than I. I think of the three of them—Jim was probably the oldest and Grant Sisson and Emma were probably about the same age.

Because there'd been a lot of maneuvering around trying to find candidates, and because it was a two-county district, you had to file in Olympia. So Jim and Grant Sisson filed early and Emma filed early. We got right up to the last day of filing and I had to make up my mind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are you kind of looking around and realizing there wasn't anybody else because you'd been beating those same bushes? You don't sound like you have a lot of fire in the belly for this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't. I wasn't too enthused, really. Anyway, it got down to the last day of filing, I drove down to Olympia and went in and filed, went back home and the next day I read in the paper that two other people had filed, so there were five of us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a crowded race. What tipped you over into saying, "Okay, I'll do it?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought maybe I might be able to make it. So we went into the primary and there were five of us Republicans for two positions. Only one that would possibly be open if we could beat the Democrat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you were pitting yourselves against each other, inadvertently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. We'd go to the Republican meetings and there'd be five of us for three positions. We went through the primary and I was running against Emma Abbott Ridgway.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not against your fellow Republicans? So, when you made speeches, that's who you'd talk about beating?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Grant Sisson and Jim Ovenell, we figured they were probably going to be shoo-ins. Then there was a woman and

another fellow who was in the canning business. So anyway, we went into the primary and when the thing shook out Jim Ovenell ran first, Emma ran second, I ran third and Grant Sisson stayed home.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you beat him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I beat him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a surprise to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really wasn't looking too much, but we didn't bounce Emma. Grant was really crushed. He just couldn't believe that his own party would turn him down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He'd been in office in 1941, '43, not in '45, then '47, '49, '51. That's a pretty long time. Did you have any feeling about how that happened? Was there something about him or people just wanted someone new? Or was there something about you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I'll tell you, I think I had the name familiarity even though he'd been in office. There were a lot of people around the county that said, "Well, Grant does all his campaigning and legislation in the Elks Club." He was retired.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe his base was a little too narrow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was against Eisenhower, and I think that hurt him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it kind of a generational thing? And certainly Eisenhower came in with a bang.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think an association there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you particularly associate yourself with the Eisenhower wing? Did you throw his name into the discussions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once I got the nomination then I put my arms around anybody who was handy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering if there were ways to differentiate yourself, amongst that pack of Republicans, what your message was, besides just who you are as a person?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I used a lot of my small business connections. Then my involvement in community affairs, that sort of thing, through the Jaycees and the Rotary Club and so on. Then I had young children who were not yet in school.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You certainly were a dream candidate in that respect. I suppose people could relate to you. You were young. Was that an issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, but it didn't hurt.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was actually an asset, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder if that's also a kind of post-war phenomena. I think that there might be some eras where age and experience are looked to, but in the post-war generation I get this feeling that people wanted somebody younger; there's just this kind of feeling of wanting something new.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because during the war, most of the young men were out of circulation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people played heavily on their veteran's status. That would have been a little bit more problematical for you. Was that something you just kind of left out of the discussions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't play on that at all, because I really hadn't had that much experience. But it didn't hurt me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that was more true immediately after the war when people actually wore their uniforms to get that image out there. Perhaps by '52 that was fading a bit. So, you won. Then what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then we got into the campaign for the general election and I had Irv Stimpson who was in the advertising and public relations business. He put together a campaign format and developed the news releases and the ads and the posters and everything. We determined that we'd spend practically everything that we had in the primary. I think that really helped, and then it carried over into the general election.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd built up a momentum?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then you got to meet up with Emma. Did you hold debates?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not so much debates. You'd go to a meeting and everybody would make their pitch and answer questions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But not against each other? Just one at a time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was your philosophy on attacking her record? Or did you stay away from that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I took the approach of opposing the general Democratic philosophy and action. Because she was so strongly identified with the Party, I figured that was probably the best way to do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were against the Democratic platform but you were for something, too? What was the Republican message in '52?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let me see if I can remember. It was probably God, Home and Motherhood!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With a little apple pie thrown in? You get on the wave of sentiment and you win. The Mount Vernon *Daily Herald* seemed to be on your side. They called you the 'favorite son.' Where would you get an appellation like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's a pretty common term. I think because of my community recognition and all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also you're from Mount Vernon and she's not, so I suppose that helps a little bit. Is Mount Vernon the most populated area of your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If a person is strong in Mount Vernon, can they win? Or would you have to be strong in some other places, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That helps. But you can't win on that alone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you pretty strong all over the district or did you have some pockets?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was strong in Mount Vernon and in the rural areas and less strong in Anacortes and Sedro Woolley.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because Emma Abbott Ridgeway was stronger there or because you just didn't happen to know a lot of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Anacortes has always been a Democratic stronghold. It was pretty labor oriented and the unions are strong there. I think they do a better job of getting their people organized and out on the firing line.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you not spend lots of time there because it was considered a hopeless cause, or what would be your strategy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'd try to contact the known Republicans. There were some good, strong ones over there even though they were outnumbered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Every vote counts. Would you concentrate your efforts in places where you would have more chance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We definitely spent more time and effort there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose you knew the area so well that you would pretty much know what to do and where to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But your district has always been, as far as I understand, characterized as a swing district.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's such that you'd have to campaign pretty hard every time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And every place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And would you try even in the areas where you were a bit weak, would you go there and try to change people's minds, or at least create a presence? Was it the kind of thing you'd have to work on all the time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's what I tried to do. To be effective and in contact with people all year round.

## CHAPTER 4

### FRESHMAN REPRESENTATIVE: 1953

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**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were a mere thirty-four years old when you were first elected in 1952, although you had a wide range of experience. How did you prepare yourself for office?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had only been in the Legislative Building once prior to the time that I appeared for the first session. When I was on the board at Western, I came to Olympia with the other trustees and we met with a subcommittee of the Appropriations committee to review our budget. That was my first visit to the Capitol.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you were appointed as a trustee, was it just by letter or did you meet with Governor Langlie?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I never did meet with him; I just received a letter. I don't recall ever going through a formal swearing-in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In 1952, the Republicans won a majority, which I don't think they'd had since 1947. There you were. Your Party had the governor, the House and the Senate. Did that give you a sense of opportunity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't really think of being there in those terms. I was kind of overwhelmed by the whole thing, being newly elected. The whole system was an eye-opener and it always takes a

while to know where the restroom is and how to get out of your seat and what to do about lunch. All those important things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How much did the governor influence the Legislature? You were of the same party, so I was wondering how much communication there was and how much his agenda had anything to do with your own agenda?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I pretty much supported the governor's programs. Mort Frayn was our Speaker and Zeke Clarke was the floor leader. Governor Langlie had quite an extensive program proposal and neither one of them could tolerate Langlie!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, really!

**Mr. Eldridge:** And they did everything they could to harpoon him. Langlie had a proposal for the merit system, consolidation of the Department of Forestry into Natural Resources, and a number of other fairly major proposals that Zeke and Mort just put their foot on, and consequently, Langlie came out of that session with virtually nothing. Rosellini was elected the next time around and the Democrats took Langlie's program and passed the whole thing and Rosellini signed it and took all the credit for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why was there this antipathy between the Republican leadership in the House and Governor Langlie? Was it more personal than political, do you think?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I just don't know for sure. In our Republican caucus, the freshmen Republicans had the majority—they outnumbered the regulars in our Republican Caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just happened to be a big turnover time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Big turnover, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In 1947, there were seventy-one Republican members but then it dropped down to thirty-two in '49. Then the Party gained a little in '51, but in your first year it gained more to become the majority. But with all these fluctuations, was it the case that there just weren't these old long-time members? They all got voted out, or one thing or another, or retired? Do you think there was a generational shift?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was a marginal kind of thing. I believe that many of the weaker Republican members of the caucus were weeded out over that '49 and '51 period.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Langlie, himself, was a holdover. He's been there since the forties.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was there two sessions, then he was out a session, then he was back in for his third session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he somehow out of step? Did he represent an older view of how to do things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was very conservative. Not like the conservatives today, but he was fiscally conservative and not quite so conservative on social issues. But he just wasn't, I would say, a great leader, although he was quite popular with the voters. Of course, I hadn't been involved in party politics really long enough to know what was going on in the back room.

Two legislators from Bellingham, Hal Arnason and Dutch McBeath, and I were close friends—we'd been active in the Junior Chamber together. Governor Langlie called us into his office three or four times and just pleaded with us to see if we couldn't get his program going.

Of course, we were just freshman legislators, and didn't have a great deal of influence or a following, although we did have

quite a number of other new legislators that we got together with on occasion. There were five or six of us who would go over the agenda and see where we could fit in. Hal Arnason carried the ball on the alien land bill which allowed the two refineries to be built. Dutch McBeath had been on the Bellingham city council for a number of years and was pretty much the expert on cities and county legislation. And Catherine May from Yakima served a couple of terms in the Legislature and then was elected to Congress. She was a real good legislator.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was her area of expertise? What did she work on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I presume the broad area would be social issues. She was a fairly conservative Republican and of course Yakima County was pretty conservative in those days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So in Yakima, that would be farming and water issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Water issues weren't as much of an issue then as they are today. But agriculture, certainly, was important and she had good ties with the agriculture community and also the agricultural organizations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yourself? What did you consider your specialty at that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had always been exposed more to education issues than anything else. Having four youngsters of my own all in school, I was interested.

I suspect if we had gone to the caucus and really pushed, we might have gotten them to move on some of those items. There really wasn't a dominant leader of that group, so consequently we probably weren't as effective as we could have been.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like you say, you have to get on your feet first.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The three major committees were Appropriations, Highways—and Education ranked right up in there. I had put in for the Appropriations Committee and was on that committee, but I didn't get involved directly with any education committees until later on in my career in the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This time you were on Colleges and Universities Committee, so you were involved with Higher Education issues, at least. You were still a Western trustee so there would be some linkage there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. The committee assignments always caused a stir. There were those who weren't happy with their assignments and there was always a certain amount of shifting around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the system? You picked the committees you wanted and then who actually appointed you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a Committee on Committees. Each caucus has its Committee on Committees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wasn't the Speaker who did the appointing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, but ordinarily they took the recommendations of the caucus. But there were some instances when the Speaker would arbitrarily make an appointment, particularly as far as chairmen were concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In an earlier time, the Speaker, I understand, had almost dictatorial powers, but that power was starting to erode a little. The sole power to make appointments was in flux.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And they usually exercised those powers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But this seems to be a period of transition, when the Speaker was made to share

those powers with the Committee on Committees and it's not quite as black and white.

Let's back up then. You're this young, fresh legislator coming in. Were there meetings with the caucus before the Legislature met so that there was a unified feeling of what you were going to do that year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You just came in kind of by yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. B. Roy Anderson was the caucus chairman and he'd be classed as an old fuddy-duddy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Elmer Johnston who was your majority leader?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had kind of an unusual situation with Zeke [Newman Clark] and Mort from Seattle, and then Elmer Johnston and I can't think of the other legislator's name from Spokane. So there were two from Seattle and two from Spokane and then Chet Gordon and Marsh Neill from Whitman County. Those were the six people who were on the Rules Committee from the Republican Party. Oh, and Ken Jones.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was his position?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was assistant floor leader.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a freshman legislator, when you came in did someone take you aside and show you the ropes and get you acquainted with the rules of the House and where things are? How you pass a bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We didn't have much in the way of orientation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You just came in cold? Was that still the era when freshmen basically sat in the back and were quiet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did it feel walking into the chambers and finding your desk?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's kind of awe inspiring because it's a beautiful setting and it's one of the nicer legislative buildings in the country.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's pretty impressive. So, you sat not quite at the back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Almost.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The second to the last row. You sat with your district mate that time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Jim Ovenell.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you want to describe your facilities? I understand that they were basically your desk.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Your desk was your office. There was a bookshelf behind the desk, behind you, and so you put most of your stuff in there and other than that it was right on top of your desk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These days, people are just drowning in paper, but was it like then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It certainly wasn't like it is now. But there was quite a lot of paper generated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And I understand you didn't have a telephone or any kind of secretary or anything like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They had a steno pool and if you wanted to do any letters or news bulletins, you'd send a Page to the steno pool and they'd send a stenographer. She'd either pull up a folding chair or sit in the chair next to you—if the member was off the floor—she'd just sit there and take

dictation. The committee chairmen had one of those big roll-top desks in their committee room, and with a secretary who would do the committee work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they could pull down the roll-top and lock their papers in there? They didn't have to leave everything just lying around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was security ever an issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where you would store papers you might not want people to look at?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Everybody just left things out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand lobbyists could come onto the floor and look at what was on the desks.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As soon as the session was over, the lobbyists would come down and they'd buttonhole legislators right there at their desks. I remember on one occasion, Pearl Wanamaker, who was Superintendent of Public Instruction, came right up to my desk and said, "Eldridge, have you looked at my budget?" And I said, "Yes, it looks a little high, Pearl." She had been in the Legislature from Island County, from Coupeville.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In other words, you actually knew her a little bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not personally, but I knew of her and had been in some meetings where she was present. But, when I said "It looks a little high, Pearl," she walked right off the floor, and the next morning I couldn't see my desk for all the telegrams and telephone messages. Boy! She had a network that just wouldn't quit!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess you don't buck a person like that, not without compromising anyway.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And she had a long memory.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These days the legislators have staff and researchers and a whole troop of people. You basically had nothing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No one, no.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think in your day lobbyists were more important in the sense that that's who you could get information from?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were very important and I would say this, that by and large, the lobbyists were responsible and for the most part pretty objective. All they had to do was lie to you once and they were in trouble, and they knew it. So, consequently, you got good information. And the lobbyists had more contact with their constituency so that they could get on the telephone and get people from your district to come down to Olympia if there was something having to do with retail trade or agriculture or logging or whatever. They could get a room full of people there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand there was no calendar for hearings or any way for the public to really know when a bill was going to be discussed or voted on.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, it wasn't until the period of time that I was Speaker that we got into that. Tom Copeland was the one who did that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you came in—and obviously you don't know any better yet—but did it strike you as a good organization? Did you feel like it was easy to grasp what was going on and how to be active?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you I was kind of awed by the office of Speaker because in those earlier

days, the Speaker really wielded a lot of power and control. Along in later years, we seemed to develop a lot of things by committee, or at least by a smaller group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Speaker seemed to hold all the strings? There weren't all these mechanisms that you developed later to let other people know what was going on.

Did you, in your wildest dreams when you came in here, ever imagine that you would be Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I'd go in and sit down and they'd go through the business and I'd say, "Oh boy, what a responsibility." I had no idea, no inclination, and I was, really, a little terrified by this whole thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You came in, you weren't dreaming of being Speaker, but did you have your own personal goals, or what you thought you would be doing there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I, of course, felt in my own mind I was representing the small business community. I had been involved as a trustee at Western and was interested in higher education. Then, I had a young family and we were going to PTA meetings and working with the youngsters on their school activities and trying to help them with their studies. So I would say that the education area was one that I was interested in a great deal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you bring your family with you to Olympia?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Too disruptive? Some people did, some people didn't. It's amazing how many people brought their kids down here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. The people from eastern Washington, some of them did bring their families over. The Pierce and King County people, most of them commuted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were a little farther away. How long would it take you to drive back and forth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Three or four hours, maybe a little more.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's pretty good. Of course there wasn't the traffic there is now.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There weren't the highways, either. I remember going through Everett with twenty-five stop lights.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you go home pretty regularly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'd go home most weekends.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose near the end of session it would get pretty hard and you'd just have to be here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's one of the things that they haven't been doing in recent years is keeping legislators' feet to the fire. Gosh, they knock off at five o'clock and no night sessions to speak of, no weekend sessions. Boy! We just kept them there and tired them out and then we could usually get something done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where did you live when you were here, especially in those early years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The first session, Dutch McBeath and Hal Arnason and I rented a two bedroom apartment in the Maple Vista Apartments. We were there that session. They called it 'Menopause Manor.' A lot of older people. But it was convenient and they were pretty nice apartments. Nothing fancy, but just real comfortable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you cook for yourselves, or did you mostly eat out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We mostly ate out. We'd have breakfast and we ate in the House cafeteria for lunch, ordinarily. And in the evening, a group of legislators would get together and maybe go out on their own, or there'd be a lobbyist or constituents who'd come down and we'd have a session with them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody ever had to eat alone unless they wanted to, as I understand it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. As a matter of fact, it was pretty hard to eat by yourself.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Olympia was a fairly small town. I would think that there wouldn't be that many places to go where you could actually get away.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounds like it was pretty much twenty-four hours a day fishbowl situation around here. Would that get tiresome?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or is it exhilarating to be constantly immersed in it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If you could use those get-togethers as an opportunity to learn more about problems, I think it was a good situation. But the second session we were there, we rented a room in the old Governor Hotel. We had an apartment on the ground floor behind the front desk. They didn't have much of a lobby in the old Governor Hotel. It had been a beauty shop and still had the plumbing for the wash basins and all that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They just carved out an extra room there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They made kind of an apartment out of that whole area. It really wasn't

too bad. Actually, the Olympian was the major function place. The dining room is where the Urban Onion is now. Then on the second floor there was the ballroom.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go to dances and things of that kind? I think there were quite a few to attend if a person was inclined that way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were quite a few social functions, even in the early years that I was there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go to the governor's inaugural ball?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They used to hold that in the Armory. They were pretty well done, and the Chamber of Commerce, as I recall, sponsored that affair. It was very nice.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You came down to Olympia in 1953, and as we said, the Republicans have the majority in both houses, plus you had a Republican governor. On the surface, an uninitiated person would think that the Republicans were just going to breeze through their agenda, but you were saying that there were some real splits, chiefly between some members and the governor. But what about the Senate? Did you meet very much with the senators? Did you have much contact with them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was on the Appropriations Committee in the House and we met jointly with the Appropriations Committee of the Senate. I remember Asa Clark, a senator from Whitman County, was the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and boy! I thought he just did a tremendous job. He really knew the budget and he had good control of the committee at all times. It was a good experience for me as a new member to have someone like that to pattern my own direction after.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be the chief way people learned how to be legislators, by watching the people they admired?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm aware that that's certainly how most of us got our education in the Legislature. And it's not all bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. Not at all. It probably works as well as any other method.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Over the years, with more staff, we're getting much legislation by staff. Many legislators, I think, that come in now don't have a clue as to what's going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As some people describe it, each legislator is now kind of buffered by all their staff being around them, and they don't relate that well to each other. They don't have to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I think that's one of the big problems today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You only had each other in your day.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can recall, Bob Charette, and Bob Bailey from the Grays Harbor area, and maybe three or four other pretty active Democrats, and there'd be three or four of us from the Republican side, would go down to the Spar and have a couple of beers and decide what we were going to do the next day, and then we'd do it. There wasn't all this wrangling around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would have been the legislators from this first session that would really stand out in your mind—on both sides of the aisle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Julia Butler Hanson was one of the strongest.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A towering figure? She'd already been there for a while. Was she at the height of her power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That session and the next.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I noticed that she was nominated for Speaker from the Democratic caucus. Obviously she wasn't going to get it because you had the majority, but they honored her with that nomination. It seemed to say something about her stature within her party.

**Mr. Eldridge:** She was a strong chairman of what they now call the Transportation Committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Highways then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Boy! She was really something!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was she a person who would just be very forceful, or would she go so far as to yell at people, to intimidate them in some way? She seemed to get her way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** She could put you down faster than anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of a rapier wit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't too much wit about it. It just was straight for the heart.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were people actually afraid of her?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know if they were afraid, but they were certainly awed by her. I know the only time I really had any kind of a run-in with her she had a bill for toll roads. We had a little bill in the highway budget for a couple of bridges up in Skagit County and I went in and appeared before the Highway Committee and I remember before I left the room, she said, "How do you stand on the toll bridge proposal?" I said, "Gosh, I'm really not sure." And she said, "Good luck on your projects."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't give the right answer. Was that like the "kiss of death?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Mort Frayn who was your Speaker? Did you know him very well beforehand?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only by reputation. He had a large printing company in Seattle. Matter of fact, he did most of the printing of the Journals and the Code. He did a lot of state work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of person was he, especially as the Speaker? Was he one who knew all the rules and knew how to maneuver?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was pretty good. He had Bull Howard as his chief clerk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Despite his name—he sounds like some kind of southern sheriff with a nickname like that—but actually he was a lawyer of some sort, wasn't he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was kind of a wheeler and dealer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that Si Holcomb who was previously the clerk had wanted to maintain that position but that he didn't quite manage. That the Republicans wanted Mr. Howard.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Speaker wanted him. Most of us didn't know him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he a special friend of Mort Frayn? Those jobs were patronage jobs, weren't they? The chief clerk and the sergeant-at-arms?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To some extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Sergeant-at-Arms that session was a person called Bud Dawley from Olympia.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He and his brother owned a lot of buildings in Olympia.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go into caucus before you voted on these positions and did the leadership say, "This is who we want, and we just want you to vote for these people," or do you get any kind of discussion going? How does it work behind the scenes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, the word kind of goes out to the hinterlands that there are some positions. There were doormen, assistant sergeants-at-arms and a lot of others, the head of the bill room. There are quite a number of positions that are available and those were party oriented, majority party oriented.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Elmer Johnston was the majority leader and B. Roy Anderson was the caucus chair. Did they get along with Governor Langlie? Were there factions within your caucus?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If there was any split it was mostly eastern Washington, western Washington. It wasn't open warfare or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was interesting because Langlie was from Seattle and so was Mort Frayn. Maybe that was the problem. Maybe they knew each other too well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could be. I really didn't know because I wasn't involved very much at that point in time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember who else was in the freshman class with you? Your seatmate, Jim Ovenell?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. He had been there one session. And the reason that they put me with him, he had been in an accident and broken his leg and he was on crutches. So he requested that we sit together so I could help him get around,

which I did. He was chairman of the Forestry, State Lands and Buildings Committee, and there were a number of bills that came out of that committee that he put my name on and we worked them through. That was my first opportunity to speak in favor of legislation on the floor. It was good experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember your first speech?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people really do not like public speaking, but you had probably done quite a lot, one thing or another. Were you comfortable speaking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That didn't bother me a bit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have legislators that you gravitated towards? That you were happy to work with and that thought along similar lines to you? Were there smaller groupings within the larger caucus that got together for ideological reasons or whatever?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course Arnason and McBeath were close friends, and I'd known them for a number of years. And Bob Timm, who was from kind of northeastern Washington. Arnold Wang who was from Bremerton, and Charlie Stokes was one of the early black members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a Republican, wasn't he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I remember things were a little slow and Charlie asked to be recognized and he said, "Mr. Speaker, I know,"—I don't know whether he said "my race," but "my friends and I know all about this discrimination stuff, but I think it's carrying things too far when you put me next to a Chinaman." He wasn't a Chinaman,

he was a Norwegian, Wang. Charlie was always talking about the “city mice and the country mice.” He was always good for a laugh.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds like he had a good sense of humor. Did people get along pretty well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there any women legislators besides Julia? There’s a few, I think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I’ll tell you one of the most famous was Catherine May who went to Congress from Yakima. She was good and she was part of this small group of freshmen legislators who kind of got together every once in a while.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She came in the same time as you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was she a pretty strong personality at that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, although she wasn’t the pushy type strong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just solid?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because she was smart and she knew not only the legislative end of it, but she’d been active in the Party and knew the Party activities. So that was good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the difference between the eastern and the western legislators? Was there still an urban/rural split? Or is it a very different kind of attitude?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much. It’s rural/urban and then it’s big and small, I think, too. They consider the Puget Sound area and the Clark County, that area, pretty much as big city types. While

Spokane population-wise was either two or three members there, the mentality over there was pretty much rural.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you have any handle on why that’s so? Spokane was not a small city.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, it isn’t, but it’s just different.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It’s certainly a bigger city than Mount Vernon. Is it because it’s more remote? I mean, there are not bigger cities nearby.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that Inland Empire area is probably more provincial than you find over here.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people said that the power of Washington Water Power overwhelmed Spokane in a sense, and took over all their politics. Could you comment on that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were pretty strong over there in that area, but they had good people representing them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. I was going to use the inaugural address from Governor Langlie to get a sense of the situation of what you were coming into and what you would be facing for the next several years. About the third day of session he came in and gave his big opening speech that sets up the session. He touched on a lot of different issues. Apparently the session before, in 1951, there had been a budget crisis of pretty severe proportions for that era. In those days they didn’t seem to need to have a balanced budget in quite the same way that your group came to deal with.

Don Brazier, in his legislative history, called it a “deepening crisis;” there was a ballooning deficit. There was a real gap between the revenue and what was going out, and there didn’t seem to be good ideas about how to solve that. Some legislators expressed resentment to the governor about his handling of that issue.

Anyway, this is what seemed to be the situation that you came into in 1953. Governor Langlie started out by generally talking about how the pace of society was quickening, that there were all these new issues, and that one of the needs was for more information. He talked about the Legislative Council. It had been around for a couple of sessions. Did you, as a legislator, know much about the Legislative Council when you came in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only that it functioned primarily during the interim. It was really quite a plum to be appointed to the Legislative Council. It was a prestigious group and you usually had the top legislators unless they were budget writers, then they were on the budget committee. The three top interim committees were the Legislative Council, the Budget Committee and the Transportation Committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did the Legislative Council relate to the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had a committee structure with chairmen and they would meet and lots of times things would be assigned to them by the Legislature to study. Don Sampson was the head staff person for the Legislative Council and he was well regarded by both parties and kept on as director of the Council for years. Paul Ellis was the staff person for the Budget Committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We'll be looking at the work of the Council in some detail later. Also at this time, there was what came to be called the "Little Hoover Committee." Now, did that work through the Legislative Council? This was a group led by Senator Al Rosellini when he was a legislator, with Harold Shefelman, a Seattle lawyer and civic leader, who went around the state having open meetings and then issued a report with recommendations. Wasn't this primarily to do with reorganizing state government itself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was one of the things that came before the Legislature and just got deep-sixed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read somewhere that the Legislature had not been looked at organizationally since—it was astonishing to me—it was 1911 or something like that. A long, long time. It had kept the same structure and it just simply didn't work anymore. Was there a feeling of frustration or was it that there was a poor fit somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know and I think maybe this was part of the problem with Zeke Clark and Mort Frayn was that they didn't feel that it had all been that bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mentioned earlier that Langlie wanted a statewide merit system for employees. Why was this so controversial?

**Mr. Eldridge:** From the Republican standpoint, they just didn't want to see the Democrats have the opportunity of locking all their people in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you were in the majority. Wouldn't this have locked in Republican staff people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, here again, I think Mort and Zeke just kind of liked things the way they were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have an opinion on these things yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I supported the Shefelman program and, as a matter of fact, before I got into the Legislature, there were a group of us who were active in the Jaycees who put together a local committee and went around to service clubs and different organizations and gave speeches about the program and supported it. This followed on the heels of the Hoover Commission at the federal level.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did this seem like a pretty progressive idea? Modernize things a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you see, I think the diehard Republicans just figured it was too progressive.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Too much too soon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They just figured it was a takeover proposal. If it shakes out to be all right, why it's worth it, but it's sure a traumatic experience going through it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Fraught with all kinds of possibilities. What about pay raises? Langlie made a big point that the public sector employees had really fallen behind the private sector and that you couldn't keep good employees at that rate. You get what you pay for, in other words. Did this resonate with you? You're an employer.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't recognize at the time that it was a big issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is something that's still debated today.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh sure. But, you know, the private sector feels that public employees are pretty well taken care of. They have a good benefits program. The retirement program is good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Although, did they have those benefits in this day? I think some of the pensions were awfully small.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. That would be more of an issue today than back then.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. I think things have come along. Governor Langlie made a good point of it, but, as you say, it didn't go anywhere.

There appeared to be a great deal of tension between the different levels of government: what was local—county or city government—and what was the state responsibility so far as revenue gathering and also for programs. That seems to be a thread through practically everything he was saying, “What is the state's responsibility?” And, as he called it, “in these times of exhausted revenues and inflated costs,” he wanted to shift more of the responsibility to the local level. Was that a general Republican approach to government, that “Local government is better. Keep the tax dollars close to home. Keep the responsibility as close to home as you can?” That seems to be the philosophical perspective.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think that that was more or less what he was talking about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, but I don't believe there was any clear cut direction as to how this was to be done. There was quite a little home rule talk in that period.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, certainly for taxes. Could counties raise the kind of taxes that the state could? Did they have the same ways to get money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You see, at the local level the property tax was really about all they had. Eventually, we gave the cities and towns the opportunity to have a local sales tax or a B&O tax. So they did open it up some for financial assistance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A few more tools, then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was always a problem and the mayors and city councilmen would come to the Legislature and say, “Don't give us these added responsibilities without giving us the funding,” because time after time they'd pass all this legislation which extended services.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** “The cities must do this and must do that,” but no means to do it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Democratic literature kind of went wild on this. They said that the governor was shirking the state’s duties and pushing them off onto the counties and just basically not facing up to any state responsibility. But what’s the other way of looking at this? Was this just a different perspective or was there some of that shifting going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends on where you want to put your thumb. It’s all going to come from the individual, whether it’s a tax at the county or city level or whether it’s at the state level. If it’s at the state level, then you expect the state to distribute the funds.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More evenly than say a county could?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That would be the rhetoric, but to be realistic you get to the state level and the administrative costs just eat away what you’ve got and there isn’t too much left to distribute to the ultimate group being served.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The money sticks, it doesn’t just pass through?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about—just to play with this idea—you have a real disparity in different counties between prosperous counties and pretty desperate counties. Would there be ways to help the poorer counties in that sort of program?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It’s pretty difficult if you have to adhere to the principle that it should be equal. It’s hard to set up a program that will help the poor counties unless you give the same benefits

to the affluent counties. I think this gets into the “eastern Washington/western Washington” where the high valuation is in the Puget Sound area and then there’s the whole rest of the state that is having a difficult time providing funding for their needs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Doesn’t more money flow out of the Puget Sound region to eastern Washington than the other way around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. If you take your pencil out and make two columns there, you’ll find that there’s quite an interchange.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The early 1950s was a period of real growth. The Depression was over, the war was over, people are finally turning to rebuilding and getting back to normalcy—and having a lot of children. The schools were more than full, and more people had cars, so they wanted more highways. More people had money and they seemed to want more from government, too. They want more services, more programs, but there was still this holdover idea from previous times that they did not want taxes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What do you do with that mismatch?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It’s difficult. This was the beginning of the period where there was another push for a state income tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was either the 1951 session or this session of 1953, the income tax was brought up again as a method of dealing with this need. You preferred the sales tax and the B&O tax?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn’t like either one of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What’s the best strategy, do you think?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If I had the answer to that one, I'd probably be the governor! But anyway, it was a real dilemma.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it like “the lesser of two evils,” or was it the best solution? Which way should people look at it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My position was that the federal government used the income tax as their basic tax program, and the state government, I figured, ought to use the sales and excise taxes, and local government use the property tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So nobody's taking a big chunk out of you in the same way? It's kind of spread out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. But it's hard to mess with the tax program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Everybody gave it a try, but nobody seems to have done much with it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There's no tax that's a good tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The state did have a deficit and you had to do something. We'll probably be revisiting that over and over.

Governor Langlie had several areas where he wanted to make some changes or address some different issues. Tell me a little more about his program. The management of public institutions—this didn't seem to be a big priority for him or something that he actually accomplished, though but he did mention, at least in his address, that mental hospitals, schools for the deaf and blind, correctional institutions, veterans homes, what he calls “custodial homes” for “mentally deficient children,” all these things needed more funding or some kind of reform. Were any of these areas of interest to you, or things that you cared about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In my district, we had Northern State Hospital. It actually developed into kind of a showplace. They had quite a dairy herd up there and had a number of crops that they raised. It was a big operation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this for mentally ill patients?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this supposed to help them feel healthier? Keep them busy and productive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think they did a pretty good job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly a lot of people consider being outside, being in nature and working with animals, very therapeutic.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When the governor mentioned these programs, as a freshman legislator, were you saying to yourself, “Oh, good, the hospital in my area might get some attention?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I was primarily looking at the whole package. It just seemed like we needed to address these items and if it was something that the Legislature ought to be doing, why then we should do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had you ever toured the hospital? Were you familiar with the conditions there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My family had a stationery store in Mount Vernon, and we had a lending library in the store. I remember a number of times going with my mother to take a carload of books up to Sedro Woolley to the hospital. Then we'd go back again in a couple of weeks and bring a new

batch of books and pick those up. We'd drive around the grounds and out to the farm, so I had a little idea about what they were talking about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the conditions at that place all right? In some of the other institutions they were rather forbidding.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, by and large, the living conditions were very good. As far as the medical situation, there was quite a bit of criticism of the staff and the way they handled patients. I think there was some feeling that the doctors were doing a lot of experimenting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose that could lead to some abuses if nobody's really checking up on these things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Eventually they closed it down and moved most of the patients down to Western.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know that state institutions become a big issue in the next couple of years. Especially under then Senator Rosellini and when he became Governor Rosellini.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. He was making that an issue and I think was pretty successful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just trying to establish prior to his activism in this area, what were those places like? Did you ever go and see some of the prisons and institutions as a legislator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't see any bad situations, but then I didn't investigate them, either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You weren't on those committees. Governor Langlie rather proudly cut the social security budget, the welfare budget. Did he see the maintenance of mental institutions primarily as a budget issue or as a social issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can't speak with any authority, but I would think that he probably was looking at it from a budgetary standpoint. Although, there had always been a lot of criticism of the staff, particularly in the welfare department.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't seem to have much training.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I don't think there was any real strong direction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed a little, well, not very professional, not very organized. Some of the head jobs were patronage positions and that caused a lot of problems. There was high turnover because of the poor pay and poor conditions.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just a bad situation, generally.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. But I guess not an urgent situation, somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's one of those areas that kind of got swept under the rug.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. Because of the budget deficit, there just wasn't the feeling that these things should be addressed or made a priority?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that in this period of time there was the awareness and the concern that came along after that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a matter of educating legislators and the public? Create a little pressure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And the public.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the biggest areas of interest and concern was education and how to pay for education. All those kids coming in, and teacher's salaries had lagged through the

Depression and war years, and buildings that sounded like nobody had been looking at them for decades because of the economic situation. It seemed like there was a lot of worry about education. “What are we supposed to do next? How are we supposed to pay for this? How are we going to approach this?” You said that was one of your areas of interest that you came in to the Legislature that you wanted to work on.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seemed as though there was more concern and more effort and more money placed on physical plant than in upgrading staffing and other things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that because the schools were falling apart or it’s easier to build buildings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** People can see bricks and concrete—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or leaky roofs or bad plumbing. I suppose there were the health concerns, and the sheer overcrowding must have been tremendous.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Fire and safety. You’re right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody wants a school to burn down with a bunch of kids in it. But it’s harder to evaluate teachers. But did you feel that the teacher issue was as important as the construction budget?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did, except it was during this period that the WEA [Washington Education Association] really turned me off. They were just getting into the era where they were feeling their muscle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That made it harder to support schools? To be on the side of teachers and supporting teacher’s pay raises and whatnot, did it feel like you were knuckling under to the WEA, rather than having your own point of view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because I didn’t. They were out after me almost every time I ran for office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was still Pearl Wanamaker and her forces?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you describe how the money was gathered for schools? There were special levies, there was money from property taxes, local money, but there was also state money, right? What were the proportions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I can’t tell you now. Proportionally, there wasn’t as much state money in those days. It was pretty much a local situation and that’s why levies were so important. Boy! When a levy failed, that really put a kink in things in the local school district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There wasn’t much else, was there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Although, at the state level you had the distribution of state forest funds and that represented quite a lot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that why forestry issues were so important then? Everybody’s trying to reorganize forestry. Was it because you need that money for schools?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And there was a lot of duplication in the administrative procedures of forestry and natural resources.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed to be quite a patchwork. Governor Langlie seemed to want schools to be even more local institutions than they already were. His statements suggest that he didn’t really consider education a state responsibility. He made some contradictory statements, but that seems to be the drift.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true that he pretty much envisioned a locally financed and controlled situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel that would work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I've always been in favor of as much local control and local financial responsibility as possible. I think that if you elect good people to the school board you're going to have a good educational system. I think, by and large, the educational system here in the state has been fairly responsible. I think we have a lot of dedicated teachers and I think our school boards are getting better people involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a lot of heat behind some of those arguments. Part of it had to do with the equalization issue between the poorer schools and richer schools.

In the early 1950s, if a lot of state dollars are not flowing into school systems, did that mean that equally there were not a lot of mandates promulgated at the state level? Not a lot of regulations or control over curriculum or standards? Now we have all these standardized tests that kids take statewide and all those things. What was it like then? Who decided what would happen in a given school day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The state superintendent's office had quite a lot of control. Standards for graduation at various levels were in place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You wouldn't get a wildly different education in Mount Vernon than you would in, say, Asotin or Ephrata? They would be very comparable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Now, I think where you might find some real variation would be in special programs like band, choir, athletic programs, that would be different, where if there was more local money, then you'd have those additional offerings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And this was before the federal government got very involved in education issues. This was before busing, before a lot of school issues became highly political. Nowadays, it seems every social issue and problem in society, people think up a curriculum answer to it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. They dump it on the schools.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was it like then? Were schools more straightforward, not so loaded down with all these social issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that if you used the term "basic education," I think that's really what you were getting. The only federal program that I can think of was the FFA, Future Farmers of America. The agriculture programs were supported with federal dollars to some extent. And at the college level, you had the land grant colleges that received considerable federal funding.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the junior or community colleges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were all part of a local school district. And that was a hot issue. We set up a separate system for them—community college or junior college districts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you came in to the Legislature, and you were interested in education, did you have any particular solutions in mind yourself? Or you just knew that this was something you wanted to get involved with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had intended to go into teaching myself and got sidetracked, but I still had a lot of interest in education.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the things that Governor Langlie talked about which seemed to strike at this, was he said that the real problem was not

the tax structure, but the low property assessments. I guess county assessors had very uneven methods for assigning taxes in the first place, so that maybe there was a lot more potential out there locally for gathering money than what was being used. Did you think that was the key?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that could be part of it, because there certainly was a wide range of the handling of property taxes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What role would the state have? How would the state get involved in county assessing of property values? You set the standards or regulations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure just what role the state plays in actually setting valuation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How does it work? When the county assessor comes to your property, how does he arrive at the number, the rate, that then you pay as property taxes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of it has to do with comparison of like properties.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What they're selling for in the local area? Does the market determine this somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Here again, that's where you had the problem of some assessors relying more on market values, and I presume others just took it off the top of their head.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was really no way to check up on this? This seemed to be the weak link in the whole tax structure, according to Governor Langlie. Whereas he wanted to shift these costs to the local areas but the local areas couldn't support them—but the local areas were not gathering the taxes as he thought they ought.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that that has somewhat been resolved. The property tax has become more equal. There's a level playing field now as far as that goes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seems to be an abiding issue for awhile, property tax assessment. This was something that you worked on for several sessions, at least. Langlie called the valuations "a mockery." That's pretty strong language.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then he said, "Through our system of equalization aid, the state has been rewarding those counties that have shirked their local revenue raising responsibilities and has penalized those counties which are trying to do a proper job." So what happened? The taxes came in and then the state spread the money around and the low-assessed counties got more than maybe they ought to and the richer counties gave more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that he was saying that if you did a poor job, you got the funds, and if you did a good job you were actually penalized.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm still not clear. The state was involved in gathering the money and spreading it around, but it had no power on how the money was collected? There's a gap there. Aren't county assessors locally elected officials?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it such a highly political thing that you couldn't do much about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's pretty hard to change. And the county commissioners had quite a say in all of this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How closely would the state work with counties? Did they have a good

relationship or would that would be quite a boundary issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that there was a lot of cooperation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did the state—if it wanted to look more at a local area—were their hands just completely tied? Was this whole idea bogus then, that these things should be local and therefore not part of the state responsibilities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure what the actual procedure would be to make changes and to shift the responsibility.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed to be something that tangled up the whole session and touched pretty much everything you considered.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. When you get involved with financing, it really can snarl things up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Every discussion seemed to be this turf issue. One piece of the education program was the issue of kindergartens. Whether the state should support them or not. What did you think?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There again, because we had a good kindergarten program in Mount Vernon and the surrounding areas, I felt, "Here's something we ought to leave alone. The local people are doing a good job, let's not mess with it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it state supported? Or was it "local option?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Kindergarten started out as a private enterprise.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of like preschool is now?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Throughout the 1940s there was lot of energy in women's groups, PTA type groups, and different kinds of committees to make kindergarten part of the state education, just like first grade. And for a while kindergarten was. Then it dropped out of the budget and was not state supported. There was a lot of heat about that in some circles. Some money was put back in the budget, but then Governor Langlie vetoed that because he said it was not enough money and he thought that if kindergartens are mandated but not fully funded it would ruin school budgets. This seemed to be a big issue throughout this session.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know it was and it was a question of whether it should be in or out. A lot of people thought it was just a babysitting service and they didn't think the state ought to be involved in it. If people wanted it, then they ought to just pay for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess I'm not clear. In Mount Vernon, were those state supported kindergartens or were they private? The programs that you admired?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those were prior to my being in the Legislature and I'm not sure how they were financed or whether they became part of the local financing program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they be like band and the athletic program, in that case supported by levies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know that there were ballot issues that provided for kindergarten financing, but I don't recall how widespread that was. I was pretty much in favor of local support for kindergartens.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another budget piece: For most of the programs that Governor Langlie was talking about, he wanted to keep the budget as

low as possible. Then out of the blue, almost, he put a lot of money into tourism. More than half a million dollars I think it was, and he justified that, saying that it was like seed money, that it would come back more, and that it was something worth doing. How did you view that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** During this whole period of time—I think nationwide—the effort behind tourism was evident all over the country. But historically, Washington had really not spent very much on promotion of tourism.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a new thing, then, a departure—this type of sponsored effort?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, because I don't recall prior to that that there was any great promotion or anything like that. It was kind of an individual community thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this effort perhaps tied to that the new prosperity and the number of people with cars and how people used their leisure time—that previously would have been more local—less gallivanting around the countryside.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So maybe this was a good fit, to get people out there in their new Chevys and Oldsmobiles?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And I think that at some period of time the emphasis was on bringing people from outside the state in. Then I think it kind of shifted and it was to get the people in the state going to different parts of the state. It was to encourage local people to go to these various places.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To go to the beach, to the mountains. Where would be the big places to go? Was Ocean Shores developing then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then Seattle City Light, their Skagit tours were very popular and promoted quite heavily.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even a place like Grand Coulee Dam was a tourist site. Was it about this time that different towns started to work on having local festivals—the Daffodil Parade, the Lilac Parade or whatever?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, a little note, 1853 was the Territorial Centennial. Did Mount Vernon do anything special for that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I was on the Centennial Commission. Herman Deutsch, who was a history professor at Washington State was the chairman of the commission. I had taken a couple of classes from him over there and so I was really pleased to be able to take part in it. Some of those meetings were really good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You never know when something's going to come around full circle. Did you think it was legitimate for state government to get involved in community development? Developing tourism? Would that be like building roads or helping with pamphlets? What exactly would a state tourism program do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, it would be primarily in the promotion end of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Ads in magazines or booklets?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was certainly some printing involved and they may have even helped with funding for staff at the various areas.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this an era of developing state parks?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In the fifties there were quite a number of state parks. John Vanderzicht

was the state parks director and I remember going on a tour with him for four or five days. We went to eastern Washington and up into northeastern Washington, places I'd never been before. There were a number of parks established then.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And, of course, to make all this travel possible you had to have highways. Other than education, wasn't that the biggest thing that the state did, build highways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure, because it affects everything. The economics, recreation, everything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It ties the state together and makes it one. This period we're discussing was prior to the Eisenhower program of building interstate highways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Prior to 1953, we had toll roads.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Every road was a toll road?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But the program to build more highways with tolls was coming in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that what you called the "pay as you go" plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a gas tax in the early 1950s?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh sure, but not like it is today. Once the federal highway program that Eisenhower promoted passed, the toll roads went out the window.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the federal dollars pour in so that you wouldn't need those tolls any more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was quite an infusion of federal dollars.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And did the federal government decide where the roads would go or did the states decide?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The states decided, but it's my understanding that they had to be approved and the federal government had some strings attached, like signage and plantings along the right-of-way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These roads would have to hook up. You couldn't have the roads in Washington State not meet up with Oregon and Idaho.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. So there were some standards, of course.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the engineering changing too, at this stage? These federally funded roads were to be freeways, not highways where you can just pull on from your driveway with your little pickup truck.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were all kinds of new materials being used and a lot more bridges and overpasses and that sort of thing, and of course, there was a lot more local truck traffic, so you had to have a heavier base.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there more trucks because there was more interstate commerce? Was the economy developing such that people are moving goods around a lot more? The economy was less local?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And there was a shift away from rail. Because the trucks were more convenient and faster and consequently less expensive for shipping.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They can reach places that trains cannot.

The big issues in the transportation area that came up in these years were bridging the Sound and Lake Washington, and the need to build a road

through the northern part of the state. The northern cross-state highway, now called the North Cascades Highway. This was, of course, Julia Butler Hanson's "queendom," her committee. The Department of Highways had been organized only in the previous session. What was there before that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was actually just a name change. I don't think there was any significant change in the structure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Soon, you begin the discussion of the Hood Canal bridge. Did that impact your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We had the ferry system. The state bought out Black Ball.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a fairly new state endeavor. Would you have had to work with Julia Butler Hanson then for ferry issues as well, or was that a separate committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was all part of transportation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Toll roads and bridges. I thought that there were separate agencies that had different parts of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had subcommittees in the Transportation Committee that handled those.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another important issue of that period was the distribution of electrical power. That seemed to be one of the most polarizing issues in the Legislature and state. Governor Langlie, that session, was concerned about the relationship of the federal government with the state over the control the Columbia Basin.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was an outcropping of the Tennessee Valley Authority. They wanted to duplicate that here in the Columbia watershed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Have a CVA to match the TVA?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And that was a pretty traumatic experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Governor Langlie seemed to be suggesting that the federal government was keeping too much of the Columbia Basin in its own control and not allowing the states to have much say-so. He said the federal government's control was not always in keeping with the wishes of the region. That the Northwest had its own identity. And then he held out the hope that the new president, Eisenhower, was going feel differently about this. He hoped that this new federal administration would change, from the Democratic point of view of dominance to the new Republican president returning power supplies back to local control. I don't think "restored" would be the right word because they never had it, but somehow he would get it back in local hands. This was a long fight. How did that play out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it gradually shifted. The federal government, through the Bonneville Power Administration, still had a lot of control but distribution was left to state control through the Public Utilities Commission.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As well as discussions about Bonneville, there was a power bill that session that seemed to involve everyone in the discussion, House Bill 77.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let me just preface this discussion. In Skagit County, Puget Power had been involved there for many years. Before I ever got involved in the political scene, I remember there was a group that came into town and they were promoting the takeover of Puget Power. I can recall being in our store and a fellow came in—I don't know who had hired him—but he was trying to get support in Skagit County to get rid

of Puget Power and establish a PUD. My mother and dad weren't abusive, but they certainly let him know where they stood on the matter. The upshot of it was they could never get enough support to go after a ballot issue, or whatever they needed, so they settled on taking over the water system. I don't recall that there was a referendum, but in any event they never made the grade. Puget Power still maintained their system. But the private utilities did lose the City of Seattle and Tacoma and Clark and Snohomish Counties.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read that the power company actually wanted to get out of that service area in 1946 so there had been some kind of action. The Jaycees were involved in holding some meetings and getting some public opinion going. Some said that the power company was actually teaming up with the public power people to achieve some new system, but I couldn't fully understand from the references what happened. So I didn't know just what the power situation in your area was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They came in with the intent to try to take over the power system. But that failed, so they went after the water system and they got that. The PUD in Skagit County is in water distribution only.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that the systems could coexist or did you think it should be all private? How did it look to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't really see any change as an individual homeowner or a business owner as far as the cost involved and the service.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people thought that the mixture of the two and the tension between the two kept the rates down.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it had a tremendous effect, although it may have had a little bit of rub-off. Of course, they were still a monopoly. In

other words, Puget Power had a monopoly in Skagit County, but in Snohomish County, the PUD had a monopoly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It certainly was a contested issue through these years and colored a lot of politics. People seemed to have to line up on one side or the other.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was no middle ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Didn't seem to be very much. Did you, in your campaigns or as a legislator, have to come out and say which system you were for?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall ever having to stand up and say, "I'm for private power."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Puget Power taking pretty good care of the community for its needs? Giving good service?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I think so, yes. The other thing was that Puget had local managers who were involved in the community. In Mount Vernon, Andy Loft was just a pillar of community service.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems real critical. This is not a faceless corporation, this is Andy Loft. A neighbor. A friend.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And he was involved in everything. He'd been president of the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce and he was involved with the Boy Scouts and his daughter was in Campfire Girls. His presence was quite visible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That makes a big difference, I think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure does. And he was really a company man. You could be sitting around talking about whatever and he would always

work the company in there someplace. He was a master. I think that, by and large, their local managers throughout their service area were that way. They were real dedicated employees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was a real company culture of being part of the community?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can see how in Mount Vernon this was the way it was. But it's almost like a crusade—public power—it's more than just electricity and service. The literature has this moral tone that they are “more democratic” or involved, there's more local control, more something. It's a different value system from private power. And there was just this edgy bitterness that creeps into every discussion about power issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a philosophical position that is also a political position. The Grange was behind the establishment of public utility districts all over the state. In the highly Democratic areas like Snohomish County, they went for the PUD hook, line and sinker. The Snohomish County PUD got into the electric business. But in Whatcom County they didn't go for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How do you account for that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's more rural. Whatcom and Skagit I think are more agriculturally inclined.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But not aligned with the Grange people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd almost think that it would go the other way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I'll tell you, there's a lot of political infighting in agriculture because the farm bureau is pretty strong in both Skagit and Whatcom County. They're a little more conservative.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are they a rival to the Grange, in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I think so. Basically, they're probably pretty much the same as the Grange, but my impression, when I got into the political arena and was meeting with these groups, was that the farm bureau seemed to be a little more business oriented.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they the group that was more oriented to the extension work of the land grant colleges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were very strong in that direction. The Grange was more inclined toward subsidies, and federal control, regulations, and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were more populist-based?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And pretty liberal. Their membership was more the liberal side of the agriculture community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do different types of agriculture gravitate to one view or the other? Was agriculture somehow different up in your area that it took a more conservative point of view? I was just thinking about the size of land holdings, the type of crops, the type of labor issues. I wonder how it all shakes out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really can't address that. I don't know. Skagit County had quite a lot of specialty crops. There was a lot of seed grown in Skagit County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were farmers of that type, did they have to be more business oriented because the marketing issues were different?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Also, they were smaller units and most of them just didn't like the federal

control. They wanted to do their own thing and rise and fall with the kind of a job they did in their marketing and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you as a legislator have a leaning towards private power and then had that strengthened or confirmed by your constituents, or which way did that go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was not out in front by any means, but I certainly let my feelings be known in meetings with various groups that I was supportive of private power.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that made you a good fit with your district in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Although there are so many issues that it's pretty hard to say, "Well, this is what's wanted," one way or the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Though this one was such a hot button one. You were either one or the other. You could hardly be in the middle.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. There was no middle ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And people were pretty fierce about it, it sounds like. There was a great philosophical divide. Was there no idea that people could, not necessarily have a middle ground, but that they could co-exist? Were they in direct competition with each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Grange was pretty strong. They had a lot of local units and they had the dances on Saturday night and they were more politically active than the farm bureau.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They had an active social dimension to what they did, yes. It was like belonging to the Elks or something.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. It was more of a fraternal organization than an economic group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which was, I think, one of their strengths; at least in that era, was that they had that whole social aspect to their activities.

So when you came to the Legislature, did you get involved in these power struggles in these first years, or basically listen and vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I wasn't directly involved, except that people knew what my position was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** House Bill 77, according to PUD lobbyist Ken Billington in his book *People, Politics, and Public Power*, would have stopped any future activation of a PUD in the state by blocking the right of eminent domain or condemnation by such public bodies. One thing stands out again and again in these public/private power fights, is the power of the Speaker. Certainly John O'Brien played an important role in either pushing through legislation or preventing legislation. I was wondering if Mort Frayn did that for private power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall. He may have. I don't recall any real visibility.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was your caucus pretty unified in how it wanted to handle these issues? There's some notion that there were splits there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** In '53, I suspect it was more rural/urban than anything else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you consider yourself to be? You lived in the town but you had a pretty big rural area that you represented.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as my political philosophy was concerned, I would be rural. In the Mount Vernon area, we considered our business community a service community. Anacortes was a fishing community and there were some mills there. Sedro Woolley was logging, and then they also had the Northern State Hospital there, which was quite a factor as far as the economy was concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We've looked at some of the big issues; let's examine the structure of the Legislature now. In that session there were thirty-five different committees. How did that work? I understand this is before scheduling was highly developed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was difficult. Members would attend committee meetings of the important committees and some of the others kind of fell by the wayside.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, some committees would be virtually just "on paper?" What would be the point of having so many different committees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just a matter of being sure that everybody had a say. Many committees were established when a group on the outside would say, "We've got a problem," and so a committee would be set up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then it would perpetuate itself for the next twenty years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it's surprising that before the Legislative Council was actually a dominant interim function, a lot of these committees would have interim meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be when they would study the issues and have hearings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And travel around the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somehow you have to get your information. Did they have any staff?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, even the minor committees would have at least one person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that person be there year-round? Or would they just be there for the session and then disappear?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Actually, the session committee might be an entirely different makeup than the interim committee. It wouldn't be a carryover.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you develop any expertise? Or continuity, or looking forward, or looking backward, even.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty steep. I think we depended more on the lobbyists. The continuity would be there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd have to. They'd be the only ones that would be paying attention in a consistent way. Did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seemed to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Legislators were beginning to question this arrangement. Some were reaching the point where they wanted to change this ad hoc approach. The volume of legislation was going up, so perhaps you were about to reach a crunch time when this did not work quite so well.

There were several efforts at modernization. Quite recently to this period, the Legislature began printing the Revised Code of Washington. It had been a private business before that and had been contracted out. The state took that upon itself and started to do it in-house. The code reviser's office had come into existence only the session before your first one. That surprised me. It hadn't occurred to me that that function would be a private business, keeping track of the laws.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, Mort Frayn's company had the contract.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. Of course, you couldn't know how it had worked before, but was this a good development from your point of view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't notice any change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also a little earlier, the Shefelman Committee looked at the reorganization of government and all kinds of structural issues. It seems like the Republicans backed the recommendations of that committee—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** —but they didn't actually get implemented.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That got caught in the conflict between Mort Frayn and Zeke Clark and Governor Langlie. I don't know really what the issue was that caused this dog and cat fight. The House Republican leadership, the two leaders, Frayn and Clark, were just stabbing the governor every time he turned around. One of the things that this freshman majority in the House caucus was concerned about was the governor's program, which came out of the Shefelman Committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They had a long list of proposed reforms.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. It covered a wide range of subjects: the establishment of the merit system and consolidation of the forestry practices. That was a big one. Then there were some employment security and public assistance issues. Those were all involved. None of those things happened, but the next session when the Democrats took control, they grabbed all these and passed them and took credit for them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the literature suggests that at least some of the Republicans were for these things, but John L. O'Brien defeated them because, yes, the Democrats wanted to grab those issues for their own credit.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the conflict among the Republicans and the governor just opened the gate and then they could do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were a lot of things that just stalled out, and then passed later. It was hard to figure what was going on there.

Some people wanted a bound caucus and other people thought that was an impossible way to go. Was that where the caucus leaders say, "This is how we're voting," and everyone sticks together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You would talk about it in caucus and everybody would have their chance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would some issues be issues of conscience and you'd be allowed to say, "No, I'm sorry, that's not going to work for my district?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And we'd always count noses and we'd say, "Okay, we need fifty votes and we've got fifty-five, so we can let five of you off the hook." Then it was a matter of who needed it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who really needs to be off the hook?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, for those who thought their vote would be detrimental to them in their district. But I would say yes, we had a bound caucus. When our caucus would get together, even if it took all day or all night, everybody had their chance to get up and speak.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the process to get to that "bound" feeling? Would everyone have to be convinced and brought along or given things in compensation? How did it work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Any number of things that would get you down to the final decision of whether we're going to go for this or we're going to kill it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there many issues where there had to be a lot of persuasion within the caucus? How unified were you before you got in the door? Were you all over the place and then had to be prodded into shape?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, no. There would be groups that would have pretty well made up their minds on what position they wanted to take. Then those individuals would bring others along that were undecided or against.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would a strong orator or a person who really understood an issue get up and say, “This is what I think of this,” and then persuade people? Was this where a speaking ability could bring people along?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Slade Gorton was pretty good in that area. Bob Goldsworthy, because he knew the appropriation and budget procedures so well, when he got up and said, “I think we ought to do this,” I’m sure that there were a lot of folks who might have been kind of undecided who would say, “If Bob thinks this is okay, I’ll go along.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine there were always people like that, especially for certain issues, where you’d think, “That guy really knows what he’s talking about.” You were dealing with such a range of issues, you couldn’t know them all.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And then the other side is that you’d have people who would get up and it’s all fluff, and they don’t know what they’re talking about or it might be a political motivation, or a personal position. It stands out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a freshman, how quickly are you able to tell the difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It doesn’t take long.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People just exhibit their strengths right off?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Since you depended to a great extent on the lobbyists, we used to always say, “He only had to lie to me once.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that ever happen to you? Where a lobbyist misrepresented something and you found out about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don’t ever recall ever running into that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were a pretty reliable group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine they wouldn’t last long if they didn’t get that reputation for integrity pretty quickly.

I’d like to discuss your committee assignments now. We can go through these one by one. You made it onto Appropriations, a big committee. You were on Colleges and Universities; Game and Game Fish; Harbors, Waterways and Flood Control; and Engrossment and Enrollment your first session.

Previously, you had told me that one of the things that brought you to the Legislature was you wanted to bring in small business values. But you were not on Commerce; you weren’t on Revenue and Taxation. Were you hoping to serve in areas like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I felt that being on the Appropriations Committee was probably the key to a lot of these things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever find a way to represent that interest, the business interest, even in these other committees, like Game and Game Fish, or is that a point of view that colors a lot of things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Almost any activity in the state has an influence on many things. Almost anything you can think of—you can go to any committee and you can find legislation that would have some issue that would affect business. I was pretty happy with my assignments.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Appropriations, that's the big one. Can you tell me anything about your chair Tom Montgomery?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was from the Puyallup area, and I'm not sure what he did in the real world, but he was very steady and was quite a student of the budget and did a good job on interviewing agency heads and whoever came before the committee with a budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just thinking of you as a freshman, you're just learning, and I would imagine that if you had a good committee chair that would bring you in quickly, whereas if you had a not very good chair it would take you longer to pick up how to do this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, in those days we had a lot of joint House and Senate committee meetings. The Appropriation Committee from the Senate and the Appropriation Committee from the House would meet and go over budget items. Asa Clark, who was a farmer from Whitman County, was the Senate chairman and presided when we got together jointly. I took my lead from him because he was just a wonderful person, and had been involved in the appropriation work for a number of sessions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you still in the era where freshmen are supposed to be seen and not heard?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you'd really want to be paying attention. In those days, how was the budget handled? You had a budget director of sorts, but the Office of Financial Management, as we know it now, had not yet been established.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ernie Brabrook was Governor Langlie's budget director. He appeared before the Senate and House Appropriations Committee to present the budget and answer questions. The

appropriations book was bigger than the Sears Roebuck catalog and everybody had a copy. We were divided up into subcommittees so that each subcommittee had a chairman and would take a section of the budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you didn't have to know the whole thing? Did someone know the whole budget?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Although, there were members—I would say that Augie Mardesich probably knew more about what was in the budget than anybody else, even better than the chairman.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had a great head for detail, yes. With everybody doing their section, how did you know if there was enough money? How did it all fit together priority-wise? Of course everybody wants their section to be well funded and taken care of, but how did you get the big picture?

**Mr. Eldridge:** This was really the function of the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. This is where Bob Goldsworthy was an expert, and Asa Clark in the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they say: education and highways and this and this, these are the priorities and we'll fully fund them, and then everything else: whatever is left?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Each subcommittee would come in with a recommendation for that area of the budget. Then the whole committee would meet and each subcommittee would present its budget and somebody would tally. It was either fifty-million out of balance or it was fairly close and what adjustments needed to be made. And then there were always had bills that passed the Legislature setting up new functions with no provision for funding them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't have fiscal notes in those days, did you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, how you would guess how much money might be needed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd have to pull it off the wall.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I noticed that different agencies and areas of government were coming to you for deficit appropriations which were generally granted, or so it looked like. I was reading into this—and you can tell me if I'm right or wrong—but was that a fairly common practice: to guess incorrectly what an agency needed and then they would have to come back and ask for a bit more and defend their program or whatever it was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement. Almost every session you considered emergency appropriations for things that went astray and cost more money than was budgeted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Without fiscal notes that it would be easy to guess incorrectly how much something would actually cost, because nobody seemed to have worked that out in advance. The whole thing seemed pretty chancy somehow. It would be easy to get out of whack.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was really surprising that it worked so well. We didn't have any real strong emergencies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No major disasters?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We had a welfare system that was leading the state into bankruptcy, but you know, it all depends on the caliber of the legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine what you bring to the Legislature, who you are and how experienced you are would have a large impact.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It doesn't take long for those people who have the expertise, for their heads to

pop up above everybody else. You begin to rely on them and their judgment and it works pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were agencies held accountable for their budgets? Say you had a bill with a certain legislative intent and then you would hand it off to an agency, was there any follow-up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not as a general rule. But on an individual basis there was some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Legislature—over a period of years and even decades—tried to get control over budgets for the agencies. What stage of this struggle you were in 1953? This seems rather fundamental, one of the basics of accountability.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it probably was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you forge relationships with agency heads and get to know the education people—say, if you're interested in education—and see what was going on in that area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To some extent, yes. And some individual legislators would do more of that than others.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed a little more informal, then. Was it based more on relationships than structure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you were in the joint meetings, did you speak very often? Did you have a chance to put forth your ideas? Things you felt strongly about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that I had many original ideas. My participation was more as a consultant. I listened and occasionally offered suggestions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering if your head was beginning to rise up a little yet.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, perhaps. But I had had quite a bit of experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You rise like a rocket in the Jaycees; you do some other things at a fairly young age. I was just wondering if you were the kind of legislator who arrived and pretty quickly you were getting noticed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't really set out to establish any kind of a record. Now, Slade Gorton did. When he got off the bus from Boston he said, "I'm going to be a US Senator."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had more of an ambitious streak? You've got to move fast if that's what you want to do.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And he did it. He stomped on a lot of people, but he had his eye on the target.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's get back to our discussion of your committees. You were on Colleges and Universities. Could you give me a thumbnail sketch of your chair, Eva Anderson?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Eva was a long time educator from Chelan County. Kind of the "old school." Just a nice grandmotherly type. Pretty sharp, though!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was she a strong figure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But unlike Julia Butler Hanson—boy, she could stand up against anybody!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were two methods, I suppose, for women. One was to be the Eva Anderson type perhaps, and Julia Butler Hanson created her own mold?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was one of a kind. Oh, I tell you, she was a pistol!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are so many stories about her.

There was an interesting little bill that came before you that wanted to make it a requirement to teach Washington state history in colleges. That everybody should take a course. Were you of the opinion that that was a good thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh sure. But I don't recall the debate on the issue. I was always under the impression that it was a requirement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think that must come later because this bill didn't pass. I was surprised, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, as a matter of practice, it was in effect and somebody thought it ought to be part of the law. I graduated with a degree in education from Western and I had taken northwest history and Washington state history, both when I was at Washington State.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were still a trustee for Western. Did you ever feel that there was a conflict of interest or that double role was actually a very helpful thing? Could you be unabashedly for Western?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I never considered it to be a conflict of interest. As long as people knew what I was and that what I was saying was probably influenced by the fact that I was on the Board. But on the other hand, they also figured that if I'm there and grounded, then I ought to know something about it and it wasn't all bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was being a trustee helpful to understand all the issues involving the colleges? Did they all have similar problems?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And in those days we had joint meetings of the Boards of Regents and the Boards of Trustees. We'd have the Regents from Washington State and the University of Washington as well as the three colleges of education and the trustees. We'd get together and talk about mutual interests.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the colleges compete with each other? I mean, there's only so much money. If one college gets a building, another one might not.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a little of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you take turns? Did you try to keep the whole system strong by balancing the needs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, not really. A lot depended on the president of the institution.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if they gave a clear message of what they needed, they were more likely to get it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And the president can exert quite an influence as a lobbyist.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the University of Washington at that point dominate the discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were pretty strong and had a lot of alumni in the Legislature. That always helps. But Washington State College was always strong and they always had legislators who were in leadership positions and were influential.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Western? Was it sort of down the list a little bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Western always had a good reputation in the Legislature. Dave Sprague came on the Board when they expanded the numbers of Board members and he had served a term in

the Legislature. And then Marshall Forest, who was an attorney in Bellingham, was on the Board of Trustees. He became a judge in Whatcom County. Bernice Hall was a school teacher and was on the Board. I think she only served, maybe, one term. She was very liberal and kind of outspoken and I don't think she really helped the college in the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does the Board try to speak with one voice, in that sense? Or is that too mixed a message if you've got some Board members who are much more liberal than others? Does that cause confusion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, particularly in the matter of the budget and of course that's the big issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's everything.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's it. I think that most boards come together and they're all talking the same language when it comes to the budget and they all have their agenda that they work towards.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did put in a bill that didn't actually pass. You wanted some kind of appropriation for a new entryway for Western.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a highway project or a street project. The streets in Bellingham are pretty narrow and if you get people parking on both sides of the street you had virtually just one lane and that was quite an issue with not only the college, but also the Chamber of Commerce and the neighbors.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine that would be. And as people got more and more cars, it was just going to get worse. Did you ever solve that issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was probably in the next session. It could have been just a line item in the appropriation bill, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a pretty big period of growth for colleges. You had the GIs coming back, post war, and then looking forward to dealing with the baby boom. Lots of building projects going on.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had some pretty good sized projects.

After I got out of the service, I enrolled at Western and I had my hours and my days pretty well full. They were real good about working to help me get a schedule so I could finish. Then I commuted from Mount Vernon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the colleges pretty crowded then with returning GIs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But it took a while. I think in my class there were maybe 350, with nine of us in the graduating class.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did lots of people not make it to graduation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A great number would come back and go for a quarter and then they'd stay out and work. So there was a lot of fluctuation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So colleges really had to be flexible?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By the time you're dealing with colleges as a legislator, were things evening out a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was a pretty steady growth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this about the time that Warren Magnuson was getting money for the medical school at the University of Washington? Would you have had much to do with any of those federally funded developments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a lot of federal money coming in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite a little, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine Warren Magnuson funneled most of it to the University of Washington?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He took care of his friends!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that okay? You were just happy to get the money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that as far as I was personally concerned it made a heck of a lot of difference.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The University was really growing and I didn't know if the other colleges were struggling or how they would feel about that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those of us in the smaller communities and smaller institutions always felt that the University grabbed everything that was loose.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were the flagship. It does seem to get a bit uneven.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Whoever said it was fair?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess not. That's true.

One of your other committees was Game and Game Fish. That's sport fishing? Game is for hunters, right? It's not to preserve animals for their own sake, but for the sake of sportsmen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This agency, doesn't it have its own funding source from the licenses of the sportsmen? So, was this agency somewhat interest-group driven?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a revolving fund.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Damon Canfield was your chair. How was he as a chair? He becomes a rising star in the Republican Party, but I think he's still kind of new at this point.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He came in at the same time I did. He ran a pretty good committee. I don't know that he was a great outdoors person, but he was very capable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a commission and they appointed the director, who at that time was John Biggs. Different governors through time always wanted to get control of the Game Commission. Governor Wallgren made a kind of big issue out of that, but failed. How did Langlie feel about the Game Commission?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that he was ever very outspoken one way or the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe Wallgren got so burned by it nobody wanted to touch it for a bit. But how did that work with legislators? What was your relationship to that group of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I pretty much relied on the people in my district that were hunters or fishermen or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To tell you what they wanted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of issues were you dealing with in a committee like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not directly, but hours of hunting or fishing. Closures. Prohibitions against a particular group of animals or birds or whatever in hunting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some issue about a season Mourning Doves.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was interesting because Dan Evans—he's kind of a bird-watcher type—he was on the side of the Mourning Doves and so there were some eloquent speeches made on both sides.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they an endangered bird?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because I don't think there were very many people who hunted them. You take the breast and there's a bite on each side of the bone. I had never heard or never knew anybody who hunted doves. But apparently in eastern Washington, it's quite an event because they're fast and they're small and they're not easy to hit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess that's where the sport element comes in. You do have something to do with fish hatcheries though. I don't know how much of a part fish hatcheries played for game fish in those days. Would that be trout?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had quite a number of pretty good sized hatcheries.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I noticed that several lakes were stocked. Would that be the kind of hatchery that they were talking about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had one on the Sammish River in Skagit County and there was a large hatchery on the Cowlitz. I think that in those days the fish and game were pretty well managed. It was a big industry.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a very strong lobby group, I understand. Would groups come forward and make pitches for longer hours, or what kinds of things would they want?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was always the threat of an increased license fee with permits of all kinds.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't want higher fees, but did they want more services from you or the game commission?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a feeling that the hatcheries could do a better job, although I think, by and large, they produced a lot of fish. Then there were game farms where they raised pheasant. They'd have a release every year before hunting season. There was a big game farm on Whidbey Island. My family had a cabin near Coupeville and the game farm was fairly close. You'd see them. Sometimes they'd fly over the fence and they'd be along the road.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, there's a big controversy with cougar hunting with dogs. I imagine that back then that was the normal practice?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't any public outcry one way or the other. That evolved from the old days when the pioneers were settling the land.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Clearing off the "varmints?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Cougars and bear.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wolves. This is a little bit too early for the environmental movement to start getting involved in these issues. There were always bird-watchers, though.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Although it was beginning to rear its ugly head.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Game and Game Fish have any relationship with the fisheries people? There's salmon fishing and that's fisheries, but what about sportsmen catching salmon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There was a separate committee for fisheries. There was always a push to consolidate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your constituency was quite different?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They dealt with the commercial side.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The bigger boats with nets and all that? Your area of concern was more guys in hip waders or in small boats, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would your group include fishing on the ocean, or is that a different kind of fishing? Did you have just the rivers-and-lakes kind of fishing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, primarily. Streams and lakes, primarily. Then you had the charter boat operators were beginning to organize and get into the act.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like out of Westport?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And you had Ducks Unlimited and the Washington State Sportsmen's Council, I think it's called, that were involved in hunting and fishing issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that the sportsmen would have a big dinner before session. Would you go to that? A pretty deluxe affair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. It wasn't so deluxe, but it sure had a variety. They'd have everything, beaver and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To eat? I never thought of eating beaver.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. And bear, deer and elk as well as pheasant and grouse and duck.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was something to look forward to? Would only the committee members go to that or everybody?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was open to the legislators and staff people. It was a big affair.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some tension for some legislators around this issue. They felt that

it was a bit of a closed circle. That the Game Department and the sportsmen were so closely tied together that there was something wrong with that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's probably true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That the regulators were too closely tied to the people they were regulating, I guess would be the issue. And that these dinners were part of the problem.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't really think that. Now, there were individual committee members who were probably wined and dined by people in the business. Only once was I ever involved in anything with members of the Game Commission or the Department when I went on a pheasant hunting trip over in the Yakima Valley area. There were maybe half a dozen legislators and John Biggs and Wes Hunter were there. I don't know that there were any industry people. But it was just kind of a get-together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people thought they had a lot of power, so it was a concern.

Another of your committees was Harbors, Waterways and Flood Control. The Skagit Valley, the river there, flooded pretty regularly. Was that one of the issues that brought you into the committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Flood control was the area that I was particularly interested in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would your committee do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was legislation involving diking, that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of ditches and diking. Can you explain diking districts to me? What exactly are they?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the early days, when they reclaimed a lot of the land in the deltas of the rivers along the Sound, they'd build these dikes to keep the saltwater from flooding the farmland. There needed to be some sort of uniform control because one dike district would raise their dike four feet and then it would flood the areas on either side, so they'd have to raise theirs. So there had to be some sort of uniformity there, and that was kind of an issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, I suppose if some districts didn't take care of their dikes, then they would jeopardize everyone else.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They could go out and then the water would come in and go around the others.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you coordinate these districts or oversee them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't have anything to do with them directly, but we would screen proposed legislation that farm groups—or it could even be sportsmen's groups, because there were a lot of gun clubs along the saltwater and the mouths of the rivers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then you would set regulations? You'd be the "big picture" people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be primarily to screen legislation and then make recommendations to the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These little districts—were they locally elected, like school board members or cemetery boards?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There are any number of minor districts like that. Fire districts and cemetery districts and the whole works.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did have an unsuccessful bill to authorize sale of obsolete property in diking districts. So that would be areas that they didn't have to pay attention to anymore for one reason or another?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Could be. Or it might be equipment that the district had, bulldozers or trucks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't have authorization themselves to take care of their own things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure what the financial situation was, but most of those districts had a one or two percent property tax for funding.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed pretty detailed if the Legislature had to get right down to that level. I was just wondering where the line was. What they were allowed to do on their own and where you would have to step in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The committee in the Legislature was one of the weakest committees as far as handling legislation and really doing very much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's pretty specialized. Only a few districts would be involved in diking and flooding issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it wouldn't be a broad, statewide activity that would grab a lot of people, just some very local situations. But yet, for those people, it would be quite important.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Grand Coulee Dam reclamation projects were coming online in these years. That, of course, was the biggest reclamation going on in the whole state. Did your committee have anything to do with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't recall that there was any involvement. That's mostly federal. Although they do have some local organizations that are involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would have been interesting because there was a lot of work going on over there.

There was another committee on which you served that I don't think many would know about called the Engrossment and Enrollment Committee. Can you tell me about that one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's all done by staff now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. How did you happen to get on that committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I suppose they needed somebody and I didn't have a full compliment of committees, so it was my turn in the barrel.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you describe what exactly you would do on that committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We went over the bills as they came through the process. It was a proofreading.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somebody typed these bills and then you had to make sure they were correct? How would you know that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty much from your knowledge of the problem and then you'd compare that with what the bill set forth to see if it actually did what it said.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To make sure the language was correct?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be pretty good training. So, in the end, would you know how to write a bill properly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think most of the bill writing was left to the pros.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you'd really understand how they worked, I would think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You had a more intimate touch with the actual bills.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many people would actually do this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The committee was quite small in number.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wouldn't the volume be quite great?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I'm not sure that we handled every bill. It may have been just specific pieces of legislation where there was apt to be a glitch.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you know at what point it became a staff responsibility?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, but I think it was not too long after this. The Legislature, during the mid-John O'Brien era, became pretty staff oriented.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's one of the big changes coming up. But here's a little reminder to us of what it used to be like.

You did get three bills passed this session, which for a freshman was an unusual achievement

**Mr. Eldridge:** These were the bills that came out of Jim Ovenell's committee and were noncontroversial, by and large. He was chairman of the Forestry and State Lands Committee and there were a number of bills that his committee considered that had to do with safety in the woods and logging. I remember one of them was a bill that would require flame arresters on logging equipment. Anyway, ordinarily, bills that came out of a committee, the chairman would handle those on the floor. Jim didn't feel like he could do that, so he asked me if I would.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wondered why you took the lead on so many forestry bills when you were not even on that committee. Good experience! They seemed to sail through pretty well. One related to restocking of logged areas. A lot of land had been logged over and then abandoned, so the state was picking it up because the taxes weren't being paid.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That would be reforestation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This period is before the creation of the Department of Natural Resources. Who took care of logging issues then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a Department of Forestry. Bernie O'Dell was the state forester.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The forestry issue also touched on school issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** School lands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The sale of the trees generated money for schools. Did you have much contact with the SPI office—Pearl Wanamaker—while you were working on these issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The only contact I had with her was when she asked me about her budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Governor Wallgren, during his term, tried to gain control of the forestry lands as he did the Game Commission. He wanted to establish a timber resources board, which never worked out, because Pearl Wanamaker, for one, really opposed this. She wanted a different configuration on the board, with herself and the land commissioner and some other officials. I was wondering if she had a say on restocking of logged-over lands?

Then there was a bill about forest fire protection. And then one on authorizing sale of school land in Skagit County. I was wondering if she had anything to do with that, as well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall the exact issue there, but there was quite a lot of school land in Skagit County and it may have had something to do with timber sales.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of the other territories sold off most of their school lands, but Washington had managed to hang on to them.

Beyond your own committee assignments, I wanted to ask you about some of the main issues under discussion that session. Transportation was another of the big legislative areas, of course. There was this curious idea left from the 1930s about building a ship canal from lower Puget Sound to Grays Harbor that you discussed that session. Can you tell me about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It had pretty well gone by the boards, but it raised its head. I presume it would have gone down the Black River and Black Lake and then on through.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Part of the old pioneer route where people took their canoes? That was barely navigable, I thought.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It would be a tremendous project.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the point? Why you would want to do this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was what finally killed it. No one could really come up with a good idea as to why it was necessary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another big idea was to bridge Puget Sound itself. To have fewer ferries or have some alternatives to ferries, or just because it was a great idea? There couldn't have been very many places where you could build a bridge?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And in the San Juans there were a few islands that you could connect. But then when they built the floating bridge—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On Lake Washington?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That kind of gave some of those folks a little encouragement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine the currents are pretty fierce up there. I couldn't see how you could put a bridge there. It seemed, from the engineering perspective, quite daunting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The wind and tide really make it difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You legislators approved the measure, but did not build immediately a second Lake Washington bridge. The issue seemed to be the location of the bridge, which would have a big impact on the growth of the eastside. What was your opinion of this project?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was one where we figured we'd just let King County fight it out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you believe there should be a bridge? It's a lot of money.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't remember having real strong feelings about it one way or the other, although we were beginning to see an influx of traffic and we needed to do something fairly long range.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a hotly contested issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just as an aside, prior to 1952 they were setting the stage for toll roads and there was quite a lot of support for that. Then in the '53 session, when Eisenhower was elected, the federal highway program came into being and here was this big pot of money. So the toll roads went out the window and the state got their matching funds together and I-5 was built.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have been a huge project at the time. It's hard to even imagine now

what would have happened without that help. The development of the state would be entirely different.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I can remember driving from Mount Vernon to Olympia and there were twenty-five stop lights going through Everett.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, yes, you had to go right through town. You had to go right through Seattle, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right through downtown Seattle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would get a little tiresome.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We used to drive from Mount Vernon to Vancouver. My first wife's family lived in Vancouver, Washington, and we'd come down what used to be Highway 9 down through Lake Stevens and then east of Everett. We'd come down and go through Yelm and Bucoda and Centralia and then hit Old Highway 99 down below Chehalis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would bring some businesses into those smaller places.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be quite an impact, after the freeways were built. Another area of government that was going through quite a transition at that point was education. We've discussed kindergartens, which continued to be hot-button issue for many. Educators were really pushing for it and it just kept going back and forth. Pearl Wanamaker, as we spoke earlier, was the dominant force in education in those days. A bill that came up in 1953 had to do with vocational education. There was a group of people who wanted a separate board to oversee vocational education. At that time, I believe, it was under Pearl directly, and

some people thought that it should be a separate board because it was a different area of education, although it was right in the schools. The bill, House Bill 206, was sponsored by representatives Timm, Smith and Munsey, a bipartisan group. Do you remember that discussion? I thought of you because you had wanted to be a shop teacher, and I thought this might have caught your eye.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was quite a movement to place more importance on vocational education. The community colleges were part of the local school systems and they were governed by the local school boards until we set up a community college system. But the issue got caught up in this kindergarten thing too, because it was the other end of the spectrum.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pearl Wanamaker apparently thought everyone should go to college, and then get some kind of vocational training. Whereas, other people said that not everybody should go to college, that you should have technical schools as an alternative. All these people were coming back from the war and wanted to get jobs.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So I don't know if this was an anti-Pearl issue or just has a totally different thrust.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was kind of a philosophical thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I noticed you didn't support it. Did you think it would be too administratively difficult?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that I was just table-banging opposed to it. Morrill Folsom, who was in the Legislature from Lewis County, had Centralia Junior College—the first one in the state—in his district. I think it was established in 1926 or something like that. All during this

organizational discussion, he was strongly for just leaving it where it was. "That the local school board could do a better job and let's not mess with it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the argument for making it separate was that it would get more or different kinds of attention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you hit on it. I think that the feeling was that it would be recognized as a very vibrant part of the educational system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a prestige issue, in a way? It would give it more stature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, no. I think it was more basic. It was a hands-on type situation where you could actually see what was happening.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you more convinced by this Lewis County representative, his arguments? That made sense to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At the outset I kind of went along with him, but I came around on the issue when I was on the interim committee on education and was involved in the junior college discussion. We actually put together the bill that established the community college system with separate boards and separate administration. I think it has worked pretty well. We have a pretty good system in the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this will be an evolutionary process for you? This is the first time it's raised its head—your first session. So gradually you learned more and shifted your opinion about how this system should be organized?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I could begin to see the light from a funding standpoint. I always felt that the local school districts were commingling their community college or junior college money and using it in the district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's another issue of legislative intent where you really want a certain thing to happen and then you can't actually make it happen. Once the money's out of your hands, there it goes. Also, I suppose it was not so much of an issue so long as there were only a few community colleges, but the system was starting to grow. So I suppose that takes on a different profile, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the fact that you're now getting the big school districts involved, King County and Spokane County. That made quite a difference.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. We'll have to follow this along.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had always been very much in favor of the junior college. I was a product of a junior college and I felt it was a great option for a lot of kids. By and large, you could stay at home and the expense was reasonable in those days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it true then that you could transfer to a four-year college after the first two years if you wanted to?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I didn't have any problem transferring my credits.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wasn't sure if that was already in place or not. So that would be a nice transition for a lot of kids.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You bet, because there are a lot of kids who get out of high school and they're just really lost. And you throw them into a big educational institution and boy! It's "sink or swim."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, we needed those intermediate institutions.

I'd like to take a look at another issue now. You started to tell me about the foreign corporations operating in the United States and what you did during that session to make that more possible.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a statute on the books that prohibited foreign corporations from owning property in the state. I guess this came about when we had a lot of Chinese.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was associating it with that in my mind. And Japanese people couldn't own land either; Asian people, in general, were prohibited from buying property in the nineteenth century.

**Mr. Eldridge:** So when Dutch Shell wanted to build a refinery just outside of Anacortes, and General Petroleum wanted to build in Ferndale—but the Shell people couldn't acquire the property in order to build the refinery.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A huge investment. Obviously, they would want to own the facility.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. So that was the whole crux of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they have gone to Canada and then shipped fuel across the border? Was that part of the issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't ever recall that being out in the open, but I presume it was certainly an option for them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Lots of potential jobs would be lost. What did you do with the statute?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't apparently much of a change. I wasn't directly involved, but Hal Arnason—he and Dutch McBeath and I lived together during that '53 and '55 session, so we were fairly close to the legislation—Hal did a

tremendous job, and as a freshman it was really a feather in his cap to herd that legislation through the session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it controversial? Were people against it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You had some rumbling, but it wasn't an all-out effort. It wasn't open warfare, but there were some objections.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the issue there? Because it would allow other things to happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there were some people who were afraid that it might open the gate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the bill passed. Then did Shell build the refinery? Was that part of the first industrialization of that area? There were some paper mills too, weren't there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Mills that were related to logging.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oil refineries on Puget Sound become an issue: Cherry Point and others. Was this the first oil refinery?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The first major project. Then, of course, the pipeline was built that tied it all together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. So that turns out to be a big development for that part of the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. During the construction period, of course, there were a tremendous number of workers who were working on the plant and then once it was built it didn't take many people to run a refinery.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it was an economic shot in the arm for a while, but not long term?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I'll tell you what it did. It brought a lot of real high class professional people to the area, because even though they don't have a lot of employment, the people that they have are well educated, they're well paid, and they've taken a place in the community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're—what—petro-chemical engineer types?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's surprising the people from the refinery who are involved in service clubs and chambers of commerce and school boards and youth organizations and the whole nine yards.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The company might be foreign, but would the people they hired be Americans? Was that part of the argument? Did Hal Arnason know that it would work out that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I don't think that there was ever a real concern with even those who had some opposition that that was a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about water pollution? Was that ever an issue to do with refineries on the waterfront?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. In that area up there in Skagit County, I don't know that any of the present day environmental concerns were really evident.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the paper mills freely dumping all their stuff into the water at this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that a lot of it went in. And even the fish canneries and processing—I'm sure that a lot of that stuff went into the Bay.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Down in the bottom of the Sound, in Shelton, what the paper mills were doing there was highly controversial. But there's not that flow of water there, either.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was going to say that one of the big advantages up there is the swift flowing water.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess that stuff all goes somewhere.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It scours it out pretty fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Whereas in Shelton, it would just stay right there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's down in a pocket there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The oyster beds all around through there were destroyed. Aren't there fisheries in the Skagit area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And there was quite an oyster industry up there in Padilla Bay, Samish Bay.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's too early for people to be thinking about that in '53? Later, of course, oil pollution became a very big issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, it does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Turning now to another issue: there was a push for modernization in the Legislature, and one of the things that people were talking about was the need for more buildings. The state was growing, population was increasing and the government was growing. The Legislative Council was bringing in reports saying that you were too crowded, that things are not actually working very well because there was just not enough space. So, this was sort of a wedge, the beginning part of this discussion.

Another modernization effort, you had a big discussion about whether or not you should take your roll call votes electronically. Some states were beginning to do that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. There was beginning to be discussion about it and people were making trips to states where they had them and seeing how they worked.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was not considered practical at that point. One of the studies that was conducted said it didn't actually shave off much time because—this interested me—they said you had to be at your desk to press the button and it took so long for everybody to get corralled back to their desks instead of being able to vote from, I guess, wherever they happened to be on the floor. It was hard to get people to stay at their desks.

Would that have been one of those inadvertent style changes, where you were allowed to wander around the room and talk to each other, rather than having to be at your desks pressing buttons? A case of a technological innovation accidentally changing social relationships.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair analysis. You would go to somebody's desk and just crouch down and visit with them and talk about a bill or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But then when they called your name, you could just say "yes" or "no" or whatever, and you didn't have to go back to your desk?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Before the electronic machine. But then, of course, what happened was with the installation of those machines you had people who were voting for other people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you'd say to somebody, "I'm going to vote 'yes.' Can you press my button?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that okay?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, there was some skullduggery, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would people actually press the other button?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Even though they weren't asked, they might just do so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Run over and—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Or be standing there and reach down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A good way to vote often—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes! Vote early and often.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One thing that you do get that session is the House members' cafeteria. The Senate had had one for a session or two and the House members decide that they wanted one. Previous to that, where did you eat?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the public cafeteria or where the Children's Museum is now, that was a restaurant called the Marigold. A lot of legislators went there for lunch.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that just not very convenient, having to leave the Legislative Building? Or you thought you were as good as the senators and should have your own facility?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was a lot of it. The leadership wanted their own mark.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, how did you carve out the space? Where did you put it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was formerly a locker room on the lower level. Members had lockers down there but none of them ever used them, I don't believe. So they just took them out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that where you were supposed to put your coat?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Then there are stairs from the cafeteria up to the floor of the House.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did having your own cafeteria change anything? Did it make it easier to hang out with other House members? Add to the camaraderie?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it helped in that respect.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you wouldn't have to actually say, "Let's go for lunch," you'd just all kind of be there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. People would wander down and there'd be a table and some vacant chairs and you'd just slide in there. You might not recognize when you first came in who was going to be sitting next to you, but it worked out pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe it was actually a good thing, to help move things along if there was this easy way of meeting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was certainly convenient.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You worked all kinds of hours and must have got hungry.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the price was right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine you kept it pretty economical?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And it was surprising how many contributions of produce or whatever—legislators who lived in an area where they produced asparagus or eggs or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. Was there quite a bit of bipartisan eating? Did you eat with Democrats and back and forth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was kind of a mixed bag.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A way to meet people and build relationships?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was anyone else allowed in there besides House members? The Press?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We eventually took the roster of Press people and divided them between the House and the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people would always get to eat with the Senate and some people would eat with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then they'd shift. It was just by lot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about lobbyists?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No lobbyists. Why were Press people special?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everybody's looking for their name in the paper or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was just a favor to them? But occasionally, I understand the Press would abuse that and overhear conversations and print stories about them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. But I don't think, by and large, that happened. But you're going to have bad media people just like you've got bad legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true. They're always going to find a way to get the story.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. But you know one of the interesting incidents. You've probably had somebody mention "Red" Beck from Bremerton? Red was a pretty good sized guy and there were the two doors to the stairs to the

cafeteria at the back of the House chamber and there are doors right there. When Red would figure that we were about to adjourn for lunch, he'd be ready, and as soon as the Speaker dropped the gavel he'd shoot to the back and down the stairs and he'd be the first in line in the cafeteria. Well, somebody figured that didn't look too good, so they locked the door. He shot out of his seat and he went down and he hit that door and it just knocked him flat! You've seen the movies where they do that. He just bounced right back and flat on his back!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was expecting it to open!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And down he went!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, dear, poor guy. Did he take it in good humor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of. He groaned a lot about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, that was pretty embarrassing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** One of the other things. You know after you had a bill passed, you'd have to buy cigars for all of the male members and then they passed out big boxes of candy. A Page would take them around. When they'd come by Red's desk, he'd take a handful and put them on his desk and then put a book or a paper or something over it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So nobody could get his candy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So anyway, a couple of the guys got hold of one of the Pages and gave him five dollars and she just kept going around and around by his desk and every time she came around, he'd take another handful of candy. I think he probably emptied the whole box.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they just wanted to see just how far he'd go? Everybody was watching?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he ever look up and notice that the other members were checking this out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He finally, I think, got the drift.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I didn't know about that tradition of the cigars. There was smoking right there, wasn't there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In the Chamber.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it pretty blue? Was this one of those "smoke-filled rooms?" Is that where that comes from?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, but I presume some of the committee rooms when you got a bunch of people smoking, why it was kind of hazy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you smoke yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I smoked a cigar once in awhile.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds like you'd have lots of opportunities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But I was never a cigarette smoker and I didn't smoke continuously.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was that like to be in that thick atmosphere?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't bad. I didn't have a problem with it. Some of the ladies kind of objected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was one of the arguments that was used why women shouldn't be in the Legislature.

That session you served on a conference committee to do with redistricting. Could you tell me about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The House and the Senate each had a bill and it finally got down to a conference committee of six members, House and Senate members, Republicans and Democrats. Joe Lawrence was a Republican House member from Seattle and I think he was chairman of the State Government committee where these bills wound up. Our caucus was ready to support a bill, but Joe Lawrence kept getting up out of his seat in the caucus meetings and saying, “We’ve got to protect Tom Pelly. We’ve got to draw this First Congressional District a little differently so he’ll have more Republican votes.” Of course, Tom Pelly had the safest Republican congressional seat in the state at that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was there until 1972.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was there a long time and it was just ridiculous. Everybody was getting a little upset with Joe Lawrence. So we adjourned without ever passing any redistricting measure. And, of course, the next session the Democrats were in control and they rewrote the thing just to suit themselves and passed it and that was it.

That was just one of the things that didn’t happen during that session. Langlie’s program was scuttled and then the next session the Democrats were in control and so they passed everything and took credit for it. It was an interesting time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Redistricting just haunts you practically your whole legislative career.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It’s always been a problem and there’s no easy way to get around it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were a freshman in ’53. How did you get on that conference committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was in an area where we had both legislative and congressional changes that were fairly major. While I didn’t know too much about it—and didn’t really want to know too

much about it—both the Democrats and Republicans had people on the conference committee who were basically from the Metropolitan areas, and I think that our caucus was determined they were going to have somebody from a rural area. I have an idea that was probably as much of a factor as anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The early fifties were just beginning to see the suburbanization of King County and the whole Puget Sound area. Was that recognized that was the direction things were going?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And particularly in Snohomish County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The state was experiencing a real population growth. That’s interesting. We’re going to have to pick up on these redistricting threads as we discuss these years.

Your first session, there was a special session. Governor Langlie called you the day after *Sine Die* of your first regular legislative session—right the next day. The Press indicated that there was a lot of grumbling about that. That people were pretty tired and didn’t want to come back. In fact some legislators took several days—they took their time coming back. Do you remember your feelings about having to come right back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Back in those days, we’d have night sessions and weekend sessions and the philosophy was kind of just “keep them here until they’re ready to drop” and then you can get things done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Weaken them and then they’ll sign on the line?

**Mr. Eldridge:** “Go on with the business.” I think there was a lot of truth to that. While it was perhaps hard on some of the older members or anybody who had any kind of illness or affliction, it probably was more difficult. But I always felt that you tire them out and vote and go home.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's like a psychological tactic? "Keep them in this hothouse. Don't let them stray and just keep them at it?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about your business? What about your family? Were you anxious to get home? Psychologically, it's a race. You run the course and there are all these hurdles of cutoffs and deadlines. Then you want to go home, don't you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Being a legislator is difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not to mention the Press really castigated you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. But they want to go home, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They make it sound more altruistic than that. Was there a sense of failure when there's a special session called right after a regular session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was more frustration.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were sessions just simply too short? Governor Langlie and Governor Rosellini later on made quite extensive speeches about how you just simply ran out of time, on how "These are important issues; we're doing the State's work." But the Press went wild every time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's some truth to that, but you could have three hundred-day sessions and they'd go right down to the two-hundred-and-ninety-ninth day and not get the job done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So your feet have to be held to the fire?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You bet!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As you held more hearings and more meetings, that's very time consuming.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really is and there were more and more advocacy groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More and more bills, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the attitude of the individual legislator has changed. These days, there are so many one-issue legislators. They come to Olympia and they have just one thing that they're interested in and they don't care about anything else. That's why you get so much bad legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And they're not listening too much to each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, there are times when they don't even talk to each other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That wasn't true in your day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I can recall any number of occasions where in the evening we'd get four or five Republicans and several Democrats and we'd have dinner together. We would sit around the table and decide what we were going to do the next day and then we'd do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And nobody looked askance at that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would be some Democrats who were pretty amenable to that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Bob Charette from the Harbor was one who was usually involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there more of a "middle" then? Were more legislators what are now called moderates so that it was easier to meet on that common ground?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, except that they could still be miles apart on some issues and be very adamant on those positions. But I think, overall, there was more of an ability to sit down and responsibly look at issues and decide how you were going to solve the problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Finally, though, your first session does end and you get to go home about March 21. Not too bad. You passed the budget at long last. That seems to be the big issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's always the stumbling block.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You must do that, whatever else you do. How did you feel about your first term as a legislator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was glad that the session was over. It didn't take long to get back into the routine of going to meetings and talking about the session and looking ahead to the next go-around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you meet with your constituents and different community groups? Did you give a report?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was some of that. It would depend on the group. There were different interests and different items that you'd talk about, but you'd always talk about the budget with any group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel? Do you remember this budget? The budget was a tough issue in these years because there was just not enough money.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think in that session the general fund budget was eight-hundred-million-dollars, and what is it today, six-billion?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot more zeros. Kind of mind-boggling.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a lot more people in the state, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the problems are greater.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The scale of operations is certainly different.

So you came home and went back to work, back to regular life. Did you feel changed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not particularly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have new insights as to what state government meant?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I've used the term "frustration" a number of times, and I think that was the thing that I felt more than anything else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have specific things you thought, if they were changed, it would make things better?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always felt that there were too many bills in the Legislature. As a matter of fact, I went three sessions without having my name on a single bill. There were some people in the district, that when you'd go home and talk to them, they'd say, "How come you didn't sponsor more legislation?" And I said, "I didn't have my name on a lot of bills, but I sure killed a bunch of them."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A different kind of distinction.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were just all kinds of "hero" bills that people knew they weren't going to go anyplace, but they could go home and wave it and say, "See, I sponsored this bill that would do this for you, and those so-and-so Republicans killed it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know if there's a tally on that end. Definitely you can go through the Journals and pull out who passed what, but nobody kept track of who killed what. That's a harder score to figure out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are so many places that this can take place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel, "enamored" is too strong a word, but did you like being a legislator? Were you intrigued?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I liked being a legislator and I think a lot of it had to do with the people who were involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel effective? Of course, you were just a freshman, but did you feel like you were learning how to do it and that you could do some useful things down there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I felt that I was growing and learning a lot from my association with other members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that you had come into it a bit naïve, and that now you were more schooled about how it actually worked?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Because I really didn't know much about the Legislature until I got there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it the kind of thing that you cannot understand unless you are in it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there's a lot of truth to that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The general public does not seem to understand the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They have no clue at all. I've always said that if every citizen of the state could spend a year in the Legislature, we wouldn't have as many problems as we have.

## CHAPTER 5

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### GAINING EXPERIENCE: 1955

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You decided to come back to the Legislature. You had to run for office again. Was that decision pretty much taken for granted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty automatic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was running as an incumbent different than running as a fresh, new face?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. When you're an incumbent, you have a record to run on. Not only with your own record, but the record of your Party or the record of the Legislature as a whole. So it's a different procedure entirely.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So your campaign had to have a different flavor, or did you go about it more or less in the same way? How did you present yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much the same way. I'd been a community activist and I still was involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel more responsible now for your statements? I don't mean you were irresponsible before, but you're now talking from the inside.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I had more knowledge and more background. I think you become a better legislator after having served.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think it takes a few years to really learn the ways of the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure it does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So people who serve only one term, are they doing anything? Can they accomplish anything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have some more concrete ideas about what you wanted to do as a legislator? Were you carving out an area of interest for yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I became more interested in education than I had been before. Although I've always been involved in education.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were re-elected, as were your colleagues from your district, all three of the incumbents came back. Yourself, James Ovenell and Emma Abbott Ridgway. The status quo held. But the House Republicans came back as the minority party. The Senate remained Republican, but more narrowly so. They lost a seat.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The numbers were getting a little tighter. The House went Democratic by one seat, which is a very narrow majority. But your party still had Governor Langlie as a standard bearer.

I thought it would be interesting to just remind ourselves what the political climate of the times was in the mid-fifties before we examine the work of the session. To give ourselves some context. This was just the end of the McCarthy era, named for Senator Joe McCarthy. He had been censored and people were starting to pull away from his anti-communist crusade. Do you remember how you felt about what was going on, on the national level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was somewhat sympathetic to the position that the McCarthy group was taking. I wasn't involved and wasn't out waving the flag or placards or whatever in support of what he was doing, but I guess, philosophically, I just had a gut feeling that the basic premise was probably right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That there were communists in high places influencing the direction of events?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that was true in Washington State?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can recall as a little kid this big flatbed truck full of workers from Anacortes with straight sides so they could stand up—they were waving their red flags. That was a highly unionized area with the fishing and mill types.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These would have been the Wobblies, something like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course we were close enough to Everett when they had the ruckus down there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did people still talk about that in your day? The 1919 events in Everett?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just as a kind of an aside.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you think of McCarthy's tactics?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought he was a little pushy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Many people think that's what brought him down, not his message, but his method.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Method. I think that's a pretty fair statement. Of course, we had Al Canwell here in this state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a little bit before your time, but actually there were, I think, some still members of that committee serving at the same time as you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And there was still some talk about reactivating the committee on occasion. I don't really know when that completely goes away as an issue. Did it just kind of fade?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, yes. There wasn't a complete break away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These were the Cold War years. Things were happening all over the world that probably kept it on the front burner.

In a very different way, it was also the beginning of the civil rights movement. The *Brown versus the Board of Education* case in the Supreme Court. The following year the Montgomery bus boycotts began. So the South was stirring, but did that feel very far away from Washington?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I always had sympathy for the minority group. I had some background as far as my family is concerned. My mother was born in Missouri which was a slave state. Kansas was a free state and they lived in Hume, Missouri, which was right on the river between the two. She said she can remember her grandmother telling her, as they sat on the front porch visiting, of watching a black man run for the river with dogs and a posse with guns chasing him. And she said, "And my grandmother just kept praying that he'd make it." And he did and he got across and she didn't know who he was. She didn't know what the outcome was, but at least he got out of Missouri.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not to mention they didn't shoot him right before her eyes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But Blacks were still discriminated against in Kansas. They had the Jim Crow streetcars and public accommodations and all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Too true. Was there any legacy of that anti-slavery feeling in your family? You said you had sympathy for the blacks, I was just wondering if there was a connection?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There probably was. But I don't recall any real strong feelings. There must have been some discussion because both my mother and father were well read, and because they were both involved in the news business.

Of course, in Mount Vernon, it wasn't until the forties that we were ever really involved with black people. Then, we had one black family that moved in—just a man and his wife.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That sounds lonely for them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They lived out of town maybe eight or nine miles, and he worked for an automobile dealer there and she did housework for people. Walt Blade and his dad, Carl Blade, who had the automobile dealership, were very good to the black family, and they included them in a lot of things. When I first ran in 1952, Walt was my campaign chairman and I remember Clarence was involved in a lot of little things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Clarence was the black man?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He'd go with us to put up signs and things like that and he'd always tell people who came into the garage, he said, "I'm whistle-stopping for Don Eldridge," because in those days they used to speak from the back end of a railroad car, you know. They'd pull into a town—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. I remember seeing photographs of Truman and different people doing that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Whistle-stopping!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember when the actions in the South started to pick up? Did they make the newspapers? Do you remember being aware of what was going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. I was aware that things were happening, but I just don't ever remember being involved in any real serious discussions about what was happening and how it related to those of us in Washington.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it just feel really far away?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've traveled in the South. So you might have seen a little of the conditions down there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was in Tampa, Florida, during my war service. I remember one time I was going from Tampa, Florida, up into Georgia by bus. I went into the bus depot and all of a sudden I realized I was in the wrong line. I was in the black line to get a ticket. I remember I got some pretty strong stares from the people behind the counter.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody outright told you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When I got up there, he said, "You should be over in this line." Then I saw the sign, 'black only.'

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just wouldn't even be in your mind.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't even think about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's part of the background for this period. Another event I'd like you to comment on was in 1954, the United States tested a hydrogen bomb on Bikini Island out in the Pacific. There was just the beginning of talk about "fallout." Not very much discussion,

though. There seemed to be more a congratulatory feeling of success with these bombs, but I wondered if that was something you recall people talking about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any serious discussion. Not until the Manhattan Project finally came out in the open where they developed the nuclear project over in Hanford.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been several years earlier, people didn't really understand what these things were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. My perception was that here was another military tool that the United States used and it had the desired result and so we moved on to something else.

When I was active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce and was the state president, I did quite a lot of traveling around the state. We had a very active chapter down in Hanford. A lot of those fellows worked on the reservation and so we were a little closer to it than just the person on the street. I think I began to feel the seriousness of the whole situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was all wrapped up in Cold War issues. It's difficult to recall now how people at that time felt about those things. Some big issues were kind of ticking away in the background.

While we are discussing cultural shifts and social change, much closer to home, attitudes toward drinking and gambling were loosening up. The regulation of liquor and gambling sometimes went hand-in-hand. As a legislator, you would be asked to address the growing pressure for the laws and regulations to keep pace with the times.

Of course, Prohibition ended in the thirties, and then the state got into the business of dispensing liquor and creating the rules by which that was done. It seems that after the war, people

were starting to revisit the regulations. There was a lot of action, a lot of bills, a lot of discussion about how to do this—mostly in the direction of opening up the regulations. What did you think the state's role should be in this area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I've been a strong advocate of control, particularly after I became a member of the Liquor Control Board. I felt that the attempts to get the state out of the liquor business were wrong. I just felt that it's a volatile issue and a product and the state ought to have a firm handle on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel about liberalizing the laws?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't see any objection to changing the regulations as far as visibility of restaurants that served liquor and taverns.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At this time, bottle clubs were a big problem. Now, for a newer generation, can you describe what a bottle club was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. A restaurant or club couldn't serve liquor by the drink. A patron could go to the liquor store and buy a bottle of Bourbon or Scotch or whatever and bring it with them to the restaurant. Then the restaurant could provide the mixer and the patron could mix the drinks right at his table.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that was legal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was legal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did restaurants prefer it that way? Or it was just kind of an accommodation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that they would rather have been able to have a cocktail lounge and serve drinks. Of course they had a fairly valid argument in favor of doing away with the bottle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was not stopping anybody from drinking, that's for sure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to drink the whole bottle, because then you couldn't take an opened bottle of liquor in your car?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was one of the arguments. That people would be drinking more just to get rid of the bottle. So it was a pretty valid argument that the licensed premises put up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read that these clubs were banned in 1951 because liquor by the drink had been made permissible in restaurants that year, but that the ban was challenged in court. Then the Legislature came back and rewrote the bill so that it was constitutional and that then bottle clubs started to disappear.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The whole attitude towards drinking seemed to be changing. There's talk of wanting more liberal laws for tourism reasons, and as a reflection of the growth of people's income. They have a little bit more discretionary income: they can go out for dinner. On one hand, the moralistic tone is still there, there's still a strong camp supporting the blue laws, the no-drinking-on-Sunday group—which is really late Saturday night, not Sunday per se. But there seems to be just this new acceptance that people would like to be able to have a drink.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I think that a lot of this came about with the men who'd been in the service and had traveled all around the country and been exposed to different liquor laws and so on. Then when they got back they began to want some changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So what was your point of view? Should the State regulate liquor—how did

you feel about this sort of regulation of personal consumption?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that a person should take responsibility personally as to how they handle liquor. I always felt that the State should control consumption and the illegal liquor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there, at this time, a Republican position on government regulation of personal behavior?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that the Party had any particular strong position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There is that kind of thread in some of the old-line Republican Party literature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that there was quite a group of Republicans who were very conservative, particularly on social issues. Then there were the moderate-to-liberal group that felt that there ought to be some relaxation of rules and regulations. Not only in the liquor aspect, but most everything else. I wasn't real enthusiastic about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How about gambling? Is that a different thing altogether?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really is. I could never see a strong reason for prohibiting slot machines. I suppose that it's true they can be manipulated, but then I don't know that it's any worse than Roulette or Bingo or Keno.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did the slot machines look like in those days? The Elks Club and a lot of places had them and it was a huge source of revenue for them. You put your quarter in and—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pull the handle!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about pull tabs? What exactly is a pull tab?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They print up a bunch of them and some have a dollar amount. First you buy them. They're fifty cents or a dollar, or whatever. You pull your tab off there and it may say five dollars, ten dollars, or "sorry" or "better luck next time," or whatever. There's no skill involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that the catch, that you just pay your money and take your chance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that what people didn't like? Did you have to earn your money at poker rather than just get lucky?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you can acquire a skill in playing poker. I'm not a card player, but there are those who are real serious about it and they get to be experts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering if part of this whole issue and why it had so much visibility in these years is was position of the Elks Club and other clubs that had gambling. All kinds of business leaders and community members belonged to the Elks. It was a place where you could get liquor by the drink and play cards. There was nothing backroom about this, particularly. Did it make gambling more respectable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, and the fact that the Elks Club expanded and flourished and there was no social barrier. I think it paved the way for general acceptance of liquor by the drink and gambling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were people worried about corruption issues with gambling? Was the Mafia yet associated with gambling?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they always have been, but I don't know that it was a real strong factor. When the issue came up there were always those who said, "Well, this is just opening it up for the Mafia or those types."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There always seemed to be a little bit of that in the discussions. "Organized crime is going to get hold of this. This is not innocent."

Every once in awhile people said we should get a state lottery. That's a discussion that went on for decades. The notion of regulating gambling and also taxing gambling was raised. Was it a big potential source of revenue for local governments? Didn't they get a piece of the proceeds?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure. I know they were certainly controlled and I think that municipalities either had a license fee or a percentage of the take. I've never been that close to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like with liquor, the state earned quite a bit of money from the sales tax on liquor. It's often been popular in budget crunch times to employ sin taxes because they're hard to defend. Is that a temptation for the State?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure. I noticed that Governor Locke is suggesting that we extend the tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So a state that's making money from drinking and gambling, it's pretty hard for them to be shutting it down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. You see, the State, as far as liquor is concerned, not only has the tax but it also has the markup, the profit, so that it's a good source of revenue. I think over the years it's been well run by the State. We've not had any big scandals as far as liquor is concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's always a watch-dog aspect of it, but it does seem like it's pretty well run.

Let's get back to your life in the Legislature. Did your caucus construct their plans any differently because you were a minority party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was no particularly definitive program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't come in with a list?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because the Democrats were the majority, they elected one of their own for Speaker. But because your numbers were so close it was a bit of a near thing. John O'Brien wanted to be Speaker, and Margaret Hurley, a Democratic member, had been in a car accident and it was thought she might not make it in for the vote. That meant that the parties were tied when you first got there. There was a fair amount of tension about what was going to happen. Then, at the last minute, she was wheeled in to cast her vote—was it on a gurney or a wheelchair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a gurney, as I recall. I don't recall that particular vote, but in the organizational procedure, she was the deciding vote for John.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just sounds so dramatic.

And the electronic voting machine was installed for the 1955 session. So you moved into a new era there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pushed the button!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you're in the minority your party wouldn't get chairmanships. But since it was so tight, did the Republicans work with more conservative Democrats to get things through? Did they forge more relationships that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's correct. There always has been a group of pretty conservative Democrats who would cross the aisle and go with Republicans. With the count as close as it was it doesn't take too many.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One or two. Was that an actual strategy, or just a natural thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just sort of happened. Everybody can count and you began to look across the aisle to see who you can pick up on any particular issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember which Democrats at that stage were crossing the aisle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Eric Braun who was a funeral director from, I think, Cashmere, would occasionally come across and vote with the Republicans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the Spokane-area Democrats who became well known for that later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** On some business issues particularly, Bill McCormick would come across. Then in the Senate, Davie Cowen was apt to go most anyplace. I'll tell you, he was something else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are a lot of stories about him. If some Democrats crossed the aisle to vote with you, did some Republicans likewise cross the aisle to vote with Democrats on different issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think on occasion there would be some who would drift over, but it was more on what I would say, local issues rather than basic statewide issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Motherhood issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a good, strong caucus. Mort Frayn was the floor leader.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These years the trend seemed to be that the Republicans were losing power. What do you think accounts for this? After almost twenty years of straight Democratic majorities, you were in the majority last session and then you lost it again.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a majority in '47.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. And then not again until '53, and then not again for quite a stretch. Was your message a little off from what the public wanted or was something else going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's primarily the local situation. Maybe we had a poor candidate in the district or there was an issue that people just didn't feel the Republicans were doing the right thing and so they shifted. Of course, basically, the state is pretty much Democratic over the years. In some districts they've got a lock on the offices.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if Governor Langlie was losing popularity. He'd been in for a while. Sometime that happens.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so and he wasn't a real strong leader. He couldn't come into your district and deliver many votes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think—just harkening back to our earlier discussion about how there's going to be a change in leadership in the Republican Party within the coming years, I was wondering if the Republican Party at this point—the leadership at any rate—was just a little tired and not sending out a dynamic message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With John O'Brien wielding the Speaker's gavel, did this session run differently from when Mort Frayn was on the rostrum? Did they have a very different style? Not just substance, but style?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you could say that. Of course, John had Julia Butler Hansen. She was the floor leader for the Democratic caucus and there's one tough cookie. Between the two of them they pretty well had a handle on things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She was the first lieutenant? A good combination?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have anybody who matched them for energy, for drive? Who were the star Republicans? For instance, on Appropriations, a committee that you served on, you had Damon Canfield, and Joe Chytil. And there was Mort Frayn and Marshall Neill.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Marsh and Chet Gordon would probably be the two prominent people in the caucus at that time. They were both very well respected. Marsh looked after Washington State College. Zeke [Newman Clark] and Mort Frayn from Seattle were there looking after the University of Washington.

An interesting thing: when we got to that session, we had six members of the Rules Committee. Zeke Clark and Mort Frayn were from King County, Elmer Johnston and Arthur Jones, the two of them from Spokane, and then Chet Gordon and Marshall Neill from Whitman County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were really taking care of all the colleges. And you took care of Western?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I kept an eye on the budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of course, the big issue was always the budget, but it really did seem to be a big issue because you were having quite a revenue problem. Governor Langlie made some very strong statements about needing new revenue sources, and in fact he came out for an income tax—a first for him.

Early in the session, two Republican senators, Thomas Hall and W.C. Raugust proposed a ballot measure for a constitutional amendment. They wanted it to go to a vote of the people for either a graduated net income tax

or a flat two percent income tax. Republicans tended to favor the flat tax, whereas it was more of a Democratic position to be for the graduated income tax. Can you tell me why there's that division in looking at taxes? What's attractive about a flat tax?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. You hit everybody. The Republicans were always afraid that with a graduated net income tax the Democrats, whenever they had a chance, would jack up the rate on the business community and the upper-level income people. Probably the threshold would be so low that it wouldn't catch a multitude of citizens.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So just the well-to-do would end up paying, and everybody else wouldn't?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's what the Republicans—at least their mindset was that was the reason.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you agreed with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I philosophically was opposed to any income tax. I always looked at the income tax as the federal tax, and the sales tax as the state tax, and the property tax as the local tax. I thought that if we just kind of kept that balance that we could probably handle most any situation. But the Democrats were always for a state income tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, here it was the Republicans calling for it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, sure. And their philosophy—at least the leadership—was that if we do it, then we can make it palatable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would make it palatable in this case?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Make it so everybody paid something.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Isn't that what a graduated tax is?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It depends on where you start and where you cap it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. So a flat tax is simpler in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the inequities of a flat tax?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are those who thought that if you took just two percent of your federal income tax or three, or whatever the figure it happened to be, that would be the easiest way to collect it, because that had already been established when you fill out your federal income tax form, and then just take a percentage of that as a state tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were so many different points of view on this. Newman Clark in the middle of this discussion—and it went throughout the session—for instance said he voted for this and then he wanted an amendment “provided this act shall not become effective until the federal income taxes shall be limited to twenty-five percent in times of peace.” Is that more or less like saying “until hell freezes over?” Is that a sort of cute way of saying “this isn't going to happen?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people voted for it because they thought that it should go to a vote of the people. They weren't for the tax, but they were for a vote of the people. What do you think of the people deciding that? Is that a legislative responsibility to decide or should it be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose basically it's a legislative responsibility, but of course the easy way out is to throw it back to the voters. It has to go to the people because you have to change the Constitution.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people think that the really big issues should always go to the people. Was the income tax the type of bill that was “too big” for the Legislature to decide?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was, because you’d really be making a tremendous change. It is kind of a threshold bill. The public isn’t all that dumb. They can pick and choose. Ordinarily, they come up with the right answer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel this was a good way to go? Did you support this way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was the only way that I would support it. If it had to go to the people. So all you were really voting on was to put it before the people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, in essence, you don’t even have to have a position on the income tax?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You just say, “Let the voters decide.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have gone out and talked on this? Later you do, of course, for Dan Evans, but at this stage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is this a good one to duck? Just let it happen.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Keep your head down! And we always figured that the Democrats didn’t want an income tax, they just wanted the issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it a stick to beat the Republicans with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the Democrats mad that the Republican governor and Republican

senators proposed this? It was kind of their thing. Did it make it awkward for them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably some of them, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were a lot of machinations about this particular endeavor. I’m trying to understand some of the different things that it went through.

And you were using that electronic roll call. Does that speed things up? Did it feel different?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I’m sure it did. It was helpful, particularly on procedural motions. If you had to stop and have an oral roll call on every vote...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people like to use the oral roll call even after the electronic roll call to slow things down.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Deal-making was going on in the background so they wanted a little more time, or what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a “Call of the House,” where they lock the doors. There was a fair amount of procedural wrangling. Getting everybody in there. Locking the doors. Holding them in place. I don’t know if it was more than the norm or what? One thing that seemed more than the usual was members inserting explanations of their votes in the House Journal. Either there was more confusion about what people’s intentions were or—I’m not quite sure—what does that indicate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was just to cover their tracks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For instance, Mr. Burns, voting on the budget, House Bill 1, had inserted, “I have

voted for this bill as I wish to register my approval of the budgetary request of the school directors.” He goes on to say, “However, I also wish to state I am opposed to the amounts in part included in other items which increased the governor’s budget,” and he kind of slammed a bunch of departments after that.

Then your caucus leadership explained their votes. It sounded like the leadership of the Republican Party voted for the budget because you had to have a budget and they needed the votes. But then they inserted this explanation: “My negative vote on the appropriations bill is not to be interpreted as a vote,” this from Douglas Kirk, “against the appropriations for schools as I do not consider them excessive.” Elmer Johnston, Marshall Neill, Lincoln Shropshire and Harold Petrie said, “Although we are unalterably opposed to the appropriations bill,” —that sounds pretty strong— “it was necessary that four Republicans vote for the bill to expedite Senate action in this session.” The Senate was Republican. Were they thinking, “We’ll just get it out of the House, send it to the Senate and the Republican senators will save us?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was certainly a possibility. That’s a maneuver that is used many times where, let’s say, “Well, let’s pass it here and let the Senate kill it.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were in the minority, but could you count on the governor vetoing a bill like this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s pretty risky.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you confer with the governor on the budget bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The governor and his budget director were right on top of the budget the whole way through.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did House members go over and talk to the Republican senators? Did you kind of know what would happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In this period of time the Appropriations Committee in both the House and the Senate met together—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you’re on that committee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** —and we went over the budget and it was generally agreed upon when it went through the House and the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this kind of maneuvering, being on that committee, the Appropriations Committee, you would be in tune with what your leadership was doing here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a pretty hard fought budget in 1955? You were kind of in a bind. I notice several Republicans are at pains, as I read in a couple of those Journal insertions, to support the schools—which, of course, were crowded with kids. This is the baby boom era. Did you fall into that camp?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always was suspect of the WEA. When we first got the budget document I was looking it over and Pearl Wanamaker, who was superintendent of public instruction, was working the floor of the House and she came over and she said, “Eldridge, what do you think of my budget?” And I said, “Well, it looks a little high to me,” and she walked off the floor, went over and picked up the telephone and called the superintendent in Mount Vernon and the next morning I couldn’t see my desk for the telegrams.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** From teachers? Parents? Community members? School board members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She really had that thing wired.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would be very hard to buck that kind of response. Were you of the group

that felt that schools should be well supported, but maybe some of these other programs were a little out of line?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would not fall into that group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All kinds of proposals were on the table and you struggled all session with this. Let's look at the big picture for a second.

When people talk about dealing with the budget they talk about two things: you can either adjust the taxes to the rising costs of government—you can increase fees, you can add little nuisance taxes, you can talk about an income tax. Or the other way around is to cut the budget to match the revenues—which seemed harder because then you have to say no to people and you have to close things down.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What approach did you take yourself on the Appropriations Committee? Those are pretty broad brush answers.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was conservative fiscally. At the time I was on the board of trustees at Western Washington College and had some interest in their budget along with other educational institutions. But it's always difficult, as you said, to cut and it's more difficult to raise taxes to meet the demands and the wishes of state agencies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the public.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The public is always vociferous about taxes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they do want services.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. So politically you have to tread a pretty fine line.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you favor doing a bit of both? Was that a good way to go about this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had always been basically opposed to the income tax at the state level. I always felt that if they just didn't mess with it, why people could probably adjust and make the thing work. But over the years the Democrats always talked about an income tax. They'd always beat the Republicans over the head because they wouldn't support an income tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, here was Governor Langlie—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. And then we had Governor Evans. I don't think either one of them ever figured that it would pass muster, but they wanted to get it out there where people could take a look at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read something recently that suggested that the problem with the sales tax for the state is that you couldn't deduct it from your federal income taxes, but if the state had a state income tax you could deduct that, and that somehow that would be a better deal. What do you think about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are all kinds of arguments. A state income tax based on a percentage of what you pay in your federal income tax would be an easy way—mechanically—to do it.

I always felt that the sales tax was really a pretty fair tax. If you made one million dollars a year you were probably going to buy a yacht instead of a row boat or a Piper Cub instead of a Lear Jet, so you'd be paying more sales tax than somebody who was driving a Mazda or owned a row boat or a canoe. And, of course, the opponents always said, "The people who have that money, they sock it away and get interest on their money."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or they have better accountants. That's what people think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know. Nobody seems to come up with a solution.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There's no easy answer to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. That's the first one. Some historians think that the fifties and early sixties are what they call a period of "rising expectations." The biggest characteristic of that era, they say, is that people want more—personally and from their government because they've been used to getting things from the government ever since the 1930s and the war years. And that there was, therefore, a lot of pressure on government. People wanted more services, more highways, they want everything and they wanted it "now" because their families were growing, and they especially wanted schools.

**Mr. Eldridge:** This was a big period for education. It started with Pearl Wanamaker who was as strong and tough as anybody you'd ever meet. Then the WEA was beginning to exert some real pressures.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were just a lot of kids coming into schools and the schools hadn't been cared for, for a couple of decades, what with the devastation of the Depression and then the war years, and so you had two things going. You had some aging buildings that were too small. You had a lot of kids. Those were real pressures.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But fortunately during that period there really wasn't a shortage of teachers. There were a lot of young people who were going into education and the colleges were turning out a lot of teachers. That was a help.

But you're right, the buildings were in horrible condition. A lot of them were the old wartime Quonset huts and anything else they could put together. So there was a real demand for heavy building.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I remember seeing a photograph of the returning GI class at WSU and they are literally on cots in a gymnasium or some kind of big room. Rows and rows of them. There was just nowhere to put them, and they had boxes and bags of their stuff around their cots and that's where they were housed. They were just overflowing. So that must have created a bit of a push there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And during those years the colleges were providing dormitories, and now they've gotten away from that to some extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At least the urban colleges, yes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you still have to have places for kids to live, particularly at the colleges that are in, as you say, rural areas.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know where you would put them. No town could absorb that many young people all in one go.

That year, as in many other years, you had a lot of trouble passing the budget and it pushed the Legislature into a special session. There seemed to be a deadlock between the Democratic House and the Republican Senate, each, I guess, with different ways of looking at the budget. Many members recorded their dissatisfaction with the whole process in the Journal. Even if they voted for it they inserted in the Journals, "I voted for this, but I am against this," over and over. Was there something quite different happening there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You're right, and I don't know what triggered it, but that's correct that during that period of time that was a trend that people would insert a statement in the Journal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Here was Julia Butler Hansen explaining her vote, "I do not oppose taxes to provide revenue for appropriations,

however I am unalterably opposed to further increases in the sales tax. Other sources of revenue were not explored sufficiently.”

Then there was a whole list of Democrats saying, “We, the undersigned voted affirmatively on the final passage of the budget bill but we are violently opposed in principle to the retrogressive character of this bill and deeply regret the circumstances which demanded its passage.” I just don’t recall language like that.

Then there were several Republicans who also inserted statements like that. Malcolm McBeath, your colleague said, “My vote . . . was not in favor of an income tax. The ‘aye’ vote recorded was to submit the matter to the voters in the hope that the measure would be defeated in the polls.” So that’s a slightly different take. One is that you’ve got to have a budget like it or not. The other is, “I’m going to vote for this but I don’t want to.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’m going to hold my nose!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Here’s Catherine May’s statement, “I voted ‘yea’ with mixed emotions on Engrossed House Joint Resolution 32. I’m far from convinced that an income tax is the answer to our tax problems in this state, but I’m convinced that the people should have the opportunity to decide this question for themselves.” On and on. There were several people, many people, making statements like that. Did they think the Press would do something with this, or is this for the historical record or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** You get down to the crunch time of a session and people will do most anything to get out of there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It was already into the special session.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They’ll vote for things that under ordinary circumstances they wouldn’t even take a look at just to get the final vote.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn’t insert a statement like that, but you did finally vote for it, I think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The other thing in all this discussion back and forth about the bill, there were no written copies of the budget passed around. You were supposed to vote on it without having a copy of it. How would you know what you were voting on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was more of a general discussion. The budget was pretty well scrutinized by the four caucuses. And I may be wrong, but I think that in those periods, legislators knew more about the budget than they do today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you do differently that your class of legislators would be so informed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a lot of subcommittees that would take, say, the education portion of the budget and they’d sit down with maybe ten or twelve members and really pick it apart. Then those people would report back to their full caucuses. So I think there was pretty good discussion of the budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think—and this just occurs to me as you’re saying that—because you had less staff, did you have to do more of the legwork yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And did that make you more intimately acquainted with the budget?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes, it does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does having more staff create a bit of a barrier or less need somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that just as kind of a general statement, a lot of this legislation is by staff. The members will sign onto bills that they have no idea of what's really in there, but the staff person has done the research and written the bill and said, "Here's a good bill. It'll go great in your district," and all this. Then they sign on and have no idea what it's about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a smaller volume of things you dealt with than what legislators do now? Is the workload comparable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they deal with more different issues today than we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Part of the cry for more staff is that the workload's impossible. But your generation did not find it that way? Or were you already also saying, "We need some staff in here. We need some help."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't hear a lot of that. Today, legislators have secretaries and administrative aides, attorneys and accountants and whatever they need. We didn't even have secretaries.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were in the Legislature quite awhile. Was there a point where that lack of staff and facilities just didn't work very well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once legislators got offices, then, of course, it became a whole new ballgame.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which happened first, the workload that necessitated the office or the office that created the workload?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's kind of hard to say because committee chairmen had offices and they had secretarial help and also a committee clerk who was in charge of that committee who sorted out the paperwork and so on. But other than that, there wasn't much available to the individual member.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've sometimes wondered if things get more complicated because they can, because you get the means...

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure, because it increases the volume of stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Create work as well as get it done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once you get staff people then you begin to give them little things to do: chase this down or go to the library or go to the bill room or go to the Code Reviser.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think you improved the quality, not to mention the quantity, of legislation with this ability to chase down information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that it improves legislation because I think legislators lose touch with the real problems. They're removed. There are too many people in between that are actually directing what's going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Joel Pritchard said something along these lines. He thought legislators were getting too much into what he called "counting the pencils and erasers and not acting enough like policy directors."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's probably true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that where you're getting into this sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that was partly driven by the ability that if you have staff you can do it. If you don't have staff, it kind of falls away because you can't do it. It's sort of an interesting paradox.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you know, to get back to the budget, there were only a handful of people

in each caucus who actually read the budget and understood it. And if somebody asked a question they could probably flip that book open and say, “It’s on page 156.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where would you put yourself as a member of the Appropriations Committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn’t one of those who read the whole budget. I would go to the sections that dealt with agencies that I was interested in and try to become familiar with what was going on there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people grasped everything, other people specialized; other people don’t do anything. Did you see yourself wanting to specialize?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not particularly. I was trying to look at the whole picture at least.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There’s a very narrow majority. There were fifty Democrats and forty-nine Republicans. The previous year the Republicans had had nine other members. They really dropped between sessions. Was there a feeling of frustration? You hadn’t been in power very long and then you lost it and the Democrats were back in, although just narrowly. Did that have any impact on the budget process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I don’t think so because except for the bottom line, there wasn’t a lot of partisan type politics. There was more rural/urban at that point. But that was beginning to drop off because the big city boys were beginning to really flex their muscles.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were fewer farmers and small business people in the Legislature. At one time the farmers were the dominant group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that it was even more important for people like yourself to stay there and to represent that point of view? Were you becoming an “endangered species?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn’t feel that way, although generally speaking, that was sort of the tone. I was first concerned about the Legislature when my mother, dad and I were sitting around the dinner table and grumbling about the Legislature, and I can remember my dad saying, “You know, we just need a few people down there who are concerned about small business,” because he was a small business person and had a retail store. We were getting into the era of all these forms and regulations. He thought they spent half the time working for the state and federal government putting all these things together. And there was the matter of control because, you see, the Republicans had the majority in ’47 and then the next time was ’53 and then there was a long drought.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At this point, of course, you don’t know that that’s going to be the case.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right. When things are close like that, you can usually have pretty good sessions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was my other question. Some people see that as just a recipe for disaster, whereas sometimes it’s actually not such a bad situation. Everybody comes more to the middle and agrees.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. You’re forced to work together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And I wondered if it went that way this time? Whether there was more of a middle ground and some cross-voting, and more accommodation for each other’s points of view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So then, you felt that there was quite a bit of working together and listening to each other and at least understanding the different caucus points of view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's very true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about with the Senate? That seemed to be the real problem—not within the House, but between the House and Senate. Did you go over and talk with them very often, or were they too lofty?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Senate's a different organization entirely; the mindset is different. But there were people—Augie Mardesich, and Bill Gissberg—who were really the movers and shakers. If you wanted to get anything done, why you talked to them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Many people have commented that it was just very different, how things were done.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Even up through the period that I was Speaker we'd get six or eight people together, some Republicans and Democrats, and maybe go off someplace and sit around at table and have a beer and decide what we were going to do the next day, then we'd leave and we'd do it. There wasn't any fuss or muss; you have to have agreement to do something. I don't think you see that today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Today that would be called backroom politics, and it would be completely forbidden to meet in that way. That's not an open meeting so that's completely out the window now. What about that point of view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When I ran for county commissioner in Thurston County, I was asked by the Press about that. I made the statement that 'hack' politicians had their place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I bet that went over well!

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was probably one of the things that beat me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's hard to defend back-room politicians today. But then, just the other day someone said to me, "We need an Augie Mardesich because we're stuck. We don't know how to do anything."

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. That's true. You have to get from here to there and it takes a certain kind of person to get you from here to there. You don't just learn that overnight.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe there's a pendulum swing. I don't know.

So, you were on Appropriations and in the thick of things. Was this still a big learning experience for you? Did you get to weigh in very often with your own ideas for the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really was. I never felt that I couldn't go to the leaders and say, "I need a little help on this," or "explain this," or whatever. Particularly that first session or two, Asa Clark from Whitman County was a real knowledgeable person on the Appropriation Committee, and I just watched him and figured there's the way you ought to do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you're rubbing shoulders with people of that caliber, is that part of the fascination, what pulls people to stay in the Legislature? There's so much to learn. There's so much to do.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. And there are just a ton of real good people in the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had Marshall Neill on that committee. Lincoln Shropshire, Ole Olsen was the chairman in '55. In fact this was, I believe, his last session. He died after that. Can you give me a little sketch of what he would have been like? He was a Democrat.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was an outstanding legislator and just a wonderful person. He could bring Republicans and Democrats together and he was just a good legislator. I had a great deal of respect for him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He sparred a little bit with Newman Clark a couple times in the Journal. He takes offense. He said, "I cannot pass over Mr. Clark's reference to me as being unrealistic. He's saying that the budget is as unrealistic as I am." He got a little upset. There are twenty-four members on the committee. That's really a huge committee, by the way. He said, "I can't be branded as unrealistic. We all work together." Another time he made a similar remark when Newman Clark was saying "You're the problem," and he said, "No, we work together." Did you feel that way? Do you feel that you all worked as a committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, and I'm sure that he worked overtime trying to do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I hope it didn't kill him.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't believe so. I know he would get pretty exercised. And Zeke Clark was not the easiest person in the world to get along with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was ambitious. He was thinking of running for governor. He was climbing the ladder there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he taking pot shots at Mr. Olsen unfairly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would say that he was bordering. But you see, Zeke and Mort Frayn were the two who actually scuttled Langlie's program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That's what you said. Mort Frayn was also on the Appropriations

Committee. He was well placed to influence events. Damon Canfield was also on the committee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Damon's another one who read the budget and was very well versed on the budget bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the Democrats on the committee were Jerry Hanna, Mark Litchman, Augie Mardesich. And then Catherine May was on there. She's a Republican, of course. That's quite a big committee. A stellar collection of members.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. It's too big.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who else stood out as really understanding what was going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Cap Edwards. He was from Whatcom County, and he was the vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee in the House. He was a retired sea captain and really a salty old bird.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is "Cap" short for Captain?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He'd always address Augie as Mr. Martovik.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did Mr. Mardesich go with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Augie kind of rolled with things. He didn't get too excited.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a pretty good mixture of seasoned legislators and younger legislators in that group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You would get in there with the older members and they would show you the ropes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a pretty good system. When you've got a few terms behind you, then you can move up the ladder. That must have been your major committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another very big committee for you was Public Utilities. Big in the sense that there was a lot going on in utilities in those days between the private and public power forces. John McCutcheon was the chair of that committee. I don't know if we've talked about him at all. Julia Butler Hanson was also on that committee

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was from Tacoma. That must be John, Sr. Then his son came along a few years later.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the issues that you dealt with that session was who should own the dams on the mid-Columbia River? Priest Rapids was being built and I guess there were different issues about who was going to get the power from these dams? Some of the literature suggested that there was a contest between the state power commission and the PUDs, and that it went to court and the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the PUDs. That public power had tried to abolish that commission, but it remained in place. Can you tell me something about the State Power Commission? Who did they represent?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that they ever really did much. It was always the Grange on one side and the private power people on the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But is the State Power Commission neither public nor private power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's just kind of hanging out there. I don't even remember how it was constituted.

These were in the days of the Tennessee Valley Authority and then they talked about a Columbia Valley Authority.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would have wanted that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The PUDs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that have been like a big umbrella organization for them? How would that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They would have had control over all the distribution systems, as I understand it. Now, the Bonneville Power Administration is in that operation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's federal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But, you see, everything is tied in with Bonneville, even the private power companies. You don't hear much about them anymore, but in those days, boy, they were in there with all four feet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** After the dust settled, everybody kind of worked together, but in this stage it's pretty tooth and nail.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were people, even in the fifties, still wanting to bring in a Columbia Valley Authority? How long did that dream carry on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it lasted too long, and there wasn't a real exerted effort. I don't recall there was any real confrontation. It was just there and then all of a sudden it just kind of drifted off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This committee, the Public Utilities committee, was it split between private and public power groups?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I don't recall that the committee ever considered very much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It doesn't split Democrat/Republican because, of course, there were private power Democrats and there are some Republicans who are for public power. Do any of the names from the committee jump off the page for you as being strong supporters one way or the other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** On the Democratic side of the committee were the members from PUD counties. There's Bozarth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Jerry Hanna from central Washington.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He would be a Chelan County PUD representative. Ella Wintler was a Republican, but she's from Clark County and Clark County has a strong PUD.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In a sense, aren't people just representing their districts rather than some sort of ideology?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that comes first in almost every case.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your district was served by private power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And we always felt that Puget Power was doing a good job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I meant to ask you, you were still involved with the Jaycees. Did they take a position on public power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, not officially. We had quite a number of very active Jaycees who were from PUD areas who were always agitating a little bit. But the Junior Chamber organization was pretty effective in staying away from real controversial issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I would think it would rip up your organization, defeat the things you could do together.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember when I was state president, I got sucked into putting the United World Federalists on the program. They were for one world government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did they want from the Jaycees? Did they want to come and speak at your conventions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They wanted the Jaycees to back the program. They wanted the local support of all these organizations around the state. I finally threw up my hands and said, "Okay, we'll put it before the body," because I knew they'd knock it in the head.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a pretty big movement at that time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was at that time. But it was short-lived.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this anything to do with the United Nations, or a separate effort?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was prior to the United Nations. The way I got into the thing was that after I moved out of my family home, my mother always had a couple of school teachers who stayed there. One of them went with a fellow who was big in the United World Federalists and she introduced me to him and we talked a little. He was pushing me to get the Jaycees involved, and even though I wasn't too enthusiastic, I finally said, "Okay, I'll see that we take a vote on it," because I knew it wouldn't fly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What, exactly, were they advocating?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the overall picture was one world government. I don't think they ever had an agenda of how this was going to operate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just as a sort of post-war peace plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of, yes. We put it up before the convention and they voted it down!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, at least you gave it an audience.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just like the income tax. Throw it up there and let 'em shoot it down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sort of like clay pigeons.

Did your party take a position on public/private power or did they leave it up to individual legislators to vote their conscience or vote their district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall. There may have been at Republican state conventions a paragraph in the platform: "We oppose the takeover of private power." Just a kind of a general statement. It didn't get into specifics.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would public power Republicans be more or less inclined to want everyone to have public power or would that be more of a Democratic position? Would the question be: It's alright where it is, but should it expand?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think I ever knew a Republican supporter of public power.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I thought Ella Wintler was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was only because she came from a public power county.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they keep a little quiet about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they kept their heads down on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they weren't very vocal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. Whereas the other side probably would have to be more vocal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Now, there were Democrats who supported private power and they were more vocal than Republicans who supported public power.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were kind of bucking the tide. Maybe they felt a little defensive?

For your other committees: you had Reclamation, Conservation and Waterways that you had served on before. Cities and Counties, and Game and Game Fish again. You have a lot of legislation that comes out of that year. A lot of it small things for county and city governments.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot going on. One of the big issues was the ability of cities to provide parking lots.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why did they need special legislation to achieve that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In a lot of towns the parking lots were owned and operated by private concerns and they didn't want city government in there competing with them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So why did city governments want to get into parking lots?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They all had parking problems and, of course, a lot of people think the only way you solve problems is to let government do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it seen as an extension of streets? You can clutter up your streets with cars or you can put them somewhere else. Would that be their thinking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was one of the major arguments.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Here in Olympia there was a heated discussion about parking garages in the 1950s; they were going to take over Sylvester Park, that little square downtown, and try to build a parking garage there. There was quite an outcry about it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** In Mount Vernon, what they did was they built a revetment out over the river. It was like the Alaskan Way viaduct, except that it would be just an extension of the area right alongside the river.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sort of a cantilevered extra piece?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They drove pilings in and then put a concrete slab all over the river for parking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Instead of using it as a scenery or park land? They parked cars there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty scruffy, so it really cleaned things up. The city did that. That took a tremendous number of cars off the streets and into that parking area. There's no commercial activity along the river, but back from the river there's a street and businesses back up to that street. Then in front is the main street of Mount Vernon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So people would go there, park their car and then be able to visit all the different businesses?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The businesses were supportive of this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But somebody who wanted to run a private parking lot might not be so thrilled? Was there opposition to this development?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a little of that. More from places like Seattle where Joe Diamond and some other people who had parking facilities, I

guess they envisioned the city of Seattle going out and putting parking lots in every block downtown. But I don't think, realistically, it became a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were not quite into the era of mall building; downtowns were still vibrant in the fifties so the issue of cars as they multiplied was quite pressing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the city come to you and say, "We want to do this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They had been to the Legislature, I think, a couple of times and nothing had ever happened. We finally got passage of the legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You also had a bill in for establishing a procedure for incorporating municipalities that extend over county lines. That passed. And you had your bill enabling third and fourth class towns to provide municipally owned off-street parking facilities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There we go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that died somewhere in the process. That succeeded later. Then you had one on salaries for city commissioners and councilmen. And for fireman's relief and pension funds and things of that nature, but there's nothing more on the parking.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They took one run at it and then it came along after that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a lot of steam behind that one, apparently.

You continued to be on the Reclamations and the Waterways committees and you had some diking legislation, but those don't seem terribly controversial bills. There were some things about water storage.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For the Game and Game Fish Committee you looked at amending the state game code, but that died. That's about it for that committee this time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Appropriations and the City and Counties were the two major committees that I was involved in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We're just about finished with the discussion of the 1955 session, but there was one thing that happened that is somewhat infamous. I'll give you the background. In 1947, the Canwell Commission held hearings about communist infiltration and various activities of that kind. Representative Canwell, the chair, was not re-elected and the committee dissolved or at least not continued. There was a lot of to-do about the reports and papers that were generated by that committee. They were put in a locked storage room—it sounded a bit like a spy novel—but the two keys would have to be turned simultaneously, one held by the Speaker and one by the Lieutenant Governor. This was hot stuff, I guess.

In this era, 1955, there a call for an investigation of these papers and the Speaker and other members went down to the room and they did the operation with the two keys and all, but when they opened up the filing cabinet, there was practically nothing there. There was, then, a hue and cry about the missing records. Do you remember this incident?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember hearing of the incident, but I don't remember what the outcome was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's the whole thing. There wasn't much outcome.

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of this stuff is just fluff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a strange story. The House appointed John O'Brien and Mort Frayn to investigate—a bipartisan committee—and former Representative Canwell would just not answer them. His point of view seemed to be that whatever papers existed belonged to him personally, and not to the committee, and not to the House. What did you think about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was a different sort of person. I didn't know him, but from the things that I've heard, he was on a witch hunt.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a government funded activity. How could those papers be construed as his property?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He kind of personalized it. I suppose that if any member, if they wanted to collect and investigate they could. And if they provided means for putting this sort of thing together then it could be construed as their personal property, but this was a committee authorized by the House and I certainly think that the papers would belong to the House.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He seems to suggest in his version of this story that he mixed his private investigation activities in with the public investigation and it was all kind of in there together and somehow that made it belong to him. That's a little confusing. I don't think that you would get away with that anymore.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This investigating group, John O'Brien and Mort Frayn, were somewhat stonewalled. They went to Attorney General Eastvold, who was a Republican, and he refused to have anything to do with them. Was this just something that was over and done with or too hot to handle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Canwell did not have much stature. We didn't pay much attention to him. We figured, "It'll go away."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At this point it more or less did go away. The whole “communists in the government” issue, though, does not go away. Canwell still claimed there were still quite a few members, but he doesn’t actually say who they were. Did you have that feeling that there were communists in Washington State government?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I had read and heard that there had been.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More the 1930s, the time of William Pennock?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But, at your time in the mid-fifties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn’t feel any agitation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Finally, the session was over, the special session was over; it’s been a long haul. You got appointed to the Washington-Oregon Boundary Commission with Representatives Al Henry, yourself and Senators McMullen and Ganders; there’s just the four of you. Two from each caucus. Can you describe for me what that involved?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was triggered because they were doing a lot of construction on the Columbia River dam and bridges, and they ran into problems every once in awhile with injuries. Somebody would fall off a scaffolding and be killed and are they in Washington or are they in Oregon? Which state had jurisdiction? Which L&I? Who paid the insurance? Who does this and who does that?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would some of these workers be itinerant and not really living in either state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was more who’s going to pay the bill? That’s the whole crux. You see

what happened was, when they originally surveyed the state line they said, “Well, it’s five-hundred feet from the red barn on the Oregon side” or “it’s two-hundred feet south of the snag fir tree.” Or “it’s the center of the island ten miles up the river,” and that sort of thing. Of course every year the river would change, you know. So what they wanted was to establish a line that people could understand and put monuments in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the boundary run down the middle of the river?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Supposedly the navigable channel, the center of that was supposed to be the boundary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Doesn’t that shift around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It does. And that was part of the problem. So the committee hired a survey outfit to come in and survey the river, which they did, and they presented that to the Legislature the next session and they approved it and that was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have to update that all the time? There must be a gray area in there when things move around.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It should be. I don’t know what the status is today and whether they’ve kept it up to date.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if some worker fell off the scaffolding like you say, did they run out with the surveying tools and say, “Well, he’s on your side.” Was that more or less how it worked?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that’s accurate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At least it would be something scientific that you could point to. And then the problem went away?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We haven't heard anything since, so I guess it was all right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go down there? Did you meet very often? Other than hiring a survey crew, did you do anything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There was a like committee from the Oregon Legislature, and we would meet. I don't recall we met very many times, but we'd get together and listen to reports and take comments from constituents and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was surprised to find you on this committee because your district was not anywhere near the Oregon border. I would have thought that they would have put somebody on who had a greater proximity.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They needed to stick me someplace, so that was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there very many interim committees at this stage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite a few. This was the period of time where the Legislative Council was becoming stronger. Lots of time the Legislature would refer things to the Council for study.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't, yourself, have much involvement with that just yet. Did you wish that you did?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I got involved later on. The Legislative Council put out a report every year that was very helpful to legislators. At least I felt it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it because you're still quite new to the Legislature that you're not yet involved with the Legislative Council? Those are the senior members? So it was a privilege, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. Well, you've got your first committee appointment that year at any rate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was my first venture into an interim committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had a rather unusual experience this year that you were telling me about. This would be a good time to relate the story of your television debut.

**Mr. Eldridge:** This was after the '55 session, and KOMO TV, for the first time, wanted to do a forum type program on the state budget. Senator John Ryder was from the Republican caucus in the Senate, and Ed Riley—that's 'Freshwater' Ed Riley, from Spokane—was from the Democrat Caucus. Howard Bargreen was also from the Democrat caucus in the Senate. And then Ed Munro was from the House Democrat caucus.

I got a call a few days before the live broadcast from John Ryder and he said that he was ill and wasn't going to be able to be there, and would I take his place? I was on the House Appropriations Committee, but really hadn't studied the budget too much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were still fairly new.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. This was just my second session, so I was kind of fumbling around, and he said, "Oh, you'll get along fine. Just be at the station at such-and-such time and they'll take it from there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you a little nervous about this? Live television and all.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I was. This was in the day where you had to wear the blue shirt and get made up. The whole nine yards.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this be your very first appearance on television?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was my first television appearance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not many people even had televisions, and it was still fairly new.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. As a matter of fact, I had only had one for a couple of years, and it was a black and white. And so this was a real breakthrough.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you study up a little?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I may have a little. I had taken some notes during Appropriation meetings. I'm trying to think of the station person who was the moderator.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In my notes I have the name Herb Robinson.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Herb Robinson. In any event, we all got prepared and made up and moved into the studio, and we were sitting in kind of a half circle and Herb came over and put his hand on my shoulder, and he said, "This is just going to be great," and I looked around and I said, "I'm the only Republican here." He said, "Don't worry about it. Just wade right into them." And I said, "Okay."

So, we started out, and fortunately, Ed Riley was pretty conservative and he opened the thing up and he teed off on his fellow Democrats for what a terrible budget it was, and that left me a good opening and I jumped right in. So between the two of us, we really went after them.

Howard Bargreen was pretty liberal and went down the spend-and-tax route and Ed Munro was pretty strong in that direction, so we had at it for I think, more than half an hour, but not quite an hour, although it may have gone an hour. But in any event, Howard Bargreen got a little excited and little flustered. As we left the studio, his wife, who had been in the audience behind the one-way glass, came over to him and

took his arm, and she said, "Daddy, you got a little excited in there." So he sputtered and they went on out.

I reported to John Ryder and he said he'd already gotten a call from Herb and Herb said, "You did alright. That's fine." So that was my first experience on television, and it was quite a session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why were you the only Republican?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how it happened that way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And these are fairly senior members that you're up against. You were not quite a freshman, but almost.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Yes. Just one session out of the box.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're hardly wet. Were you ever on television again?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not in a formal situation like that. I had lots of interviews when I was Speaker. They'd come into the office after a session and want to question me about things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that would be more brief. A minute or two?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To flash across the evening news. "There you are."

Were the lights hot? What was it like to be in there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It didn't seem to be too bright and warm.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you able to forget the cameras after awhile and just concentrate on having a good time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And Herb was a good moderator. Able to keep things moving along, and there weren't any real dog and cat fights. I think it turned out to be a pretty good program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your friends watch you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I had quite a few people say, "Oh, I saw you on TV last night," or last week or whenever they happened to see it. So it was really interesting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Behind the scenes. Did it whet your appetite to do it again, or were you just as glad to get off?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I would have liked to have done similar programs like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did television cover the Legislature very much?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this was somewhat unusual?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were still using those great big cameras that the cameraman carried on their shoulders and just kind of aimed them. And then the news person would be following them along and say, "Well, get this or get that."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they tape right in the sessions? I've heard of television cameras down there, but I don't know exactly when they were doing that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not at that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, at least you came out looking pretty good.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it worked out alright.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What a good story. And then there's another election campaign. Now, this was

your third election. Were you pretty committed at this stage of the game? You're no longer a tentative-feeling legislator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think every year you get a little more involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It must be kind of getting under your skin. Did you ever say to yourself, "I'm going to do this for lots of years," or was it a decision for you every two years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just one session at a time. I think I just kind of went along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was quite an exciting election. It's a presidential election. And a gubernatorial election. There was a lot of turmoil. Eisenhower, with Nixon of course, was on the stump. Did he ever come up in your area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The national governor's conference was held in Seattle. He was the keynote speaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine that you're still a supporter of him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is the year that there's quite a hot Republican primary for the governor's seat. You had Lieutenant Governor Emmett Anderson running against Attorney General Don Eastvold. Anderson's claim to fame was that he was the Exalted Ruler of the Elks. Did he have any other qualities or qualifications?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was active in the Seattle Chamber of Commerce and his company was very prominent in Seattle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Every time I've read about him, the word "colorless" was used. Was that a fair characteristic?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He certainly wasn't a table-pounder by any means. Very stable and I think he was fair and objective, but he was, yes, colorless. I guess it's as good a term as any.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Don Eastvold, on the other hand, had plenty of color. Maybe a bit too much?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Too much, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was said to have run a very vigorous campaign. He was very big on school funding, even called for a kind of tax increase of some kind to support schools. His personal life was apparently in a mess, and he offended Governor Langlie with his life style, shall we say. The outgoing governor actually worked against him, which seems a little unusual. Eastvold got pretty bitter about that, according to different accounts. He even started revealing things about the Langlie administration that amongst Republicans probably would have been left unsaid. It seemed to get kind of nasty.

Langlie, himself, was running against Warren Magnuson for the U.S. Senate. So he was on the stump for the next governor. Eastvold did not win, partly it is said, because of Langlie's lack of enthusiasm and support. How did the Republicans feel about this campaign? It must have been a bit of a mess.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it was. Republicans, we're a peculiar breed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where were you in all this? What did you think of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I kind of stood on the sidelines watching the parade go by.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you wish that somebody else was your candidate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Emmett Anderson did all his campaigning in the Elks Clubs around the state,

which was natural because he was involved with the Elks. Eastvold had made a name for himself. He was the keynote speaker at the national Republican convention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was considered a rising star? What was he like as a public person?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Kind of arrogant. I could never really cotton-up to him. His dad was president of Pacific Lutheran College. I remember when Don got tangled up with Ginny Sims and they came over to Whidbey Island. If you're familiar at all with Whidbey Island, there's a scenic route that comes around Penn Cove between Oak Harbor and Coupeville. It went right along the bluff there on the north side of the cove. They bought some property there and then somehow or other he finagled the county commission to reroute the highway so that he could build his development right along the bluff, so they could have an unobstructed view out over the cove. The road went in behind the development.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who was this person he was with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ginny Sims. That was the female he was tangled up with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was she someone from the governor's office? Wasn't that part of Langlie's concern?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was somebody else. Ginny Sims was an actress from Hollywood.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh. A little showy, I suppose?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And this was just right when he was running for governor that he was doing this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It may have been either during or after, but it was in that time frame.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he didn't seem too worried about what people might think?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And he wasn't above getting in and mixing it up and doing whatever needed to be done to get where he wanted to go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would he be kind of an embarrassment to the Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think in a lot of people's minds, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He didn't go quietly. He lost to Anderson, but the story is then he secretly helped the Rosellini campaign by giving them information on inner Republican workings. So a lot of spite there.

Albert Rosellini, the Democratic candidate, had been a state senator for quite awhile and had his own problems. His was a first generation Italian immigrant family, which some people thought was an issue. He was Catholic, of course. There was always this sort of shadowy set of allegations against him. What did you think of Rosellini?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't think much of him at the outset. He headed up a committee in the Senate that did some investigating.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The "Little Hoover committee," the Shefeleman committee? There were a couple of different committees. But there was another one to do with investigating organized crime in the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I can't remember what they called it but that's what they were looking into.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a national committee at about that time too, that was also

going around looking at organized crime. I think the Washington committee was somewhat modeled on the national.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. You know, in those days I didn't get too exercised about all that stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** John Kennedy had not yet broken the barrier as a Catholic president. There was a lot of concern expressed about having a Catholic governor. How did that play with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It didn't bother me, but there were certainly a lot of people who were concerned about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the concern?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Catholic Church was beginning to stir around and getting more involved. There was kind of a barrier there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did people feel that he would be taking orders from the Pope? That sort of thing? I know Kennedy was charged with that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There may have been some of that feeling, although I didn't run into it directly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the end Rosellini was elected by over one-hundred-thousand votes. A pretty good margin. It's a very strange year. Eisenhower was re-elected, a Republican president. After a fairly long period with a Republican governor, you had a new Democratic governor come in. Vic Meyers, a Democrat, overcame a Republican for Secretary of State. But Pearl Wanamaker, who had been such a power, was defeated by Lloyd Andrews as Superintendent of Public Instruction. What happened there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think a lot of people, particularly if they were on the conservative side, thought that she was being manipulated by the WEA and they didn't like that too much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did she somehow overstep herself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She was pretty aggressive. And Lloyd Andrews—he came out of the Senate. He was from eastern Washington. I think it was just a case where people wanted a change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the things that is said to have really had a huge impact on that election was Initiative 198, a “right-to-work” initiative that was brought forward. It was said to have galvanized all the union people, this huge turnout of Democratic supporters. The measure was associated with the Republican Party in some way and was nothing but bad news for them, put it that way. Can you tell me more about the initiative and who was behind it and what it was going to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can’t tell you too much because, as I said, a lot of that activity I just didn’t get involved in. But it was supported primarily by the business community around the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did it do? If it had passed, what would have happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was kind of a union-busting proposal. It would have opened up employment to non-union people. You didn’t have to join the union in order to work on a particular job and particularly government projects.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I gathered that the people behind it assumed that it would win, but it really went down in flames.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The unions were pretty strong in those days and they had more control over their members than the proponents did over members of the chambers of commerce around the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Dave Beck still a powerhouse, or was his day over?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he was still involved there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a Republican, did you find the association of this measure with your party unfortunate? It really lost big.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It didn’t really affect me directly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you speak on it ever?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t recall that it was ever an issue in my campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In your own district, there were three seats, and for the first time it went all Republican. Ralph Rickdall edged out Emma Abbott Ridgway, and you, Jim Ovenell and Ralph were all elected. I saw one ad where all three of you appeared to be running as a team. Was that your strategy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you tell me something about Ralph Rickdall?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was a farmer in the Burlington area. He grew strawberries primarily. He and his wife were very conservative. She was especially conservative.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you mean fiscally or otherwise? Everything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everything. She was a great supporter of Barry Goldwater as well as some of the other really extreme issues and candidates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he in sort of the John Birch fringe? Getting up into that end of the spectrum?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was conservative, but he wasn’t involved in any of these organizations. He then ran for the Senate and didn’t make it.

Then he was real unhappy that Governor Evans didn't appoint him to a directorship or something in his administration. I think he was a little too conservative for Dan.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds like it. Those races were still somewhat close. What did you think tipped it one way or the other? Why did Emma Abbott Ridgway lose?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She had been there for quite a while. This was a period of time when women were beginning to get more active and I know that in Skagit County that Ralph and Jim and I had good, strong support from women's groups in the district. I think they were beginning to question her as a representative for women.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would you be a better representative for women's groups than a woman? What were you saying that was more attractive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't say much!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that was the attraction! On one hand, all three of you Republicans are elected, but the Senate position flipped from being a Republican senator to Fred Martin who is a Democrat. What's your district trying to say when its votes split like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You ask the man on the street, and he says, "Well, I vote for the person, not the party." Paul Luvera was the Republican who was a grocer from Anacortes, and Fred Martin was a cattleman from upriver, up at Rockport. Matter of fact, he and Jim Ovenell lived almost side by side.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he just a more attractive candidate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He'd been involved in the county in various things and was a strong Democrat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does this split voting keep you on your toes? You can't seem to take re-election for granted.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You have to have to look at your whole card and see what the wind's doing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you change your campaigning in any way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did the same things? What was your message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I did the same things. I think my message was pretty much the same, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see, your district voted for Eisenhower but they also voted for Magnuson by quite a large margin over Langlie. They voted for Rosellini. They also voted for John Cherberg who came on the scene that year. There's just a real mish-mash.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe it *is* just the person and not the party. Some people just pulled the lever and voted one way or the other, but this was a real mixed bag.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You take a paper ballot up there and it would just go like this—they were all over the lot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. I was just looking at this and thinking, boy, if I was an elected official, what would I think my district was wanting here, because there's no clear message from what I can tell. These are very different kinds of candidates.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I think that people voted based on the person and their background. In a

district like this there are a lot of community type meetings where you go and speak for five or ten minutes and then you answer questions and mingle around and visit with people. That counts for a lot in an election.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Electioneering is quite hard work. You were really putting yourself out there. Did you enjoy that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet you're a business person, so—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, and I had a lot of contact with people through the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not to mention Rotary and the Jaycees and the different things you belonged to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I enjoyed speaking to groups. Matter of fact, I'd rather speak to five hundred people in an auditorium than sit down at a table with five or six.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's just different, the scale, how you present yourself. Did you have to eat a lot of potato salad, that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Some of the meals weren't too good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And all those cups of coffee. That takes a certain stamina.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But there are lots of experiences that are really good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you learn things from your constituents? You're giving out, but what do you get from them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You get a lot of feedback.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you find that people understood what was going on in Olympia?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of them really didn't understand the system and how it worked, but the more contact you had with them the more comfortable they became and they'd pick up the phone or they'd write a letter or whatever and express a concern over something. Then they always appreciated when you got back to them and talked to them about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By now, with this third election, are you considered something of a veteran?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess I'm approaching that. But I hadn't gotten into leadership yet.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANOTHER MINORITY SESSION: 1957

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was looking at a directory of legislators and one thing I noticed is many legislators that you served with—especially senators, but also some House members—had been born in the 1880s and 1890s. That really struck me. They're only one generation away from the Civil War, but you grew up in a different world.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then with the Second World War experience for your generation, I wondered if there was a divide of experience and perspective in the Legislature as more members your age were elected?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was not a clear cut distinction between the groups. We did have, during that period in the early fifties, some long-term legislators. But from there on out, they began to retire and pass away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Just before the session Ole Olsen died—he must have been missed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was. He was a good stabilizing influence there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they have memorial services in that case, or how does the Legislature mark such a passing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Every session they have a memorial service for legislators who have passed away during the previous two years. There isn't a specific service for any one individual.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that Olsen had a strung-out district along the Columbia River. The county commissioners had trouble finding a candidate that they thought would be able to handle the district. They finally appointed Senator Al Henry's wife, Mildred. How did that work? That's pretty unusual to have a husband and wife team.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was unusual, but she did pretty well. They were both independent. She was a pretty good legislator. Al was kind of a wheeler-dealer. A big man. I got along with both of the Henrys.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She seemed like a very interesting woman. Full of verve.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, she was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some other new people were coming into the Legislature this session: Dan Evans, Charles Moriarty, Tom Copeland, Dick Kink, Robert Goldsworthy, and Elmer Huntley after Marshall Neill moved to the Senate. This is the new generation, your generation more or less.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you recognize it as such? Was there a change in feeling or pace?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not at the outset. Dan Evans was just coming into a whole strange and new territory. But everybody recognized that here was a comer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though he was pretty shy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He knew and understood what he was dealing with. He was an engineer and pretty analytical. Then he matured fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about some of these other people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Chuck Moriarty was a Seattle Republican. And very capable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lawyer. He was married to Tom Pelly's daughter. Did that help him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It didn't hurt him, I'm sure. But he would have gotten along fine on his own.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Tom Copeland and Robert Goldsworthy and Elmer Huntley, all from eastern Washington.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Walla Walla and Whitman County, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a post-war group. Dick Kink, I don't know very much about him.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was from Bellingham, a fisherman. He was one of the dissidents during the coalition. Kind of a rough-and-tumble guy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Again, from the other side of the aisle, this session had Martin Durkan from King County coming in. Leonard Sawyer had been there one term, but Buster Brouillet came in for his first term, both had long careers representing Pierce County. And Mike McCormack from over in Tri-Cities. And John Goldmark from Okanagon This will be the up-and-coming group to watch.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. A whole new group was beginning to take over. Many of the leaders in the state came out of out of the group that came into the Legislature when I did and for a few years following—that group.

And some went on to bigger and better things. But the group of Dan Evans, Slade Gorton, Joel Pritchard and Mary Ellen McCaffree all went on. Then in my group, we had Catherine May who went to Congress, and Marge Lynch who later wound up in a top position in Washington, D.C. with the federal administration. It's interesting to go through the list of names and then see what happened to some of those people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you tell at the time that you were at the beginning of something new?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did when Dan Evans came up out of the floorboards. It was an interesting transition period because when he came to the Legislature those who had been there for awhile kind of shook their heads and said, "That boy'll never make it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Really?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You know, there was a time when he could hardly get up and say his name. He had difficulty speaking. As a matter of fact, when he finally got into the position of running for governor, he took a number of classes in speaking and really developed. But he was certainly a remarkable person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he must have had something going for him, because it seemed like he rose pretty quickly.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He, I think, just basically had all the tools to work with and it was just a matter of getting them lined up and ready to go. But he and I sat together on the floor of the House. Most of the desks were kind of twin desks, so we sat side-by-side.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you kind of help him along?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how much help I gave him...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He considered you something of a mentor. He has spoken about your role in those years as someone who taught him the ropes. You were a little ahead of him, a little more senior, but he considered you one of his group.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I hoped that I was included, although lots of times I felt that I was kind of on the outside. I'll take whatever's offered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you weren't from Seattle, so I don't know if that made a difference.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. Because there was the group that I mentioned, Joel and Slade and Dan and Mary Ellen were a pretty tight-knit group. They'd get together Sunday afternoons and sit around the table.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Solve the problems of the world?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know they looked to you with great respect.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I appreciate that. I enjoyed working with all of them and I learned a lot from them, because they're all very intelligent as well as political.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the energy level changing from the older generation to all these new, young guys coming in—and women, for that matter? You were a more activist group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it was a different type of individual. The leaders, prior to the fifties, were pretty much of the “old school.” You know, the “good old boys.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tell me more about that. What does that mean? Eventually, your group became the “good old boys,” so what did it mean before?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose. They were pretty much dominated by Seattle—I don't know that it was the business community, particularly, but pretty much the Seattle group. It just shifted from one generation to another, but it was, I think, pretty much the same mentality.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the baton was passed pretty tightly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Although there was a lot of disagreement with the new group and the older group. Not out, open warfare or anything, but they kind of shook their heads and wanted to move along.

Of course, Dan was considerably more liberal than most of the old group and of the new group of Republicans. I've said a number of times that I had to bite my tongue on a lot of the issues that Dan was out leading the charge on, but I always had such a great deal of respect for him that I could hold my nose and go along. I even toured the state with him trying to get the income tax on the ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's quite a statement.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, that was a difficult one to swallow. But I finally just said, “Let's get it out there. The people are going to knock it in the head anyway, so why put up all the fuss?”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That is what happened.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It had been an issue for six or seven different times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, yes. Even Governor Langlie, who was certainly no liberal, brought it forward.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you aware that you were on the cusp of “big things coming?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think I was. I'm really pretty relaxed and I sort of take things as they come. You look at the facts and see who's involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If these new Republicans had a slightly different view of how to do things from you, yet you identified with them, where did you fit in the spectrum? Did you represent more of a middle ground between the "old school" and this new, more brash group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** While we are talking about different legislators, there was one I hoped you could tell me about. There had been a black Republican from Seattle, Charles Stokes, who served the Thirty-seventh District in 1951 and '53, but not in '55. Then he came back in this election of '57, but later he ran for the Senate and didn't make it and went on to other things. What interested me is, he was the only black person, I think, in the House and Senate for that matter, who was a Republican in this time period. All the black members were Democrats. How did he fit in your Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was involved with the King County Republican group and was active in other organizations in King County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just reflecting. This was before the Civil Rights Act of '64. Most black voters were originally "Lincoln" Republicans. But by the Lyndon Johnson era certainly, and dating back to the Roosevelt era, they were mostly Democrats and it's hard to find a black Republican.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was very loyal to the caucus and the Republican Party and was quite articulate and had a good sense of humor. Everybody liked him. Then when Sam Smith came along, there was such a difference in them both personally and as far as the legislative activity was concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Sam Smith represent a new generation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sam was probably a turning point of the black Democrats.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Republicans try to enlist minority candidates?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think there was any concerted effort. When a good one came along and became interested then he was supported just like everybody else. Charlie went on to be a municipal judge, I believe. He was a good legislator and a very good person. Mike Ross from Seattle was a black man who was a Republican, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering, in retrospect almost, whether Republicans wished they had tried harder to recruit black people into their party.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't remember any outward indication of that. I'm sure that in small groups and in the back rooms why they'd say, "Boy, we need to do something to get more black people involved."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about women candidates? Was there any effort in the fifties to recruit women?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was more of that. We had some outstanding women. The Democrats hung their hats on Julia Butler Hanson and Pearl Wanamaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had Catherine May. Who else did you have?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Mary Ellen McCaffree and Marge Lynch. Frances Swayze was another outstanding woman on the Republican side.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is before the women's movement, but it's impossible to tell from the outside whether the parties are even thinking about these kinds of things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** From my district, Emma Abbott Ridgway had been in the Legislature for a number of years and she was one of those Democrats who attended all the meetings and was very visible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of women's recruiting or training grounds, you might call it, seemed to be the League of Women Voters. A lot of your strongest candidates seemed to have that in their background. Were there any ties, even of an informal nature, with groups like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to my knowledge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People just came at it organically? They were interested or not?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was by and large an individual thing. Or, perhaps a community encouraged a local activist to run.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it still true in the mid to late fifties that the Legislature was an "old boys club?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Male dominated?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly by the numbers it is, but was there that feeling that it was impenetrable for a woman?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I don't think so. At least on our side of the aisle, the women who were in our caucus were all pretty much part of the group. I would say that they were all very objective and good legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's what it takes, I think. Going by the numbers there weren't that many women, but I think that the women who made it were very capable, so that would help.

Just one more story, and then we'll look at the session. John Cherberg was elected for the first time in 1956 as lieutenant governor. As he became something of an institution in Washington State government, can you tell me about the story that led him into prominence in the news?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He'd been fired by the University of Washington as football coach and there was quite a ruckus about "Torchy" Torrance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you tell me more about who he was? That's quite a nickname, "Torchy."

**Mr. Eldridge:** He spoke for the University more than any other single person for quite a long period of time. He was in the printing business and had been associated with the University for years. Mort Frayn was also in the printing business. There was quite a group, particularly on the Republican side, who were affiliated somehow or other with the University.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They'd all attended the U?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, and they supported the University, particularly athletic programs, financially. John Cherberg had a built-in constituency because he was very popular as a coach and all of the men who played football for him supported him. He was very popular.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he a winning coach?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know what kind of a record he had at the University because I didn't pay that much attention to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your allegiance was elsewhere.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If he was elected Lieutenant Governor as a Democrat, the official who presides

over the Senate, and the people who were involved in the Legislature who were old alumni were Republicans, was there any kind of problem with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think there was any rift at all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that the Legislature somehow got involved, through the Legislative Council, in investigating what happened at the University and the whole mess that seemed to be behind the firing of John Cherberg.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't involved in any of that and didn't really want to be. I wasn't close enough to any of the people who were involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He turns out to be one of the great personalities of the Washington Legislature. You were always in the House, but did you ever have any dealings with him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. We'd confer back and forth. Not on an individual basis, but socially we'd run into each other at receptions and dinners.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Being the presiding officers of your day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you give me a quick sketch of what he was like as a person?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was very likeable. You always had the feeling that he was very honest and objective and he ran a good shop over there. He was a good state official and he represented the state well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Didn't he travel quite a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, quite a bit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a Democrat, but perhaps he transcended that label. The position of the lieutenant governor is not a particularly partisan office.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's not a particularly partisan position. It deals with both parties and as long as you're fair in your rulings, there are not many problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's turn to the session, then. It was a Democratic majority year again. John O'Brien was re-elected Speaker. Julia Butler Hanson was Speaker Pro Tem. Si Holcomb was re-elected Chief Clerk for the eleventh term, so he's definitely been there for awhile. I noticed that Sid Snyder replaced Ward Bowden as the assistant Chief Clerk. Could you tell me a little bit about that position and what that would mean for you as a member?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sid was the assistant Sergeant-at-Arms and Ward Bowden had been there for quite a number of years and it was just kind of an automatic. Sid had been with the Legislature for some years in various positions and was very well informed about the operation and well respected by all the members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a representative, what would the assistant Chief Clerk do for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was with the Chief Clerk on the rostrum during sessions of the House and he kept track of the bills that were to be considered during that session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So would he put the right papers on your desk each morning to be sure you had what you needed? Keep things in order. What was going to come forward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. More for the benefit of the Speaker and the Chief Clerk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds pretty important, actually.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. And he was also involved with having materials prepared and delivered to the members. He would have had quite an important part in that effort.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These are offices that make the process work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. They're the mechanical people. But Sid was always there and he was very knowledgeable and easy to get along with. Everybody liked him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wanted take note of that because Sid Snyder, of course, becomes a fixture in the House the rest of your career, I believe. Once these people are in their positions, does it become more of a non partisan office? They serve everyone?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh yes. The position is such that if you wanted to maneuver around and do some things to the benefit of one party, or even an individual legislator, it could be done, but I think over the years it's been a pretty clean operation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think while we're talking about how the Legislature works, it's important to remember these people who are the go-betweens and make sure everyone's got what they need and who make it all happen. You mentioned the Sergeant-at-Arms. What did that person do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He oversees all of the non secretarial staff. Doormen and such.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are those the security people? Are they the ones who go look for you when there is a Call of the House? That sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And if there's a disturbance and the Speaker says, "Will the Sergeant-at-

Arms clear the galleries," why, then they hike up the stairs and clear the gallery. That doesn't happen very often.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that the galleries used to be much more packed in your day than they are now. That more people would come down and watch the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's probably true. Although I haven't been over there for years, so I don't know what it is like today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A pretty good sized crowd would gather up there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Depending on the issue, you'd get all the Grangers in the state to come in. And the labor people were always bringing groups down for labor legislation. Of course, the WEA, they were lurking around. But I think there was more general interest and I think there were more family members who came to the sessions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that scrutiny have any impact on what you were doing on the Floor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you be aware of them watching you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You could always see Joe Davis. On labor votes, he'd give you the thumbs up or thumbs down from the gallery.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there would be some sort of communication?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. His people were down there and he'd tell them how to vote.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The first time I remember watching the Legislature from the gallery, it looked

very casual. People were reading newspapers and wandering around. It was hard for me to tell what was going on. It looked disorganized, actually. It was hard to see what the process was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. And for a lot of the members, it was that way too. They weren't quite sure what was going on!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If there was a big debate or something, would people be more attentive and at their desks?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. On a lot of issues that had kind of a partisan tinge, the caucuses would meet before the session started and they'd determine what they were going to do. And then if they had the majority, they'd do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So I suppose there wouldn't be a lot of debate. It would just be up or down, yea or nay? You'd pretty much know?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some issues that we had members that had to get up and make a speech.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Capital punishment seemed to be one of those issues. What would be some other conscience-vote issues where people would want to speak out? Would they be party oriented votes, or more individual positions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Capital punishment would be a good example. At some place along the line we lowered the age limit for drinking, I believe.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly alcohol issues were still controversial.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They always bring out a crowd.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were still struggling with Sunday closing, liquor by the drink and all those

things that we take for granted now. You were seeing that slow opening up of all those laws. Gambling too, seemed to be one of those hot-button issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was coming along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the "moral edge" of legislation the sort of issue that was more prone to speech making?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of those things. And then, of course, if there were budgetary items that affected a particular district, you'd have those representatives on their feet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there any issues like that for you that you would be sure and speak out on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that I had any real volatile issues. There were a lot of general things that people pounded on me, such as education. All the teachers were calling me on the phone.

I remember we had a bill having to do with cattle rustling. You wouldn't think in the State of Washington that would be a big problem, but apparently it was in some areas.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are there two sides to it? There's a right and a—

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a matter of degree, I think. But anyway, I had gotten up and made some smart remark about the bill on the floor and when I got home that weekend I got a call from a cattleman, and boy, he really raked me over good! Making light of their problems!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Set you straight on the cattle business.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I picture that as an eastern Washington range issue. Not too much up in Mount Vernon. Not too many cowboys up there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We didn't have much in the way of cattle ranching.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess if you've got pedigreed cattle that would be quite a lot of money. It feels like an issue out of some other century, but where there is money, you would have crime.

Perhaps if you weren't given to much speech making, were there certain members who, in your day, you admired for that ability?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was more the other way around. You had some who would get up and talk on anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would certain people get to their feet and you'd kind of groan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Yes. But there were some members who would get up to speak on an issue and everybody would listen because they knew that he had done some research and had read the bill and talked to people, and what he had to say was worth listening to. Damon Canfield was one of those people. And Bob Brachtenbach, who later went to the Supreme Court, was a good spokesman. Julia Butler Hansen was really good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of her effectiveness, that she was a good speaker? Besides being very strong, she could bring people over to her side?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She'd bring them over by threatening them!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, whatever works!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I wouldn't say that she was an orator.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, she wasn't necessarily persuasive in the sense of oratory, but just sheer power, and the willingness to use it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She knew how to get things done. In her first session, Catherine May was also one who was a developing leader. She eventually went to Congress and was well regarded.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think legal training helped some people, at least in that kind of ability to understand the law and talk about it in a cogent way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Except a lot of those attorneys were just pains. They weren't in the real world.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. I think Damon Canfield was a farmer, wasn't he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Dan Evans, of course, was an engineer. What was Catherine May? Wasn't she a radio commentator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Julia Butler Hansen had a varied background. So you had a wide variety of people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Julia was an author. She wrote children's books and they are dandies. One was called *Singing Paddles*. We carried them in our store in Mount Vernon and they were very popular before I ever knew her.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And so when you met her, did you say, "Are you the Julia Butler Hansen who writes these books?" That would be a collector's item now.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just knew that. That was usually a line in her brochures or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Usually when people speak of her, they talk about her toughness. You don't

normally associate that with somebody who writes children's books. That's interesting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. It's a little surprising.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That rounds out her image a little bit more. And this session, she was Speaker Pro Tempore.

On the House side in 1957, you had a newly elected Democratic governor, there was also a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate. Did it look monolithic?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We just figured, "The ball's in your court, all these things you've been talking about, now go ahead and let's see you pass them." Of course, the income tax was one that they always harped on. So we'd just say, "Look, you've got the two-thirds votes, you've got a Democrat governor, pass it and let's get on with it." They didn't want the income tax any more than the Republicans did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were apparently quite a few conservative Democrats who didn't want an income tax. And then, when it was your turn to try it, there were parts of both parties that still didn't want it. It's like the golden ring for the merry-go-round, everyone goes for it, but nobody can grab it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, the ultimate answer is the people didn't want it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it seems. Your Party was in a minority. You had forty-three Republicans to fifty-six Democrats, which was a pretty big spread. John O'Brien was elected to his second term as Speaker as we said, and August Mardesich seemed to be the floor leader. That was the Democratic leadership. Newman Clark was your floor leader, with Lincoln Shropshire and Elmer Johnston playing important roles, but there's no record of the leadership positions in the Journal that I can discover. Does that jibe with your memory?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's pretty accurate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is the last year these particular three men lead the Republican House members.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there already grumblings in the background about their leadership style or positions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Zeke Clark was really not a leader. He had been close to Mort Frayn and "Bull" Howard who was the chief clerk. Elmer Johnston and Linc Shropshire primarily represented the central and eastern part of the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it was a nice geographic spread?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that had more to do with it than most anything else. Zeke Clark and Elmer Johnston were attorneys, as well as Linc Shropshire. They were solid people, but there again, they weren't exactly real leaders.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They couldn't set the world on fire?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was their notion of what you ought to be doing? What was the message in 1957? Besides sitting back and watching the Democrats—what was your Republican agenda?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Primarily to keep the appropriations down and no tax increases, which was a little ironic because the Republicans took the responsibility to raise taxes when it was necessary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You have to be for something as well as against it, too. How did you fit in this caucus? What did you think of this configuration of leadership?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was still a back-bencher. I think there was more caucus discipline in those days. We'd discuss issues and then we'd decide the position of the caucus, and then that's the direction we went.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a bound caucus that session, or was it just a case of more or less you stuck together because that was the way to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't have an official mandate or anything like that, but somebody needed to pull things together. And that was more of a procedure when Dan Evans became the leader. There wasn't anyone who got up and outlined: "This is the way we're going to do this." It just evolved because most of the members of the caucus pretty much felt that way and would go along whether it was signed in blood or not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a feeling of lack of direction or just biding time? There was a sharp change after this session. Was there dissatisfaction in the rank and file?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so because, as I recall, there weren't any strong partisan issues where we were going toe-to-toe with the Democrats. Most of the legislation was of general concern.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Schools, roads. Everybody's pretty much for them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** This was a kind of growing period.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was kind of coming from underneath? Something new emerging?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. People of my vintage were beginning to stir around a little and get out and look around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you had Dan Evans in now. He was a freshman this year so he's certainly got things to learn. He's a back-bencher. He sits with you, as you said.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. He said my biggest contribution was the fact that I could lick a postage stamp faster than anybody he'd ever seen. We used to do everything at our desks—that was our office. I'd been in business where we'd send out flyers and statements at the end of the month so I'd fan the envelopes and take a roll of stamps and peel off twenty in a strip and run them across the sponge and then go right down the line and put them on the envelopes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were a model of organization!

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. It just happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's funny, little things like that can spark something in another person when they witness it. I think that display of efficiency would be inspiring to an engineer.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, from his standpoint, I was a stamp lickier.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were sending things out. You were being active. I'm sure you did other things. I imagine you taught him some of the rules of the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had an interesting occasion. I remember we were on different sides of one issue. Nothing combative, but we had a bill that would allow corporate engineers to practice in the state of Washington, and, of course, he was not too enthused about that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know what a corporate engineer is.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It had to do with when two refineries came up in Skagit and Whatcom counties: Texaco and the Shell Oil Company. They had their own engineering staff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they be trained by the company rather than from a school of engineering? Would that be the difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be certainly following the company's procedures. I'm sure the engineers were all graduates from some university, but they weren't licensed as individual engineers. Dan was opposed to having the companies use their own people.

I suppose there was some concern on the part of the in-state engineers who thought that perhaps these people would be taking jobs away from them, but I don't recall that that there was any of that. In any event, because I was interested in the refinery being built in my district, that was one of the things they were concerned about. I was on the side of getting these projects underway—it would mean a great deal to that area—and Dan was on the other side. It would bring a lot of professional people into the communities up there.

We'd get up to speak and I remember a couple of times we sort of fought over the microphones—not really. We've laughed about it many times since then. But in any event, on the final vote, my side prevailed and I don't know that there was any serious problem connected with it. I was never really sure what the gut issue was here because it seemed simple to me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were probably stepping on professional toes there. Were you able to disagree agreeably?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. We laughed about it all through the discussion of the issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who won? What happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We got the legislation through that would allow them to practice in the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wouldn't think that many engineers were in the Legislature. So he might be a little bit alone on that one.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Then we had another bill that had to do with dove shooting. Dan produced a letter, probably written by his uncle. He got up and read this letter that talked about doves. It was kind of a humorous incident that he brought into the discussion which was a little out of character for him, but it was pretty well done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that helped him learn to speak?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure it did. It wasn't really evident, it just happened. He became a strong leader.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How quickly did he get on his feet in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Very fast. He was a quick learner.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He certainly had the passion for it, which seemed to be the ingredient that other people thought was missing from the Republican Party just then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And he had some people around him who were of great assistance to him. Joel Pritchard and Slade Gorton and Mary Ellen McCaffree.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All of whom will arrive in the Legislature the next session or two.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were all involved with the Party in some form or other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were very keen, from what I understand, to transform the Republican

Party with as many people like themselves as they could find. They set out to scour the state looking for new leaders and new blood.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I find it interesting that on most of their lists of who they considered their closest allies, they include you, but you don't seem to feel as included as they considered you to be.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I wasn't really part of that group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So your relationship is a little more off to the side?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's just kind of hold that thought while we examine the events of the session. One of the very first things that you faced in the 1957 session is that the League of Women Voters had passed an initiative to redistrict the state. They drew up a plan that adjusted the district boundaries across the state. It had not been done for decades and had become very mal-apportioned in the districts with all the suburban growth and all the changes that had happened.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I-199 was a terrible initiative!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly, so far as legislators were concerned, it was a disaster. They used census tracts rather than precincts which, I gather, was a totally different way of dividing up the state and left some legislators high and dry, not living in their districts or having oddly shaped districts that changed their relationships.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tell you that whole scenario shows what kind of masterful person Bob Greive was. He took that thing on almost single-handedly and he went around and contacted every legislator. My district was one that was affected

because we had three seats at that time, and fortunately Jim Ovenell came to Ralph Rickdall and me and he said, "Look, don't worry about our district. I'm going to announce that I'm not going to run again and that'll take care of the seat that you're going to lose and there won't be any problem." So that's exactly what we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it change your boundaries very much? You were still representing the same geographic area? Divided up a little bit though?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The two counties, Skagit and San Juan. But down to two, from three representatives. That's basically the gist of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people's districts were very different.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The whole nature of the district some were supposed to represent changed drastically, and the concern was they wouldn't be re-elected or stood a pretty stiff chance of not being elected.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Senator Greive contact House members as well as Senate members about amending the initiative? Were members pretty open to this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. There wasn't any question about the need for a change among legislators. It was just a matter of whose ox was going to be gored.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He amended it pretty much back to the title, as far as I can make out. Too many members were getting hurt by the League of Women Voters measure? The League had had some representatives who were reported to have helped them. Do you have any sense of why they chose census tracts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was an entity that was there and it was almost cast in stone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So census tracts were just handy? Something that was available?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's part of it, although I have never had anybody from the League say, "This is what we did and why we did it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'd be interested to know how they happened to make that strategic decision. But it was pretty clear that legislators were appalled.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was a pretty dramatic change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You said that there had been an amendment to the Constitution that allowed you to pass Greive's amendment to an initiative, providing you did it within two years. Was there any feeling that there would be any kind of public backlash or it was just too high stakes to worry about that possibility?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall ever having that feeling from anybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There would be no fallout, that you would save yourselves? It's taken on kind of this mythic quality of the women trying to reapportion and the politicians thwarting them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of people in the state who were a little bit skeptical of the League and I think the people in the rural areas figured that here were a bunch of city women trying to take over. That sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess I've just heard of the League as this "good government" group. I never considered that other people might resent their role in this, other than the legislators. But not all legislators disagreed with their efforts. There was a resolution put forward in the House by

Representatives Olson, Ruark and Munro—a bipartisan trio—that lauded the League of Women Voters.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know where that came from.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They gave quite a big, flowery speech about it. But that resolution rather tellingly was not adopted. And, in fact, Speaker O'Brien kind of chided them for their efforts.

There's a very interesting letter from Earl Coe, the Secretary of State, somewhat unprecedented I would think, alerting the Legislature to this issue and actually saying to you, "Don't let this happen. This is a mess." It was fairly pointed. He first reiterated the initiative passed. Then he said, "However, since the approval of Initiative Measure 199 into law, certain flaws concerning the use of census tracts as basic units in establishing legislative districts have been brought to my attention. As the chief elections officer in the State of Washington, I feel it is my duty to alert the members of the Thirty-fifth Legislature that remedial legislation will be necessary in order that definite and clear boundaries be established." He even told you what you could do about it. He cited that one of the boundaries was a creek that changes its bed every once in awhile. That some of the census tracts were outdated already, that the boundaries—this one was kind of interesting—cut through private residences, a housing project and an apartment house. He thought that would cause a lot of confusion. Half way through your bedroom or something. The husband's in one district and the wife in another. These sorts of stories. That the roads that they used were no longer there. That it was not very well done. He was very critical. Did he come in and actually present this himself, personally, or was this just a letter?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think everybody just got a copy of the letter.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it kind of make your hair stand on end?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it just reinforced the position of opposition!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then he reminded you that with this new amendment to the state Constitution what your remedy was, that you could amend this, and he urged you to do so. That seems unusual for the Secretary of State to step forward in that way.

So you did. You voted two-thirds in the House and two-thirds in the Senate to amend. Was there a plan put in place that replaced the League's plan? I read that you returned almost to status quo with the districts.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The amendment was a completely new bill, in effect.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the lines drawn by Senator Greive, or was it more bipartisan? Where did the new lines come from?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He established the districts and some of his selling was done on the basis that, "Here's your district now and here's what it would be under the League's initiative and here's what I propose."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So his proposal was bound to look better for you? On principle, is redistricting a legislative issue or a public issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh boy! There are as many problems with the Legislature handling redistricting, just like setting salaries. But then if a commission does it, they really don't understand what's involved; they don't know all about the Legislature. I really don't know. I'd have to flip a coin!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's the most personal of determinants for everyone's political life.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And of course the two parties are so strongly involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, it is very high stakes for the future of both parties.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the notion that some members—some small town or rural legislators—were representing thirty-thousand people whereas urban legislators were representing as many as one-hundred-and-fifty-thousand. Is that "representative government" or is that sliding into something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's just one of the idiosyncrasies of the system. You've got population increases and if you start to adjust for those then you're going to change the balance for some other reason.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also this idea that districts should not represent only population, but also geography.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Land mass.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was the more rural point of view. The Grange was more involved in that argument. Their areas of support were going to lose a lot of representation with this shift to the cities. Your district is a mixture of towns and more rural areas—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, and it was becoming less rural. At one time it was strongly rural. Lots of agriculture and then as the population increased it began to shift and there were a number of changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to take a stand one way or the other on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** On redistricting? No. The people in my district were perfectly happy by and large with what we had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they upset when they lost a representative, or did it not make much difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I don't think that it was a big concern. There wasn't too much that you could do to our district. But what it did, it reduced the number of House members from three to two.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you losing population, comparatively?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They were just trying to get it down to two per district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have three because you had a fairly large district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a pretty good-sized district. And the fact that it had the San Juan Islands in it made it a little difficult to manage.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your district people feel that they were losing power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There had been enough of a swing back and forth between the two parties that there wasn't a great concern that the Democrats were going to lose anything or the Republicans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That makes a difference. Then nobody feels completely shut out. That's probably good. It took the whole session, I believe, to pass the amendment. Both Democrats and Republicans were for it and against it. Was this something that you discussed in your caucus?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As I recall, it was every man for himself!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's territory! Was it hard trying to count up the votes and looking at the patterns? It wasn't really a clear pattern, so I guess it depended on how badly your district had been changed. I was just wondering if any kind

of word went down, "This is what we're thinking of," or if it really was just take care of yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that we discussed it in the caucus. There were some areas where there was quite a shift in political influence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting. I think this might be the only time that the Democrats have two-thirds members in both houses, plus the governor. They could have run through a pretty stiff Democratic redistricting effort, but I don't think they did. Was this premature? They weren't quite up to speed? Or were you more watchful and could prevent that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That point that you bring up merits some discussion in the '63 session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of what happened then had redistricting as one of its root causes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because after the census, the '61 session would be the first session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you had to go at this again. Those decades roll around a lot faster than you think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the fact that you get the census one year and then it's almost impossible for the next session of the Legislature to do anything, and so you're into another one, so you've got three years and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It's kind of a mess. It became a huge preoccupation while you dealt with other matters.

Governor Rosellini came in with quite an agenda, quite a program. He didn't want to raise taxes his first term—his first two years—with his first budget. He apparently wanted to see what efficiencies he could introduce first and learn exactly where everything was and how it worked, and look at taxes further down

the road. But he also wanted to do quite a few things. He wanted to build a lot of roads and bridges, for one. From his perspective, he was tying that to economic development in the state.

Was that something that you Republicans were also in tune with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there was any open opposition to that kind of a program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The federal money was really starting to roll in for highways, so highways were being built one way or the other. One of the big issues in Washington State was bridging the water.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was Lake Washington and then Puget Sound and further south, the Columbia River. We seemed to have more water issues than other states. The whole Olympic peninsula was held back in their development because you couldn't easily get there. You'd have to go way down through Shelton and around. Unless you took a ferry.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of these bridges that were proposed, was the engineering really in place to build such huge bridges? The floating bridge idea seemed brand-new.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how much preliminary work had been done, but I know that once they decided to do it, it fell into place pretty fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Hood Canal bridge had some problems with the tide and storms. Some pontoons sunk. But they seemed to have addressed the engineering parts of that. The location of the second Lake Washington bridge seemed to be not the issue of engineering, but where to put it and its impact on lakeside communities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that placing it where it eventually was built at the Evergreen Point helped tie that area to eastern Washington, over the mountains. That it linked up with that route and helped that development. I wasn't aware of that connection.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's campaign oratory because I-90 is the direct shot and we've added another parallel bridge in that route which was one of the alternatives when they decided on Evergreen Point. But I think Bellevue and Kirkland and Redmond and those areas wanted a closer link and a direct link.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that would be Evergreen Point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. To the city of Seattle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Seattle seemed to not want it built right there, but seemed to think it was going to funnel into the wrong part of Seattle.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The environmentalists, I think, were beginning to flex their muscles a little and weren't too enthused about that location.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a more sensitive site, ecologically speaking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suspect that the University of Washington may have been somewhat concerned about dumping that traffic right into the university area. But I don't know, these things seem to work their way out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We're used to it now. What about the Naches Tunnel?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was kind of a shot in the dark.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was the idea that there was going to be this all-weather link to the East. Go under the mountains. I guess that has something to do with snow and avalanches and all that issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think the people in Puyallup and Sumner were pushing that pretty strongly, and Tacoma to some extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's an old pioneer era idea. One reads stories of pioneers chopping out the wagon trail.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. And lowering the wagons down over cliffs and ferrying them across rivers. The Naches route was one of the traveled accesses to the Sound country.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The passage for the Model-T era and beyond got a little better, but what were the roads like to eastern Washington in the late fifties? How did you get from here to there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You had Stevens Pass and Snoqualmie Pass.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they two lanes, four, divided?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were two lanes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not anything like what they are now?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, no. I remember driving from Mount Vernon to Pullman to go to college and eleven or twelve hours was not unusual.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And maybe a few mishaps along the way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. You'd see cars pulled over changing tires and steaming on top of the pass. Radiators blowing out. All kinds of things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Traveling was a little more demanding then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a major corridor for economic development on the east side. Would the eastern Washington residents and legislators be pushing for this as well as the West? This was really good for everybody?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that there was a lot of support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The other piece that comes a little later while we're talking about roads, was the North Cascades route. That had been kind of bandied about for a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That had been talked about for years. When I first heard about it, it was proposed as the Cascade Pass route. Then, if you came from Skagit County, across on that route, it would dump you down into Stehekin.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By Lake Chelan, you mean?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Then you'd have a real problem getting from there down to Wenatchee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have to take that ferry and come down Lake Chelan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Or build a road alongside of the lake. But that proposal was abandoned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you really couldn't get from one side to the other very well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if you, say, lived in Skagit where you did, and you wanted to go to Wenatchee, would you have to go—

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd go to Everett and then across at Stevens Pass.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would take you a while.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A North Cascades highway would benefit your district, wouldn't it? It would funnel right into Sedro Wooley and that area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The North Cross-State Highway Association included Skagit and then Omak, Okanogan on the east side, and to some extent Whatcom County, because almost any route would probably go through a corner of Whatcom County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Besides the absolutely stunning scenery through there, would there be an economic reason to build that road?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There had been in the past, mining. There were a couple of talc mines in there and then, of course, gold and silver early on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just trying to think what were the linkages between east and west up in that part of the state? What would be the products that would be brought across, say, to the ports?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were talking about apples coming across from Okanogan and Omak.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it be Bellingham be the closest port?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could be Anacortes. The Great Northern, you see, had a line from Concrete down to Anacortes. As a matter of fact, that section of rail was the most lucrative that Great Northern had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's just a tremendous era of road building, bridges, and development of the ferry systems. I imagine that this was a

nonpartisan issue. Did Republicans wanted highways as much as the Democrats?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was good for business, good for jobs. It was part of the modernization of the state?

Besides building the highway infrastructure, one of the other things that Governor Rosellini wanted to do was to create the Department of Commerce and Economic Development. He was very concerned about the whole economy of the state as an issue and wanted to find ways to bolster it and make it work better. He tied it in with some other developments, too, for instance, promoting tourism. I think this might be the beginning of the golden age of tourism. People had more disposable income. They had better cars. The roads were improving.

Part of this was the development of state parks. State parks seemed to be in a pretty rudimentary state at this point. The next decade or so, they began to grow. Can you talk about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A good deal of the development of state parks came with the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]. They did much of the work in many of the parks. Deception Pass, originally, was almost entirely a CCC project.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Back in the thirties.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then the park system evolved from those that had been developed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there enough parks for the growing population? Was there a pressure to get more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any great surge of developing new parks. In the late sixties, at the time I was Speaker, we were still working on park property and development.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the literature at this point in the late fifties said that, as the state was developing and more and more people are moving in, that the good sites would disappear if you didn't get them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't detect any panic of acquisition of land. We still had a lot of vacant areas in the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand the parks were not terribly developed. They didn't have very many facilities. The car camping phenomena was developing. There were wilderness areas where hikers and backpacker types could probably get into, but I got the impression that for the average family it wasn't that easy to get to a park.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. There were a lot of places that you could go and practically just pull off the road and camp.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would those be the national forest areas and that kind of spot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I can remember as a kid of six or seven years old, when my mother, dad and I and along with the neighbors across the street with their two older youngsters would pile into the old Model T and drive up the Skagit River to Bacon Creek. We could just pull off the road and put up our tent and stay for two or three days and fish.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the feeling developing that that experience was getting more difficult?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that led to acquiring property that would be developed for a state park where they'd have a few fire pits with iron grates over the top of them. I can remember camping where there'd be a few big boulders and with a circular saw left there by some timber company when they'd pulled their operation out of an area, and you'd cook on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Parks had been a part of state government where governors appointed political patronage positions. That began to change in this time period; there's a shifting culture from more political administration to the more professional—park developers, park rangers—coming in. Was there any discussion about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall in this time frame that there was any real discussion or push in that direction. It's one of those things that evolved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps the changes were more on the administrative level, below the political radar screen. Again, dealing with land, Governor Rosellini pushed and was successful in creating the Department of Natural Resources under Bert Cole as Land Commissioner.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this part of the consolidation and organization of multiple little commissions and agencies and programs, to put them all under one umbrella? He created DNR and the Commerce and Economic Development Board. Dan Evans continued this trend of trying to create agencies that are in charge of whole areas of government activity.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The interesting part of that is, when Langlie was governor, he had Harold Shefelman head up a committee to look into state government and he recommended these things be done. Zeke Clark and Mort Frayn killed that. They didn't go with any of those recommendations. And so the next governor—Rosellini—got that done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those could have been Republican achievements?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. But after the next election, Rosellini came in and the Democrats passed all those measures and took credit for them—just

like you mentioned that Rosellini did this and Rosellini did that, which he did. But that was a travesty.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that just an idea whose time had come and he happened to be the governor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a political disaster for the Republicans, because it could have been a tremendous program and most of the things that were proposed were philosophically things that the Republicans were for.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It is interesting to look at this. The discussion about the bringing in of the civil service and merit system. It didn't come in the Republican time, it came in later.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the Democrats froze all their people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Democrats put it in place when they were in charge and it went from there. Was there a sense of frustration or even bitterness about that from your side?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You were asking earlier about that leadership, and I think that may have been some of the motivation to make some changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you kind of saying to yourselves, "They blew it?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. And maybe not right at that point, but down the road. Many times I talked about that and how the Democrats took a Republican program, passed it and took credit for it. You can't blame them. I think it worked out to be a pretty progressive move, and one that we needed. Although there are still people out there who think that the merit system is terrible, who would rather go back to the old patronage system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How'd that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just the way it did for years and years and years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** From what I understand, every time there'd be a change in governor—

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd have a change of personnel.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** —there'd be wholesale firing of people. It would be far reaching to have those swings of people manning the desks. I guess I can picture it more easily when the whole governor's office could easily fit in one room. But now?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Oh, it would be difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel about the merit system?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was in favor of it. I thought it would professionalize a lot of the positions and that we'd have better people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How about the issue of continuity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That would be certainly a part of it because when there would be a change of administration, along with the bad employees, you'd lose a lot of good ones.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I would think it would be hard to administer programs. It seems to invite administrative chaos to have people whipping in and out every four years or so.

Early in the session, U.S. Senator Henry Jackson visited the Legislature—I understand the senators periodically came and gave speeches and made contact with you. Was there much federal/state exchange of information or strategy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There may have been on an individual basis like the governor's office contacting the representatives and senators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He outlines quite a list—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's quite an extensive program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** His proposals would have a lot of impact on the state. He talked about federal tax policy and how his own point of view was to help the state out in a certain way by tweaking the federal tax policies so that there would be more money left over for the states. He talked about aid to education—I was surprised; I hadn't realized that the federal government did much in education in those days.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. They're primarily through agricultural colleges and land grant colleges. And I think that the high schools that had agricultural programs probably got some funding there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He talked about the need for improving education as a kind of cold war issue. He was concerned about the Russians, what they were doing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, he was a hawk and he had a lot to say about some of those things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did that resonate with you? This is the year, 1957, the year of Sputnik. How did that ripple through with the concern with education?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I have always felt that the schools needed to keep up with some of these developments and scientific achievements and put more emphasis on math and science. Even though I was not a student of chemistry, physics or any of those subjects.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it common to link education with national security? Was that an accepted approach?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that came along later.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's assumed now that people then were thinking about that link, but I wondered whether at that time people were automatically making that association. Or whether that was something that was used to justify more money for schools.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think you're right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Senator Jackson also talked about the Mount Rainier National Park. Others were thinking about it, too. There was a joint memorial brought in by senators Kupka, Dixon and DeGarmo, who urged Governor Rosellini to contact the federal powers-that-be. There was a lot of discussion about the development of Mount Rainier in this time period. Quite a lot of dissention, in fact. The state wanted to develop it and the national parks people were somewhat wary of that idea. There was some resistance to developing a big lodge up there. They wanted it more undeveloped and pristine, while the state wanted a tourist draw. Eventually, we know, the lodges were built. Jackson was, supposedly, on the side of developing the park, at least to a certain degree. So that ordinary people could go there and enjoy the facility. It was the flagship scenic spot of Washington State and there was a fair amount of contention about what vision to follow.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I don't remember any of that being discussed in Olympia.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The issue seemed to be scale. What was the right amount of people without overwhelming the park itself and trampling everything in sight? That's a pretty delicate balancing act.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Senator Jackson also talked about the federal government giving states highway money, which was beginning to flow in this era. I don't know what the formula was, but he alluded to how many miles of road you need, but also population, and how Washington was disadvantaged because we didn't have the population base. Was there some kind of road funding ratio tied to population?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't remember that. But, you see, I wasn't specifically involved in any way with the transportation committee or roads and bridges in the Legislature, so I didn't follow it too closely.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mentioned a series of harbor projects that received federal money. And then Senator Jackson talked a little bit about the development of the Columbia River, the John Day Dam project and how this was going to be an era of major dam building on the Columbia River in the next decade or so. Were there dams up in your area, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had dams on the Skagit and on the Cascade River. Seattle City Light, of course, had quite a development up there. And then Puget Power on the Baker River. They had two dams there. Seattle City Light started out with the Gorge dam and then went to Diablo dam and then on up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Getting into your back country. Would Mount Vernon have benefited from these power projects, or would all the power flow down to Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would go primarily to Seattle. I suppose it was all part of the grid. Mount Vernon was served by Puget Power and I suspect that there was an inter-tie between their dams and power plants and Seattle City Light.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have an opinion about all these dams?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It certainly became a plus as far as recreation was concerned. During the construction period it was quite a boon to the area. A lot of men were involved in the construction and a lot of those people stayed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You can almost see Washington State taking a quantum leap in these years from resource-based industries and smaller towns and a more regional culture to becoming a major industrial power. Much more urban and much more intense economic development.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was quite a change, yes. And then we got into a period of military development. The Naval Air Station at Whidbey Island became quite a hub.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Bremerton. The Air Force at McChord and Spokane. Fort Lewis. This was after the Korean War. I was trying to figure out how important Boeing was in this era?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The plant in Everett was built then. There were many people from Skagit and Snohomish County working at the Everett plant and so there was a lot of commuting. And here again, it increased the burden on the highway system. Boeing was getting contracts and there was a lot of activity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of Governor Rosellini's statements was that while he applauded, of course, the Boeing expansion, he was worried that the state's economy was based too much in that one basket, and he talked about bringing in other industries.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. He wanted to diversify.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. What was happening with the wood products industry in the late fifties? How were they doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of the mills, particularly the small ones, just went out of business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a big shift, then, for them. What about the paper industry?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was pretty healthy. Then we were getting into the refining business. There were refineries being built in Skagit County and Whatcom County.

You were talking about Jackson's appearance. He and Warren Magnuson were the masters of bringing home the bacon. That's where all of this evolved because they were getting those federal dollars and they were masters at that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the military contracts for Boeing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All this kind of fits together. You can tease yourself with the 'what ifs'. What if Washington had been represented differently? I wonder what the development of the state would have been like if we hadn't had such well-placed, powerful senators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. Then you looked toward the universities as to what kind of people they're turning out and whether there's going to be a shift in the type of manufacturing that you have in the state. If we'd had a different representation, perhaps we would have been more into plastics, for instance, or electronics earlier. It just depends.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With those refineries developing, I suppose the state could have got more into manufacturing with the oil company products. That would have totally changed the nature of your district. You were still somewhat bucolic. Would you have welcomed that development?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it would have been a disaster. And I don't think it would have been

a bad situation. It would have concerned a lot of different people and organizations, but if you get good, clean businesses with people who are more on a professional level, it boosts your communities by having those people there and taking part in community activities, municipal government and school boards. I think it really benefits. We saw that when the refineries came in, there were top management people: you had engineers; you had people with good educations. They appreciated good schools and they became involved in the communities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It brought the whole level up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really helped.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was thinking of all the controversy in later years about Cherry Point and the concerns about the pollution by Bellingham with the paper mills and the destruction of the fishing and shellfish industry there. Getting all those things to coexist and not destroying the good, old ways of life—when you're bringing in the new industries is a very difficult proposition.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a real juggling act.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly we'll be talking about that.

There was a power issue that session we should look at. Tacoma wanted to build dams on the Cowlitz River and that was in competition, or shall we say, contradiction to the hatchery operations there. How to develop that part of the state became quite a political issue. There were some tradeoffs. Tacoma does develop a dam, though?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There are two dams: Mossyrock and Mayfield.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's their power base. That's where they get their electricity.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And then they have Lake Cushman. Two different watersheds.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they're drawing a circle around themselves.

Jackson was a big supporter of Boeing and also of the atomic energy program. The "Atoms for Peace" program was transforming Hanford from a wartime enterprise, transitioning to other uses of atoms. There's a very small bill that is passed that year along those lines to create WPPSS [Washington Public Power Supply System]. A sort of little one-liner that grew, of course, into a very large program. Did you understand the significance of this measure at the time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I didn't. I was aware that there was a lot of development of nuclear power going on, but I had never been too concerned with it. I didn't think it was a disaster waiting to happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think anyone saw it coming. At the beginning, I don't think it was even imaginable what that bill could lead to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, even today it wouldn't bother me to have a nuclear plant down the street from me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nuclear energy is something that's still debated.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These are the some of the issues that give us the big picture of what's going on in the state. All the development.

Let's focus more on what you were doing. You were on several committees and on those committees you had your finger in various pies. You served on the Cities and Counties Committee, chaired by Wally Carmichael. That was the year that Metro bill came through the Legislature. Certainly your committee played a very large role in that legislation. When the Metro legislation was sent into your committee, can you describe what happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was kind of a mish-mash. Primarily, the legislators from King County were really pushing it. We were getting some opposition from the Snohomish people because they didn't want to be overpowered and eventually sucked into something like that. Those of us out in the hinterlands really didn't give a damn. "Let the big boys fight it out."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you didn't have an opinion one way or the other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It sounded good to me when it was first set up to clean up Lake Washington. That was the original idea.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Apparently it was very polluted.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was going downhill fast. So that was, I considered, a good move. Then, once they got into that, it began to expand.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Can you list all the things Metro wanted to involve itself with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Transportation and water supply and sewage disposal. They had a laundry list a mile long.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that was a little over-ambitious?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Dan Evans, your seatmate, was one of the strongest proponents of Metro. Was he twisting your arm at all and bending your ear about this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because I guess that he considered that I would probably support it because I had supported the original intent of Metro. And he was right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered. You were right there sitting with him, whether he talked about it quite a bit.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll say this about Dan Evans. There were lots of times I had to bite my lip to go along with some of his programs and ideas, but I had such a great deal of respect for him that I'd go along and he ultimately was usually right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's quite an accolade. This is his first big issue as far as I can tell. I don't think he was on that committee, though.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there people within your committee who were strong proponents and also strong resisters?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any serious discussion one way or the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some indication that your chair was not in favor of Metro was told to get in line.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Wally Carmichael was a terrible legislator. He was from Snohomish County—Everett. As a committee chairman, he would sit there and go through the bills. He'd have two stacks and he'd say, "This is a one-case bill. This one we won't act on. This is a two-case bill."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What does that mean?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Two cases of whiskey. One case of whiskey.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm glad you clarified that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was a b-a-a-d operator.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If something's a two-case bill then it's worth acting on, because he's going to get a reward? Is that what you mean?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Somewhat like that, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know what they gave him, but he was told to get it out of his committee. He was stalling with it. So would he just not bring it up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He wouldn't bring it up for discussion in the committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In those days, did committee chairs have the kind of power that if they didn't bring it up, a bill just simply didn't get a hearing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's called a pocket veto. He'd carry it around in his coat pocket.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But no members of your committee pushed on him? It just wasn't done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that there were people who were in favor of it that would say, "C'mon Wally, let's get this bill out tomorrow, or today, or whatever."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It went right down to the line. The people who were for it were doing some serious nail biting there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Finally, apparently John O'Brien and some other people read him the riot act, as they say, and it came out of your committee and then went into Rules, another committee on which you sat. How did it fare there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it moved along pretty well once it got there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Once you got out of the roadblock?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some notion by some legislators and community people that it was basically a communist plot. "Big government taking over." A "big brother" kind of thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can believe that there were some thoughts along that line, although I don't recall anything out in the open where people were pounding on the table and making speeches and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it because it was so far reaching?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So when it got scaled back, was it a little more palatable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Jim Ellis, the attorney, was lobbying hard for it. Did he come and speak on the issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that he ever came before the committee, although he may have.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm guessing you must have had hearings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I tell you. In those days we didn't have all the open meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this would be more button-holing in the hall kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Did you tour Lake Washington? Did you go up there and look at it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not specifically.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get reports on the pollution?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was that. Of course, I was close enough that driving home I could swing down around there. I was aware that there was a real problem there and that was why I was supportive of that original proposal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the end, the last vote, you're not present from what I can tell from the Journal. You're at a meeting or something.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall. I didn't duck it on purpose or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Quite a few people weren't present. There isn't any particular record of you avoiding it, but you just happened not to be there. You don't actually sign the report to get it out of committee, but many people didn't. They just got the number of signatures they needed. When it was passed to Rules, the Journal doesn't actually say, just that it was passed. It doesn't say who voted or how they voted. I'm sure there were many opportunities to vote or move it along, but you didn't happen to be there for the last vote. But had you been there, for the record now, you would have voted for it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another committee that you served on was Game and Game Fish. There were several bills that you get passed regulating what's to be done about damage caused by beaver, elk and deer. Would that be like orchard trees and things of that nature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Or beavers building dams and flooding farmland, for example.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So those seem like housekeeping items.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. The game department would come in with a list of items that needed to be remedied.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These would be agency request bills? These wouldn't be things that you would think up yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Although there might be a group of farmers in Skagit County that would come to you and say, "Boy, we've really got a problem. Those beavers are just killing our crops up there."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine you could still trap beavers then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** These were mountain beaver and they aren't good for much of anything. They don't have the kind of fur that you make a beaver coat out of. I remember a lot of the kids in my school would trap beaver.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a special interim committee report given to the Legislature that year on game and game fish. I was wondering if this would have had something to do with your committee, but tell me, how did the interim committees relate to these regular legislative committees? Did you take this interim report and do anything with it or how did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, the interim committee would either submit bills at the start of the session, which would go then to the standing committee, or they might have suggestions that they didn't act on in the interim committee that they would pass along to the standing committee. Then they could draft legislation for consideration and have it go through the regular channels.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These interim committees, they're an opportunity to study something in depth and travel all over the state for hearings and collect information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Get down on the ground and see what's going on. Would that really enrich

your deliberations on the standing committees where you'd have these big reports? Would it give you more to work with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes and no. Sometimes these interim committees just developed into an opportunity for a group to get together and go someplace and meet. And maybe the game department would take them out to an area that had good pheasant hunting or duck hunting or whatever, and they'd go out and meet for a couple hours.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd get your per diem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, some committees would be doing worthwhile things and others would be just kind of partying?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were there for the ride.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, this committee had a big list of things that they thought would help fisheries.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Now, there's a difference here too that we have to recognize. Game and Game Fish are different from the Fisheries Committee. Because in Fisheries, we're talking about the commercial fishery. And the other is primarily game fish, trout and perch and bass. Sports fishing. Although it didn't include salmon fishing, which came under the Fisheries.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That is a little confusing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think under the existing committee structure that it combines all fisheries into this with the game.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is the Game and Game Fish interim committee, but they seem to be talking about fisheries, too, or at least things that touch on fisheries. There's some kind of gray area there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There could be some overlapping.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They talk a lot about hatcheries. They also seemed pretty exercised about gillnet fishing. And this seemed to be a new thing. Was that an innovation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That gets us into the Indian struggle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering. So, the gill-netters were primarily Indians?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They'd put their nets across streams and just take everything in sight. There wasn't much quality control.

But the fisheries really went through quite a change. I can remember growing up and my dad taking me out toward La Conner where there were fish traps. The Indians had fish traps, but there were also some other individuals who had fish traps. This particular trap that we visited was owned and built by a fellow by the name of Gunnar Ashland and we were there when they raised the nets. And boy! There were big fish and lots of them when they pulled the nets.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that a weir? Can you describe how a fish trap works?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They drive piling in and there are nets around there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They kind of balloon out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Actually, there's a pocket of net in there and then there's a v-shaped row of piling with nets and the fish funnel into this area and there's such a narrow opening that if they try to go out, they are usually diverted to one side or the other. But anyway, when they get that thing to a point, then they pull up this net and take the fish out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they just keep the big ones or keep them all?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think in those days they kept everything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is this just a smaller scale way of catching fish than what the gill-netters were doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The gill-netters, what they did was they would have one end of the net at one point and then they'd take a small boat and lay the net out around in a big arc. Then, when the fish would come in, they'd pull it around—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like a noose?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then pull the two ends together. The net would have floats. In other words, you'd have a net maybe six hundred feet long and there'd be floats with lead weights on the bottom.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's kind of a wall.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would hang down and then the fish would come in and then they'd pull this on around. Most of the time with the Indians, they'd start on shore and run the net out and around and then back. They determined where the fish would be running and then they'd leave that open and then when the fish all got in there and you could see them bubbling and jumping, then they'd pull it on around to the beach and they'd get their crews and pull those lines and they would pocket them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Get a big bulge of fish?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then they'd just wade out into that area and throw them up on the beach.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds extremely effective. Is that what the problem was, it was too good?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were just really over-fishing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it because they were too successful or because they were Indians that was the problem? Was there some kind of racial tension, say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a treaty situation that they were guaranteed fifty percent of the fish. Who knows what fifty percent is?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We're still struggling with that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's a real problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there that cultural issue there too, as well as the number of fish being caught?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a lot of resentment among the white fishermen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they actually depleting the fisheries? Were they wiping out runs of fish?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know they were certainly bringing them down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That, of course, will erupt in the sixties where you get full-fledged battling over the fish.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then the Boldt decision.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, in the seventies. But the tensions certainly rose and there was violence and actual physical altercations on the rivers. Just a lot of tension there. Was the nature of the fishing industry changing at this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The fishing that used to be done in the Puget Sound area with boats was moving north.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To Alaska?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There wasn't too much fishing in the Sound.

And of course you had the gill netters. They'd have two boats, they looked almost like canoes, and they had platforms and there'd be a man on the top of the platform and he'd watch the fish coming through and then they'd signal and they'd close the nets then and pull them like the others. Duane Berentson worked on a gill net operation when he was either a high school or college student in the summertime.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How big an industry was fishing up in your area? Was it one of the major ones?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were two or three big canneries in Anacortes. There was one, or maybe two, in La Conner.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the fishing industry was touching your district pretty heavily? The whole process.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Not only were there the fishermen, but there was the canning industry. Paul Luvera, who was a senator at the time I was first elected in the House, had a grocery store with his family in Anacortes. And boy, during the start of the fishing season they did a whirlwind business because all the fishermen were getting supplies and getting ready to go out and knock 'em dead!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And he, of course, was the chair of this interim committee, where you were intimately involved in this issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This also involved international treaties and Alaska, a new state. There seemed to be a push for long-range funding of solutions and planning. People were starting to look at this much more carefully. You can feel some tensions growing here from these reports. Did your committee, the Game Committee, who received this report—everyone received this report—but did you discuss this and have some initiatives come out of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That particular issue would have gone to the Fisheries committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's turn to another committee then. This is your first year on Rules. Did you lobby to get on Rules?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Every session there's a change of membership and there happened to be a vacancy on there. I really hadn't thought too much about it. I was beginning to get a little higher in the pecking order and being on the Rules committee had some advantages.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Getting a spot on Rules is often a measure of "you have arrived" as a player, a decision maker, a sign of growing leadership. It's quite an important committee assignment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. Everybody wants to be on the Rules committee because there is quite a lot of access to what's going on and how it's going to happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The gatekeeper committee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. It's a pretty important assignment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You once told me that you thought the bills you were able to kill were as important as the ones you were able to promote. Certainly Rules is considered the graveyard of many bills. Were you able to start sorting through legislation with some measure of discipline? What kind of bills would you consider things should just never see the light of day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** While I may say that, I don't know that I ever practiced it. I'm sure that I influenced people to vote no to move a bill out of the committee. But I didn't support a lot of the

proliferation of committees and agencies and new departments and all that kind of stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Commissions? Studies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. It is just a huge expenditure and once the study is completed, it goes on somebody's back shelf and gathers dust. I've seen that so many times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Traditionally, the chair of Rules is the Speaker? In this case this would be John O'Brien. What was he like as chair of that committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. John had his own agenda. He was a strong Speaker. I think he was reasonably fair. He'd push hard on some things that he wanted, or his caucus wanted, or the Party wanted. Plus, he'd have a few pet bills that he'd want to get out on the calendar and once in awhile he'd just say, "These bills go on." That was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Run me through how a typical Rules meeting would work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We sat around a big table and the chairman would just go around the table and everybody would have their list of bills and you could say, "I want House Bill 129," and so they'd bring it out and they'd discuss it and then vote whether to put it on the calendar for the next day or not. The chairman usually had two or three picks and we'd have a consent calendar every once in awhile where we just dumped everything on there that wasn't controversial and got rid of them all at once. Each member would have a chance to "pull" a bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that means you would present it and say, "This is what I want?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then there'd be discussion around the table and the Speaker would call for a vote, either yes or no.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a voice vote, not a secret vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Well, at one time we went to secret ballots. We had just a little pad, each member, and he'd check yes or no and the chief clerk would gather those up and make the count and announce what it was and that was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you had a staff person in there, the chief clerk. Giving you things, or helping out in some way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The chief clerk was the secretary of the Rules committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And would you have all of these bills on paper in front of you and you'd have your list?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd have a list and if it was a new bill, then there'd be a copy in front of everybody. So you'd have a little stack of paper when you got to the committee meeting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a pattern of what you would support or not support? A bill would come up. For one thing, did you have time to read all the bills?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So how would you make your choice?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Association of Washington Business had a bill digest. They had a staff person

who reviewed every bill that was introduced, and the next morning you'd have a digest of that bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With a few lines saying, "We support this because of this and this, or we don't want this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Actually it was pretty objective.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was just "the bill does this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But then their lobbyist would say, "Did you read the digest on such-and-such a bill?" You'd say, "Yes," and he'd say, "Well, that's one that we really oppose."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you could make a little notation there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there other groups that helped out in that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of groups that did research. They would send out information sheets.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little more annotated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And say, "We oppose such-and-such and such-and-such," and with the reasons why.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see. Somebody would sponsor a bill, then it's assigned to whatever committee, say the Education Committee or State Government or whatever. Then they look at it and if it comes out of there 'do pass,' then does it go to Rules?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It hit the Rules committee twice. Once on the first reading and at that point it can be amended. It could be amended by the standing committee that it was assigned to or when

it comes out on the floor, it can be amended on the floor. Then once that action is completed, it goes back into the Rules committee again.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you amend it there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Rules committee—I don't know that it happened very often—but they would have the authority to do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then it would come back out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That would be on final passage.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then you would debate it again on the floor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Vote it yes or no.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And could it be amended again?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But it would take a two-thirds vote to get it back onto second reading.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would it go to Rules again?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To establish the calendar then for final passage.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see now. And then I understand that if it—what was the threshold? If the measure would cost more than fifty-thousand dollars—it would have to go through Ways and Means? If it had some kind of an appropriation attached to it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is before you had fiscal notes, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you know what things were going to cost? Would you be discussing a bill without knowing much about its fiscal impact?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That could happen. But ordinarily at some point people want to know, "How much is this going to cost?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Like say, these bridges and things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They always had an appropriation attached to it in the bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I would think that would be a great part of the discussion. Everybody wants all kinds of things, but what will it cost?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What percentage of bills came into Rules and died there? Pretty high?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that the majority of bills that get to the Rules Committee will go out and then either fail or pass.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you at least established priorities when things should go on the calendar? I've understood that sometimes people would come to you and say, "I had to sponsor this bill because my community really wants it, but I think it's a crummy bill, so please don't let it out of Rules."

**Mr. Eldridge:** "Kill it." Yes. That would happen occasionally.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or, "Gee, I didn't really understand that this bill would do X and Y, so just let's not do it."

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you see a member who maybe got that comment from a constituent or

another member or whatever, when we got into the meeting and that bill was on the list to be considered, he might just say, “You know, this is a terrible bill. I want you to vote no on it.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So people could speak against them as well as for them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. Yes. It’s a screening process.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You’d have to have some mechanism, because there were hundreds of bills every year. Now, thousands.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you can’t discuss them all on the floor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. You would be there forever. So it’s a useful part of the process. Did you enjoy it? Did you feel like you were doing something effective?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a good experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You stayed on Rules, I believe, for quite a while?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think from the time I went on until I resigned, I was on the Rules committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, at this time, John O’Brien, was, of course, the chair. Augie Mardesich was the vice chair. Serving with you were: Newman Clark, Donohue, Bernard Gallagher, Hawley, Hurley, Elmer Johnston, Miller, Rasmussen, Sandison, Sawyer, Shropshire, Testu, Timm, Young. Did these people represent different types of interests? Do you have a good mixture here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It’s more longevity, I would say.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of a reward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of. The members who had been there for quite a number of years usually wanted to get on the Rules Committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it also a place to groom people who appear to be up and coming? Is it kind of a route to power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have more access to things that are going on in the process of the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are several ways to become prominent. To become chair of a committee. To be on Rules. There are just certain paths that people follow.

One of your other committees was Ways and Means, which is another one of these big committees. It was divided into two subcommittees, Appropriations and Revenue and Taxation. Why did you want to serve on Appropriations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because of my interest in higher education and some of those areas, Appropriations was the major consideration.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who was going to get the money, yes. So you became one of the members who would be writing the budget?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It’s a big responsibility. Would you have a lot of hearings and go to a lot of meetings? Is that what was involved?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All the agencies would be scheduled to come in and present their cases before the Appropriations Committee. We’d have college presidents and their comptrollers and whoever else would come in and present their case.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So your job would be to decide priorities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And by and large those requests are usually pretty legitimate. It's just a matter of how you cut the pie.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There must have been some painful choices on occasion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I was chairman of the Board of Trustees at Western before I went to the Legislature and had been, at only one Appropriations hearing which was the first time I'd ever been involved with the Legislature. The presidents and the board of trustees from those five institutions, the two universities and the three state colleges, would get together prior to a Legislative session and go over their requests.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this year you get a wing of a building, the next year this institution gets a dorm, or whatever? A gym or more classrooms?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You see, we actually had two appropriations. The maintenance and operation one and then the construction—the Capital budget. That worked pretty well because we could settle a lot of those things before we ever got into the session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Though you're all going for the same pie. Are you not competing against each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Each college and university had its own budget that it would present. Ernie Brabrook, the director of the state budget would take all these budgets and he'd outline what was going to be requested and then that would go into the budget book.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which you're motioning is about one inch thick or more.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Two inches.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he would just organize the material. Would it be the Legislature or the

governor who would make the decisions? This was before the Budget and Accounting Act.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Brabrook would sit down with the governor and his staff and they'd go over the whole budget. I presume that they made some changes. Then it would go to the Legislature and the Appropriations committee would sit down and they'd call people back in to go over things that they questioned or didn't understand. Then the Appropriations Committee would present amendments or rewrite the budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you change it very much from what the governor proposed? How much would it fluctuate from year to year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. You've only got so many dollars.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you might have a slightly different emphasis, so you would give a little bit more to certain programs that you favored and trim a little off somewhere else. It would be more like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were looking at these things when the legislation came forward. Did you have some things that you favored over some other things? Did you have an emphasis in your own mind about, well, "I prefer to give to higher education and a little bit less to something else."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't really have things pinned down that closely, but I was interested in higher education and of course I was looking out for Western. Then we had a junior college in Mount Vernon—this was before the junior colleges were part of a separate organization and changed their names to community colleges. Then there were quite a few items that had to do with agriculture that I was interested in. And, in addition, the North Cascade Highway—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So for transportation issues, maybe you didn't care too much about certain things, but that would be something you'd be looking out for? That would have an impact on your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then of course with the San Juan Islands in my district, we were concerned about the ferry operation and ferry fares.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Keeping those reasonable, yes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, the islanders always wanted a special commuter rate so they could come into Anacortes and Mount Vernon or go to Seattle or Bellingham to shop.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, the tourists would pay a bit more and they would have some kind of sticker or something on their car?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily they had commuter booklets of tickets that they'd use.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you able to get that to happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They did have a special rate for residents of the islands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there things that you were less inclined to give money to that you thought perhaps weren't really the state's business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any burning issue that I was opposed to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about, say, the Naches Tunnel? There were some big, spendy projects that people were always talking about.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just from a practical standpoint, I opposed that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that would be something that you would not be too inclined to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I wouldn't be too enthused about that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's certainly an interesting committee. Anything worth looking at would be going through your hands.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were a lot of items to consider.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And, let's see, your chair was "Cap" Edwards. And Chet King was the vice chair. Then, the members were: Campbell, Canfield, Chytil, Dowd, yourself, Clayton Farrington, Gallagher again, Epton, Gleason, Goldmark, Goldsworthy. Robert Goldsworthy was quite known for his work on Appropriations, wasn't he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Bob became chairman of the committee when the Republicans got the majority.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Kirk—I think that was Mr. Kirk in this case—Mardesich, who I imagine had a fine pencil, Miller, Petrie, Ruark, Savage, Stokes, Strom, Swayze, Twidwell, Vane, Wintler and Young. That's a very large committee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is a big committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the standouts would be Goldsworthy and—any other names strike you as really effective members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Mardesich, of course, would be a consideration there. He knew the budget and he could pick out the phony things. He was a good legislator. We had Ella Wintler, who was a retired teacher, and Clayton Farrington was also a retired teacher. That was kind of an interesting pair. Ella Wintler was a real conservative and

Clayton Farrington was about as liberal as you can get. They'd usually wind up on the same subcommittee in the Appropriations committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they get along, or did they clash?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, no. They'd kind of spar around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Ella Wintler a feisty kind of person or quiet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She'd every once in awhile get up and sound off a little.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She was in the Legislature quite a while. Kathryn Epton was interested in children who had special needs. Did she have wider interests?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Really, that was pretty much the issue she focused on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You could come into the Legislature with different approaches. One is to have a really focused interest and go after it. Another is to have broader interests and try to have a point of view rather than a particular burning interest. Was she very effective if she was so focused, or is that more difficult?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wouldn't say that she was real effective. She was a very energetic person as far as looking into the issues. But, during the period of time that I served, most of the people were fairly broadminded and objective and were involved in more than just one little issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this sized committee workable, or was this a lot of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It needed to be broken down into subcommittees, but it still was a lot of people. But it was a broad spectrum of things that needed

to be looked at. So you needed a broad-based committee with many different backgrounds and interests.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For certain issues, say, would some people be considered the experts and if they stood up and said, "Well, on agriculture or fisheries or whatever, this is what I know about it," and then you would think that person knows what they're talking about? Would certain people take the lead like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There's quite a lot of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You can't be an expert on everything.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You can't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would higher education have been your piece that you really knew and understood?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think that and small business interests and to some extent, transportation issues, as they applied primarily to the ferry system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you would be paying attention in a really consistent way to those things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And pretty soon when you stood up to talk on ferries, people would think that "Eldridge, he knows. He's got the San Juan Islands in his district." Election-wise, you always seemed to do well in the San Juans so you must have been doing something right.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Boy! That was a great district. I loved campaigning in the San Juans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's certainly a beautiful district.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had a friend who was an attorney in Mount Vernon and a Democrat, but we had known each other through the Junior Chamber of Commerce. He belonged to a flying club and they had a float plane and so my campaign manager and I would get our bundle of signs and pamphlets and Bill would load us into his plane and fly us into the San Juans. We'd just pull that thing up on the beach and jump out and nail up a few signs and go over to the local grocery store and maybe have a coffee hour someplace and it was great.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was good of him, considering that he came from the other party and all.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was a close friend and I appreciated him doing that because, boy, it sure was a chore to try to hit all the islands and the little communities on each island.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many islands are there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there are one hundred and twelve islands, but some of them are no more than rocks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of them are just homes for birds. How many islands would you visit on a campaign swing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd have San Juan Island, Orcas Island and Lopez. Those would be the three major islands that had any kind of a population on them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you go to the other ones, though, just to keep familiar with what the issues were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Waldren and Sinclair and Cypress might have a family or two on them, but that was all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you could reach the bigger islands, presumably that would also take care of all of them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They'd have meetings on Orcas Island where people could come from the outlying islands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The people came to you. Did the little islands have different issues from the big islands?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Most of those people, where there was just a family or two, they just wanted to be left alone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The less they saw of you the better, maybe. They didn't necessarily want a big ferry or a bridge?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, no.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Especially not a bridge. It's pretty hard to "get away" if somebody sticks a bridge right out there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Boy! That's for sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Julia Butler Hanson wanted bridges to those islands, but did those people want bridges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some, of course, who wanted easier access. But there are a lot of people who live in the islands with the attitude: "Just don't bother me and I'll get along fine." If they get off the island a couple times a year, that's enough.

But, you know, a friend of mine and I took a week when I was a senior in high school and he had finished his first year in college. I had built a twelve-foot boat and he had a one horsepower outboard motor that he bought at Montgomery Ward's. That summer we decided we'd take a little trip through the San Juan Islands.

So we put the little motor on the boat and had a five gallon can of gas, and a couple of boxes of groceries and our sleeping bags and we took off. We went down the Skagit River and out and then around the islands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The water wasn't too rough for such a trip?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We slept on the beach on Sinclair Island on the west side and we got up in the morning and it was blowing and you could see it was pretty choppy, but we decided we'd head on because we wanted to. So we got in and we got offshore about one hundred yards, I guess, and the waves started breaking over the bow of the boat and we were bailing and trying to get to where we were going. We did and things weren't too wet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was thinking about your boxes of groceries getting to be a little soggy there. You were lucky; you could have had a slightly different outcome.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But it was a great trip. We camped on the beach one night. We'd had our dinner and we had a little fire and were sitting there and we looked up and here was a fellow in a rowboat. He was rowing and he pulled in and came up where we were and sat down and we got to visiting with him. He lived on the other side of the island and he said, "Where are you boys from?" We said, "Mount Vernon," and he said, "Mount Vernon. I was in Mount Vernon once." I think he said 1912 and this was '38 or '39. And so he said, "I go into Anacortes about once a month and get a few groceries, but he said, "I've got a little garden and I kill a deer once in awhile, and I get along fine."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he live all by himself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He had a little house on the other side. During that whole week that we were

out, I don't think we saw more than two boats and now you can hardly get from one island to the other without running into boats.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was thinking that day is gone. Did you see Orca whales?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. None. And the few people that we did run into, they'd say, "How's the fishing?" And we said, "Oh, we don't fish. We're just on a little tour." Boy! They couldn't understand that. Why you'd be out in the San Juans and not fish?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds like a wonderful adventure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy! It was great.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know. Can you still do that anymore? I bet all the beaches are privately owned.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They're privately owned. There are two saltwater parks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. But it's not the same. There's not that openness and feeling of freedom. Sounds like you grew up in the right time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. It was just dandy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We have to get out of the San Juans and back to reality. It's really harsh, I know.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's hard to do!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The last committee you were on that I wanted to ask you about was State Government. One of the interesting things that went through that committee that year was the approval for the World's Fair in Seattle that eventually happened in 1962. Do you remember those discussions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The usual type oratory on something like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would have come down? Would that have been Eddie Carlson and people like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And Joe Gandy, the car dealer up there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In some accounts, at first, this was a bit of hard rowing. A lot of people thought this was kind of an audacious idea. Seattle, a world's fair? Seattle wasn't exactly on the map. How did that sound in the Legislature? A little fantastic?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little bit. But I tell you, there's a lot of pride in having something like that. As I recall there really wasn't a lot of organized opposition. You had the unions—the construction unions—that were all in favor of it and supporting it, and of course the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. So you had some pretty powerful entities that were backing it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These things are thought to be good for whole regions. Tourism and business promotion and trade and just generally getting yourself known.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it proved to be what everybody expected of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even the promoters of it in their memoirs sound a little surprised.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was more successful than people envisioned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it broke even. It even made money, which I gather was unusual.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because a lot of those world's fairs and expositions were disasters, financially.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the things that made Seattle's World's Fair a little bit different was they wanted to create a legacy of permanent buildings. So many of the fairs would build rather fantastic structures and then rip them down.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's the beauty of the Seattle Center.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've been reading about how they got all the financing to stick together. It was pretty fantastic. So your part would have been to find the money to match Seattle's money and various other pockets of money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was quite a project. I don't remember what the financing was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I believe it was something like seven and a half million dollars, which is not actually that much money.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It bought a lot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In those days. Did it seem like a big number then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a pretty sizeable amount, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Besides the financing, did the Legislature have any other role?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The arts people were beginning to stir around and there was some guarantee that there was going to be a performing arts center. Then they wanted to take in part of the city athletic field that was adjacent there. I think that as you look back on it, it was a pretty well designed project.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One piece of the story that I thought was really fascinating was the role of Senator Magnuson back in D.C. to get the money for what became the Pacific Science Center. It was tied to the—for them—fortuitous launching

of the Russian Sputnik in 1957; some people credit that the spur of that event with getting the money for a science center. There was a sort of trail of thought: the Russians are getting ahead of us, we've got to promote science, and therefore we needed a science center.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. I think that's a valid appraisal. It was just another example of how Warren Magnuson could wring the dollars out. I'll tell you, he and Henry Jackson were masters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Their legacies are strewn all over the state.

Well, those are some of the bigger issues that run through your committees. Perhaps we could look at some the bills of general interest for that session.

There was a bill that year, House Bill 50 that authorized funding for the state library building. Do you remember the machinations that the library people went through to finally get a building and get out of the basement of the Temple of Justice?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was quite a push and there were a lot of legislators who supported the building of a state library.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've seen photographs of their facility before they got their building and it looks medieval. It was dark. It was crammed to the rafters. It didn't look very functional.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty grim.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever go down in there? Did you have occasion to go into it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had been in a couple of times, but it wasn't a place that you felt very comfortable in, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wouldn't like to be in there in an earthquake. For you, was this any kind of controversy, or did you think this was a good idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I supported the state library.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Part of the issue was where to put it. The Capitol at that time was just all in the one area on the west campus, the original buildings by Wilder and White. Then this measure pushed through the appropriation for what became a more modern building situated between what's now the Cherberg and the O'Brien buildings. Did legislators have any role in these decisions or was it just simply: give them the money and some group would work on the design?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there was any great controversy about locating the building. It seemed to be a pretty logical place for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the late 1950s, the Legislature was also looking at creating an east campus across Capitol Way from the main Capitol Campus and the Legislative Building. Then, the area was residential but with this development became a collection of various agency buildings. This building program became necessary because some Olympia businessmen had gone to the Supreme Court with a case stating that all state agencies needed to be located in Olympia. They won! Many agencies had drifted up to Seattle and other places. And so this came back to the Legislature where you had to deal with this somehow—this was a major capital outlay coming down the pike here.

So the state library was a piece, not really of that movement, but of a modernization of state facilities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did State Librarian Maryan Reynolds or any of her people come and lobby legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was quite active and very popular.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did she promote this? What kind of things did she do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just the fact that the court and agencies and the general public needed a facility that would house the collection and also it would give enough room to begin to expand the collection of written material.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you understand all the functions of the state library? Did Maryan Reynolds present that need pretty cogently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, she did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a sense of pride involved that you wanted a handsome building—that this was an important institution?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But it wasn't stressed all that much. There was some controversy over Paul Thiry as the architect, but he had done quite a number of large projects in the state and had a good reputation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As it turned out, he was one of the major architects for the World's Fair. His name was pretty prominent in Seattle circles.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. When I was on the board of trustees at Western in Bellingham, we interviewed him for some work that we were doing there on new buildings. I think the ultimate decision was made that he was probably over-qualified for what we needed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your buildings didn't need that much design work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But we did contract with Fred Bassetta, who's a Seattle architect, not quite as prominent as Thiry, but is now recognized as an outstanding architect.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that's the way to go, get the architect who's a little further down on the career ladder and build his career rather than

pay the top dollar for somebody who's already there.

It's such a conceptual profession. What does a library "look" like? It's intriguing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I was going through the throes of being on a committee to build a new church in Mount Vernon. The architects came in with all these sketches and all, and I finally said, "Look, can't one of you people design a church that looks like a church?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't want to spring for a break-through, modernistic building?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I envisioned a moderate church with a steeple. I'll tell you, some of the designs were pretty wild.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those are some interesting things that you did that year.

As usual, though, the budget was the big thing. By the end of session, there was a lot of controversy about the budget. Some people claimed that it was as much as forty million dollars out of balance. Other people had different numbers. John O'Brien was unhappy. He thought that there should be a special session to correct the problems in the budget, but Governor Rosellini didn't think that was necessary and cut the budget back using his own methods.

The Republicans seemed to feel marginalized in the budget discussions because they were such a minority. They inserted this explanation of their vote in the House Journal once the budget passed as to why they didn't like it. Your name was one, along with pretty much every Republican member.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, just generally, it was the Republican philosophy of not spending more than you take in. Deficit spending has always been a real problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this before Rosellini made his cuts? Did he take care of it?

You had had deficit spending for some time under Governor Langlie, I understand. Was this just a perennial problem trying to get things to balance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was certainly a problem and in this period it was a little difficult to figure out who was doing what to whom.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't have much documentation, it seems.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The governor at times took a strong position that the Republicans would take, and the Democrats' philosophy was, "We'll just raise taxes and take care of it." This was just a revolt against that sort of mentality, I guess is the best way to put it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a little futile? You went on record, but other than that, does such a statement change the outcome?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that these kinds of statements that are written by caucuses or individual members are just fodder for the next election. It's really just window dressing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Let me read: "We, the undersigned Republicans, voted against the Omnibus Appropriations bill for these reasons. The Democrat budget is more out of balance than any bill adopted in the history of the state of Washington, with the possible exception of the budget adopted after the ruinous welfare initiative 172 sponsored by the Democrats, became effective." So, that seems like an election year kind of dig to me. "The true state of the budget has been concealed when in reality the budget is much further out of balance than is shown by this bill." Do you think there was subterfuge going on? Or is that just kind of a partisan jab?

For example, "The \$20,000 bond issue based on pledging the retail sales tax for the next thirty years is merely deficit spending, causing the budget to be further out of balance." And then,

of course, "This act will place an excessive burden on the taxpayers of the state and their children for many years to come." What jumped into my mind when I read this was the federal deficit. This is small potatoes compared to them, but that must have resonated to some degree with you. Is this how the minority party participates? They don't actually get to decide the final budget but they can at least speak against it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a device that is available, and I don't know that it's been used a great deal. You'll see some individuals who will say, "I voted against House Bill 259 for the following reasons."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And "I want this in the Journal."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this show up in the newspapers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd have to be a pretty close student of the Legislature to even see this statement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There might be an astute reporter who would pick up on it and maybe write a column.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You would get together in your caucus and would write this and sign it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it make you feel better, or would you feel like you were tilting at windmills?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that there were some of the members of our caucus who would have grasped at this and said, "Boy! We've got 'em now."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you think?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I've never been one to really grab something like this and use it. I've used some critical votes, pointing them out when I'm campaigning, but I've never run against an incumbent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It couldn't be a stick to use against somebody who had never served yet, I suppose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting.

Other bills that seemed interesting to me: One that you sponsored, HB 646, was to get the appropriation for Fort Worden. The Army had run Fort Worden up by Port Townsend and was closing down their use of that facility—end of an era there—and wanted to give it over to the state, which I gather would take some money to effect. Would you have to buy the property or was it just for renovation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think for renovation. I don't believe that there was ever any charge to the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this was actually a very handy development. The idea was to use it for a diagnostic center for children that were called "mentally deficient." This bill passed. There were two bills that you had—one didn't go through and this one did.

Was this part of Governor Rosellini's initiative to bring state institutions back up to standard? How did you see this issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't remember being out on point on this. I was certainly in favor of the state taking the facility and using it for a state function by a state agency. I also knew that because of the governor's interest in institutions that if we didn't do something like this, he'd come in with a proposal that would cost a lot of money to build

the facility and then, of course, to staff it. You'd have the staffing of this, but I thought it seemed to be a pretty prudent acquisition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it that it was available and at low cost—and needed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would fill a need, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, some things came together there that were very good. One thing I noticed in these years—several former Tuberculosis hospitals became available just as you were trying to expand these other kinds of institutions.

**Mr. Eldridge:** On the decline, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that these buildings and places are ready to transition to be something else. Kind of an important health milestone I would think.

The places for retarded children and troubled children of one kind or another seemed to be very critical issue then. There were huge waiting lists and the exiting facilities for children were pretty abysmal sounding. Was there some kind of social change going on? Were there more children that needed care? More people less able to keep them in their own homes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All the above. But I think that awareness of the problems was probably the major factor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a growing realization that these children were actually capable of much more than people had thought if they had proper training and care?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's one of the important reasons. I think that the public became more aware of the critical condition with our institutions, particularly for children.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why had it been neglected for so long?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To my knowledge there weren't any real strong citizen organizations that were concerned about these conditions like there are today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they just forming at this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, following that acquisition, there was a considerable rise in the participation by local communities and parents and educators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I remember reading about groups of parents and other citizens at about this time forming study circles in different communities. There was kind of a new, heightened worry about children in general. About juvenile delinquency. About mentally deficient children, as they were called. This growing awareness led to a new kind of activism around those issues. I wondered if that development played into this new attention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it did and it would be interesting to go back and research who were the people who were instrumental initially in getting some of this established and moving.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly Governor Rosellini would be high on that list. We mentioned Kathryn Epton a little earlier; that was her primary focus. I don't know if there were other legislators who adopted that as their cause in quite the same way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any, but I know that she was very active in her own Spokane area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I believe she was galvanized because her own son was—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Had a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that's sometimes what it takes, is intimate knowledge of the problem.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. You have to hit close to home.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now in your own district, you had the Northern State Hospital. Were you aware of their conditions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I told you about our stationery store having a lending library type facility and I remember going with my mother out there. So we were kind of involved.

We'd go into the part where they would handle the books. I was never in any of the wards. Later, when I became active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce, we had a couple of chapters that were involved in this sort of thing. The state president at that time was from Richland and when he was in the area I remember we drove out to Northern State Hospital. They gave us a tour, primarily of the cattle barns and other agricultural programs. It was a huge rural area just outside of Sedro Woolley. They raised prize dairy cattle there. And then they had all kinds of farm produce. They raised their own hay for the cattle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this part of the therapy or was this a sort of financial help?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was, I think, therapy, primarily in the way it was established.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. Some of the descriptions of these mental hospitals were really terrible. But being out in the fresh air and working with animals actually sounds good.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you know, you'd go to a high school activity—like a basketball game—and you'd see a group of these folks with a couple of staff people. They'd come to the basketball game and they'd have a section and they really enjoyed the game.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they weren't that isolated? They did have a role in the community? But yet, Northern State was one of the hospitals that had lost its accreditation and was not doing so well.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know whether there was politics involved in that, but there was certainly much discussion in the local community about the loss of the facility.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think that Western and Eastern, all of them, had problems.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They shipped all the patients from Northern State down to Steilacoom, to Western State.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** After 1957, when Governor Rosellini worked to reform the institutions, he brought in Garrett Heyns and he really started to pump a lot of effort into the institutions. That year Northern State received an achievement award from the American Psychiatric Association for bringing itself back to the recognized standards. There had been a lot of renovation of the facility and bringing in new staff and raising their salaries a bit and making it more attractive and having better nutrition. They were attacking these institutions from every different angle. Evaluating patients and moving them to different wards. It sounded like before that they were all kind of mixed together. There wasn't a lot of care. I don't know about Northern State, but just generally some of these institutions were not very good by all accounts.

By 1959, Northern State was re-accredited. They were back on track. Western was also re-accredited that year and Eastern in 1961. Institutions were a big focus of attention and it paid off. Were you following all this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To some extent. It wasn't my first interest, so I wasn't directly involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wondered if you helped facilitate some of this with your role on Appropriations, or if you would be looking out for Northern State in the same way you might for the college?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were aware of their need for funds to accomplish some of these things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you'd be supportive of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Actually, Senate Bill 122, that was devoted to the Rainier School and the Lakeland School that were institutions for mentally retarded children, passed unanimously through the House. There seemed to be a great recognition that these places needed help, needed to be upgraded. It was kind of encouraging to see that there was tremendous support for these places. Again, TB hospitals became available for expanding facilities, so fortuitous timing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It kind of meshed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a new facility in Bremerton named for Frances Haddon Morgan. She became a legislator in 1959 but her mother, Lulu Haddon, had been a member earlier. I don't know very much about her. Were you familiar with her?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I remember her being in the Legislature and I'd say she was a little on the pushy side, but very dedicated to the causes that she was interested in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And this, I guess, would be one of them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was she one of those activist women who were helping to bring back the institutions? Was she part of that movement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a general recognition for her work in the Legislature. It may have had a little political overtone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She was only in the House for one term and then in the Senate for two terms. Her mother had served in both houses, too. I don't think you get very many mother-daughter combinations like that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you know anything about her mother, Lulu?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I didn't. Except that she apparently was a "terror" around the Capitol building.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would that be? Just very forceful?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was kind of into everything. But I don't recall ever meeting her. There were a lot of—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Stories?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I don't recall any in particular except that she was quite vigorous and she'd get hold of something and wouldn't let go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, I'm really going to push this line a little bit. Bear with me. Was a woman doing that somehow different from how a man would do it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always think that the women tend to cry a little bit. They play on the sympathies more than a man would. A man would probably pound the table and talk about all the bad things and might even threaten a little.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But if a woman did that it would look a little different somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or would they employ different means? There were not very many women in the Legislature then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not in those days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if they went about their work in a different way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The ones we've talked about, Julia Butler Hanson, Catherine May and Gladys Kirk—she wasn't quite as forceful as Julia or Catherine, but she was a good legislator and she had her head screwed on straight and people listened to her. Her husband had been in the Legislature before her. She was twice the legislator that he was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's a matter of temperament?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of that enters into it; how a person operates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose there's a male version of crying a bit or acting in that sort of emotional way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You don't find too many, but there are some.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a method, at any rate. Those were some of the things that seemed noteworthy about the 1957 session.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was certainly a period of change and interesting events and legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the advent of a new governor, Governor Rosellini—who was by all accounts a pretty activist person—would that set a different pace? Would you feel that things were different?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He'd been in the Senate and was quite a leader. I've said this a good many times. I had a great deal of respect for him and I always point out that when he was governor, if a legislator would come down to his office and go to the reception desk and say, "I'm Representative Don Eldridge and I'd like to see the Governor," she'd get up and go off and boy, within five minutes he'd be out there. He'd shake hands and say, "What can I do for you?" You'd tell him what. He'd say, "Well, I'm in a very important meeting here, but I'll send my administrative assistant out and you tell him what you need and he'll see to it." He'd maybe say, "Boy, I'm just tied up for the next half hour, but thanks for coming in and I'll get back to you," and he'd go back into his meeting. But he'd always recognize that you were there. That was good public relations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And would he get back to you? Would you get a phone call or something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But he was always very receptive to members of the Legislature. And of course, it paid off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If the governor does something for you, you're a little bit more inclined to do something for him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. And you know—it's not a criticism—but Dan Evans was the toughest person in the world to get in to see.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though he came through the Legislature, too. Was that just a matter of style?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I suppose.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe his secretaries were not quite as receptive. But certainly the chief executive says to the receptionists, "I see everyone. If they want me, I'm here." If that's their method. That's interesting. Did you do that

yourself, go down and see the governor a few times?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I recall maybe a couple of times that I went down. I don't think I ever went in alone, but I had somebody from the adjoining district or somebody who had a similar interest. We'd go down and ask to speak to the governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kinds of things would you take to the governor? Would that be budget issues or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Could be. Or it could be this issue of Northern State Hospital or ferry rates. It could be any number of things that you wanted to bounce off him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would he, correspondingly, come to you if he needed your support for something that was in your district or your committee? Would there be a lot of that back and forth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that there was a lot, but there was some.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More than other governors?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember as a freshman legislator, Governor Langlie had a laundry list of things that he wanted and the Republican leadership in the House just turned their backs on him. I remember he called three or four of us from that freshman group down to his office and he said, "Look, you people have got to do something about this." Well, being naïve and all of us looking at each other and wondering, "What can we do?" we didn't do anything. And we could have because in our caucus the freshmen legislators outnumbered the rest of the caucus. So we could have done something.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you weren't quite on your feet yet, so you didn't know that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And so that was my only experience of being asked to come in to see the governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Too bad, yes. Now, I don't know in his first years how the Republican caucus felt about Rosellini, but later it gets pretty tough. But when he first came in, were members generally supportive of him or did they take a wait-and-see attitude?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some members of the Legislature who had served with him and he had various degrees of what they thought of him. I don't think that he ever had close Republican ties. I may be wrong, but I just didn't feel that there were any or many Republicans who would jump up to defend him or support his proposals or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He seemed to get support for this reform of the institutions.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But most other things seemed to be more difficult. Were institutions just widely recognized as needing help?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Things had gotten so bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Kind of an embarrassment I would think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I think that he had good support on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Many Republicans readily applaud what he did there and especially his hiring of Garrett Heyns. The consensus seems to be that Heyns was one of the great administrators, and that work was critical and necessary. When Rosellini was first elected and giving his inaugural speech, do you remember how you felt about him yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't. I had been off the Senate floor a number of times and kind of watched him in action and I had the impression that he was a showoff who was maybe just there to promote his own interests and so on. But over the years I've never had any problems directly as far as he was concerned and always got along with him real well. I would consider now that we're good friends and would say that he turned out to be a pretty good governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Politicians often go through a reassessment much later in their careers. People look back and say, well, "He was really good," or "he wasn't as good as I thought at the time." You know how that happens. He remained controversial. His administration represented a turning-point between an older system and a modern system. And then certainly, Dan Evans seemed to take that to the next level when it was his turn.

But Rosellini was an activist governor in a way that probably hadn't been seen for quite a while. He had a lot of ideas, so it's interesting to see how much communication there was and how it felt working with him. Did his own caucus support him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I remember, they did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would he be said to be close to John O'Brien? I wasn't clear about their relationship.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He and John O'Brien probably would interact pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be important, I would think.

## CHAPTER 7

### MEMBER OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were appointed during the 1957 session to the Legislative Council. I believe that was your first appointment to that Council?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this appointment a sign of greater involvement on your part? This was a big step up for you. Did you have a particular interest?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Council was *the* committee. And a lot of the legislation that was proposed and looked at actually was referred to the Legislative Council for action. Then before the next session the Legislative Council presented a list of recommendations and the bills were already drafted for the legislators who wanted to sign on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Council had been formed in 1947 by the Legislature, a post-war mechanism for studying issues in more depth.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was created to provide a service for members of the Legislature. It also attempted to consolidate all of the interim committees into one body with staff that could handle the mechanics of the committee. There were a number of former interim committees that became subcommittees of the Legislative Council.

And as the Council continued to take on more responsibilities given them by the Legislature every session, they would come back, then, with information on various areas of state government. Don Sampson was the primary staff person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you tell me something about him? He was there for a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was there for a good, long time and was a very professional person and had a great knowledge of state government. Very competent, a thorough analyst. Legislators were always coming to him on an individual basis asking questions or asking him to provide information, which he did gladly. If you went into Don's office and sat down and told him you were interested in some issue, he'd probably turn around and pull it off the shelf and say, "Here." He was just an excellent person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be a big help.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had an office in the Legislative Building and functioned during the session as well as between sessions. The Council was a full-circle group. The Council probably had better staff than any of the other interim committees, although the budget committee also had a pretty good staff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Don Sampson an attorney or some kind of professional like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think he'd always been involved in community service. I think he was on the staff of one of the cities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he had some kind of background in legislation and public policy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. He was an unusual person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A good resource person, well supported by both sides?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct, yes. Unfortunately we had a few members of the Legislative Council who tried to—I guess you'd say—politicize the work of the Council in particular areas. But Don was able to keep it on a focused path.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So I imagine if the lead staff people had been different, the whole council would have operated in a much different way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I'm sure of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If it was not politicized, was it primarily just bipartisan research? Fact-finding? Did any partisanship play into it, or did you kind of keep that on a low level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were maybe two or three of the members who always threw something in, that the Council as a whole ordinarily ignored and just went on to the next item.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. Your normal way of working with each other would, by nature, be partisan. I know there are bills where everybody comes together on them, but you are two parties and one is in power and one is not, but this is a totally different arena?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because it was pretty evenly balanced as far as the membership was concerned. There was more friction between the House members and the Senate members than there was between Democrats and Republicans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering about that. It's built right into the structure that the House members had a slight majority and that the Speaker was always the chair.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The Council was set up by statute that there was one more House member than Senate member. And the chairman of the Council was always the Speaker of the House and that caused some ruffled feathers. That was a bone of contention with the Senate members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the Senate fancy themselves the senior members and therefore should have had more members? They didn't take too kindly to playing second fiddle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I think there was kind of the undercurrent. They always figured they were at least a full step ahead of the House members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But was it a good arena for really getting to know other legislators and other senators by working so closely with them? Those relationships that were built there, did they help in the long run?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. And I think that the Legislative Council really provided a good, objective approach to the problems of the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it give you more time to look into things deeply? Sessions were so short—and busy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure that it did, because there was always something else that you had to jump into. But the number of items that the Legislature itself requested from the Council assumed quite a large proportion of the time that was devoted at the meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would all requests be honored, or was there any sense of priority?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were screened. We'd have a general meeting of the Council and Don Sampson would present the items that had been requested and there'd be some discussion and yes, items were put into priorities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would some things drop off the list?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that either intentionally or unintentionally the list became shorter as we got into the interim period.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you can't do everything.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You can't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would ultimately make those decisions? Was there an inner group that would decide who would do what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was an executive committee of the Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be the Speaker and—

**Mr. Eldridge:** The ranking senator from each party. It was a six- or eight-person group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were twenty-one members altogether, weren't there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it an honor to be chosen to work on the Council?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a sought after appointment for the interim.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to have served in the Legislature quite a while before you might be appointed, or make your mark in some way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd probably need to have served two or three sessions before you could get on the Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that until the mid-fifties it existed more like an interim committee that would dissolve as soon as the session started.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Including the position of the staff, who would then have to find new posts.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And that was one of the difficult situations. When we finally established permanent staff, the Council survived through the session and if there was legislation proposed by the Council, the Council members would head up the speech making and presentations before the standing committees and the full Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Don Sampson predate that change? That was in 1955 that you restructured the Council. Was he there before and then picked up on it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He could see the need for the continuity. I think he felt that the staff ought to be available during the session in case there were questions about the legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can see that you'd build up a certain expertise about issues and if those people were constantly being dispersed, that that wouldn't actually be very efficient. You'd just get going on something and then it'd be over.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Originally, I understand, the Council would make recommendations and not draw up bills, but just make reports. That turned out to delay implementation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Things weren't ready to go and then the staff would be gone, and so some of the work would get lost.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the Code Reviser was always busy, particularly at the start of a session, and that always caused some delay.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So in 1955, the whole concept of the council was reworked. They decided to hire the permanent staff and revamp the whole system. Did you take place in any of that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Before we get into your role in this, there's another piece to discuss. The Council worked with another group called the Council of State Governments. Many states had legislative councils, but this is a different group. Can you tell me about the Council of State Governments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a national organization of legislative leaders and they dealt primarily with legislative proposals, whereas the National Legislative Leaders Conference dealt more with administration and organization. But the Council of State Governments was, I would say, primarily program oriented.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they would tackle different issues and make studies of how different states were handling them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was primarily a screening organization, a clearinghouse for legislation that one state could use that another state or two had already dealt with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that not everybody had to reinvent the wheel?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, say if Wisconsin had this really great program, you could, through this organization, find out about it? And see if it suited your needs rather than have to make it up yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you know, as with a lot of national organizations, it's sort of unwieldy. You'd have maybe one or two meetings a year and the staff person would give a report and hand out the printed stuff. And there wasn't as much chance to sit down with people who had like interests and really work it over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is there an organization that allows legislators to do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. At that time it was pretty loose.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that the structure of the Council of State Governments was regional. That you met with just the western states?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** From their literature, I see they were founded in the 1930s. One thing that interested me is that their dues were based on population. So in the West, California, of course, was the most populated state, but Washington was pretty high on the list, too. So you would actually pay more for belonging to this than say Idaho or Montana, or some less populated state like Wyoming?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet not necessarily get back more, just pay more. Was that a problem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement. I don't think it was a problem, though. This wasn't a highly structured organization. The members didn't have a format indicating how things were to be disseminated and what subjects were going to be covered. But there was a lot of interaction among legislators on a personal basis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh yes. That would be a plus.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read in a later report that there was some resentment that the high population states had to pay more but had no more power than a little population state in how decisions were made or positions taken.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Except that they had a stronger membership base on the Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was some weighting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this Council discuss all kinds of issues? Would they be as useful as your own Legislative Council, but on a broader base?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure that it was more useful. If issues can be handled right where they're happening, that's a better situation than trying to do it on a broad basis with a lot of different states.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It might be a way to track large trends, but not necessarily specifics?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of it depended on the staff people and what direction they were going, because ultimately they're the ones who had the machinery. A staff person eager to do something is certainly in a position to do the research and to promote a particular program or issue with the legislative members of the Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess it's a question about which tail was wagging the dog. Would the state suggest to the Council what they wanted to look at, or would the Council suggest back to the state what they were interested in? Or could it go both ways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was more of a situation where the individual members did the proposing and took the ball and ran with it in their particular state if it was something they thought was a good idea.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Both of these organizations were mechanisms or ways to get above the daily crush of legislation and take some longer term looks, or get some kind of broader perspective. Do you think they were both effective or one more than the other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think in our state the Legislative Council was more effective and probably did a better job for the legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting to know that there are these different organizations and that it's not quite as insular as perhaps it sometimes looks.

After 1955, the Legislative Council was reformed and then you were appointed in 1957. So by then, I'm guessing, it had gotten into its new mode and worked out some new patterns of how they were going to operate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not having been there before, I can't make a comparison. But I think that it functioned pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By the time you got there things were pretty well oiled?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By then they were creating actual bill language. Was their success greater or comparable to what legislators coming up with their own bill language would be? The Council bills, were they more successful?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there was any great emphasis in either direction. There were probably Council bills that got killed just as easily as a bill by an individual member. A lot of it depended on the temperament of the Legislature and the subject matter.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if, as a legislator, during session, when a bill came up "by Legislative Council request," was that an indication of anything? If that meant, "Oh, this is probably a well considered bill," or it was just like any other bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it helped some to have "by request of the Council."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think that these bills had any particular characteristics? Were they better written? Did they have more background? Had more hearings been held about them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only in respect to the kind of attention Council members would give them. When the bill would come up for consideration either in a standing committee or on the floor, they would add a good word. There really wasn't a lot of opposition to Legislative Council bills.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they more bipartisan, then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If you made a chart and analyzed it, I think you'd find that was true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered, by their very nature, the way that they had been created, if they tended to come out a little bit differently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you'd have more basic support coming to the floor than just an individual's bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More people would have contributed to their wording?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Been exposed to it, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you were first appointed to the Legislative Council, John O'Brien was the chair. How did he perform in that role?

**Mr. Eldridge:** John was a good chairperson. He knew how to handle a committee and he always seemed to be well organized and relied on people who knew what they were talking about. I think he was reasonably effective.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who made the appointments? Would you request that appointment to the Council yourself or would your caucus put your name forward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a sheet that had the interim committees listed and you requested the committees you wanted. Then there would be the Committee on Committees in each caucus that would screen those and try to look out for the assignments. All the interim committee assignments went through the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were a lot of different subcommittees. I was just wondering how you would indicate if you were interested in a particular one, or whether you even wanted such an appointment, or it just came out of the blue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty much open season. I don't think that many members specifically said, "I'd like to get on the Legislative Council and I'd like to be on the Education Committee or the Transportation Committee," or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would your colleagues know that "Don Eldridge is really interested in these and these things so let's put him on these committees?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Many times when the selections were made, the Speaker might go to a legislator and say, "We want to be sure we've got a good, strong person to head up the Cities and Counties subcommittee on the Council. Would you take that on?" There was some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Members built up an expertise in certain areas, so I imagine that even if they didn't identify themselves, they would be obvious choices for certain committees.

And then, with the House and Senate balance—with the House having a bit of preponderance—would the Republican caucus from the House and the Senate get together to appoint members, or do you think they would do it separately?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, each caucus made the selection.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if it was a chance for Republican House and Senate members to get to know each other, or if there was much cross fertilization of ideas there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think it was pretty well balanced. At least with my experience with the Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the governor? Did he play any role whatsoever in this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I was never aware of any governor having anything to do with the Council or its membership.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Except its budget.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, sure. He could veto the whole budget or line item it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about state agencies? Could a state agency request certain things be studied, or would they have any kind of input or receive any information? Did they have any role in this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any more or less specific route to take for an agency. Many agencies would direct a letter to the Council through the chairman and say, "We've got a problem with this, and this and this, and we need some legislation to correct it. Is this something the Council could do for us?" That sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Still on the mechanics: Did the Council meet during session or was this strictly an interim activity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some of the subcommittees might possibly meet if they had bills that were being considered. I don't recall that it happened frequently, but that route was available.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So when you were appointed, it would be from the end of a session to the

beginning of the next session? Or until a new committee was appointed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall it was until a new committee was appointed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you actually would still be a member of that committee all during the next session until about the end there when the new appointments were made?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because members of the Legislative Council often took a large part in the procedure leading up to the passage of bills recommended by the Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did the regular committee structure and membership relate to the Council? Sometimes you were on committees that had some relationship to your Legislative Council duties, but often not.

**Mr. Eldridge:** When that didn't happen, it was usually because some member just wanted to be on the Council to be able to put that on his letterhead, not really caring what subcommittee he was on, just as long as he could indicate that he was on the Legislative Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's look at a specific committee, the Education Committee. Several members on the Education Committee who were really active in the Legislative Council were not that on that committee in the Legislature, including yourself. Was it a way to have your say in certain areas without having to serve on the actual committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right. I was never on the Education standing committee. But I did have some interest and it was a chance to be involved and yet not have to be subjected to a standing committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Would you meet weekly or monthly? Would there be any kind of pattern?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The subcommittees met at the will of their particular subcommittee chairman. I don't recall that there were a lot of meetings during the interim.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about hearings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had some members who would hold five or six meetings around the state and make a big deal out of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think that was an effective way to gather information? Depends on the issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't as highly developed as the meetings they have now, but it was a start.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand there wasn't a whole lot of public involvement at this stage of the legislative history. Was this kind of the beginning of letting the public in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't recall that there was any real effort to get public participation. They'd maybe meet with groups. For instance, the Fisheries subcommittee might meet with the gill-netters or seiners or recreational fishermen and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the kinds of people that are now called stakeholders?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not just the "general" public? But people who would be, say, invited because they belonged to a group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The group would be invited and then they'd drum up their own membership participation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For some committees, would you go around the state and make sure that you

saw certain things or met with different people, but not always? That was just at the discretion of the chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Ordinarily, as I recall, we either met in Olympia or in the Seattle area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How much time do you recall spending on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. It wasn't a tremendous burden time-wise. But some chair people were on committees that had a lot of interest or had many requests for legislation and I'm sure that they spent quite a lot of time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be like studying reports and—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And meeting with people and agency heads.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a mechanism for handling certain hot-button issues so that it wasn't done right in the legislative session? Take a little steam off them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suspect there was some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was perhaps not as pressured? It was somehow different from what you would do during session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just the fact that you're away from the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you characterize this whole effort as part of the reform of the Legislature in the post war era? A part of the modernization of the process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was at least an acknowledgement of what could be done and, yes, I think that it was the initial move towards changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it kind of an acknowledgement that the legislative session was too short to look at everything? It extended the legislative year.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It did. I think it was one of the things that kept pushing for full time legislators and annual sessions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also staff. Was it an acknowledgement that you needed more support?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, yes. Or at least to have it available to legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were things just getting more complex?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that every session people would say, "Oh, boy, we've got to do something about this."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You do tackle some pretty big issues. The Council was divided into several subcommittees and members would be appointed to serve on these. That's where a great deal of the work would be accomplished. We should look at your subcommittees for the 1957 interim. This year you were on three: the Legislative Processes and Procedures Committee, of which you were the chair. And the Education and Public Building Committee, and Cities, Towns and Counties. That represents a lot of different issues.

We can start with Legislative Processes and Procedures. The other members—and maybe you'd want to say a little bit about them—were Herbert Freise, who was a freshman Republican senator from the Franklin, Benton County area. And then Patrick Sutherland, a Democrat from King County who had been a representative, but by then was in the Senate. What were they like to work with? Were they knowledgeable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had known both of them and I'd say they were reasonably hard working individuals, and both had a sincere interest in the legislative process.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's quite a list of things that you looked at. We can touch on some of them. I don't know if this was a new issue, but people were looking at ways to identify who the lobbyists were, who they represented, what kind of groups they belonged to. You also looked at the salaries of legislative employees. You examined the changes in the length of the session, whether it should be longer, I guess. You looked at creating legislative manuals or handbooks. You looked at getting an intercom system that the Speaker could then communicate more closely with floor leaders. You looked at limiting the number of bills that could be introduced.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Everybody was frustrated and said, "We've got to do something about this."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you looked at—I'm not really clear what this is—creating schedule boards? I guess there was a push to create mechanisms so that people would know when they were meeting, which I gather was a little disorganized still at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That gradually evolved into quite a process. Tom Copeland, when he was Speaker Pro Tem, handled scheduling. We had a daily schedule that indicated the time of the session and the bills on second reading and the bills on third reading. Then it had the committees that were meeting that day and the time and the place of that committee meeting and the items that they were considering.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which, apparently, prior to this time had not been written down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People would get up and announce a committee meeting and you had to just be there to hear that? That must have made planning your time a little bit hard as a legislator.

**Mr. Eldridge:** In some respects. But it was easier when you actually knew and could plan your day.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. The issue of regulating lobbyists also loomed during these committee meetings. Apparently there was a California law that regulated lobbyists that you looked at quite carefully. You discussed also, not just who the lobbyists were and what companies or groups they worked for, but also how much money they were giving to campaigns. Was this the beginning of monitoring campaign finances?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't a big issue, but it was a move towards more open disclosure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were lobbyists themselves involved in this discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any formal meeting where lobbyists were invited and called on to make comments. Individual members made their own contacts and would come to the subcommittee meeting and say, "This is what so-and-so thinks we need," or "Here are some pitfalls that we ought to look at."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now the system is fraught with all kinds of reporting requirements, but were you trying to create some kind of mechanism for campaign reporting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think people thought about it a lot, but I don't recall there was anything really concrete that was offered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You do come up with a bill called Recommendation Number 5. In this report from the Legislative Council of that year, it says,

"Representative Eldridge explained the bill. He said that basically it requires lobbyists to register, and would establish minimum controls on lobbying activity." What would that be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were suggestions that lobbyists could only meet with members of a committee during a certain period, or they could only talk with the chairman or all kinds of nit-picky things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did this come about because there was a problem, or just as a preventive measure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any particular incident that prompted this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Other states were doing it, too. I wondered about the genesis of this, whether this is just something that's kind of swirling around in the legislative works? California was looking at this and I think there was some kind of effort in Oregon. I was wondering if whether it was just something that's being discussed, so you start to say to yourself, well, "Maybe we should do this, too."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It just kind of evolved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The report goes on to say, "Under this act, all lobbyists would be identified and it would provide a fine information source for new legislators trying to get material to identify people who are acquainted and help them with their bills." It was seen as a possible resource as well as having this other information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The biggest hoorah about this was the fact that the lobbyists had to wear a badge that gave his name and his company or his organization, and boy, a lot of them didn't like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd think that would be helpful.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be to the legislator, but a lot of lobbyists would just as soon be back in the woodwork someplace. But anyway, there were no major protests.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Public Disclosure Commission, which eventually is the agency that does this work, doesn't emerge until the 1970s. So way back in 1957, there was a discussion of that. It takes a long time to come to any kind of fruition.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It does. There's a lot of talking before any action.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some idea that it would—I'm not sure if it would prevent people who work say, in agencies, from lobbying—but that it would straighten out who could lobby and who shouldn't lobby. There was a lot of discussion on "what is a lobbyist" and who should be one. Did agencies commonly send their staff over to plead their cause?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Particularly in budgetary matters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can imagine. Just a procedural question, in this report it says, "Representative Eldridge then moved to advance the bill"—after you discussed it and chewed it over for a bit—"to third reading and place it on final passage. Motion carried." Did you actually, in a sense, pass bills in the Legislative Council and then they were brought forward to the Legislature? Did you have the same procedure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just like a standing committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's really interesting. You came up with some language defining a lobbyist as "a person who pays, or for any other consideration engages in lobbying." And the definition of lobbying as being "the influencing or attempting to influence the passage or defeat of

any legislation by the state Legislature or the approval or veto thereof by the governor."

You wanted them to register with the president of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. Would they have a big book or something where everybody wrote in who they were? "Registration shall be affected by filing with each of such officers: a statement made under oath before an officer authorized by law to administer oaths containing the following information: name and address of registrant. Name and address of the person by whom he is employed and in whose interest he appears or works. The duration of such employment and whether he's paid on a permanent basis to do this."

I think there were some other provisions, but those were the main ones. Did this pass? Did you get this through or is this something that took years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it went through.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this was one step in a very long process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You never were successful in limiting the number of bills introduced, I know that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was talk, not for the first time and not the last, about annual sessions and about starting legislative sessions at different times of the year. Was there something about the January start that was not very convenient?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It did present some problems, but I don't think there was any real serious consideration of making a change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be because any other time also would have problems, so you stick with what you've got?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Usually that's the safest answer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But there was some notion—and I don't know if it came up at this time—that the Revenue Forecast Council gave its reports at different times of the year and some people had suggested that if the Legislature's schedule was more congruent with these forecasts that you would have this information and you would have a better sense of the economy of the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There has always been a general concern about meshing information with the time when action needs to be taken. It's always just a discussion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose you came into session with at least some indication of which way the economy was going. Was it ever a total surprise when those reports came out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once in awhile.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just fine tune it, up or down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's a lot of that that goes on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can remember some years when the forecasts came out worse than expected and so the Legislature would have to come back and redo things. That seemed to be a problem.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was more of a consideration with the governor's office than the Legislature, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. He's got to come up with the budget.

There was a lot of talk about the rules of operation, whether they needed reform. One thing—this is a sort of technological breakthrough, I gather—is that bills could be photographed. Maybe this is an early form of Xeroxing or copying, rather than printing that would eliminate proofreading and double references?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was always a tedious procedure to get a bill printed and proofed and then reprinted and then distributed to everybody. You'd always find an error someplace.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A word missing here and there or a comma even can change the meaning...

**Mr. Eldridge:** It makes quite a difference. You bet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understood that when things were typed they would be typed in multiple copies using carbon paper. That must have got a little blurry after a while. Was that hard to read?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The processing procedure certainly improved considerably over time. And later, with the advent of the computer, it was much easier.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where was the technology at this stage of the game? There weren't copy machines yet, were there? Maybe primitive ones?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there were the great, big old Xerox machines that an agency might have, or, in the case of the Legislature, the workroom would probably have one. But they did use a lot of the mimeograph for distribution to a subcommittee or a committee of agendas and bills and amendments. I can remember the amendments that came out of a mimeograph machine would be just a little strip of paper.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Glued onto a bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pages would go through after adjournment and fasten the amendments in the bill books.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The labor involved in keeping track of things must have been incredible.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think present readers might not even know what a mimeograph machine was. Let's see, how did that work? You would cut a master and then put it through the machine and it would—

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a drum that was inked and a stencil would be typed for each page, then you'd put it on the inked drum. The early ones were cranked and you fed the paper through. Then eventually they had electric machines where you'd just push the button. It would just whip 'em out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Still, not at all like a copy machine.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not at all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine the whole Legislature sort of pervaded by the inky mimeograph smell.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. You'd always get it all over your hands and your clothes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And if you picked it up too quickly before it has kind of set it would smear. Fun!

**Mr. Eldridge:** An interesting time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you'd have to have people in some back room typing away at all this stuff and it would have to be perfect, I imagine. You told me about how legislators had to proofread these things, which must have taken hours of your time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was the Engrossment and Enrollment Committee that did all the proofreading. And it would have to be retyped and reproduced.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the idea of photographing bills would be quite a breakthrough. That would

eliminate so much hand work and so many hours devoted to just managing all this paper. Did this actually work out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was at that time that we began getting into reproduction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The intercom system also sounded interesting. Can you describe that to me how that worked?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Prior to that, if the Speaker wanted to have a message sent to the minority floor leader or the majority floor leader, he'd scribble it out and call a Page and the Page would physically take it down and hand it to the person. Then they'd write an answer and they'd bring it back up. The first step was to install an intercom where the Speaker on the Rostrum would have a button and a phone to the majority leader and one to the minority leader.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was like a telephone set-up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He'd push the button and it would ring where he wanted to go and he'd take the phone and they could have a conversation back and forth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A private conversation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That sounds like another breakthrough.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then the Speaker had a microphone so that everything that he said would be amplified and they had speakers under the gallery and in the gallery and so everybody knew what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that new?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That went along kind of with this other situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So previously, the Speaker would just have to really shout it out or else maybe just the front rows would hear and the back rows would not be able to?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It wasn't really too good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that was the qualification for a Speaker? You had to have a booming voice?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let me tell you an interesting situation. It was my first term as Speaker and I can't remember what the issue was, but anyway, I made a ruling that Jonathan Whetzel didn't particularly like, so he got to his feet and was recognized and he said, "I challenge the ruling of the chair." Of course, I gaveled him down and I picked up the phone to Slade Gorton who was the floor leader for the majority party—he sat next to Whetzel—and I grabbed that thing and I said, "Keep that SOB in his seat." And I had forgotten to turn off the microphone, and this went out all over the place—the galleries, the committee rooms, every place. It caused quite a furor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine that kind of language was not normally heard coming from you? Did you know immediately what you had done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I did. He just wasn't thinking. I don't even remember what the issue was. But Slade did it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the reaction would be enough to imprint itself on your mind. Was there sort of a guffaw throughout the chambers? How do you get over a gaff like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I got kidded a lot!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm sure that was embarrassing for several people. I'll bet you looked at that mike more carefully after that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Ah, in the heat of the moment. So these innovations are all just coming in now, in the late fifties? I don't think at this time you could have dreamt that everybody would have their little lap tops and they'd have all the electronic devices of today.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And then, of course, the voting machine came in along about this time. You used to have to call the roll on every amendment and every motion and it took forever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pretty tedious. Now everybody just pressed the button and that was that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's it. It made a printout and it was all over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The other thing that you discussed a lot that year in that subcommittee was the voter's pamphlet. You talked about the way Oregon did it as an example of what you might like to do in Washington. I understand that earlier voter's pamphlets had only information on initiative measures, and had no pictures of candidates or candidate's statements like they do today. One of the issues holding you back was cost. The idea of producing these things was just considered prohibitive.

I have some examples of different voter's pamphlets here with me. This is one from 1958 and it's just the initiatives. It doesn't have much. And then a couple years later, by 1960, I have another voter's pamphlet that has a lot of changes. I'm going to quote from what's called the explanatory comments in the front part of the voter's pamphlet—it says, "Your attention is also called to the fact that there is now one official

argument for and one official argument against each measure. In previous years there was no assurance that arguments would appear giving both sides of each proposition.” These arguments would be for initiatives and referendums. “Persons or organizations wishing to have arguments appear in the pamphlet formerly had to purchase the space. The cost was approximately \$750.00 per page. Many of the measures had only arguments supporting one side of the question. Persons wanting to present counter arguments simply did not have the funds to purchase space.” Was this one of the issues you discussed, that it was inherently unfair, or misrepresentative how issues were presented?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall the discussion, there wasn’t a great concern among the legislators. There were some small groups of citizens that felt it was unfair. The cost was certainly a major issue, though.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would people interested in initiatives have to get their information from newspapers or some other source? How would they know how to vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Before the voter’s pamphlet became widespread and more information was provided, the information basically came from newspapers in this time frame.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a concern that people were voting in ignorance of the issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had never heard that expressed, but presume that with some people it was a concern.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would people like the League of Women Voters or other “good-government” groups be saying, “There’s something wrong with the way this is done here?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I’ll read a little bit more from this comment here, and I want you to tell me if some of these were the things that you discussed in this committee as reforms. There was a new law passed in 1959, during the next session: “The presiding officer of the state Senate, the presiding officer of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of State shall together appoint two persons known to favor a measure to compose the argument in its favor and the same officials would appoint two persons known to have opposed a measure to write that argument against it.” So it’s highly organized. Going from sort of an ad hoc treatment to exactly who’s going to do what.

And then they could have up to as many as five additional persons to act as an advisory committee for these positions, and that there would be no charge for printing these official arguments. So that leveled the playing field, I guess. It was no longer possible to purchase space in the pamphlet for the printing of arguments. So well-heeled groups would be no further ahead than anybody else.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that further, the attorney general was required to write a brief explanatory statement for each measure laying it out. They even made the provision that it was not supposed to be written in technical jargon. First, an explanation of the law as it existed, and then secondly, the effect of the proposed measure if it should be approved into law. And then the statement that it could be subject to court review. So there were all these pretty tight mechanisms created at that time.

There were several pieces. There was the presentation of information that everybody started off with. The same information. Was that part of the goal here to create this level playing field?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there was any distinct effort to do that. It sort of happened as part of the procedure and mechanics of putting the thing together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now we take it for granted. It's really interesting to know that it wasn't always that way. With this new level playing field and cheaper process, did that lead to more people filing initiatives? Do initiatives take on a different meaning with the voter's pamphlet being more accommodating?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's just been recently that we've had a big surge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It makes it possible—or easier, at any rate—for people with less funding to get initiatives on the ballot.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that was an intent of the changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are always the unintended consequences of actions taken. But it's not until later—I think it's even as late as 1966—that the full voter's pamphlet as we now think of it, appeared with the candidate lists and the format we have now. Did people pay more attention in this time to newspaper accounts? Did they have to rely more on newspapers for information on the candidates and the issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** For those who really wanted to know, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there other ways of getting that information? Could you phone up the Secretary of State and say, "Send me the list of candidates or measures?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure you could do that. I don't know that there were very many who did. But the information was always available if you knew where to look and took the time to make the inquiry.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this part of a drive to get more people to vote? To make it easier to vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** After the days of Vic Meyers, there was more emphasis from the Secretary of State's office for getting more people to vote. Then there were a lot of organizations on the outside that were pushing "get out the vote" drives and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly by the sixties, with the civil rights movement, there was an emphasis on "everybody should vote." So maybe that was part of the push.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you know, there were still a lot of people who said, "If people aren't interested enough to vote, we don't need to be holding their hands and driving them to the polls and doing all this. That's just tough. They don't have any right to criticize."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It never seems to stop some from criticizing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a big initiative, and I understand that Washington was on the cutting edge of voter's pamphlet design. That most states didn't have them, and some still don't have the extensive voter's pamphlet that we do.

Another piece of this process was that you were invited to attend the western regional conference of the Council of State Governments that was held in Los Angeles that November. And that at that conference they discussed Washington's lobbying bill as developed by your committee. Did you go down to Los Angeles?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that was the Council of State Governments meeting I attended.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you present what Washington was doing? Were we ahead in some sense of other states in our thinking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Washington often is doing new things. What were other states doing, do you recall, about lobbying? Was there a pretty wide open field out there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was certainly a feeling that something needed to be done, and most states were moving in that direction. Some kind of control and some responsibility on the part of lobbyists and their organizations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was your presentation well received? Were you bringing good ideas?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that I brought the house down, but I think there was enough interest. And I think Washington has gained a reputation for taking on some of these things and doing something about them. So people were interested.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about bringing back ideas? Was that the kind of place where you would hear what other states were doing and say to yourself, "Oh yes, that makes sense?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only to the extent that people were asking questions and saying, "Well, we do it this way."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about, "We've done it this way and it doesn't work." Or, "We wrote this law. We hoped it would do this and it turned out it did X and Y instead. It had these other pieces." Could you learn from other states' experience?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There's usually that sort of a dialogue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go to that conference by yourself, or was that a committee endeavor? The correspondence only mentions you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think I was the only one from that committee, but there were other legislators from Washington. I remember Senator Perry Woodall and Senator Marshall Neill also went. Marsh and Perry Woodall may have traveled together. I don't recall that I did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go for the whole conference or just your piece?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was there for the entire three days or whatever it happened to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were these conferences pretty stimulating? Was this a good education for a legislator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Actually the formal presentations were there and available, but the real gutsy part of those meetings are when you sit down around a table with one or two people from other states and you just have a general discussion. That's the real value.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounded like an interesting opportunity to meet people and to hear what was going on in other places.

Those were the highlights of that subcommittee on which you served. You were also on the Education and Public Building Committee. "Public Buildings" would be what kind of buildings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** School buildings, primarily. There were a number of legislators who thought we ought to have a standardized blueprint for school buildings. Boy! You got all kinds of input there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can see that eastern Washington and western Washington might need different kinds of buildings because they have different climates. But I imagine that people would argue that it would save money, you wouldn't have to hire architects.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you there was a real mish-mash of conversations on that one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel about it yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I started out by saying, "Boy! That would be a good idea." Have one set of blueprints and you just run them off on the machine and ship a copy out to a district for a building and that's it. Give it to the architect and say, "Go to work, send us the bill." But you gradually begin to realize that there are a lot more issues than just the floor plan with X number of square feet for the gym and the cafeteria and the classrooms and so on. I still think there ought to be some general guidelines, and maybe there are now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly all through this time you're working on fire and safety issues, and what kind of building materials to use. Of course, those change too, over time. So as soon as you get this all set in stone, somebody would invent something new or there'd be some improvement or something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. You have to be reasonably flexible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, schools, at least in the sixties, went through all kinds of changes in approach, from open plans back to traditional classrooms and everything in between. It would be pretty hard to figure out what was *the* plan.

Anyway, the members of this committee were Senator Andy Hess as the chair, Gordon Brown, Newman Clark, Slim Rasmussen, Ed Reilly and John Ryder and yourself. Andy Hess was quite prominent in the Legislature for educational issues. What was his forte in his field?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that he had any real direct experience. He was an airport manager. I think he just had a personal interest.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he a good chair? Was he an inspiring leader?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wouldn't say he was an inspiring leader, but he ran a pretty good committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did this committee have a consensus of what they wanted, or was there a real range of opinions here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of issues were talked about. One of them was establishing a junior college system. Before, the junior college had been part of the local school district where it was located. There were those who thought that it ought to have an identity of itself. That was one of the big issues when we established the education interim committee and we did deal with that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this committee in '57 the beginning of that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The subcommittee spent quite a little time on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go into this committee having an opinion on that or did you have to educate yourself about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was pretty much in favor of a centralized system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A separate system, so not the thirteenth and fourteenth grade of the school system?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was a product of a junior college myself and I could see the advantages.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there people on the committee who felt otherwise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Morrie Folsom was in the Legislature from Centralia and was on the school board down there, or had been. And his whole

thought was if you take the community colleges out of there, the school district is going to lose X amount of dollars because some of that community college money was going to be used in the district for other things. And so he was really opposed to changing it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That could be used both ways then. You could ask, “Why is the community college money going into other things?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was kind of a loaded argument there. You certainly discussed a variety of things in this committee: statewide insurance and fire protection, construction for schools, changing the materials used for building schools. Were schools at that point insured piecemeal, there was not a state plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think each district negotiated their own insurance plan.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So to have a statewide plan, would you get a better deal? Economy of scale?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You should.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You discussed the drivers training program. I know that that was contentious for some people who didn’t think that public schools should have anything to do with teaching kids to drive. Other people thought it was a good safety program and would prevent carnage on the highways. How did you feel about that yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was always in favor of the driver education program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed like a good fit? Another issue: exemption of schools from the sales tax. If schools were going to buy paper or books or something, then they wouldn’t be charged the sales tax?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s correct. They just wouldn’t pay it. And on construction items, you see, it would be quite a large item. So I had mixed feelings about it. You start on exemptions and it never ends.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The state builds a lot of things. It would be hard to say where the exemption should stop. There was a discussion on the revision of the school aid formula. I know that’s a big discussion all through these years as to how to fund schools.

And then, of course, “education beyond the high school.” That was the beginning of the community college discussion. Technical and vocational schools also fell under that heading.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But this was more about the public schools and at the high school level. Agriculture. And it also had to do with the area of home economics. They were just beginning to move out of the home economics effort in the schools.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Has this discussion got anything to do with four-year colleges or just those in-between institutions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just the in-between.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You served on this committee, the Education subcommittee, and then the following year you served on the Education interim committee. Was there a relationship between these committees? They were both chaired by Andy Hess. What’s the difference between a Legislative Council subcommittee and the Education interim committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was, I think, a matter of status.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which was higher?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The interim committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, you had just kind of set up this whole Legislative Council structure, but yet you still have interim committees. I'm confused between the two. Could you explain this for me?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think this is where the politics enters into it. We had some legislators who used the interim committee or the Legislative Council subcommittee as a device to take trips, go to conferences, do all these various things. And you had some legislators and some committees that really was the only reason for them being in operation. So there was kind of that push and pull.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be true of the Education interim committee that you served on? That was a huge committee. It did a lot of different things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were quite a number of issues that came out of the subcommittee, and there were those who felt, well, it needs a more concentrated effort and more study and it can best be done by a staffed, separate committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It was much more elaborate. You had advisory groups. You had quite a few different subcommittees. You had hearings all over the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We'll be talking about that later, but I was wondering what the relationship was. So this subcommittee of the Legislative Council, did you identify all these different needs and realized you needed a much bigger body? How did that come about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** By and large, the number of legislators just shifted from the subcommittee to the interim committee, the separate committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More got involved with the interim committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a larger committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But again chaired by Senator Hess, both of them. That's why I was wondering about the relationship. Would an interim committee have different powers from the Legislative Council committees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You wouldn't have quite as much intensive screening as you do on the Council because you have to go through the subcommittee and then through the full Council in order to get something before the Legislature. Where the interim committee on Education, they developed their own bills and they'd have "at the request of the Legislative Education Interim Committee."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So would Senator Hess, the chair of that, have more power to create what he wanted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Interesting. Let's look at the work, then, of the Legislative Council subcommittee. Did you work with people from the Superintendent of Public Instruction's office, or school boards? What sorts of groups did you meet with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We really didn't work directly with any groups. The Superintendent's office would have people attend the meetings and offer comments and suggestions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered where you got your information how schools were doing and what was needed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** This was an area where the staff really had a lot of control over what was happening.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would entities like SPI have funneled things to them and then they put it together for you to consider?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was a lot of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where you get your information and who frames the issues goes a long way to creating what happens next.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You bet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We won't take that too far because we're going to discuss that in more detail when you're on the interim committee. We'll come back to these issues.

But the other committee that you were on was the Cities, Towns and Counties subcommittee. The chair was Dale Nordquist from Lewis County. Andy Hess also served on that committee, with George Kupka, Gordon Sandison and Victor Zednick. Do you recall how that committee functioned?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty loose. One of the big issues was off-street parking—could the cities get into the business of off-street parking?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not all of these are people from cities. There were a couple of Seattle people, but there're people from say, Lewis County, and Gordon Sandison's district doesn't look exactly urban—Jefferson and Clallam counties.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But you've got Port Angeles and Centralia and Chehalis represented there and Mount Vernon, all of which were all having problems locally with parking. We were pretty much interested in giving the cities permission to establish off-street parking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another of the big issues that you discussed was your review of the Metro law that had just passed would have affected King

County and Seattle more than anywhere else. It was a hard fought battle. It barely passed. And now it was being reviewed. Was there some sense that there was something wrong with it or was this just a safeguard?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think maybe a little of both. Metro was originally set up to clean up Lake Washington and once they had the authority they did that. They did a good job. And then after that they got into a lot of other things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were a couple of visions about Metro. One was much broader and then they narrowed it down because they couldn't pass that. But then they expanded it again?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that was a good way to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not one to say that state government or local governments have the answer to all problems, but it seemed to me that on a regional basis—when they were talking primarily about Seattle and King County—I could see where it was an effective means to take care of some problems that an individual community couldn't do on their own.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly Lake Washington was a regional issue. Did other parts of the state ever look at adopting a Metro law for whatever issues they may have been facing? Say Tacoma and Pierce County, or some other areas?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think both Tacoma and Spokane showed some interest in doing something similar.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they ever adopt this model?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that they did in Spokane, but I could be wrong. Spokane is so different. But it just seemed to me that they did get into the concept.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about home rule for cities? It was another one of the issues you discussed. What did that involve?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That would be giving the cities the opportunity to increase their tax base and get out from under a lot of state regulations. The city councils would have more authority and the ability to raise funds locally for whatever they needed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This issue was around for a long time. There were even calls to revise the state Constitution to allow for this. Were cities that weak in their governmental powers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, individually, each city had its own set of problems. The Association of Washington Cities, quite frankly, wasn't a very strong organization. Chester Biesen headed it up as the staff person, and was a wonderful guy. But he got pushed around a lot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know some cities are going through the throes at this time of considering whether they would have council-manager governments. Or looking at having strong mayors versus weak mayors. The whole how-to-do-it was really in flux.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of change there. And a lot of cities went to the commission form. Matter of fact Olympia did. Then they went back to the council form.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There was a lot of turmoil in how to govern cities. And, certainly by the sixties, cities were having difficulty with urban renewal issues. A lot of issues are coming home to cities in ways that didn't seem to be as urgent in earlier days.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the Legislature, in its infinite wisdom, had been piling a lot more responsibilities on all of these other governmental entities without giving them the ability to raise the finances to pay for them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's always difficult. You got to do some fun things with this committee. You got to visit the future site of the World's Fair in Seattle. At what stage of development was the Fair when you went on the tour?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were getting along pretty well. That was really a tremendous project and it was well organized and I think it's one of the few fairs or expositions that actually operated in the black. But Joe Gandy, he had the clout to bring the right people together and he could raise the money. Everything fell into place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's certainly one of the high points of Seattle history.

Those were the main committees that you worked on. Did you have a chance to build deeper relationships with other legislators through this committee work? Did that experience make a difference advancing you in leadership?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure about that, but it helped me personally to know other legislators more closely and be able to talk to them about issues down the line and get support. So, yes, I think it was an important part of my career.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You said the time commitment wasn't really great, but it's more than you gave before. Were you advancing in your ideas about your commitment to politics at this stage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, over all the years I was in the political arena, I never did sit down and say, "This is where I want to be, and this is what I want to do over the next two years, five years, ten years," whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have years when your interest was deeper or you had more time or energy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think I gradually increased my interest in the political system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even if it wasn't a conscious decision, were you playing a greater role when you took on these responsibilities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And people would ask me and I'd say, "If my head sticks up above the crowd, and people ask me to do something, then I'll certainly do it. But I'm not writing an agenda and following a schedule of what I'm going to do to get from here to there." I wasn't going to make a career out of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This isn't necessarily an ambition, it's just an opportunity? How much would this kind of extra sessional work impact your family and business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Being in the Legislature is a strain, period. Of course, I was gone more, away from my home and business, during this period we're talking about because of my involvement with these three subcommittees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of meetings.

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of meetings, right. I probably neglected the homework part of being involved in these committees. In other words, I didn't sit down and study all these proposals and write briefs and propose bills and all that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You went to the meetings. Your attendance record was quite good.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I thought that I'd try to participate at that level in the meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you're saying that you didn't actually throw yourself into it as a huge commitment?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't make it a full time project.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did some people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it because certain issues would just really grab them or because they had ambitions or what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think those are two areas where it affected a lot of decisions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you weren't quite ready to step into it on that level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I may have been ready, but I just didn't get the call, and so I just tried to do the best I could in the position that I was in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering how you managed. You were involved in other things too, not just the Legislature and your business and your family. You've got other commitments. This seems like a very busy time of your life.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people have a pretty huge appetite for meetings. How did you feel about that part of it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I could take meetings or leave them alone. If I was involved, I'd be involved. And if I wasn't, I was content to sit on the sidelines and listen and take in what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were getting all these reports and going to hearings and learning all kinds of things. Did this deepen your knowledge of how the state worked and what you might want to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Certainly every contact you have and every piece of literature always helps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your views broaden or change in any way with all these different things that you were doing and learning?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I changed from—not very much, but I changed some—from being a strong conservative to a more moderate person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because you were hearing a greater mix of ideas or just what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then the association with other legislators. I always had a great deal of respect for Dan Evans. But as I told Adele Ferguson one time, I had to bite my tongue because of his liberal leanings. But because I had such a great deal of respect for him, I'd go along with a lot of things that ordinarily I would either put aside or openly oppose.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it more effective as a legislator to be a little bit more in the middle? Could you reach more people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Then you can more easily draw from all corners of the whole spectrum.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this kind of rubbing shoulders with all these different legislators and all these different issues, would that bring a person more into the middle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think that was a common outcome for many legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were a number of Democrats both in the House and in the Senate that I really felt close to. We weren't bosom buddies or anything like that, but I knew that I could talk to them. We'd sit around the table and visit about legislation. Bob Charette was one of those. I've always felt that Bill Gissberg and Augie Mardesich were real leaders. Sometimes you have to kind of joke about things and we used to do that about some of the positions people would take.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With all these different ways of being with people and working with them, that would lead to different kinds of networks and different kinds of contacts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it built support for whatever direction you go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine the better you know a fellow legislator, the more empathy—it's not really the right word—but you can hear about their needs and their ideas in a different light.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. I'm sure that wasn't what people were thinking when they started inventing these councils and these committees, but it sounds like a happy outcome. A really productive thing in itself.

## CHAPTER 8

### ON THE CUSP OF CHANGE: 1959

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**Ms. Kilgannon:** The summer of 1958 would have seen an election campaign for you again. There was a big campaign for Initiative 202 then that had a rather severe impact on the Republican election results that year. It was the “Right to Work” issue and was, I believe, the second time that measure had been pushed. Can you tell me what that was all about? Who wanted it and what it was supposed to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It started out as a small business proposition, but labor got into it with both feet, opposing it of course. You know I can’t remember exactly what came out of that turmoil, but Republican Party became involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the Party endorse this campaign? They seemed to be associated with it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, the Republican convention that year didn’t take a stand on it. But there were a good many Republicans involved in the campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So people made the natural assumption that it was a Republican measure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was an association there, right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was for open shop workplaces?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And while I personally didn’t take any active part in the campaign, philosophically I agreed with the principle that a person ought to be able to join the union or not join the union and it shouldn’t have any effect on his ability to hold a job.

Our business was a non-union business and I always took the position that I didn’t want to get into a game playing match with my employees. I said if one of them needs to stay at home a day or two with a sick child or have some reason to not come to work, all they have to do is pick up the phone and call me. On the other hand, if we’ve got a shipment of merchandise that’s at the back door and we need somebody to stay on another half hour or so at the end of the regular work day, I didn’t want to get into a position of having to bargain with them. We got along fine and I think most small business operators do pretty much the same thing.

Our business was picketed a couple of times. There was kind of an unusual instance during that campaign season when an outside union organizer came into my business and tried to put pressure on me to sign a union contract. I said, “No, we’ve gotten along for X number of years and had no problems with our employees,” and I didn’t see any reason to saddle them with a forced organization that they might not feel comfortable with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I’m surprised that they would come to you rather than the employees. Generally, unions come in at the employee level, not from the top down.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think in those days the decision was made by the owners. Now, of course, they get the groups together and then they either petition for union representation or whatever the issue happens to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think that they were trying to force you to make a statement for political reasons, or it happened to be just then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They might have.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a connection between your re-election campaign and the attempt to unionize your business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't evident, so I don't know. I think it just happened that way. But anyway, they put our business on the unfair list—"do not patronize" and so on.

As we got closer to the election, another person from the union, but outside of the local organization, came in and was selling advertising. In the union hall they had a big board where they were selling space to businesses to put their logo there and so on. So I said, "No, I don't believe that I'd be interested." And I said to him, "Have you been at the union hall lately?" and he said, "No," and I said, "I've got my name up there and it didn't cost me a cent." That kind of slowed him down a little bit.

But Skagit County, in those days, was, I would say, ninety-nine percent agriculture. Of course the farmers were not too interested in the labor movement but we had people coming in our store that we had never seen before. They said, "We just wanted to come in and show them that we're right behind you."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it had the adverse effect of bringing you new business and publicity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, back to the initiative. You didn't work for it? You just kept quiet about it? Was it just too hot to handle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was certainly a volatile issue. And in the Legislature the labor people stacked all the committee meetings and they had big groups in the gallery.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it worth it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. Sometimes you get an adverse reaction to that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that your constituents would know what your position was and you didn't need to take a stand—nothing to gain by it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But apparently, many in your Party did associate themselves with the campaign and the Republicans lost a lot of seats. Republicans paid dearly for this particular connection. The initiative itself failed by a large margin. Sixty-two percent of the population voted against it. Did that close the issue? It just wasn't going to fly? Or did it stick around for years and years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, it was always kind of on the fringe, but nothing ever really came together to do anything again.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You, however, were re-elected by a very large margin. Your partner, Ralph Rickdall was also re-elected. So your district was not impacted by this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And Ralph and his wife were very outspoken in favor of the initiative.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that particular to your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At the time it appeared to be. The district was kind of up and down, up and down. We had, in the Legislature over the years, Republicans one session and then it'd switch over and it would be Democrats for awhile.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. No particular pattern.

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the twenties everything was Republican. It was a strong Republican district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, yes. The whole state was, really.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then that all changed with Franklin Roosevelt. And even during the early years of my legislative experience, we had ups and downs. Ralph Rickdall ran for the Senate the next session and he was defeated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happened to your former senator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Paul Luvera was there for my first two sessions. And then his third time he was defeated by Fred Martin, who had been in the Legislature and then was Director of Agriculture. Emma Abbott Ridgway was in the Legislature from our district when I was first elected. Then Ralph Rickdall defeated her. Then, instead of staying in the House where he could have been re-elected, he decided to run for the Senate and didn't make it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of overreached himself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that somewhat of an object lesson to you? Did you ever feel tempted to go to the Senate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not at all. I just had no interest at all in being in the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A different ballgame?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people stay where they are and climb the ladder and reach the heights where they are, and other people look around for the next arena.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends. I think a lot depends on your temperament as to whether you want to take that next step.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did people like to go to the Senate because they didn't have to run election campaigns so often? What did you think of that? Was that tiring every two years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't particularly like to campaign, but I didn't really dislike it either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you still doorbell?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not as much; I didn't because of the time it took. I just didn't feel right about doorbelling in the evening when people were having dinner, having family time, or whatever and get interrupted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Feel a bit like a telephone solicitor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. But I liked as much as anything going to meetings and making a presentation and then visiting with people and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You belonged to a lot of organizations. You were still very involved in the community?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was quite active.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I would hope that that level of activity give you a name in your district.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We did a lot of mailing and newspaper advertising. We had quite a number of small weekly papers in the district. From my first campaign on, I always took the first money that came in and I went around to all the newspapers and introduced myself and said, "I'm going to be running a little election ad and here's a check that we can draw against." And boy! That went over big because so many times they'd have somebody come out of the woodwork and get ads and then just walk away from the bills. So political advertising was looked on with a jaundiced eye by newspapers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But money up front is never unwelcome.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And that really worked and I did that every campaign. Always made the rounds first with the check.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Being a small business person you would understand that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And then my dad had had the weekly newspaper there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was already in your blood anyway.

So, it was back to Olympia again. It was the mid-term for Governor Rosellini's first administration: 1959, the Thirty-sixth Session. The Senate was overwhelmingly Democratic, thirty-five to fourteen Republicans, rather large numbers. The House had sixty-six Democrats and thirty-three Republicans. This was kind of a low point for Republicans in the House. Was that discouraging to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. Because when you came right down to it, there weren't a lot of partisan issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you felt that there were still things that you could do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. Now, with major statewide political decisions, then of course it became much more of a dogfight. But on most issues having to do with dikes and ditches and that sort of thing, you could always get bipartisan support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your caucus get together and say, "Okay, what are we going to concentrate on? We've only got thirty-three members, what can we do here?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not in just those words. I think we all recognized that it was going to be a defensive action for the whole session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** See what you can prevent rather than what you can pass?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Duane Berentson always told people, "When I got to the Legislature, Don taught me how to vote no."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Strangely enough, the Democrats, even though they had a two-thirds majority in both houses and a Democratic governor, were not able to push through everything they wanted either. They were somewhat stymied.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And we always used to say about their push for a state income tax, they really didn't want one, they just wanted the issue. Because they had two-thirds in both the House and the Senate and a Democratic governor, so they could have just walked right in there with it. But they couldn't do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This would have been the year for it. They couldn't seem to get it together. Well, maybe they're a big tent party, just like your party. There was a range of opinion and not everybody could agree.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But there weren't too many Democrats that would drop off. I think that's one of the successes of the Democrats in Washington, particularly in legislative races. They stuck together and they put aside a lot of their individual preferences and issues and went as a block and you've got to give them credit for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of course, your Party is quite famous for that, too. The Republican caucus was experiencing some changes. Newman Clark was your floor leader this session and Damon Canfield was the assistant floor leader. Cecil Clark was

the caucus secretary. And Don Moos became the Republican sergeant-at-arms which is kind of a new title. Names like Elmer Johnston and Lincoln Shropshire seemed to drop out of the picture a little bit. Were they retired or just taking a back seat at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were part of the “old guard,” you might say. Shropshire was from Yakima and Elmer Johnston from Spokane and I think you’re beginning to see the Puget Sound group becoming more forceful and more active.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Several of these leaders were also from eastern Washington, except Newman Clark who was from King County.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was from Seattle. But then, he’s one of the old guard, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. He wasn’t considered one of the “New Breed” Republicans. So this was perhaps a small shift, but an interesting one to see.

Dan Evans was the one who nominated Newman Clark as your candidate for Speaker in the opening of the session. He realized, no doubt, that you weren’t going to get it, but there was still that chance to make a speech. In his—Dan Evans’ speech—he made this interesting statement: “The watchword of this session will be money. The watchword of the session two years ago should have been money, but it wasn’t. We failed to do the job two years ago. The song heard then was one of harmony, ‘we needed no new taxes.’ That tune has now changed until today we hear the discordant song of new tax burdens to provide the services which are needed. We believe—we Republicans—the needs of this state can be met through careful management, through the elimination of waste and unrestricted spending. We believe this can be done without imposing any burdens.” Interesting to hear that coming from Dan Evans, who, of course, when he became governor, developed quite a different perspective.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then he went on to say that Newman Clark was the man of the hour and deserved to be Speaker.

In the write-ups of the 1959 session in the Press, it’s widely acknowledged that there had been a deficit for eight years and this would be the year that something happened and the situation was corrected and that the government should not overspend on new programs. And reluctantly or otherwise, most of the articles say that there would be new taxes. Did your caucus take a stand on the issue of the deficit and offer a good, sound program for the state with the proviso: “We don’t need new taxes?” Or was there some tax increase expected to pass as inevitable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The position was always “no new taxes.” But as we got down towards the end of the session and we had the budget—and the appropriation bills were all rolling in—I think everybody in the caucus recognized that we were going to have to bite the bullet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Schools, for instance, were really expanding in this period. That costs money.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It has to come from somewhere. An article in one of the newspapers at the beginning of the session noted that: “It is generally recognized that the state Legislature will face more serious problems and will be forced to make more vital decisions than any legislative body in modern times.” The problem seems to have reached some kind of threshold here. “It is at the crossroads where deficit financing has reached a limit and conclusions must be reached as to tax policies which may well affect the future of state government for years to come.” That’s the kind of statement I kept seeing over and over about this session. That sets a kind of a tone—

that the situation seemed, not an emergency, but it had reached a certain pitch and something would have to be done.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pressing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your caucus have a plan in mind as to how budgets should be trimmed or where the money should come from or how to face up to this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any sit-down-around-the-table type discussions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's easy to say "let's trim the fat," but you have to find it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. And there were just individuals who said, "Hey, we ought to cut this" or "we ought to add to this."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No coherent ideas?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No consensus, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Being such a minority, I suppose you didn't have to come up with answers.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't. All we had to do was vote no for the record.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that enough? You didn't have a plan, but would you have felt better with a plan, put it that way, if you'd had a real statement to make?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so. From a political standpoint you get a plan or a statement out there and you get all the slings and arrows.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As soon as it's in black and white. I just wondered if it put you in a more reactive position where the Democrats were putting forward the program and all you can do

is react to theirs, or whether you would have preferred to have your own ideas even if you couldn't implement them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were small groups who would put out a program but not the entire Republican caucus, for instance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's an interesting time. The Speaker of that year was again John O'Brien, and Julia Butler Hanson was nominated as the Speaker Pro Tem for the third time. Earlier in her career, she had challenged John O'Brien for the leadership. But now, she was his lieutenant.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Augie Mardesich was pretty active as floor leader. He seems to lead the charge on a lot of the issues. You had Newman Clark and Damon Canfield and Cecil Clark as I said, and then Don Moos seems to be edging into the picture.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He's coming along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any other new leading lights?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Joel Pritchard was beginning his legislative career. Dan Evans was certainly maturing and fulfilling a role of leadership.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's not in the official leadership yet, but he's showing up a lot. Making speeches and moving things along. He's creating a presence. Where are you in the pack? How are you feeling about where you are in the caucus lineup?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was the caucus chairman for two, maybe three sessions. It wasn't until after Dan assumed the leadership in the caucus in 1961. And then he and I worked real close together during those years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if the next group of leaders was somewhat chafing at the bit here? Joel Pritchard reported being very frustrated with your tiny minority and vowed to do something about it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I say, I think things were beginning to fall into place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Other people in your party also were looking at those numbers and saying, “We’re obviously going down the wrong road and we have to do something differently if we want to get anywhere here.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** The group that formed around Dan was Joel and Slade Gorton and Mary Ellen McCaffree. Pretty much a moderate to liberal group. That kind of frustrated some of us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That they were taking the lead?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. No one questioned their leadership ability, but they questioned—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where they were being led?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that’s a good statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about people like Tom Copeland and Jimmy Andersen who were also pretty active in these years? Where do they come into this picture?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They really, at this point, didn’t have positions of leadership, but they were certainly effective members of the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did your caucus operate at this time? Were you fairly amicable or were there tensions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a pretty objective group. I know during the time that I served as caucus

chairman I didn’t have to stop any fights or gavel people down or anything like that. The caucuses were, I would say, pretty quiet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People respected each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You have quite a few different kinds of personalities here. Did you have common goals that kept you together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of sameness to the people in the caucus. You didn’t have to take a vote on everything because you knew pretty much what people were thinking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You said earlier about the urban Republicans were starting to get a little more active. Was there good rapport between them and the more rural Republicans? Did they have a lot in common with each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Philosophically, of course, there were some differences, but on the basic issues I think that the rural and the urban legislators were pretty much of the same mind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People sometimes say that the splits in the Legislature are urban/rural rather than Democrat/Republican. That that’s a bigger hump to get over.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That certainly occurred. It wasn’t something that was on everybody’s mind, though, or that they were going to try to do something about it. We still had people from eastern Washington who were dominant in the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let’s see. Robert Goldsworthy was active then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Bob Goldsworthy and Maury Ahlquist and, of course, Tom Copeland. Don Moos.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Don Moos. He's from eastern Washington. A young guy coming up.

The other piece I wanted to ask you about is the state Republican organization. Sometimes they seem very active and sometimes they seem almost nonexistent. At this time, former Senator William Goodloe was the state chairman. He was new to the position, I think. For the first time that I've ever noticed, there was a little newspaper article that talked about him making a plan for a "Republican Day." He wanted to hold weekly joint House and Senate breakfast meetings. In the paper they described it as a little pep talk. That he was trying to have more unity or more spirit. I'm not sure exactly what his goals were. He wanted more of a relationship between the legislators and the central committee, which I've always understood was rather lacking. He wanted to get to work on the next campaign for 1960. You had just finished one and he's already looking ahead. Did these breakfasts happen? Do you remember these?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Boy! I sure don't remember them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe this was just a flash in the pan and never happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Bill was kind of a maverick and it got to the point where I don't think anybody ever paid much attention to him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did he become the state chairman if he's kind of on the edge?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That wasn't a real sought-after position in those years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if somebody really wanted it, they could have it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's just about right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What is the relationship between the Party and legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was very slim in those days. Until Gummie Johnson got in and took control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the Party do nothing, basically, for legislators, so legislators were quite free to ignore it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would say that's a pretty fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that they didn't give you money and they didn't really help you with your campaigns. Was the state Republican Party—would those be the precinct leaders and those kind of people? What was their role in all this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The state central committee could—and should be—a policy making group. And that group should be working with Republican legislative leaders and Republican state office holders. But, like I say, it was pretty slim in those days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And these would be the people who would create the platform that everyone talked about at your conventions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you say that relationship was pretty tenuous. Is that a totally different group of people who are active on the local level and they had other concerns, and legislators were somewhat independent and ran their own campaigns and decided their positions themselves?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that is probably right, although it shouldn't be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think the public would have been surprised to know there was such a little relationship there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But, that all changed when Gummie came in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they more interested in presidential politics and national level positions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a bit more interest in national politics.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So at the district level, would you be paying attention to precinct leaders and going to meetings with them, or would they want to do that? Would they be interested in you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In our district, we relied quite heavily on the Party people, the precinct people and the county chairman and his associates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who in your area would that be? Did that change from year to year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a group of old timers who had been involved with the Party for years and years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Fund raising and events and “get out the vote” kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounds like in your district, at least, there was a relationship and there was a connection there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We really had a good relationship.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But maybe in some districts that wouldn't exist? It's such a puzzle.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. But I'm sure that there were things going on that I didn't maybe pay attention to or didn't think were important.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It might be best not to get too worked up on that level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right, because you never knew what the central committee was going to

do. They could come out with a statement or with a policy that was entirely foreign to the legislative group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The party convention platform was always a big issue. And then you never hear about it again afterwards.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because most legislators wouldn't touch the platform with a ten-foot pole.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would people put so much energy into drawing up platforms that then legislators just ignored?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of the items in the platform were sort of pie-in-the-sky. And the people who write the platform, they think that all they need to do is put a sentence in there and it'll happen. Most candidates just ignore the platform entirely. They don't want to be tied to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had to be a bit more pragmatic? Because otherwise it looks like a promise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It can cause some problems with people who are running for office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do people hold it up to you and say, “Where do you stand on this?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then what do you say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depended on what it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they expect you to hold to it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so. I think that the general public recognized that it would be impossible for an elected official to say “this is the judgment” and run with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** “This is my manifesto?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet people, year after year, battle it out. They have pretty fierce struggles. One of those little oddities of the political culture. So these Goodloe breakfasts perhaps didn’t happen? He made it sound like it was going to be this really big deal.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t recall ever being invited to one, so I don’t know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let’s turn to the session, then. I’ll just list your committees and we’ll keep them in mind, and then we can talk about some of the big issues of that session of which there were several.

You were on Cities and Counties, Game and Game Fish, Rules and Order—which, of course, is a very important committee—State Government, and another important one, the Ways and Means Appropriations subcommittee. Especially with Rules and Appropriations, you had your finger on the big issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s where all the action is, or inaction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of the big issues, taxes and revenue simmered throughout the whole session and in fact pushed you into special session. One of the things that either helped clarify the whole revenue issue—the outgo if not the income—was the pushing through of the Budget and Accounting Act that year. This was something that Governor Rosellini wanted and did manage to get that year. Can you describe how this act transformed the budget process? This was a big reform.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It put more responsibility on state agencies to rethink their procedures. To more accurately present to the Legislature their needs. And it was reasonably successful in doing that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For the first time you have a written budget that was going to reflect the real programs. Previously, as we discussed, agencies would come back to the Appropriations Committee again and again asking for more money. There was little overview.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the performance budget was a step in the right direction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was an important tool for the modernization of how the state managed its money. Were there people who did not want this? Was this controversial or just “good housekeeping?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were those who questioned it, but really didn’t come out with strong opposition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some noise about it was going to give too much power to the governor.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That, I think, was mostly political.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was officials like the state treasurer and the auditor who were worried about that, I believe, because it would redefine their responsibilities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did this act change how you worked in the Appropriations Committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it, in effect, simplified the consideration of the appropriation bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it give you more information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it was, I would say, in a simpler form. So the members could more easily understand what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That sounds like a good thing. Part of the act required a balanced budget. That there would be no more deficit spending allowed by the state. That sounds like a Republican value.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That proposal was supported by Republicans by and large.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. In fact some Republicans wanted a Constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget. They wanted to take it all the way to the top. There was a House joint resolution calling for that introduced by Canfield and your district mate, Ralph Rickdall. And Jack Hood. But it didn't really go anywhere. It went into committee and didn't reappear. Would that have been superfluous at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this just window dressing perhaps? Wanting to enshrine this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was a move to keep it in front of the Legislature and the public.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seems like it was already in place. You passed this act, and part of it was that you must have a balanced budget. I understand that passing Constitutional amendments is always a huge hurdle.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a difficult procedure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. So now you had the mechanism and more information and you had a better procedure perhaps, but you still needed more revenue. No matter how you dressed up the books, you still needed more taxes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that was resisted. Nobody really likes to vote for taxes. Governor Rosellini was asking at that point for a slight raise in the sales tax. He wasn't going for an income tax.

But many Democrats were. That was one of the things that kind of dragged through the whole session was this constant clamoring for an income tax.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Republicans just keep quiet or what was your position on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Our position was, this is a Democrat proposal and they've got the votes if they want to use them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you would just sit back and see what happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you realize they were divided enough that that was a pretty safe thing to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everybody knew how to count and you've got to have the votes in order to get anything done, and they just couldn't come up with them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. Despite their large numbers, it didn't go anywhere.

There had been a group of citizens who formed a tax advisory council that the governor had called into being. And they came forward with various proposals. That sort of outside group, was that really helpful to the Legislature? What would you do with those reports?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the final analysis, those groups really don't do too much. But not because they weren't interested.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were some quite prominent names on the committee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You bet. But they aren't the foot soldiers and you don't find those people going out and pounding the pavement to get these things supported.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it just help the governor to have those names behind him on the masthead, so to speak?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He quoted them quite often: "The tax council says we should do it this way."

**Mr. Eldridge:** And there were some really good, talented people on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. They included such citizens such as the mayor of Yakima; the secretary of the Puget Sound Pulp and Timber Company; Dean Eastman, the vice president and western counsel of Northern Pacific Railway Company. They were heavy hitters. Senator Web Hallauer; William Klein, a lawyer and state representative; Lars Nelson, the leader of the Grange. They had different kinds of people. They were quite careful to get different points of view. The president of the Puget Sound National Bank, and Harold Shefelman, a prominent lawyer in Seattle who served on a lot of these commissions. Mrs. Arthur Skelton, the president of the Washington Congress of Parents and Teachers, one of the two women who served. Virgil Sparks, president of Key City Cleaners from Walla Walla. So they were also very careful to get people from all over the state. William Street, president of Frederick and Nelson. Mrs. Robert J. Stuart—back then when women didn't use their own names—president of the League of Women Voters. That would be quite a force I would think. Charles Todd, another lawyer. Ed Westin, president of the AFL-CIO. And the vice president of finance for the Boeing Company. So all these people met, made proposals, studied the issues. Did you read their reports or would it be all for nothing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You might find a subcommittee, for instance of the Ways and Means committee, that would take some of these things up and use them in their proposals.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it be one of those things where, if they were saying what you agreed with, you'd be holding up this report and saying, "This is great," and if they didn't agree with what you wanted to do, you would just kind of ignore the report?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This report showed a certain amount of statewide consensus.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I would hazard a guess that it would be pretty difficult for that group to agree on anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I didn't actually read through every bit of the report, but they were at least able to reach enough agreement to produce the document.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that they did. I would think that Harold Shefelman's fine hand would be right in there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was very prominent in a lot of these commissions.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was articulate and he knew the issues and the players. The Shefelman report in the early fifties was patterned after the Hoover Commission—I remember using excerpts from the Shefelman report during campaigns. It was pretty well thought out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do reports like this help legislators think through some issues? It gave you something to bounce off of?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it does. If you really take advantage of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm sure it was a lot of work for you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. A lot of hours and a lot of paper.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just assembling such a group of leaders in the community, getting a group like that together would be no small thing.

There were several issues of interest this session. There was, of course, the fight over the income tax which was introduced, but doesn't go anywhere. There was a proposal to lower the threshold on the B&O tax—called the “newsboy tax” by people who were not in favor of this measure. Could you explain the nature of this tax for me?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The B&O tax is the tax on gross sales. On gross business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if you lowered the threshold, businesses have to begin paying taxes on much smaller amounts of their sales revenue? Which led to the point that even the newspaper boys would end up paying this? That was the contention that more or less killed this measure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The newspaper accounts of these different tax battles talked about a “taxpayer revolt.” How would that be expressed? Letters to the editor? Letters to legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There would be some of that and anytime you get a group of five or more people together someone would make a speech about it. Just by word of mouth. Groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that in your own district? Were there groups that were at least semi-organized, saying, “Don't mess with our taxes?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember hearing a lot of discussions about it. I don't remember any even quasi-formal groups that took a position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody took to the streets with signs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Often, we read or hear about that: the taxpayers are “going to revolt.” As a legislator, how would you register that? Would you get a lot of letters, say, or telephone calls from constituents saying, “Don't raise our taxes?” Would that be a tactic that would constitute a tax revolt?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There would be some of those, yes. There are always people out there who will rise up if there's any indication that taxes are going to go up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How seriously did you, as a representative, take that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you begin to take it seriously if you get enough of it. Of course, within the organization of both parties, this is the sort of thing that would go into the platforms.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people are sort of chronic “against-ers.” Would there be certain classes of people where you just felt, “Oh, they're not going to be for anything, so what's the use?” But then when you get a different group of people writing letters, you pay more attention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have to go through the motions of at least thinking about who they are and who they represent as to how seriously you are going to take it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's so easy to be against something, but would you be looking to know what people were *for*? For instance, if you

wanted tax cuts, are people going to step forward and say what exactly they are willing to cut?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. You don't find much of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were a lot of actions to do with taxes that session. Just a lot of headlines of this nature: "Lots of tax measures being revised" and "Revision of business tax by Legislature possible."

There was intense maneuvering by different people. Cecil Clark wanted an amendment to the budget and appropriations bill: "any portion of this appropriation which shall be paid to any applicant for, or recipient of public assistance or medical care shall be a debt due the state payable after the recipient's death as a claim when filed and allowed as provided by Title II RCW which shall have preference over all unsecured claims except funeral, last sickness and administrative expenses."

**Mr. Eldridge:** The lien clause.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This got some attention. Was he saying someone—your aged aunt—might receive some public assistance and then if she died and maybe she had a little home or something, when it was sold after her funeral expenses, the state would recoup its money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. On the surface it looks like that would be a fair thing to do, but oh, boy, that's a real buzz saw.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there's the grieving family and there's the heavy government tax man coming in and taking the furniture. Is that the kind of thing that arose in people's minds?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. And when you say lien, why they just figure you're taking the old homestead and leaving them with nothing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And they're bereaved already.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This doesn't pass.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are states that do have that lien clause in their welfare laws.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did actually vote for this amendment when it came up, but it really didn't go far. You offered an amendment a little further down in the process: "Provided further that this appropriation shall not be effective until such time as laws providing for recovery, relative responsibility, medical first call charges, attorney general prosecution of fraud cases and prevention of misuse of aid to dependent children funds, as set forth in House Bills—there's quite a long list here—have become effective in this state." Was that a sort of adaptation of his thinking there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just as an aside, one of my mother's brothers was at Stanford during the San Francisco earthquake. He dropped out of school and went to work in the reconstruction and then got interested in mining and went into Nevada. Then when the Alaska gold rush came along he went up there. He never did have a real job. He had two or three small mining claims in Alaska. He'd work the claims during the good weather, and then he worked for the railroad in the winter time. He was never in what you'd call a financially stable atmosphere. He had throat cancer and eventually it took him. I went up to arrange for a funeral and whatever else there was and discovered that he had been on welfare in Alaska and that they were now after his log cabin, just down off the main street of Wasilla, which is just a little railroad town.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it worth much?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I bet it cost them more to process it than it did for what they got out of it. But anyway, that was my first taste of the lien law.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that before or after this bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As a matter of fact, I think it was after it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it change your mind on this kind of policy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I thought it was probably all right, but it just didn't work. Sooner or later, with a lot of these issues, you become more directly involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, personal experience adds to the perspective. Some of the tensions running through the appropriations bills had to do with public assistance. That turned into quite a fight.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You know, all through the legislative years, the hue and cry was that "the welfare program was a terrible thing and it just wasn't working the way it should." That there was fraud and "the state employees involved with the program were lazy and not really doing their jobs and look what's happening."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there actual evidence for those charges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't a lot of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those are the early days of public assistance and I don't think it was terribly sophisticated. It was kind of the outgrowth of the relief systems set up during the Depression.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the methods outmoded? Needed some work? Who should get relief and how you should do this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was no real accountability. I think there was a lack of professionalism among

the people who were dealing with the recipients. It just kind of slid downhill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was talked about over and over. Jim Andersen, for instance, inserted an explanation of his vote—why he was upset with the appropriations bill. He said, it was because "it doesn't provide sufficient monies for critical areas of needs in education and institutional fields. This money would have been available for these purposes without raising the total appropriation if the amendments proposed to reduce grossly excessive welfare cost had passed." Some evidence of the frustration and tension around this issue. Not necessarily the number of dollars to be spent but how they should be distributed.

Of course, there are two budgets. There's the general budget and then there's the capital budget. There was some controversy with the capital budget, too, that included yourself. You were trying to get more money for Northern State Hospital. We talked about how much progress the hospital had made to be accredited. It had been having all those problems but then was turning around and becoming quite successful. You were trying to get them a little bit more money, but you were not able to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the hospital come to you and explain their needs and you went to bat for them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I'll tell you, the people involved in the institutions were professionals like doctors, psychiatrists and so on. They weren't lobbyists and consequently they'd give you the facts but really no PR or sales pitch or anything like that. Just: "here it is."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's refreshing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But maybe not effective?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course, they eventually closed the hospital.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though Governor Rosellini, himself, said he would support it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was a strong supporter of the institutions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But yet you were not able to get this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In fact, when the final capital appropriations bill ground through the process, you inserted into the Journal, as did several Republicans, reasons why you were opposed to the final bill. That you voted against the bill because “the voters of the state of Washington approved Referendum 10 at the general election of November, 1958. The State Finance Committee submitted a list of approved projects, among them a Receiving, Treatment, Medical and Surgical Building for Northern State Hospital. The House Ways and Means committee arbitrarily removed this project which had been approved by the voters under Referendum 10. Most projects authorized in House Bill 36 were deserving of full support of the legislative body. However, the aforementioned action of the House Ways and Means Committee broke faith with the people of the state of Washington and occasioned my negative vote on the measure.” Signed, Don Eldridge. I wasn’t familiar with this Initiative 10. Did it list various state capital projects?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that evidently passed. So what happened? Why would the House Ways and Means Committee do that? Was it the only thing they yanked out of the list, or were there other things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a number of projects that were eliminated by the Appropriations Committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they eliminated completely or put off for another time? “We’ll do it next year?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that it just knocked them right off

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would have been in charge of that, to pick and chose like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Cecil Clark may have been one of those who would look at that as an area where they could save some money.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be criteria for such a decision?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, I don’t think criteria was ever a big issue in the Legislature!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One fondly thinks that decisions are being made with the help of information. What kind of a message was that if it was a person from your own Party? Not getting something done for your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’m just guessing. I don’t know if he specifically made the decision. But it’s something that I could see him taking a whack at.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you speak to the members of that committee? What would you be able to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it was pretty late.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Was it a surprise to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All of those eliminations were a surprise, but as a group, I’m sure that the

Republicans were looking down to that final vote that they were going to have to take on new taxes. Anything they could do to reduce that figure, why—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this wasn't necessarily something against the district, it was just trimming?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you sound pretty frustrated.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was, because there were rumblings about closing the hospital and of course, now they could say, well, "We aren't being able to move ahead with the facilities that we need and so we'll move the patients to Western State and just close it down."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So making it look like a failure by hamstringing it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they had just gone through this big effort—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Seems kind of wasteful for them to do that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I think that after it was done, there was a lot of remorse.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was nice, I would guess, for patients to have facilities in different parts of the state. So their families could be close by.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And of course, they had a wonderful dairy herd there which not only gave the patients an opportunity to work with the animals, but they provided milk for state institutions all around the area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe this was short-sighted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that there was some rethinking going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How big a presence was that in your district? How many people would they have employed? Quite a few?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite a few.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was no small thing to close, then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** When they closed it down, the town of Sedro Woolley really felt it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would have been their professional elite. The leaders in their community, I would think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The doctors there were all highly educated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. The nurses and administrators and all of those people. The suppliers. It would create quite a ripple. So that's too bad.

Some of the other explanations: There was a very large group of Republicans who affixed their names to this protest. They were protesting the way it was done, not necessarily the numbers reached, but that "the bill contains three separate and distinct categories of appropriations. First, it contains re-appropriations of money to complete projects already started. ...Money to carry into effect institutional construction ordered by the people at the last election by this referendum, and thirdly, it contains large appropriations of money to carry a number of new construction programs into effect. Unfortunately, all of these three categories of appropriations were deliberately and intentionally co-mingled and mixed together in one hodgepodge bill." So you might be for some things then and not some other things—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Part of it but not the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And not some other things which would be an up or down vote. So they were upset that they didn't get to evaluate these projects separately?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Be more selective.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It was too broad-brushed, I guess, was the heart of the problem.

Cecil Clark, himself, voted against it because he said of the bill: "It was just as dishonest on Saturday as it was on Friday." That sounded a little harsh. Was he referring to this co-mingling? It did pass, of course, because they had the numbers. The majority passed it.

There was a lot of discussion that went through the whole session and pushed into the special session, which kind of dragged on and on. There were a couple times when people tried to inject some humor into the long process or voiced their frustration in a humorous way. There's one instance where you, with Representative Ruoff, presented a resolution: "Whereas, the Democratic Party has failed to come up with a balanced budget during sixty days of the Thirty-sixth Regular Session, etc., etc.; and Whereas the governor has insisted on a balanced budget; and Whereas, ... at its present rate of progress, we will be in session on Easter Sunday; Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the House of Representatives shall go into a committee of the whole on Easter Sunday for the purpose of coloring Easter eggs." Were you trying to call attention to the dragging out of the process, the clock ticking down the hours?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were occasionally some suggestions on the humorous side. Ruoff was one of those who was always hopping up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that resolution a little tongue-in-cheek, but an effective way—rather than a crabby sort of way—of saying, "You're taking a long time here?" An attempt to inject a little laughter?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how effective it is, but at least it kind of loosened things up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Helped with the mood a bit. There was another one. Some representatives were concerned that the special session was costing the state too much money at a time there was an already very precarious financial situation. They resolved "that the state should provide for an appropriation for the expenses of the session shall be limited so that no funds can be paid for subsistence of any legislator for any day on which the House either adjourned or recessed for the whole of that day." And that members "shall not receive any travel pay for said extraordinary session" Were you going into recesses fairly regularly? And were they saying, "We can fix this. We'll just cut everybody's per diem."

And then Representative Ackley said, "All right. But let's have this amendment "that the provisions of this resolution shall apply only to those legislators who drive Cadillacs." I didn't know if he was poking fun at particular representatives. And then somebody turned around and said, "All right. "But the provisions of this resolution should only apply to the sponsors of this resolution." These light moments seemed to maybe ease the tension and give a moment of relief.

Part of this long, drawn-out discussion centered on the issue of the income tax. And the issue of how to deal with the B&O tax. Members found that to be an especially egregious tax. There were several measures about it. They said it was the most regressive tax of all. That it hurts small businesses.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You could lose money and still have to pay it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you, yourself, take a stand on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was supporting any change—you couldn't eliminate it, but you could make some adjustments in the way it was figured.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the sales tax? How did you feel about raising the sales tax up a few notches?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always had the theory that the income tax was pretty much a federal tax. And the sales and use taxes were pretty much state taxes. Then the property tax was pretty much a local tax. I figured that for state services, then, the sales tax is where you ought to make the adjustment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were actually in agreement with Governor Rosellini, because that was the only thing that he was putting forward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't in agreement with it, but I voted for it. Probably to get out of there. Anytime you talk about taxes, there's always a furor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then there were the people asking for a graduated net income tax as opposed to a flat tax. Charles Moriarty, when the graduated income tax was proposed in a joint resolution, wanted the amendment: "after net income... insert: Provided further that no business and occupation tax or other gross income excise tax shall be imposed." So he was saying, "Okay, if you're going for an income tax, wipe out the B&O tax?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that have been more equitable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Maybe. I think, in the whole scheme of things, we probably needed some B&O tax, but it was pretty tough the way it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's like he was throwing down the gauntlet here—okay, if you want an income tax. That doesn't pass. And then, Charles Moriarty again offered a different amendment:

"Providing further that no sales tax shall be imposed on the sale of food." There's another gauntlet. You voted for that amendment.

Then Margaret Hurley said, how about: "Provided further that a sales tax may not be in effect after the enactment of a net income tax." Some people had this notion of the "three-legged stool." These amendments were saying, "No, you want an income tax, then get rid of these other taxes entirely."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was lost as an amendment. It didn't pass and you did vote against it. A few Democrats voted with the Republicans against the income tax and it was defeated. But these ideas were simmering.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was always there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Eventually you just went with it and the sales tax was raised a little bit, but you do get out of there and go home.

There were some complaints about the whole process, that you weren't given very much information. James Andersen said, "I would like to ask what the rule is that requires myself and other members on the Republican side to vote on a bill which we have never seen." Were the Democrats just giving you the total dollar figure with no details?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They took their caucus position and just threw it out there and said, "This is it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like it or lump it? How could you intelligently discuss such a thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You couldn't. You'd have to surmise and talk to members of the committee where maybe it had been discussed somewhat.

**Mr. Kilgannon:** Does this allow special interests to throw things into the budget without much

fanfare if nobody can see it? Is that one of the dangers of this method?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If it were widely used, yes. But I don't think that you'd find that that sort of a move would happen except in an extreme circumstance like a tax increase.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Speaker just said, "You may not have seen it, but you've heard it read." So would they just rattle it off one time and you're supposed to memorize it or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy. I don't recall that exchange.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It doesn't seem quite fair. But after the Budget and Accounting Act was passed, would this process be different? Would you get a paper budget and be able to study it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you have to have the proposal in front of you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was pretty hard to act responsibly as a legislator under the circumstances.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Without the information.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the budget, there were a couple of things that were big ticket items. One of them was the cross-Sound bridge, which seems like it was a big idea around for a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it really came forward this year. Just to set the stage: the federal government was pouring a lot of money into highways. They were building the whole system that became the I-5 corridor.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The interstates. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And I-99 going the other way across the state. Did the federal money also include bridges? Would the federal dollars have helped build cross-Sound bridges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was part of the highway system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that have made it easier at this time to start really looking at those bridges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But the state's share would still be a pretty sizeable amount.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the bridges replace ferries or just be a supplement to ferries?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ultimately the Hood Canal bridge did replace a ferry that ran from Brinnon. Fairly close to where the existing bridge is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Hood Canal is not such a large body of water. Some people opposed it not just for the cost but because they wanted to keep those areas a little more—pristine wouldn't be the word but—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Uninhabited!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't want to develop around in there too much. Would the cross-Sound bridges have affected your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was some talk at one time of bridging the San Juan Islands, but the cost and the fact that you had a small population and a lot of absentee ownership, it was just prohibitive. It just didn't seem to be practical.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People groused about the ferries, but even as an engineering task, it seemed almost insurmountable with the tides.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be a real tough job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the depth of the water. But Julia Butler Hansen who, of course, was a power to be reckoned with, was very much in favor of this and pushed this. It was her main thrust of the year, I believe. What were her arguments for it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just to make it more accessible. She just thought it would be nice.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did she think that those parts of the state were being left out? Like second-class citizens in a way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was some of that. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that they had the right to be connected like anyone else? The Olympic peninsula was still a little bit remote. Now it's a little easier to get there, but it's still kind of difficult.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. You have to work at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When federal dollars are involved and they are pouring into the state, how much does that tip the balance for these highways decisions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it has quite an influence as to projects.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there have been federal reasons to bridge the Sound? I understand the highway budget fell under the defense department. Would they have wanted to get better access to Bremerton?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that there would be some consideration as far as the feds were concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did people bring that up as an issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think any more than just in passing and saying this would make it easier for people to get to Bremerton or wherever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because of the federal dollars, did some of these decisions become less than state decisions? Did the federals come in and say, "We're going to give you this money and we want a bridge here?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** That may have been a discussion with the state agency. How much influence the federal government would have directly with the legislative committee, I don't know. I've never served on the Transportation Committee, and I just don't have any idea how they operated. But I have an idea they may have had some people lurking around in the wings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting because this is, to my knowledge, one of the first big federal programs that touched the states very closely. Later, of course, there were the Great Society programs—everybody has things to say about that—but this was an earlier program. This was an Eisenhower initiative.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You see, prior to the federal interstate system which Eisenhower pushed, we were talking about toll roads here. We had some experience with toll bridges and then, of course, the ferry system was pretty much a toll situation. So this was a new element that was thrown into the mix.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Julia Butler Hansen was noted for getting pretty much everything she wanted in Highways. This was a very big defeat for her, I imagine.

**Mr. Eldridge:** She certainly was a very aggressive person and very knowledgeable and tough.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did she take this defeat? Was she philosophical or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** She grumbled a lot about it. But she was a pretty practical politician and took her lumps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think she was very used to taking them. She normally got what she wanted.

**Mr. Eldridge:** She was very successful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So what happened when this got voted down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was just the magnitude of the project.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was just bigger than everybody? Even a Julia Butler Hansen couldn't pull this off?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wouldn't think so. And you didn't have anyone, as far as I recollect, out front who was from the Seattle area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the chambers of commerce and those sorts of people, even in these communities that would be impacted by this, were not necessarily clamoring for it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were there and they were saying, "Yes, we need this." But I didn't see any great surge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would have been perhaps difficult to envision then the development that has taken place since.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a very small population area. In exchange for not getting this bridge, these series of bridges rather, would the ferry system have been stepped up a little bit to serve those communities? Would that be a way of handling this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They've always juggled the ferry system, adding new boats and additional service and so on. I would say that we have a good ferry system in this state. I think it's basically well run and supported pretty well by both the people who buy tickets and the state as an agency.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there recognition that it was just part of the transportation system? Where other people have highways, it fills that gap?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did have a bill, which was not successful, but went all the way to the Senate, authorizing reduced ferry rates for Island County areas not having a highway connection to the mainland. Would that have been the San Juans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was your thinking that there was no other way to get there, so give these people a break?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As for Bainbridge Island, there is a bridge so you can get to the Island without going on the ferry if you really want to. Was that already built at this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know much about the south Sound, Bainbridge and Vashon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Vashon you have to take the ferry still. That one didn't pass.

Also at this same time, the Naches Tunnel was studied and finally, I think—or maybe not—laid to rest.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It became clear that it was not very feasible, it was not economic?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So these were big projects that had been discussed for a long time. How about these bridges? Did they go away as an issue or were they resurrected again? Was this the final pitch?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I don't recall hearing much about them after that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The other big ticket item, perhaps, which was considered the number-one labor issue that session, was the unemployment compensation bill, HB 84, to raise compensation rates for unemployed workers and also lengthen the period of time they could collect payments. It was a hotly contested, hard fought battle.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And costly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That's probably got something to do with the hard-fought part. Some more conservative Democrats joined you in that fight. It was described by the Press as: "An all-out stubborn battle to keep the bill in Senate Rules. The opponents of the bill tried to hold it on the claim that the bill approved by the House several weeks ago—so it had already gone through your process—would add six million dollars a year to the industry's tax load and thus hurt businesses throughout the state."

I remember you originally wanted to represent small business interests in the Legislature. Did you speak out vociferously against this bill? Was this one of the places where you would take a stand?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think—I wouldn't say vociferously, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that's not your style. Firmly then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That might be a better word. I might have made a few remarks. I don't know that I made a speech.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you try to get out the point that you were a small businessman and what this would do to them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And use more personal contact with legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Talking one-on-one or in caucus or in committees? Was that more effective than the grandstand speech?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've read that once you're on the floor with a bill, it's too late. That those speeches are window dressing? It's already been said and done in committee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. It's window dressing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was the governor's executive request. To increase the minimum weekly jobless benefits from thirty-five dollars to forty-two dollars. These days, of course, that doesn't sound like a whole lot. Could you live on that amount of money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think probably in those times you could.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sparingly.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You wouldn't be living high on the hog, that's for sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hardly. No hog at all, in fact, I would think. And they wanted to extend the eligibility period from twenty-six to thirty weeks. This was a fairly big chunk of time. The employer, this article explained, paid the full cost of the unemployment compensation program. I guess I didn't understand that. I thought that workers, themselves, as you do with social security, made small payments out of their checks for this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** In those days the employer paid the whole bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that would be quite a bite.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And for certain industries that had a lot of cyclical unemployment, this would be a major outlay? Like the timber industry, construction, things like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Seasonal employers would really get hit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were some other provisions, but those were the main ones. I understand there was a recession then and there was quite a bit of unemployment at this time. Was that the kind of pressure that would bring this to the fore? Or was this something that would have been worked on for quite a while and then brought forward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The unions are always working on extending benefits.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pushing a little more.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And they took advantage then of the economic situation as it happened to be at the time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sure. Labor has a set of interests that they push. Did they focus from year to year on different issues and move forward on one front, and be quieter on another, and then, when they had some gains, move forward on another issue? Or did they kind of pepper you with demands?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that by and large they had the whole shot and they'd take their chances.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This year it seems to have this focus. This is what they were pushing. I imagine

they had other bills too, but this is what was getting the headlines. I believe this passes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think that that session it did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was quite a long discussion on the floor. There was some concern that workers were not really looking for other jobs while they were on unemployment compensation. That they were refusing jobs. Was there much documentation of that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there was. There was a lot of oratory.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that now there are procedures, that they have to apply for a certain number of jobs every week and be able to document that. Were those rules not in place back in those days?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't believe so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So a much looser situation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be a part of this bill? Perhaps you would have to accept that, yes, they were going to get more benefits, but would you be thinking more along the line of tightening up the regulations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be something where you could make some input?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because I think it was a pretty loose operation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it be like public assistance, where they wouldn't really have the staff or the means to keep track of all this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I presume there would be some of that. But I think it's a matter of philosophy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the people administrating this would be more pro labor, more taking their word for it, rather than really checking up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did different administrations—a Democratic administration or a Republican administration—take different positions on how these programs were administered?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. But you know, there's really only so much you can do. And so much depends on the director of the agency and what position they take.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the Legislature have any say at all in that sort of thing? Or was that executive decision?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's pretty much in the executive branch. Although the Legislature could pass a bill directing the agency to do this and that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At this time did you have much feedback whether those things actually occurred?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Just a lot of hearsay.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the agencies were a little bit remote from the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** But almost every legislator could recite incidents in his own district. And of course that would have more impact than most anything else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sort of anecdotal information would weigh in. Yet, it passed. And again there was an explanation of the vote—protests by the Republicans. That seemed to be your only real mechanism during the session, was getting your point of view included as a statement in the

Journal. You were one of the signers: "We desire to explain our vote against House Bill 84. At the present time the employee benefits in this state rank only thirteenth among the states, but the present tax on industry per employee is one of the highest in the country, ranking third. This difference is because of the present loopholes and abuses in the system. We desperately tried in committee and on the floor today to correct some of these abuses." You went on to describe how under intense pressure from the Governor, this bill was passed, which to your way of thinking, didn't serve either labor or industry interests. Your message was one of lost opportunity to find an equitable solution to this problem:

"If these corrections had been adopted, the maximum compensation could have been increased to an adequate figure of forty-four dollars a week without increasing the tax on industry. Instead, the Democrats under strong pressure from the governor have resisted all these efforts to establish some safeguards and have left labor with an inadequate increase that has imposed on the industry an even higher tax burden." It's interesting that you agreed on how much the workers should get, but just not the way they should get it? How it was administered?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Without going into all the details, do you remember which was the method you thought it should be run by? Should the employers maybe have not carried the whole burden?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That has always been intertwined with any changes is that the employees ought to participate some way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that have created a climate of more personal responsibility? If the employees had to help pay the bills, it would have been used more judiciously?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It does pass. It's the big bill for the Democrats that session.

During the last session, in the interim period, you were on the committee that looked at the voter's pamphlet bill. And this session—I'm assuming growing out of your work on that committee—a bill went through that established the voter's pamphlet in a more complex form. You're not one of the sponsors though. Was that because it would have gone through a committee you weren't on? Or you were finished with that issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't have a burning interest in the issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd gone to all those meetings. You've done all the work. I thought maybe you'd want to get on board here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you approve of the new more inclusive voter's pamphlet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always thought that there needed to be more information in the pamphlet, and I think that was accomplished.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It certainly revamped it by quite a bit. It had been quite a small thing and then you added a lot of features. It was successful. Was that due to the legwork of the interim committee? People were more informed about this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That had a lot to do with it, but I think the Secretary of State's office was the real moving force.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In those days that would be Vic Meyers? Did he come and give presentations on this? Would you have had hearings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were hearings and people from his office would come in. The technicians.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Washington State was a national leader in the creation of voter's pamphlets. Very few states had them at that time—or else had much more simple ones.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I don't think it was so much with legislators as it was the Secretary of State's office. I think they really used the work that was done on the voter's pamphlet when they'd go to the meetings of the secretaries of state from around the country and say, "See what we did?" I'm sure it created a lot of interest and I think other states sent their people out to see how it was done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think it had an impact on elections themselves? Were people better informed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think maybe on the issues, but as far as candidates, I think what influences there is whether there's a D or an R after your name.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pretty much wraps it up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you compose your own campaign statement in the early pamphlets? Did you choose what to highlight about yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall spending very much time on it. But I think the statement was helpful to voters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the voter's pamphlet make a difference in getting people involved in elections? Did you think it helped more people vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. It might tilt a little towards the incumbents.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's very nice to have the information and names listed all in one place.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another little modernization. There was an appropriation for the electronic roll call machine that passed that session. Was that just a desire to speed things up a little bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. If you had to take an oral roll call on every motion, it just took forever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People still had the right to ask for an oral roll call?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that was more a delaying tactic, then, wasn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those were your main bills that you were involved in and the main issues of the 1959 session.

When I was reading through old newspapers about the session, right next to an article on the cross-Sound bridge, for instance, was a big story about Castro and the Cuban revolution. Seeing that photo of Castro addressing the Cuban people reminded me of the wider events of the world stage, of the context for events in Washington State that we were discussing. How much do international issues like that shadow the work of the Legislative or influence it? Or does it have anything to do with it at all?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it diminished the activity in the Legislature, really, at all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it make you think a little about democracy or what it is you're doing as a representative of this system of government?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just don't think that the national and global incidents had that much

influence. On most of those expanded issues, I think most legislators just kind of shook their heads and probably thought, "Boy! I'm glad I'm not there."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Personally though, how did you feel about the Cold War as it developed in the sixties? This was a pretty tense time in the country. Did you feel that war was imminent, what with the building of the Berlin wall and eventually the different confrontations with Cuba? Did you feel that the country was in any kind of danger?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were beginning to build. I didn't feel that it was in any kind of danger, only to the extent that I thought the administration might cave in to the adversary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be the new Kennedy administration?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was it like to be active during those years when President Eisenhower retired and that next election was really a hard fought one between Richard Nixon and Kennedy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Kennedy was certainly a popular candidate, and of course, became a very popular president. But I think, generally speaking, Republicans just considered him way too liberal and that any opportunity to hold things in check physically, fiscally and socially were just out the window.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The issue of his Catholicism ran through his candidacy, although I understand that it died down after he became president. That debate also had an impact on his co-religionist Governor Rosellini, who was running for a second term at that time. Do you recall how that was expressed in Washington State?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you might hear a little grumbling on the street corners or in the coffee shops, but I don't think that it had really any appreciable effect on the general discussion of things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Each of those candidates was quite concerned about projecting an appearance of independence from the Church. You know the old charge that the Pope would be running things. Kennedy, at least, was careful to refute that. Did you ever run across people who really had that concern?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd find little knots of people talking about the influence of the Catholic Church. But I think among Catholics, particularly in our community, they took more abuse from the jokes about the situation than anything else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it complicate people's thinking? I just wondered if it was an intrusion into the more normal campaign rhetoric?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really don't think so. I didn't observe any of that. But then, I guess I'm pretty relaxed about this sort of thing and didn't get too excited.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's still—I'm not quite sure what to call it. It's not a movement. It's expressed here and there. It's hard to tell how to measure it, but there was still a great concern about communism within the country. Representative John Goldmark ran into some difficulties with that issue in the next election season. But during the session of 1961, there was quite a big discussion in the Legislature about a presentation called "Communism on the Map." It was a film that was circulating in some communities. And there was a lot of concern in some areas about whether there was still a communist threat in the country. Did you remember any of that or your own thoughts on this issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I heard some rumblings about that. And I think that there were a lot of people who were still concerned about the threat of communism. I always felt that Americans could certainly override anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you consider it just a fringe element that you weren't too concerned about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's about right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a Senate Joint Resolution 36 sponsored by quite a few senators—Bargreen, Papajani, Riley, Shannon, Dore, Conner, Raugust, Martin, Freise, Talley, Donohue, Sandison, Knoblauch and Hofmeister—about this "Communism on the Map" film that session. They commended the producers of it and wanted to show it in the public schools. There was quite a debate and some people considered it a civil liberties issue. The resolution passed, but I don't know if anything really happened.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's quite a sizeable group of senators. They don't seem like what you might think of as a fringe group. It's just, to me, a kind of indicator that there was still some concern about communist subversion.

During the last days of the session of 1959, you were appointed to the interim committee on education which was a very active committee and an important assignment for you. There were quite a few factors pushing this concentrated focus on education. In the literature for this committee, there was a lot of discussion of the Sputnik issue. That the country was falling behind in math and the sciences. There was a kind of Cold War-type discussion about defense issues having to do with education. It was given quite an emphasis. The other driver in education issues was the baby boom pushing the enrollment figures sky high. And then down the road seeing what that was going to do to the colleges and universities.

So there were a number of different factors: the sheer numbers enrolling, and then the concern about the science curriculum. At the same time, we were seeing scientific breakthroughs, the beginning of the space age and all that developed with the new technology. All these factors came together.

Some people credit Senator Andy Hess with keeping the interim committee together with all these issues. He was the chair. But other people acknowledged that Governor Rosellini, who had begun the discussion earlier and was the one who initiated and appointed the committee, was the leader on education reform. Did you have any feelings on the origins of this effort?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was an offshoot, really, of the higher education subcommittee of the Legislative Council. There were a number of us who were primarily interested in the junior college situation. That was where I got really involved. But quite frankly, I think that Andy Hess became involved and pushed strictly from a political standpoint.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just looked like a good issue to him on the platform?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I'm not saying that he wasn't genuinely interested in education, but I just think that he felt this was an opportunity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was he aiming to do? He was already a senator. Do you think he was going for a higher office?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. It could have been Congress. And then he just kind of faded into the woodwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I noticed that at the end of all this, there was another interim committee the following session and you were on that again, but he was not. He's just not there. How can you tell if somebody's building a platform or if they're

genuinely interested? If they are just a flash in the pan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's pretty difficult. Then, you see, Senator Dore sort of stepped in and took over. And that was really a political move.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That wasn't genuine either?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But for yourself, you had some legitimacy. You'd been involved in education issues for years. Well, for whatever motives, the committee formed. You were appointed the vice chairman. There were representatives Braun and Brouillet—who I'm sure had bona fide contacts with education circles—and Tom Copeland and Clayton Farrington.

**Mr. Eldridge:** A retired school teacher.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And on the Senate side with Andy Hess: Web Hallauer, John Ryder and Albert Thompson. Senator Hallauer also had a great interest in community colleges. He had attended one, somewhat like yourself. I don't know enough about the other members to say what their position was. Was this a pretty decent working group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was. I think that you'll find it a pretty broad based group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you could work together? You had similar goals?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You see the junior college system was under the jurisdiction of the local school board where the college was located. Morrill Folsom, who was from Centralia, strongly opposed a state controlled and financed system. He wanted the money to go to the school districts. And in a lot of those situations the money went to the school district, but didn't go specifically to the junior college.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it weakened the system? There was little control over the money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There didn't seem to be. It appeared to me that it just went into the district's general fund and then the school board decided how it was going to be allocated and used.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was one of those areas where there was that tension between state control and local control. Education is probably the biggest example of that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you see, that was taken care of by establishing separate junior college or community college boards. I think that the system was developed pretty responsibly and I think that they've done a good job in filling that space between the high school and a four-year college.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go onto this committee with that opinion already formed, or did you pick that up during all the hearings and the fact finding?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I went in with the feeling that that was the way we ought to go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it take much effort to bring other people into that position, or did quite a few people already feel that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the general feeling was that there ought to be a separately financed and controlled system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Creating a separate system was one piece of this issue. Expansion was another. Would there also be support for the places that didn't have junior colleges that wanted them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I don't recall any communities that were clamoring for community colleges, although there were a number of them established once the system was in place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that one of the rules was that if you had a four-year college in your county you were precluded from getting a junior college. It was interesting to me that it was both private and public colleges that counted. What would that be—say, Whitworth in Spokane?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right here in Thurston County: Saint Martin's.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that would eliminate Thurston County all together from the possibility of getting a junior college?

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you see, South Sound College was not a community college to begin with. It was a technical school.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were technical schools administered by the school districts, or did they have a different structure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were, originally. There were a number of those vocational and technical schools that became community colleges.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Community colleges are not just stepping stones to the four-year institutions, but they cover areas that are more employment-related, don't they? They have a different purpose? You can go there and take a course and come out the other end with a pretty good chance of employment in a certain field.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. But I think that in the majority of instances there was a step to a four-year college. And in most instances, a person who graduated with an AA degree from a community college could get into a four-year college without too much difficulty.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It served as their first two years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be good for families who perhaps couldn't foot the bill for the University of Washington for four years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And the other thing was at the community college the student could probably live at home and ordinarily employment was probably available to a greater degree in a local community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little bit more supervision of those kids who are maybe not quite ready to go to the big city? Or whose parents are not ready to have them go.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they do answer a different need. You can go to a community college and not go on and yet come out with something useful. So they are taking care of a different kind of student who would maybe get lost at the University of Washington.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And there was still that pretty heavy emphasis on vocational and technical studies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On this committee, there were both representatives and senators, but the governor also appointed a fifteen member advisory council of citizens with a broad range of backgrounds, headed by Charles Odegaard, the president of the University of Washington. The emphasis here was going to be on post secondary education.

The language that set up the work of this committee acknowledged the constitutional responsibility of the state to provide basic education—predating the court case of 1977 that confirmed that. I remember in the Langlie years a lot of discussion that schooling was really a local issue and legislators discussed shifting the cost

and the method of paying for it to the local areas. Schools were in a crisis due to under-funding, but the discussion then was of shifting the burden. But this language reflected a greater recognition of state responsibility. This seems like quite a change in emphasis. Do you remember that shift?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, it wasn't as pronounced as you've indicated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps some of the earlier talk was more speculative than real? Are we witnessing a change in policy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wish I could say I agree with you, but I just didn't see it that clear cut. It just kind of slid into place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe it just looks that way in retrospect.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's probably right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The committee churns out a very thick report. Did you have hearings? Did you listen to different people? Do you remember what you did to come up with this new analysis?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't that much activity by legislators, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you gather all this information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of it was done by staff people who worked pretty closely with the educators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about this advisory group, the citizens group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't, as a committee, have too much contact with the advisory group. But I'm certain that they were involved in a lot of these reports.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Their names were on them. Did the advisory groups go out and do their research and do their work and hear from the public, and they bring it to you as reports?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had these printed reports that were circulated. As I recall, Dr. Odegaard appeared before the committee and gave a kind of an overview of what they were doing. It was a pretty high-powered group of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it their job to write the reports, and your job as legislators to turn them into bills? Laws?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That is pretty accurate as to how it works. The subcommittees of the interim committee on education in the various categories would probably wind up sponsoring the proposals.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a general overall committee and then there were sub committees studying education “beyond the high school,” the community college issue. And “school finance and organization.” Then one called “efficiency and economy of school management.” One called “improvement of instruction” and another focused on “the teacher.”

There was a list of issues; this was what you were charged to do in the bill itself: “The committee is authorized to ascertain and study facts and knowledge relating to education in the state of Washington including but not limited to”, and then fourteen different items are listed—in case you have extra time. “Education beyond the high school” was top of the list. Did you also study the four-year colleges or just the community colleges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think ninety-nine percent of the effort was on establishing the community college system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was certainly a big push here. Some others were: “Implications of

Enrollment Forecasts.” That would be the impact of the baby boom? “Methods of Dispersion of State Funds.” “Possible Economies in School Operations.” The push there seemed to be more efficiency with tax dollars so you wouldn’t have to raise taxes. Finding new formulas.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The number of the people on the advisory committee were proposed by members of the interim committee. I remember I had asked Bill Molstad, who was president of the local bank and had also been on the Mount Vernon school board for a number of years, if he would serve on the advisory committee and he indicated he would. But after everything was wrapped up I remember him saying to me, “Boy, don’t ever do that to me again!” He said, “Working with educators is a real chore.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it because they wanted what he thought were unreasonable demands?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think probably he thought they sure know how to spend money, but they aren’t too interested in how to raise it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s somebody else’s job! I guess everyone wants the ideal.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it feels so urgent, because each child going through school just gets one go ‘round and the issues can’t wait.

There was an attempt to standardize school construction and get better fire and earthquake protection. There were proposals on how to use school buildings, the grounds and facilities more, perhaps on a year ‘round basis, or after school or weekends. “Get a little more bang for your buck” there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** “School district reorganization.” How far down does the state regulate education?

Right down to the school building? At what point was it local and at what point was it a state issue? This seems to be a place where you're kind of examining that threshold.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's a good question. And I think that's really all that happened. It was just examined but nothing was ever done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it too hot to handle, really?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a tough issue. It really is. And there's no easy answer. It seems like everybody wants local control, but they want somebody else to pay for it. Of course, a lot of the state bureaucrats think that, "If we're providing the money, we want some say as to how it's going to be spent."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's the whole accountability issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So I suspect that there were a lot of rules and regulations concerning the operation of the various functions of the school district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also the issue of some districts are quite wealthy and others are very poor. Should children from poor districts be so disadvantaged, and what do you do about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to me that the equalization system may not completely take care of it, but it certainly was a foot in the door.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's where poor districts get a little infusion of money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a standard you didn't let them fall below? Was that how it worked?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To my recollection, that's right. I could be wrong and it may be a matter of degree. And then there was always the claim that the schools are given more responsibility for different programs, but they don't provide the funds for them to do it. I think there's a lot of validity to that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Driver's education seems to be kind of a hot button issue. Whether or not schools should teach driving. And kindergarten was another.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Kindergarten. Boy! That was one that just went round and round and round.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's now accepted that kindergarten is the first grade in school, but not then. Why was that so difficult? Was it just a new idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were quite a number of privately operated kindergartens—and of course those people were fine with the status quo—and I think, by and large, they were doing a pretty good job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But not everyone could afford that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And they weren't available every place either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's kind of an uneven system? Well, no system at all, really. What finally resolved that kindergarten issue? They're in and out of the budget. It was pretty chaotic.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was always just a budgetary situation. I don't recall when the kindergarten system became actually a part of the school system. But at some point, as you say, it did become the first grade, or pre-first grade. Now they have two or three steps below that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pre-schools by and large are still private, but pretty much everybody goes to kindergarten.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In those years sometimes there'd be public kindergartens and then the next year there wouldn't be, and back and forth. You kind of wonder what happened to the classroom. One child in your family would have it and the next one wouldn't. Pretty up and down.

You also looked at the office of county superintendent. Was that tied to issue of the community college system? They are the chief officer of the school district and, if you're going to pull out community colleges from their arena, does their job need to be redefined?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were many people who thought that there was no need to have a county superintendent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was their function?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was the question that a lot of these people asked. What are they doing? What does that office do?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there'd be the state-level superintendent of public instruction. Would they need some liaison with each county? What would be the chain of command directly to the schools? The school board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The feeling of a lot of legislators was that they ought to be dealing directly with the superintendent of schools of that district and not another layer of administration.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you come to any resolution about the county superintendents?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall during this period that anything was done. And I don't know, but I think it just kind of faded out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes the first time an issue is brought up and studied, it seems nothing really happens. But within a few years you start to see some movement. Either the group is suddenly on notice and they start to improve themselves or there a bill passes after a few years of building concern.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. "How did this happen?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like the kindergarten issue. Another focus of study was "teacher training and certification." Were you asking for more qualifications? Beef up those programs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to me it was a question of accountability. Are the teacher training programs really producing the kind of teachers that we need in the school system today?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this be part of the Sputnik issue where you want more or better math and science?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was always mentioned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was the era of "new math" which was highly controversial. Were people trying out different things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were legislators watching that closely?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so. A lot of parents were!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another category listed was "student grouping for accelerated instruction." These would be, I guess, the gifted students? There were discussions about different kinds of students and how to meet their needs.

**Mr. Eldridge:** This is sort of the beginning of that trend to take care of different groups of students.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also discussion of handicapped children. I don't know where mainstreaming is in this picture. Had that been tried yet in the schools, where more and more children with disabilities are encouraged to go to public schools and be included in regular classes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think this was a little early for that. I think this is a little prior to that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's some discussion. And one from my elementary school days—using "audio-visual teaching aids." There's a term that you probably never hear any more, for those little film strips we used to get in school. And you were beginning to talk about using television in school. How did you feel about that one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had never visualized it as a real teaching tool. I thought it was nice for assemblies and PTA meetings and all that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was the cutting edge in 1960.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then, technical and vocational education was also discussed. This is a huge range. I don't know how you would discuss so many different issues. Were they seen as interrelated? You've got fourteen different areas here, some huge, some not quite so big.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You can't. Somebody picked those out of the air and put them down. I think that really you could say that this committee established the junior college system, period.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And all these other issues were just discussed without any action?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were just there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That is definitely the most concrete thing that comes with all this—just a real grab bag.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's got everything but the kitchen sink in there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think so. There was a lot of talk about standards, trying to make them statewide, figure out what they were, accountability issues, financing and more efficiency. There was this discussion about squeezing the dollar and getting more. More school consolidation. Getting rid of these little, tiny districts to save administrative costs.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And there was a lot of discussion about a basic school plan—construction plan. Can't we hire one architect and have them develop a plan for a school for one-thousand kids or one for fifty? When they get ready to request funds for construction you hand them the plans and say, "Here it is, and here's your check. Go to it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you'd know exactly how much it's going to cost because you'd done it before?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. But, oh no. Every school district says, "We have a particular problem so that we can't use a standardized blueprint."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Schools, themselves, were in flux. Where you had the traditional classroom with the four walls and the door, some were changing to more open plans and team teaching where you move the walls around. Education seemed to be changing so rapidly in these years that I think if you ever solidified into one plan it would be obsolete before the ink dried.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd never do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There'd be a lot of fighting about it.

One thing that was really interesting, when reading through all these reports, was that they uncovered that very few school districts had any

written policies at all. It all seemed to be seat-of-your-pants. That's probably something that had to go. The sort of amateur approach to education wasn't probably working too well.

Because you were talking about fashioning different kinds of institutions like the community colleges, there was also a call for more guidance counselors because there were more choices all of a sudden. Things were just getting more complicated.

So we'll be following that. There were several bills that you work with, having to do with some of this involvement on this committee in the Session of 1961. Did you meet often as a large committee? How did the actual committee do its work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, we generally met on a quarterly basis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This committee operated for a year or so, doesn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then the subcommittees, for instance the one on finance and the one on community colleges, would meet separately.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How much of a time commitment was this for you? Reading the reports and going to the meetings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At the outset, I should say I probably didn't do as much research and reading as I should have, but I was pretty faithful attending the meetings and hearings. It was reasonably time consuming.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You said that this was one of your major interests as a legislator.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But, of course, it helped me having attended a junior college to have a little more insight than a legislator who had never been involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You could speak more from personal experience? Did that help make you a stronger advocate? You, of course, also attended other institutions, so you had something to compare it to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right before this period, you retired from the board of trustees at Western. You had been the chair from '57 to '59, but by the time you were on this committee, you were no longer on that board. Was there a relationship, that retirement, or was that happenstance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had been appointed to the board to replace an attorney from Bellingham by Governor Langlie prior to the session in 1947. He sent the appointment to the Senate for confirmation, but because the Legislature wasn't in session, the Senate leadership just decided they'd sit on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you serve without being confirmed at that stage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** What happened was that I got a notice of a meeting of the board of trustees, so I attended and when I walked into the room here was Joe Pemberton, the fellow that I was to replace. We kind of looked at each other and the president of the college was pretty shrewd and he said, "We're going to be at a distinct advantage. We're going to have one more board member than any of the other colleges." So he said, "If you two don't see a problem, I certainly don't. We'll send out all the information and the notices and everything to both of you." It worked out fine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were like an apprentice member?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of. Yes. And from a political standpoint, he was a Democrat. The other two board members had been appointed by Langlie and had been confirmed and so from a voting standpoint, if you wanted to inject politics into it, we had control. But we didn't have any problem. But then it was interesting. The next session was 1947. The Republicans had gained control in '47, and so they just deep-sixed his renewal and voted favorably on my appointment and that ended it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were those for certain terms that had to be renewed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were six-year terms.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And did your term run out in 1960 and you were not re-appointed, or did you retire?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it came to the end of that period or was almost at the end, and I just figured that I would retire. I was in the Legislature and...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Things were getting busy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, when I was elected to the Legislature, one of the local Republican leaders came to me and said, "It would sure be nice if you'd just resign from the board. I think the governor would like to appoint so-and-so." I said, "Fine. The governor appointed me, have him write me a letter asking me to resign and I'd be happy to." "Oh, we couldn't do that." "Well, you're going to have to struggle along then." So I stayed on and as my end of term approached, I just resigned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had you accomplished enough that you felt that was fine? It was someone else's turn?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had learned everything and done everything you had wanted to do, or were other things pushing you in a new direction?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were beginning to get into a tremendous building program at the college and I kind of hated to leave that because I have always been interested in that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it just feel like too much? You couldn't do all these things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are you the kind of person that if you can't give it your all you'd just as soon not do it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. There have been times when I've taken on a job and then just didn't do it because I just didn't have the time or the energy or really the interest. Sometimes you think, yes, that would sure be great, I'd love to do that, and then you take a look at it and it's not all that it's cracked up to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or you say to yourself, what was I thinking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. What am I doing here?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At any rate, that's one less commitment. Were you still involved with the Skagit Development Association? You had been president in 1958. Was that an ongoing commitment or an off and on kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It lasted for a couple of years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were still appeals advisor for the Small Business Administration for several more years. Was that a very big commitment?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That was pretty much an honorary sort of thing. Although if there were local businesses that applied to the SBA for loans, often times I'd get a call and they'd question me about the person or the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were kind of the local authority?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're still on the board of directors for the Mount Vernon YMCA. And I was wondering, were you still involved with Rotary and with the Jaycees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And, of course, Boy Scouts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So these would be your local community connections.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was state president of the Jaycees, and then two years later I was elected vice president of the United States Jaycees. Then when I finished that term, I decided that I'd just go to the local meetings and let that be it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Take a break?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The only time I really enjoyed going to a meeting is if I was in charge. I like to preside at meetings, and the bigger the meeting the more I enjoy it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We're going to see a little more of that!

## CHAPTER 9

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### CAUCUS CHAIRMAN: 1961

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Republican convention of 1960 was held in Spokane. There was a big change that year. The whole leadership of the Republican Party experienced a turnover. Dan Evans rose to be the floor leader. The “old guard”—Elmer Johnston, Cecil Clark, Newman Clark—were retired. You became the caucus chair. Can you say how you landed there? How did you become caucus chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t really know. Somebody nominated me and I got more votes than whoever—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a rival? Were there other people who would have liked to be caucus chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you know, I can’t remember who it was or what the circumstances were. But, yes, I did have opposition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you didn’t push for it yourself, what was it about you that people thought would make a good caucus chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can’t really say what motivated people, but I did have quite a lot of support and I had two or three individuals who came up and said, “We’re sure glad that you’re going to do this.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there different groups within the Party and you would represent a different interest?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think maybe the fact that I had been active at the state and national level with the Jaycees had more to do with it probably than anything else. And I think that most members of the caucus felt that I had a pretty broad based interest in state government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get along with most members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I had a good relationship with the caucus and with the Democrat members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be a quality they’d be looking for? Somebody who had good people skills?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be your duties as a caucus chair? What did you do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You preside at the meeting of the caucus, and then you serve with the floor leader, the whip, the assistant floor leader.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you set policy as well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It’s kind of a steering committee, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What else would you do? Would you help decide which people would be on which committees for instance, and who would be the chairs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You might be involved in some discussion with the chairman of the Committee on Committees and the Republican leader and the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be broad discussions—not on policy—but approach, that the leadership group would come together to discuss and say, “Okay, this is our focus this session,” or “this is our new look?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** We met for breakfast at least once a week to discuss pending legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you decide priorities and who was going to speak on what issue? That sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That’s right. And then we’d discuss who could talk to so-and-so across the aisle and the whip would have those names and who they were contacting so we could line up what kind of support we had for a particular piece of legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You’d been in office a little bit longer than Dan Evans and some of the others. Did that help you really know everybody and have a deeper relationship with all the caucus members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It probably had some effect, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Dan Evans’ rise was not fore-ordained. Were you involved in the discussions prior to the convention as to what was going to happen there? Who was going to support whom? Did he call you and say, “I want to be the new leader. Could you support me?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not directly from him, but I had been working fairly closely with Joel Pritchard and Slade Gorton and some of the people that wound up to be the nucleus for his support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Working closely in a sense of elections or caucus issues? What exactly would that be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All of the above.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get involved in other people’s elections? Helping this “new look” emerge for the Republicans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn’t really a part of this group. I probably thought many times that I should be, but I wasn’t.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that because they were all from Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. And they had been part of a group that had been involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know they lived together at least one or two sessions. I would imagine that would cement that relationship.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I lived with that group. But I wasn’t a close confidant. I was really part of the group because I was the caucus chairman.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But is it also true that you were caucus chair because you were connected with this new group in some way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there an attempt to get a good geographic spread in this leadership group? You had Dan Evans from Seattle, yourself from Mount Vernon, Damon Canfield from eastern Washington, Tom Copeland from Walla Walla. Both of those two from farming counties. Then Mrs. Swayze, wasn’t she from Tacoma?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had an engineer, a small businessman, two farmers. I’m not sure if Mrs. Swayze had an outside occupation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Her husband was the director of Licensing under Langlie. After she got out of the Legislature, she had an appointed position. I can’t remember just what it was, but she was involved at that level.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And, of course, her son came along later to hold her seat. So long-time government people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any kind of contest with this changeover in leadership? Was this difficult to pull off at this convention? I think there was some last minute tension about whether Dan Evans really had the numbers of people he needed behind him. Do you recall any the machinations that went on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that so many of people were like myself who felt that Dan was a little more liberal than we liked, but we had such confidence in him as a person and a leader that we would support him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Once it all came together—there's quite an emphasis in all of the news articles about this—both at the time and later in retrospect, this was a new look for the Republican Party. Much more assertive. Younger. More urban. More “dynamic” is a word that's used again and again. More willing to push and have a program. That the perpetual minority status of the Republican Party was not set in stone. Did you have that feeling?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of the attractiveness of Dan Evans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I could see it coming and he just grew during this period. When he first came to the Legislature, he could hardly stand up and say his own name. But he did. I understand he took some training and he became a good speaker and of course, being an engineer, he had that technical, analytical mind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did an engineer's mind compare to, say, a lawyer's mind?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a terrible question. But is that the ability to organize your thoughts and line up your arguments together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that an engineer would present the facts as facts, and I think a lawyer relies a lot on flare and showmanship.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So his style of speaking would be just to overwhelm you with information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he wouldn't be flailing away. He'd just be presenting it in a slow, easy manner, but you could tell that it was forceful and backed up by facts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the end, he built a structure to his argument?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Damon Canfield? What were his strengths?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Damon was kind of a slow, methodical person. He didn't speak a great deal, but when he did, people listened. He was a fiscal conservative.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's a little bit from the old guard. Was he included as a sort of transition member of the leadership team? Keeping the best of the old and bringing in the new?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was kind of interesting. We had our caucus election and the Dan Evans group wanted Joel Pritchard as the assistant leader. I sort of had the feeling that they were pushing a little too fast and so, during our caucus, I nominated Damon Canfield to oppose Joel. We won that one and Dan's people couldn't understand how that could happen. It didn't cause a breach or anything like that, but it was

just to kind of slow things down a little bit. So Damon was kind of a holdover from the older group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Joel Pritchard said that he actually supported this. He felt that that was a really good idea, that it would hold the party together better. He thought that was kind of a stroke of genius.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You see, Joel was a sort of “behind the scenes” person. He could kind of joke his way into almost any circumstance. A real master. Everybody liked him. My kids used to sit in the gallery and I’d get home at night and they’d say, “How come the funny man didn’t say something today?” They always called him the funny man.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people claim that his other occupation should have been as a standup comedian. That he had that quality.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He could have done very well, I’m sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, I see no mention of Slade Gorton. Where was he in all this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tell you. Slade sort of has to grow on you. The first impression is that—a lot of the newcomers always called him “Slippery Slade.” He was not bashful about anything and very talented. He read the bills and he knew the budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he didn’t create a warm spot in other people’s hearts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right. He was always there and always participated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That’s why I’m noticing that he’s not in this lineup.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But Slade and Mary Ellen and Joel were really the key elements.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Mary Ellen McCaffree is not yet in this lineup, either. She didn’t become a member of the Legislature until 1963.

**Mr. Eldridge:** She later became chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which is no small thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It’s a big thing. That kept her pretty busy. She was involved in a lot of these discussions because so much in the Legislature revolves around appropriations and revenue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Tom Copeland? He was the party whip. It was a new position for him. How does he fit into this group? Did he bring eastern Washington and the farm interests to the table?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that’s probably the main interest was the fact that he did represent a lot of that eastern Washington agriculture group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he expected to speak for that perspective? If there was an issue, did people turn to him and say, “What is eastern Washington going to think of this?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Tom usually had something to say. I don’t know that there was any dialogue saying, “Tom, what do you think about this?” But he was involved enough that he certainly would respond to any questions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know he was very keen on reforming the Legislature and opening up the old musty doors and windows and getting things changed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He and John O’Brien established the individual offices for members and new

furniture and the electronic roll call machine. A lot of that sort of facility type things that Tom was always interested in. After I was elected Speaker and Tom was elected Speaker Pro Tem, I turned over all to him the personnel matters, the facilities, the scheduling of committee meetings and hearings. He's a very capable person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there talk about that in the caucus this session, about that sort of reform?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That came later.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The last member of the leadership group was Mrs. Frances Swayze. She was the secretary. Quite often the secretary position seems to go to a woman for whatever reason. What would be her duties? What does the secretary do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had staff people who actually mechanically took the minutes and all that sort of stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it just a title?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tell me something about her.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was a good legislator.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which means an effective legislator or a level-headed person or someone easy to work with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And she was a team player. I think she did a good job of representing Tacoma and Pierce County. Sometimes those people kind of feel like they're shoved aside.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's always that rivalry with Seattle.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She wasn't afraid to make a comment about anything that she didn't agree

with. She wasn't a feminist, but she did have a leaning towards women's issues and made good points.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So she wasn't a nonentity sitting there. She was a real player?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was a good legislator. You bet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just from other conversations with some other members, this is a group that seemed to respect women legislators perhaps more than some others. It seemed a little more open to women's issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That might be. And I think it was because they increased in numbers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You seemed more open to allowing women to work to their capabilities. Is that a fair characterization?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a pretty good assessment. And it was both Democrats and Republicans. The Democrats had some outstanding women. Julia Butler Hansen, Margaret Hurley. They had quite a number of real topnotch people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly people who knew their own minds. Julia Butler Hansen retired from the Legislature and went to Congress this year. Did that leave kind of a hole? She was a towering presence. Who stepped into her shoes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really don't believe anybody did. I know it left a real hole in the Democratic caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. She had been John O'Brien's right hand for a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of people thought that she should have been there instead of John.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She occasionally thought that herself. She would have liked to be Speaker. When a person of that caliber goes on to other things, all the relationships seem to shift.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They change. But in the Republican caucus, we had Catherine May. She was probably the first to kind of break the mold. Then she went on to Congress.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She was a colleague of Julia Butler Hansen, then.

This caucus meeting took place after the election. Your Party did gain in numbers: seven in the House, so now you have forty Republicans—up from thirty-three—to fifty-nine Democrats. They still had a majority but the movement was good for you. Was that encouraging? Some of the work was paying off?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think that it encouraged more effort on the part of the Republicans to pick up a few more seats.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were a little bit stagnant for awhile, but now there was some movement.

Governor Rosellini was re-elected. Not overwhelmingly, but he did win a second term as governor. The Republican primary campaign for governor had been quite messy. Newman Clark initially challenged Rosellini, but then Lloyd Andrews beat Newman Clark in the primary and was the Republican challenger. Walter Williams had even had been recruited for awhile to run against Rosellini, who was uncontested in the Democratic Party, which probably helped him considerably. Who decided who was going to be the sword bearer for the Republicans? Was it a personal choice? Having three different Republicans running for governor made it much more difficult for all of them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that those people were self starters. Kind of opportunists figuring that maybe this is the year that they can get back into

things. Walter Williams was probably the best of the group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a preference between Newman Clark and Lloyd Andrews?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Lloyd Andrews had been Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he didn't sound that impressive as a candidate, according to the Press.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Newman Clark, I never quite understood what he stood for. Does it damage the party if you don't have a strong candidate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think, as far as the party was concerned, it had a great effect on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At any rate, Governor Rosellini won despite his difficulties. And President Kennedy narrowly won over Richard Nixon. The Republicans were pretty close, though. Some encouragement there.

Besides being the caucus chair this session, you were on five different committees, which was quite a load: Cities and Counties. Game and Game Fish. State Government. Some of those you had been on before.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Rules and Order, which is a big committee—the traffic cop of the Legislature. And Ways and Means Appropriations subcommittee, on which you had also served before.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were rising in the ranks. You had a lot of duties. Did you have a main focus this session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose that the Appropriations Committee was really an important assignment. With the evolvement of the community college system, it became more important as far as financing was concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering, with your new caucus chair position and membership on five committees, was your commitment to being a legislator deepening in these years? You were climbing in the leadership and had more responsibilities. Did you feel a greater sense of commitment?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think you said that you didn't plan out your political career, but did you feel yourself getting in pretty deep here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I really didn't. I always figured that if my head got up above the crowd, I was selected to do these things, why that was my destiny.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you didn't actually go for the caucus chair position?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't out looking for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some legislators, of course, have great ambitions. So this was more a matter of just accepting more responsibility rather than pushing for advancement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Looking forward. That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** John O'Brien was challenged by Leonard Sawyer in 1961 for the Speakership. They each had twenty-nine supporters. There was one member of their caucus who was ill and away. They represented different parts of the Democratic Party and different models of leadership. I guess the session opened and the contest was still on.

I know Republicans had no role in this, but you must have been deeply aware of it. That there was this disarray. Were you watching on the sidelines with some interest or did you have a preference in the outcome?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a lot of support for Sawyer just because he was opposing John O'Brien. John really wasn't an extremely popular person. He was a good Speaker technically, and he knew the rules back and forth and used them to his advantage. I always got along with him real well and I considered him a friend and we'd joke back and forth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But Leonard Sawyer was more to the Republicans' liking somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was pretty flighty. I think there was a lot of feeling that he couldn't be trusted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did he give that impression?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In committee meetings he'd be making deals.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that mean you weren't too sure what he actually stood for, beyond power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess you could say that. I didn't have any strong feelings personally. I always got along with him okay.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some sources say that he was more amenable to private power interests, certainly than John O'Brien. Would that have been something more useful to the Republican side? More compatible?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably. I think that's a fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there other reasons why a Sawyer Speakership would have been an advantage? Did he have different fiscal views than John O'Brien? Do you think he would have pushed different issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure he would have, but I can't enumerate just what those issues would be. I think he was maybe a little more conservative fiscally than John.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was, of course, one of the big might-have-beens of legislative history.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you know an interesting thing, that session I don't believe started on time because the Democrats were in caucus trying to figure out who was going to be their leader. I remember the Republicans had all filed in and were standing by their seats or just waiting and the Democrat caucus broke up and Leonard Sawyer and a couple of his cohorts came out of their caucus and you could tell that he hadn't made the grade. Then John came out and he had that sickly smile on his face and we knew that things hadn't changed much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that, when they couldn't break the twenty-nine vote tie, that Augie Mardesich was put forward as an alternative to Leonard Sawyer, but that fewer people were willing to go with that scenario and that's when it fell apart and they swung over to John O'Brien.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would Augie Mardesich have been like as a Speaker, since we're dealing in "might have been?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would have been an interesting session! He would have been pretty strong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you speculate a moment on that picture? Would he have kept the

Democrats united? I'm not sure exactly, but they seemed very splintered.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that he would have done a better job of pulling them together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess we'll never know. He left for the Senate the next session and gave up on the House. But the split between the two groups are said to have shown their colors all through that session. Then, of course, the next year was the coalition session, the ultimate breaking apart of the Democratic caucus. So it's always kind of interesting to think, well, what if it had been different? Would that split have ever widened to that degree?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a couple of things. One was the public/private power fight, and the other thing was redistricting. Of course, from the Republican standpoint, that was more critical than anything else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would these groups have had different notions about redistricting? Would they have been supporting some member's districts and while others were sacrificed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they were looking at numbers. Augie had a lot of friends in the Legislature, but I don't think he had built a machine or anything like that. Lenny Sawyer, I'm not sure what he had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps this was a premature challenge?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** John O'Brien, let's see, how many years had he been Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let's see. Mort Frayn was Speaker in '53.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** John O'Brien had been majority leader in '51 and '53. And then Speaker in '55 and '57 and '59, so this was his fourth term as Speaker in 1961. I believe that's some kind of record for holding the Speakership.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it apparent throughout the session, this split, and was there anything the Republicans did to keep the split from healing or use it to their advantage? Did you at least factor it into your own calculations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The place that the Republicans got involved was in the public/private power fight.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did O'Brien look vulnerable because of that challenge? I know the big power bill of that year, which we will discuss in a minute, probably would have come up anyway because it grew out of a local issue in Thurston County. But did this look like the year that you would win a private power bill? You'd been battling that one for a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that there was any real strong feeling that this was the time we could prevail.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if in caucus you discussed the disarray of the Democrats and what you might do with that opportunity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a general feeling that the Democrats who opposed the legislation were the liberal element of the Party. It solidified those groups, and then, of course, the few Democrats who supported the legislation—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We're talking about the power bill, House Bill 197?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think they were considered to be more conservative, but I would venture to

say that on most legislation, the public power Democrats were pretty much on the liberal side.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Shall we discuss that bill now? Don Brazier, in his book on legislative history, and other people agree, says that this was one of the biggest battles the Legislature ever saw. That the fight over this bill was a critical turning point in the history of the Legislature. You had a filibuster—a rarely used tactic.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It went on for days and days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a make-or-break debate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And Harry Lewis pretty much carried the ball on that whole issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a very young legislator. Wasn't he a freshman?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did anyone coach him or help him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that the private power people were in the back room helping him out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about in your own Party? Here was this young legislator bringing forward what turns out to be the most contentious bill of the session. Were there systems to support people through their battles and coach them on procedure and strategy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We weren't that sophisticated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think his strategy was a good one? How he maneuvered the bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He just waded in!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The bill was cosponsored with Margaret Hurley and Avery Garrett, two Democrats, so he was doing the wise thing in getting support on the other side of the aisle.

The bill would have required a vote of the people before a public utility could acquire the operating property of an investor-owned, that is, private utility. Some say this was the last great power battle of the Legislature and that after that there just wasn't the energy for it and eventually the two groups who had been at each other's throats—the private and public power entities—learned to coexist.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was the last gasp. There are various interesting descriptions of how this bill was fought. The Rosellini biography by Payton Smith offers this analysis: "The public power forces assumed that the Rules Committee would hold the bill and not let it reach the floor of the House. But John O'Brien had given a pledge in return for her support to Margaret Hurley—again the Speakership issue—that he would allow a secret ballot on the issue, and under that cover several Democrats allowed the bill to move forward." Now, you served in Rules. You were present during this maneuver. Do you remember, was it common in the Rules Committee to have a secret ballot? Or was this pretty much unheard of?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Once in awhile a member would call for a secret ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of issues would require that? Just really touchy ones?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Or it could be a matter of appropriations or establishing a new department or expanding the interest of a state agency.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But there would be issues where people would not want their names

recorded 'yes' or 'no' for different reasons? Where it would be problematical?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let's just say it was the kindergarten issue. There might be a person who wouldn't want to offend the education groups in his district and so he would like to have a secret ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that a kind of signal which way he's going to vote just in itself? But it's a little bit more muted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And then it isn't the cold, hard vote down or up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Rules Committee was—as were, I think, all committees—closed. You didn't have anyone in there watching you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They were all closed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Secret, then. Behind the doors. But would word leak out how different people had voted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So John O'Brien probably knew how Margaret Hurley felt about power issues, coming from Spokane, a noted private power area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he was a little bit over the barrel, I suppose. Somehow she extracted this promise from him and he needed her vote for the Speakership. I find it fascinating that it's her vote that he makes this promise for, given what happened later. Do you remember this secret ballot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At the time you may not have known the significance of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which side of this would you have been on yourself? Which way would you have come down on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would have supported putting it on the calendar.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that's all this was about, wasn't it, is whether or not it should leave that committee? So getting it out of Rules was one of the hurdles?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps this didn't feel momentous yet. Was there any indication before that this was going to be a really hot issue, resulting in a filibuster and debate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because it had been before the Legislature so many times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What made it so critical this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the fact that there was the fracture of the Democratic caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mean that little window of opportunity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it anything to do with the tenacity of Harry Lewis himself or other factors of that kind?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that Harry had a number of legislators who were cheering him on and helping him in any way they could.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe he was too innocent to know what he was stepping into? This was supposedly a measure for his district, Thurston County.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And he was getting a lot of pressure, I'm sure, from people in the county.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some belief that the bill would move quickly through the process and not be a complicated thing at all. But there was a certain amount of raucousness in the Chambers during this discussion, a kind of edginess on that first night. And rather famously, as things—as they say—heated up, John O'Brien abruptly adjourned the session. Broke his gavel, and left the Chambers.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Walked off the Rostrum.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And apparently there was pandemonium after that. There are a couple of different interpretations of this. One is that he did that to end the discussion. And the other more charitable point of view is that he truly believed that the House was out of order and needed to be adjourned because the decorum had been shattered. How did it look to you from your side?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know at the moment, but in retrospect I believe that John felt that it needed to be cut off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Have a cool-down period?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you had been Speaker, what would you have done if the House was all in a big eruption over something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I expect that I might have done the same thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Interesting. But at the time was there just outrage? You thought that you had the majority on this one.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that that was probably the initial interpretation that here was a guy just trying to throw his weight around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was called a “dictator” and various other things. There was a lot of push behind this bill. Then you fell into this filibuster: endless oral roll call votes, calls of the House, procedural amendments, trying to send it back to all kinds of different committees—some that had absolutely nothing to do with utilities. What was the strategy there? Do you remember what people were trying to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those who opposed the bill were just trying to kill it by any means possible. The supporters were beating them back every time they tried to stall it or kill it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was not just Republicans, of course. It got really mixed up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Several Democrats wanted this bill for private power reasons. Mark Litchman was the floor leader for the Democrats. He was on his feet a lot. Every page of this debate, when you read it, he was pushing something. What kind of a leader was he? I don’t have a portrait of him.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wouldn’t call him a strong leader. I always had the impression that he liked to hear himself talk. I don’t know that he had much of a following in the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet he was floor leader. He must have had some. Was he closely tied to John O’Brien? Is that how he came to have that position?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t know how he was elected and what kind of support he had, but I’m not sure that he was too close to John O’Brien. He may have been. I just don’t recall any strong indication.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Augie Mardesich and Leonard Sawyer? Did the split go that deep?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You see, Augie was from a strong public power county, Snohomish County. I don’t know, but I have an idea that it was one of those situations where he had to hold his nose and vote. Sawyer, I don’t know. He was from rural Pierce County and I would suspect that he wouldn’t have any problem or any conscience going with the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the Spokane Democrats and several others peeled off and voted with you because their loyalties were different. And this was where the real split started to show. Did you talk with them or was that something they just did on their own?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They just did it. As a matter of fact, when we got around to the point of forming the coalition, this group came to us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. When you saw that group—it was a sort of a shifting group—was voting on the Republican side of this issue, was this a triumph?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was more of a surprise.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It didn’t happen very often?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there more going on here than about private and public power? Was it also some people just simply opposing John O’Brien? Were there other things imbedded in this fight?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think that some in the caucus just opposed John O'Brien, and that was the basis for the vote. But I don't know, because I was never involved in conversation with any of them as to why they voted with the Republicans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was said to disrupt the whole session and cause a lot of bitterness. It put you behind on your schedule. And eventually, of course, the bill went back to Rules and was not passed. Nor was it ever brought up again.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that because you had expended the energy that could be spent on this, and even when you were in the majority the following year, it was a sort of an old issue that wasn't going to be resurrected?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think anybody had the energy to go through it again.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You probably would have won it the next time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's probably right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Although it's noted that it would have still had to go through the Democratic Senate and that Governor Rosellini vowed to veto it. So, curiously, given that, why was so much energy expended on this bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Strange things happen in the Legislature and that's one that I certainly can't explain!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you just get your teeth into it and it was such an all-consuming fight that it took on a life of its own?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I don't know that anybody ever really sat down and tried to diagnose what would happen if this happened or what would happen if something else happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were just in the thick of it before you knew it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting because it goes on for days. And then finally, I believe, there was a Republican from the Centralia area, a public power district, who couldn't handle it any more. He said, "I'm sorry. I can't do this. I can't vote for this." And that was the end of it. It went back to Rules and it was never heard from again. Did this fight make Harry Lewis' name? Did he become a bigger presence?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it hurt him a bit. I don't know that it did a great deal for him in building up his stature in his district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly as a freshman, he put himself on the map pretty quickly.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, he did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This fight, of course, was one of the big issues of the session. And it showed the Republican Party in a much more active, aggressive stand. Dan Evans played quite a role during that debate and various other up-and-coming members of your Party created a name for themselves and played a very active part in that.

Several news articles discussed this event. There was a *Seattle Times* article that summed up after the session; I wanted to ask you to comment on their assessment. It said, "The forty House Republicans not only were welded into a firm unit, but also had enough votes to capitalize on splits in the majority party to assume command on several occasions. The Republican leadership went into battle with the assurance that every team member was in marching order and ready for combat. Few minority leaders have had the unswerving support given Daniel J. Evans." The only other person I

have heard this said of is Jeannette Hayner. I know you didn't serve with her, but she was said in the same way to hold the Republican Party together, to really vote in a block. The Democratic Party is often said to be disorganized and individualistic. But you Republicans are often noted for your cohesion. Did it feel that way from the inside? Did you feel that you were one army moving forward under the banner?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. This was a great caucus. Those people were really dedicated and they stood together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a new strength?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was the first time that I saw it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a kind of exhilaration to some of the statements made about this era. Did it feel that way to you? Exciting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You could kind of tell it. When people left the caucus room, there'd be two or three going out together and talking and being pretty animated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And pumped up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Like a football team going back into the second half.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When a football team feels that it might win?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then the article went on to say: "House Republicans proposed an alternative program in opposition to the majority." For years you'd been in the minority and somewhat sitting back and watching what the Democrats were going to do. Of course, you were still trying to do nonpartisan things, but that you had an actual program in contrast to theirs seemed like a new departure.

I'd like to discuss another article from the *Seattle Times* by Ed Guthman called, "The Republican Party Studies Stand on Fiscal Responsibility," to try to understand more about your new spirit. There was a group, as described in this article, of House Republicans who were proposing an alternative program in opposition to the majority Democratic Party. Previously, as we have discussed, when you were a quite tiny minority, you let the Democrats take the lead and didn't try to match them budget for budget, program for program, in any particular way. But this article seems to be saying that this session the Republicans were more activist, even though you were still a minority, took more positions, and got yourselves out there. Was that about right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the feeling was that we needed to get more aggressive. It was becoming evident that there was a fairly conservative group in the Democratic caucus, so we figured that on a number of issues we could probably pick up enough of their votes to do something.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this an important psychological turning point between thinking of yourself as always in the minority to thinking of yourself as a possible majority party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that it was an undercurrent that was flowing through everybody's mind. And I think there was more optimism in the Republican caucus at this time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had new leadership. Certainly the word 'aggressive' was used by yourself and almost every article written about House Republicans at this time. You're assertive. You've got plans. "Moving." "Dynamic" is the other word that was used a lot. This article, for one, said that "they recognized they lack support to put this program on the statute books, but they succeeded in dramatizing their position," I guess articulating this perspective. It said there were

eighteen Republican legislators in this group. Were you a part of this group who are asserting this new energy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I wasn't actually on the roster of the group, but I did keep pretty close and kept track of what they were doing. I think there were a number of others in the caucus who wanted to see some sort of a program that could be used, one, from a political standpoint at the next election, and then the other, just a personal interest that a lot of them had for a conservative program that would counteract the more liberal Rosellini programs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Besides Damon Canfield, who was identified in the article, can you think of who was part of this group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, Alfred Adams, the doctor from Spokane, and I think Maury Ahlquist and Cecil Clark were a part of it. I just can't remember just where Dan Evans and Joel Pritchard, Mary Ellen McCaffree, Slade Gorton and Bob Goldsworthy fit in there. I know that they became the core, but whether or not they were involved with this group initially, I just don't recall.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall if this group lasted all year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it was a long term situation. But I think they did turn the light on and get things started, and got people thinking about the possibilities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All these movements add up to a big watershed of change.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So getting any kind of group together that was more active in discussing issues was all part of a bigger picture. So, whether this

group helped forge this unity or it was the new leadership of Dan Evans and others, this was a new phenomenon.

**Mr. Eldridge:** One of the important elements was the fact that the caucus was standing together. We discussed issues in our caucus meeting, made a decision and then that would be the way it would go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that was new? Or just more effective somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was a stronger, more cohesive group than I recall during the two years prior to this that I was in the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you were the caucus leader, what role did you play? Did you help forge these discussions? Bring people in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't involved so much in the planning and the strategizing—that sort of thing—but as the caucus chairman I offered some leadership that kept the caucus together and then, I'd say, help forge the battle plan, if you like. Of course, all this is what developed into strong support for Dan as the ultimate leader.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly these events, as they unfold, transformed the Republicans into the majority party within a short time. A great step forward. People could see that this was coming, perhaps? That "if we get behind this guy Evans, we're going to be successful?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a lot of that. I think that the members of the caucus became more sure of themselves and were more optimistic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you were in a caucus meeting and there was someone who looked like they were not really on board for whatever reason, would you as caucus chair go to them yourself,

one-on-one, and talk over their issues with them and try to help them coordinate their effort a little bit? Is that the primary role of the caucus chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. To some extent. But the whip would be the person who actually made those contacts. But I certainly did talk to people in the caucus about our position and how we needed to go forward together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And was the battle plan simply to become the majority or was there a particular program that you wanted to put into place?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Republicans have always touted fiscal responsibility, and I think there was beginning to be a swing towards more moderate approaches to social issues. Of course, that's where Dan ran into some opposition because he actually was pretty liberal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Going for the greater whole rather than the smaller parts? For yourself, you could see a bigger picture, so that on some of the small issues, you could just live with those?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was one humorous piece that I found: this article said that the Republicans were discussing this more moderate approach: "The Republicans were re-examining their Party's position on standing first and foremost for fiscal responsibility." Then one member—who was not named—said, "We've been like husbands trying to talk to their wives about bank balances, says one Republican. 'Where does it get you?'" That's a little outdated now, but was the thinking that your message had become too narrow and wasn't exciting enough to draw new people and that you needed to have some other things to say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a recognition that we needed to broaden out. But I think through all of this was the matter of accountability. In other

words, a lot of the things that the Democrats proposed over the years, there was really nothing wrong with the concept, but it was a matter of how you put it together and how you paid for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The nitty-gritty.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Things haven't changed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This Damon Canfield group, for the first time, invited representatives from labor groups to give presentations to them. They had other groups—from education, industry and various interests. But talking with labor seemed to be a departure, because, well, labor's pretty strongly a Democratic-oriented group. It looked like they were really reaching out and trying to understand different points of view.

**Mr. Eldridge:** In a lot of instances it just solidified the thinking of many of the members of the caucus. See: "We've been talking about this and now he just proves to us what we've been saying is right, that they've gone amuck. While it's fine to sit down and talk to them, we've got to rein them in." This was particularly true with the education forces.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They wanted "pie in the sky" and you were trying to bring them down to earth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And just some of the things that were being proposed in the education program were really pretty expensive and hard to reach.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the ideas put forward were a recovery clause for public assistance that would be, say, if your situation changed, you would pay back some of the money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More training for welfare recipients so they could have gainful employment.

Raising teacher's salaries. But there was this other idea of putting schools on an eleven-month program. Not having such a long summer holiday. Getting a little more back from the state's investment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were talking about having classes year-round and breaking it up on a different schedule.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That hasn't happened.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And that's been talked about for years and years and years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There's something sacred about those summer holidays. Better use of school facilities and other ideas to save money. In general, the idea was that if you could just use all the resources more efficiently they would not have to raise taxes. So, we'll see what happens with that.

All this new activism made quite a difference that session. The Republicans challenged the Democrats again and again in different ways. One of the first actions, actually of both the parties, was the override of Governor Rosellini's veto of the salary bill by from the previous session.

And I don't know if your party made an effort to make more headlines, but when you stood up to do something, you got publicity, a change from what had been happening before, I think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there was really a concerted effort. Rather, it was something that occurred because of the individuals who stepped up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly Dan Evans stepped up to that one. There was an explanation of the vote in the Journal. It says "We Republican members of the House of Representatives have voted to override the Governor's veto"—passed

in the 1959 session, which would have increased the salary of the governor from fifteen-thousand to twenty-two-thousand five-hundred per year. "In our opinion the office of the governor of the state of Washington should command a salary in accordance with the provisions of the bill."

Basically, everybody, all the higher officials were going to get a raise and then Governor Rosellini line-itemed the governor's raise out because he thought it would be too hot a political issue in an election year. But you came back and overrode his veto and he wasn't happy with that idea. There was a sense that it was just a political ploy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of those who felt that we were beginning to move forward and that we might be laying the groundwork for a Republican governor and officeholders to benefit from the increases.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly that was not an extravagant amount of money for the head of a very large organization.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The next action—and it seemed like every time some piece of the Democratic program goes forward you had a response—the governor brought in his budget message and Dan Evans had a very strong response. He complained that the governor called for a tax increase, but that he didn't specify what taxes he wanted raised. He was on his feet almost immediately, pushing on the governor saying, "What do you really want to do here?" That aggressiveness was new. Evans had a resolution to force the governor to respond to his questions about which taxes he meant. That was also a party line vote, but still, your presence as a Party was much more assertive.

As well as picking on the governor, you were also picking on John O'Brien a little more. The complacency, the "going along to get along"

era was gone. We discussed House Bill 197, the one on private power, the Harry Lewis bill. But it was part of this big new pattern of really taking on John O'Brien. Many people think that that was the point where John O'Brien started to lose power. It was already a little precarious with Leonard Sawyer challenging him for the Speakership, but that this point was where you can see the beginning of the end.

Another area where you challenged the status quo: you challenged Governor Rosellini concerning his appointments to the Liquor Control Board. Liquor seems to be one of those flash issues. Why liquor? Was it because it's such a messy issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's one that people understand and it sort of evolved. Langlie was really a strong teetotaler and when he replaced Mon Wallgren he removed the bar from the mansion and put in milkshake machines. That was how the thing kind of swung.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those approaches offer a particularly sharp contrast in their personal style.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And then Rosellini was kind of thrown into that sort of environment, and whether it was exactly as advertised, I'm not sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you explain a little more what you mean?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Wallgren had his cronies in and they played poker and drank. They probably did a lot of business at the same time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A kind of "old style" politician.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the stories about Al Rosellini relating to liquor issues and possible corruption—is that what you are suggesting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was always some innuendo.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think they had any basis in fact?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as I personally knew during my time in the Legislature, I didn't really see any of that. I didn't really see or hear anything about that until I was on the Liquor Board. Then some of these things began to pop up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So then you heard stories about how it used to be, and there was some substance there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then how it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The liquor issue is really odd sounding if you're not familiar with that area, but I understand that there were these different accounts that were maintained, that people would sell the different brands of whiskey and Scotch or whatever to the state and that perhaps a little wining and dining was involved in the choices made.

Why isn't liquor more straightforward like any other commodity? Why would you need to persuade the state to buy one brand over the other? Wouldn't the marketplace dictate that in itself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have a certain amount of control over what brands are going to be at eye level in the liquor stores and there are all kinds of things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And somehow this was tied to patronage appointments. That the friends of the governor got appointments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, in the liquor agencies which are in the outlying small communities where they don't have a state store, they appointed a manager and then he got his own location, put his own shelving in and hired the people that he needed to run the place. Those used to be pretty much patronage types. As a matter of fact, the

managers of liquor stores were also patronage. But once we got into the merit system, we had a personnel department.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The actual issue this time, the governor wanted to change some of the policies of the board and to do that he needed to replace some of the board members. Some people on the board weren't his appointees, and although he was ultimately accountable for liquor issues, yet he didn't have much power over this board that he inherited. I would think that would be an issue for any governor in this sort of situation. So he proposed that they reduce the length of term from nine years to six years.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nine years *is* a long time. Then he would have had an opportunity to ease some members off and appoint his own people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you see, the nine year term was set up originally so that it would span two terms of a governor. Ultimately it went to six years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it was a big fight. There seemed to be a lot of tension and ambiguity about liquor issues. There were several initiatives in these years about liquor by the drink, where liquor could be sold, and opening it up a little bit more, and extending the hours—just kind of pushing on the rules in every direction. The 1960s was a time of loosening generally for a lot of different social laws; it was part of the cultural shift. There were still, though, strongly identified 'wets' and 'dries' in the Legislature. How did you feel about some of these issues yourself; did you think it was time to start loosening up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't believe at this point in time I actually gave it much thought. I thought the basic system was operating pretty well but I wasn't in favor of expanding the sale or getting the state out of the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a good compromise situation, did you feel?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I hadn't run into any flagrant situations as far as liquor was concerned and of course this wasn't too long after prohibition. There were, of course, some real problems during that era.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mean with law enforcement and general disregard for the law?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then there was a lot of trafficking between the State of Washington and Canada.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people were against any liberalization of liquor laws.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, Herb Hill was one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Herb Hill of the Alcohol Problems Association? It was aptly named, an organization that thought any alcohol consumption was a problem. That group was still powerful in the early 1960s, but they were on the losing end of the cultural shift. Was that apparent?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, they were beginning to go down hill and the public was really the driving force behind that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were heading into an era of greater prosperity, which tends to be a little more liberal during those times because people can afford to be.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And then I think the experience that a lot of young men had being in the service, had a lot to do with the change in attitude.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, going over to Europe and seeing the culture over there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, and the fact that in most instances service men could be served liquor. They traveled to different parts of the country and the laws were different, and in many instances were considerably more liberal. I think there was quite an influence there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. So there would have developed a critical mass of people who didn't necessarily think this way was the only way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, the blue laws, "keeping Sunday pure," all these ideals were fraying at this time. That campaign to "keep Sunday for the family" and fighting against opening stores on Sundays...eventually all those things were just washed away and Sunday becomes...

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just another day.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pretty much what you made it, a personal choice then, not a legal matter. Were Republicans at this stage where they thought, "Get government out of people's personal lives; people should regulate themselves and government shouldn't be concerned with that?" Sort of a more libertarian point of view? Or were Republicans more the conservative social group who still supported these policies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, as far as liquor was concerned, the majority of the caucus felt that the state ought to control it and it ought to be left alone, not expanded. However, there were some pretty vocal members of our caucus who were advocating that we should liberalize the liquor laws.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a divisive issue in the caucus?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, as I recall, these folks would get up and sound off and that would end it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember who were the advocates for more liberalization?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh boy, Dick Ruoff and Dwight Hawley come to mind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just thinking: the wine industry in Washington was just getting on its feet in these years and farmers, or representatives of farmers, from the wine growing areas of the state in southeastern Washington, did they try to help that growing industry by pushing for different attitudes on liquor laws?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, I don't recall. The wine industry was really not much in the course.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that was too early; maybe 1961 was premature for that. It was pretty tiny still, but it's going to become a factor.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, you bet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was something that became a big election issue; some Republicans really beat up Governor Rosellini about his liquor legislation, whether or not it was a fair representation of his views, but it was used against him.

It said that the biggest accomplishment of the Republicans that session was getting a billboard bill passed. Do you remember that particular struggle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. The billboard industry was pretty strong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The bill was sponsored by Evans, Testu and Hood. It was widely supported by many Republicans, although the final votes for it were a pretty mixed bag. It didn't seem to be a party line issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think it was reasonably close.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You supported it. Can you line up the issues for me—was it highway beautification versus commercialism?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's probably the dividing line. I remember one of the most interesting discussions was when the bill was up for final passage and Frances Swayze put forth kind of an interesting position. She said that her children learned a lot from billboards. She said they learned to read, they learned to be observant of things, and she said, "I don't see any problem with having billboards on the interstate highways." Well, of course, the federal government took care of all that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true, it became a federal issue pretty soon after this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You either control billboards or you cut off the money from them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That kind of straightens up the issue right there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That makes a lot of decisions for people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand the groups that wanted to ban the billboards were the garden clubs and groups of that type.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Environmental groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, the early environmental groups. How did you make your own decision on that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I probably flipped a coin.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't have a strong feeling one way or another?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I didn't. I think I probably supported it because it was a business issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Supported having billboards?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But in the end you voted to get rid of them, you went with Dan Evans.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, that was probably the reason that I did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He persuaded you? Now, would he be twisting arms, as the saying goes? How would they get people who were ambivalent to support this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, on that issue, it was pretty difficult because there wasn't a clear cut right and wrong. It was just a matter, really, of personal choice and what you thought your constituents wanted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read that when this passed more than six thousand billboards were taken down. That seemed like an astonishing number of billboards.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, there were sure a lot of them out there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have made a big change in the landscape in certain parts of the state. There are still areas with billboards, though.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, you see, it didn't say 'none' but they put some restrictions on them. They couldn't be closer than six hundred feet from the freeway and they couldn't be any larger than so many square feet. There was quite a lot of control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For some who were big supporters of this, this was seen as a major triumph that a Republican initiative passed. This was the beginning of the beginning for some people that you could get things passed that mattered to you. That this represented an exciting breakthrough. I guess not for you, though?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, it was just another bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another issue of importance that session involved education. Many in your party had wanted that to be the main focus of the session. Because the power debate dragged on quite a bit, you were a little behind in your process, though. Redistricting was also sapping a certain amount of energy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But with education issues, there were a lot of different activities in that area. The House and Senate held a joint session of the Legislature on January 31 that brought in Louis Bruno, the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, Charles Odegaard, President of the University of Washington, Clement French from W.S.U. and all the other college presidents and various superintendents of public instruction from different areas of the state. They gave a big presentation to the Legislature. Do you remember that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember that it was a well orchestrated program based primarily on the need for additional funds to do these things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this something that you would have been involved in from your interim committee on education from the previous session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The committee wasn't actually involved. They had made the report and some of those things were-

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the players were the same? Representative Brouillet seemed to be playing a role here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You're right, yes. I would say that the greatest accomplishment was the establishment of the community college system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this just a way to focus attention or heighten the discussion level? This was an impressive group of people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was going to say I think that it was designed to get people interested and to gain additional support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this be for community colleges and also higher education, or for a host of education issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think just education in general, pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's look more closely, then, at your main achievement. There were several bills to do with community colleges. House Bill 370, sponsored by Swayze and Campbell, to create a junior college board came in that year. Not everyone was for it, but I believe you were. It passed with a good majority: seventy-one people wanted to create this board. What did this board do to help organize and coordinate the growth of community colleges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was kind of an advisory group. There were still those that didn't want to pull the community colleges away from the local school district. And that was for all the contention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think this is the year that you removed the restriction that junior colleges couldn't exist within a certain distance from four-year institutions. Would the four-year college presidents be saying, "We don't need this restriction any more. We're bursting at the seams; this will help us." Would they make that kind of pitch?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of that kind of talk from the state colleges and universities that they wanted a better two-year system. Junior colleges originally were pretty much focused on vocational type activities and curriculum, but I

think they found that a lot of students were there to get the first two years of college. I think that it's been a very successful program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, it was a big achievement when you got the whole system in place. This call for coordination with the colleges was a fairly new one. They had been somewhat aloof to the community college system before, but there was this growing realization that they actually had a relationship and maybe this was a new use for these junior colleges. More people were using them as a stepping stone.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And once they got established and began to get into adult education and night classes, they expanded the opportunities for many people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, it's a good transition. Part of the issue with education in 1961 was how to finance it; of course, that's always been tough. Governor Rosellini and some Democrats wanted to push for an income tax using the needs of education as the driver.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Apparently that held up a lot of the discussion. People couldn't move on certain issues because of the income tax issue was tangled with education issues. Joint House Resolution 2, sponsored by Goldmark, Edwards and Litchman, by executive request for Governor Rosellini, called for an amendment to the Constitution to permit an income tax.

There were other bills calling for a graduated net income tax, or reducing the B&O tax, or adding exemptions to the sales tax. It seemed like every time taxes were on the table it fragmented in this way. Nobody got behind one solution, there was just a whole menu. Is that why it shows up again and again, people can't choose? They don't know what they really want? They seem to know what they don't want.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so many legislators really didn't understand what the system would come up with. And since they didn't have the answers, it was pretty hard for them to make a decision whether or not they wanted to go for a graduated net income tax, a flat tax, and whether you tie in reductions, or elimination of existing taxes. Everybody just kind of muddled and were up in the air.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people thought that if you brought in an income tax you absolutely had to get rid of the B&O tax or the sales tax. You'd have to give up something. There were always the calculations about, "Can you trust the government to ever give up the tax once it's in place? Can you draft legislation that has that guarantee in it so that people would actually believe that that would be so?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh boy, it would be real difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that what it would be, a Constitutional amendment?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My feeling was always that the Democrats kept throwing up an income tax but they really didn't want one, they just wanted the issue. And I finally supported putting the income tax on the ballot in the sixties. And that was exclusively because of Dan Evans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a matter of, "Well we've talked this death; now let's see what the people want."

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, the people had voted on the issue, I don't know how many times, and always turned it down. That was one of the other reasons that I didn't feel too guilty about supporting it, because I knew that I would not hit my head on it again.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was no danger there. Now, there was the flat income tax and the graduated income tax, did you have to have one or the other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My preference would be to tie it to the federal income tax. Just take a percentage of what you pay in federal income tax and pay that to the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would be a lot less paperwork.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the federal government would probably do the paperwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be an argument for it, I would think! Many people weren't very keen on a state income tax because, "Oh my heavens, what if you had to fill out those forms again?" That would defeat you right there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think that was true. People don't like to fill out paperwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This discussion dragged on; in fact you're pushed into special session over it. The Senate and the House can't agree, let alone the Democrats and Republicans. It went to conference committee, then a free conference committee, then it just sort of disappears off the table. There was the discussion about taxes on food, somebody wanted to add taking the tax off prescription drugs...

Eventually, I believe they just raised the sales tax again, which seems to be the usual response. But the Republicans protested that method and said the whole thing was shabby and that education had been, once again, poorly treated. It seemed like the positive program the Republicans put forth had lost energy. The whole thing just lost momentum.

**Mr. Eldridge:** When you get to talking about taxation then you lose people real fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Too bad. To get to the end of the '61 session and wrap up, I wanted to talk a little bit about what bills you sponsored that year. Several of them had to do with education—an

outgrowth of your service on the interim committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. That's probably the only reason that I was on the bill, because it came out of the committee. Most of the education bills were sponsored by members of the committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were pretty active. Not all of them passed—only some did—but was it the case where at least you brought it forward and began the discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That is the usual outcome of legislation proposed by interim committees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You sponsored House Bill 345, with Brouillet and Copeland, also members of that committee, to create an educational research center. I remember that discussion in the interim committee report, the committee felt that to really improve schools you would need more information. That one went pretty far but it didn't make it to passage.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Didn't pass.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Again, with Tom Copeland, and this time Representative Bond, you had another bill to provide a better bidding procedure for school districts.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Primarily for construction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The buildings, yes. As there was a building boom, that would amount to quite a bit.

Those were your main education bills. You had several other bills that did pass. One with Representatives Garrett and McFadden relating to municipal officers conflict of interest. Do you remember that one at all? I know there was discussion this session about the Port of Seattle issue—I don't know if this bill related to that or not.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was primarily city council positions, that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had one with Representatives Hurley and Ahlquist to provide funds for drainage districts and new methods of funding drainage districts.

There was one with dozens of co-sponsors—to regulate the operation of vehicles by minors. I'm guessing this was a measure to restrict teenage drivers. That one does not pass. Teenage driving in these years was discussed a lot.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's kind of hard to sort out because you've got the people in agriculture who depended on their kids to drive the tractors or a pickup truck to pick up supplies and that sort of thing. So there was a lot of support to allow exemptions on the restriction on age for agricultural workers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the people in towns were not real keen on teenage drivers.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They wanted to get the kids off the street.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was another bill with Pritchard and Flanagan, authorizing work programs for certain public assistance recipients. That sounds like it was coming out of that discussion—I think it was with Damon Canfield's group about rethinking public assistance and getting people to pay some of the money back or work. That one didn't actually pass. It's a huge issue that is still with us.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Still with us, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was another one creating a Labor and Industries Commission. Do you remember what that would have been about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of discussion about L&I and how they were operating and I

think the feeling was that it needed a citizen type group to at least oversee what was going on there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that have been like the Highways Commission?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wouldn't have been as powerful as the Highway Commission. I'm trying to think of something comparable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it wouldn't be like the Liquor Control Board that set policy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It did not pass, but it received a certain amount of interest. Has there ever been anything like this proposal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to my knowledge. Although I presume there have been other proposals that probably met the same fate, but the intent was logical and probably pretty good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the debate against it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just another committee floundering around and nothing coming out of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are a lot of boards and commissions. It's true. But they do play a role. Who did you think should appoint the commission? Would that be a governor's duty?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know these issues interest you for quite a long time. Public assistance issues seemed to be a flash point for the Democrats and education issues the focus of the Republicans and those two areas were competing for the same dollars.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's probably right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Republicans were carving out an area of support for schools as their area of focus. Not that Democrats were against education, but Republicans were, in these years, saying that they were especially close to school people and wanted to be leaders in school issues. Why was education not just a bipartisan issue? Were there really different points of view on how to do it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seemed to me that during this period of time the state superintendent and the state board of education were probably on the liberal side and we still had quite a few people of the Al Canwell type running around and pounding on the table.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was the year that Canwell and his colleagues conducted a whisper campaign against John Goldmark, in the '62 election, which ended up in an infamous libel trial.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this have been part of your larger initiative to make the Republican Party more attractive and more accessible to more people? Broadening your base a little? Support for education is a very attractive issue for many people. Was that position part of the remodeling of the Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I don't know that it was an intended item that was cast in concrete. It was, I'm sure, supported by most Republicans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps it was just the natural outgrowth of where you were in your own lives. You've got children. You can relate to this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I think that's a good statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's where the dividing line seems to be this session, between public

assistance and education, with the Republicans coming down more on that side. The division was part of what pushed the budget deliberations into special session. It wasn't a very long special session though.

Again, more explanations of votes were recorded. Against the income tax. You certainly signed that one. It read: "We believe the best way to produce revenues needed by the state is to concentrate on stimulating our state economy so that it will produce out of existing taxes the new money necessary to meet the needs of education and other essential state programs. In order to do this, we must halt the trend by which our general state government is increasing more rapidly than the state's population and the income of its citizens." So, was the thinking there to hold the line on government but stimulate growth so that there was just more income generated? The "rising tide raises all boats" type of solution?

**Mr. Eldridge:** More income. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some Democrats joined you voting against the income tax resolution. Some of them became outright dissidents by the next session. So there was a bit of a rough edge there on that vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** An undercurrent was beginning to develop.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were more pieces on the budget discussion inserted in the Journal, worrying about the growth of state government. Somewhat ironic, given that under Governor Evans it was going to skyrocket. But that was in the future.

Eventually, you did wrap up the session. There was a little ceremony that you have at the end of the session that I think is worth noting. You give each other gifts and accolades and you thank the staff and you thank pretty much everybody in sight. It's all very cordial.

You, yourself, received a gift that year as caucus leader, which Tom Copeland presented to you. He said, “Ladies and gentlemen, it was a privilege for me today to present to Don Eldridge, on behalf of the Republican members, a scroll in which we extend to him our thanks for his devoted service as our caucus chairman. With this scroll goes our heartfelt thanks and I understand we also have a gavel for Don... one that is equipped, it is said, with a mallet that is as hard as your head and with as much hair.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, the gavel is the major tool of the caucus chairman.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get tired of the hair jokes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It didn’t bother me. That scroll—it looked like a certificate, but every member of the caucus had signed it. I still have it framed, and I’ll tell you, every time I look at it I see Dan Evans and Joel Pritchard and right down the line. Slade Gorton. And out of that caucus there were a big percentage of those people who went on to other higher offices. It’s real interesting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was definitely a stellar group of people. Pretty exciting people to work with.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were outstanding.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You finally went home, but you were appointed to an interim committee again on education. Not all the same players, but you were still part of this effort. The House members were Brouillet, Backstrom, Mildred Henry, yourself and Folsom. That committee met frequently, about twenty times, in the interim. It had five subcommittees, a more pared down version of that very huge interim committee of the ’59 session. The committee produced a report...

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Fred Dore produced that report.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, did he? Ralph Julnes was the administrative assistant for this committee. Frank “Buster” Brouillet was the chair—Ralph had a long association with Frank Brouillet, but this is the first time I’ve seen his name come up in this capacity.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The committee focused attention a little more narrowly this time on the junior colleges, the extended school year, school organization, the teacher/administrator relations and higher education. You were on two of these subcommittees, in fact you’re the chair of the junior college committee and a member of the higher education committee, so your assignment is much more focused, too.

You came up with twenty-one recommendations in that junior college subcommittee. The report opened with the background of the issue and laid out the history of vocational education in the state and why it was changing. It touched on several of the things we’ve talked about.

You made quite a point of saying that junior colleges served two different kinds of populations—those who would transfer to the four-year institutions, and those who would terminate their education—finish it—with the community college years. And it was those people, that population, who needed more vocational and technical courses, whereas the other people needed a broader program.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Academic type.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More academic. And so trying to meet those two quite different needs was the challenge.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we generally agreed that it was difficult in one small institution to serve both of those interests. And that perhaps the trend ought to be to have junior college “A” pretty much

specialized in the vocational field and “B,” which might be established in Tacoma or Seattle or Yakima, be more tuned into providing the first two years of a four-year college degree.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you choose which ones would go which way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If you took the colleges that were established at the time, you could almost just say this one is in “A” and this one is “B” because they had sort of gravitated towards that kind of a program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about new colleges? Would you do some kind of a study of the communities and assess their needs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was generally the idea. If we were going to have additional junior colleges, they ought to fit the needs of the community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also some discussion in this report that there needed to be studies. That you couldn’t rely on local enthusiasm that might wane or that might not really be representative—might just be a small group that was pretty vocal. That there had to be some state-level, top-down study of where these colleges should be, instead of just being lobbied by different communities. The studies should identify some areas in the state that were growing perhaps, or would it be that there’d be some area that had high unemployment? What would be the criteria that would trigger the notion that certain areas should have a community college?

**Mr. Eldridge:** One of the things was what was happening to new industry in an area, where they would need training for machinists or welders or whatever, and that a community or junior college would fill that need.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about, conversely, areas that need retraining? Say you had a dying

industry. Would that be a consideration? I know that much later, at least, this became a consideration for areas undergoing economic transformation where the forest industry was waning. Was there any thinking along those lines?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At that time it may have been a problem, but it wasn’t one that was laid out in front or a visible consideration.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The biggest discussion was who would run the new system. Should it be under the local school boards or some new structure? The majority report said, “The current method was the simplest, so therefore let’s go with it,” which was to let the local school boards run the colleges. There was quite a strongly worded minority report, of which you were one of the signers, that disagreed with that quite vehemently. Did you feel that the junior colleges had gotten beyond being the thirteenth and fourteenth grades? That they should be looked at differently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then, of course, the basic consideration was that in the financing of the junior colleges up to this time, the local school board got the money for junior colleges and they were throwing it in the pot and it might go to the math department of the high school or the band or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the accountability issue was part of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then I think there was a feeling that we needed a new group of people who would be board members of a junior college board who were a little different than a board of a local school district who were dealing with five- and six-year olds up to the first two years of college.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s quite a spread. There was a feeling in your minority report that tying the community colleges to those younger grades

was ignoring the fact that they should be tied actually to the four-year colleges. That that's where the relationship should be. Not that they should have the same boards of trustees as universities, but there needed to be much more coordination since there were so many kids using them as a springboard to the four-year institutions. The structure that you had at the time didn't really acknowledge that trend at all.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's exactly right. There was a need. And particularly those of us who worked on this program felt that the role of the junior college was going to expand and the need was going to be greater.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Eventually, your point of view became, not the minority, but the majority. The measures setting this new structure in place did come to pass. The junior colleges got beyond being what you called the 'orphan' group to being their own entity. Were people resistant to that just because it is a pretty huge change?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those who opposed setting up a separate governing board said, "You know, we've already got a group of people." But I think, because of the things we've talked about: the need for the transition, the growing need for specific vocational training with the changing economics...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And changing technology?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And technology. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've got a very strong minority report, but it took you a couple of years to get that to happen. You signed it; also Wayne Angevine, John Ryder and Perry Woodall.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Wayne Angevine was a Democrat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it was not a party line, you just happened to have this point of view together?

Within a couple of years your opinion became the program. As for the funding issues, you were still on some kind of middle ground here in your recommendations. You thought that perhaps the state shouldn't step in and fund community colleges at that level, but that multiple school districts could band together—I'm not sure how that would work—and then pay for a community college. You were breaking away from and wanting to separate from school boards and have these independent boards, but how would that work? I was confused why school districts—if those boards were not going to run community colleges—why they would still fund them? Why they would want to do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the thrust was that if you had a separate board, but it came from that area, they would have the control and it would still be a local group and would be exclusively dealing with the institution for that area. I think we probably emphasized the fact that it was still going to be a locally controlled institution.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this was the middle ground here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not stepping out too far? So this would have been local property taxes collected and administered by this other board? Sliced off the school district money somehow? Or still the same pot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be actually aside from that. Then, of course, there was going to be a lot of state money that went into the support of the system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Taking money away from groups, of course, is painful and difficult. I was wondering how you could wrest it out of their hands.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that was the idea. We would envision a separate financing system apart from the local school district's funding.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some discussion that the local districts had quite a bit of money invested in these colleges. They had built them, they supplied them with furniture and equipment. How would they be compensated if those institutions were taken over by a different entity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that there was very much discussion about that. But so many of the junior colleges were using old run-down school buildings that the district had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read that no community college existed in a building built expressly for that purpose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** At that time, I think that was right. Mount Vernon Junior College was established in 1928 and my first year we shared one floor of the high school building. Then my second year we moved into an old building that had been the high school years before, but was now a grade school, one through eighth grade. They built a new building and moved two floors out of that building, turned those two floors over to the junior college and kept the kindergarten and first grade on the lower floor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a very strange mixture.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a college student, did you feel like you were going backwards where you end up in an elementary school?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was just hard to move down the hall without tripping over some little kid. But it seemed to work all right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, if no other community college had any great facilities, you had nothing to compare it to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Today they've got a beautiful campus and nice buildings and equipment. There's a lot of private money going into that community college.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's quite a change. I'm sure that not many people who go to community colleges now know anything about how they started out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And what the conditions were and how tenuous it all was. Your group called for a much stronger program. You liked the majority report, but you wanted to go further. You wanted to really push this and your group became the spokespersons for a much bigger system. Do you recall the meetings, the hearings, the fact-gathering process you went through?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know we heard from a lot of people and it didn't seem like there were a lot of fragmented ideas. That almost everybody was reading from the same page.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would certainly help push your point of view.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did it mean to have to write the minority report? Did you come together as a committee and finally agree to disagree and handle it that way? Or was there some kind of major split?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The minority members of the committee pretty much agreed as to the things that we thought the projected bill ought to have in it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's kind of interesting. Most minority reports resist the majority report. You wanted more. You were pushing much harder.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the other thing was that Ralph Julnes had a pretty good head and he was able to sort out a lot of this and get it into focus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he meet with you and discuss how you might go about submitting two reports? Did that finally become apparent that there were two points of view that had validity and needed to be present in the report?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the majority report came out and after we looked it over we decided that we'd like to take a little different approach.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think it's the first time I've come across this minority report idea. You were given almost as much space as the majority report.

You were also a member of the Higher Education Committee, though not the chair. The big issue there seemed to point to a lack of coordination among the colleges. That they were actually competing with each another on a somewhat unequal basis—being that the University of Washington, of course, was much bigger than anybody else—for funds, for recognition and for professors and programs. Each institution would come to the Legislature and ask for its own budget—not in relation to the other colleges, but just by itself. That was difficult to sort out as they each used different sorts of data and different ways of presenting their statistics, so that you couldn't match them up very easily, as a legislator, and make a fair comparison.

There were several solutions. One group thought that there should be a state chancellor of higher education. And that this person should sort this out instead of the institutions lobbying legislators, that this person should just present all the data.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That got blown out of the water because there would be a political situation pure and simple.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then there are others who just wanted the data to be more coordinated and to work more closely with the central budget agency and give you the information in a different way so that you could make your own deliberations more fairly. Did you favor that approach more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And actually that didn't occur until I was appointed to the board at Western. Then we instituted a meeting of the five college presidents and the board members of the five colleges.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Actually talked to each other.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was pretty much a joint effort then as far as lobbying for the budget. Now, the universities, Washington State and the University of Washington, they had been meeting for a number of years and they came in and just tried to sandbag everybody else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Grab the money and run?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it was pretty effective because both institutions have had good people heading them up. The presidents of Washington State and the University of Washington have been excellent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Much more sophisticated than the smaller teachers colleges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Although we had good presidents.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you able to come up with some reforms so that this problem of coordination was handled more equitably?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just the fact that we got them talking to each other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a start?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And that's always a good start.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some discussion about the fact that, with population projections and growth, that by 1970 it was believed that the state would need another four-year institution, and you began to look at how to make that decision, where it should be, all that. There's a hot potato for you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was a real issue! It boiled down to Arlington and what became Evergreen. The people in Snohomish County really put together a strong committee and did a good job lobbying for that. But it came down to the fact that you had Western in Bellingham and then you had a community college in Everett and one in Mount Vernon and that was kind of, I think, the point at which things tipped.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The universities hadn't started their branch campuses yet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the whole southwestern part of the state really didn't have much? It had some community colleges, but it had no colleges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It had Saint Martin's.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true. It's a parochial school, though. How much does the existence of private schools weigh in on that sort of planning?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the establishment of a new—whether it's a community college or a four-year college—you certainly take into consideration the private schools.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even when it's a religiously based school?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that really entered into it. It may have among the academic people, but I think the general population—if an area's being served and there are no problems—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Saint Martin's very big in these years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not real large, but you had Pacific Lutheran and the College of Puget Sound and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Whitworth in Spokane.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And Whitman in Walla Walla.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's not a religious school.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And Walla Walla College.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would kind of take care of the corner of the state. So somehow it tipped to Olympia? Did they put up a big lobbying effort?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had quite a strong group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the decision made and then not revisited, or was there a constant struggle over this before it was finally built?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think once the die was cast, everybody went on to something else. You see, there were many people who supported Olympia who wanted the college where the county courthouse and the hotel are now. In that area there. It was just an ideal site. You could see the Capitol building and you could look down on the Bay.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was certainly a beautiful site there. I wonder how they chose the area out on the end of Cooper Point? Perhaps here was a bigger chunk of land available?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it was probably a lot less expensive.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would certainly be a factor. Did you have a feeling either way about these locations? Arlington was closer to you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought that Arlington would be a good site. It's kind of in the middle of a pretty large population area and has quite a diversity as far as agriculture and industry.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the decision for location made that year or did it drag on a bit? It wasn't mentioned in the report.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think the decision was made.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be quite a process to go through.

The other issue discussed in this report is, I think, probably at that time a somewhat new notion—what we now call lifelong learning—that colleges needed to have evening courses to accommodate adults well into their careers. They needed to have different programs for different kinds of people. Were you successful at this point in pushing for more non-traditional paths for students?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't involved in that. I was involved in the community college system providing more vocational type studies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was again a minority report, this time on higher education, although in this case, you were in the majority. That report called for a coordinating board or advisory commission composed of the presidents of state colleges perhaps, or different groups. Did that eventually become the HEC Board, the Higher Education Coordinating Board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It may have been.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In true academic style, as with many studies, this report ended with the recommendation for more studies.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It cited the value to legislators and the general public of these kinds of in-depth studies. It said that there was still a long list of issues that needed work and that interim committees were a good mechanism for doing that. Would you have wanted to go on studying education yourself had there been another interim committee—if they had not been cancelled in 1963? Did you feel that there was more that you wanted to contribute in this area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. I was beginning, I guess, to look ahead a little bit and I thought that I would try to get back on the Legislative Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've kind of made your contribution here and said what you wanted to say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These were large committees. They did a lot of work. That would take up quite a bit of your time, too. Did you want to broaden your interest beyond education? You were now no longer a trustee of Western. Were you moving, perhaps, into a new phase?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Legislative Council was kind of a broad body. It had a different spectrum and I'd have to admit that it was kind of a prestige appointment. The Council always had a good reputation and membership was sought after. And then Don Sampson, who was the executive director, was just an outstanding person and I thought the chance to work with him would be a real help.

## CHAPTER 10

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### COALITION SESSION: 1963

**Ms. Kilgannon:** After all the meetings and work you did on this education interim committee, you had another election campaign to conduct during this same interim. That year is the first year, I believe, that Duane Berentson ran in your district with you. Did you two campaign together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happened to Ralph Rickdall? Did he retire?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He went to the Senate. Jim Ovenell had been my seatmate for years. But then in the redistricting we were going to lose a seat, so Jim just said, "I'm going to retire." That seat was eliminated from our district. Duane ran for the seat that Ralph had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a team, how did you two do? Did you have similar views?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. We pretty much agreed on the items that we'd talk about and we did joint advertising.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was from Burlington. Was he someone that you knew already?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only by reputation. He was very prominent in athletics at Burlington. He had

played basketball. And then when he graduated from high school, he went to the University of Washington and played on the freshman basketball team and then did some kind of assistant coaching. He wasn't as tall for basketball as they have today. But anyway, he wasn't getting the playing time that he wanted, so he transferred to Pacific Lutheran and played there and graduated from Pacific Lutheran.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A smaller school?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He got his teaching degree. His first school was Mount Baker High School in Deming. It's between Sedro Woolley and Bellingham on the eastern route. He did very well there. And he usually went to Alaska in the summer and fished.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he was a pretty active young guy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And just a wonderful person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think he saw you as a kind of mentor for himself? Did he come to you in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He always tells people that the greatest thing he learned from me was how to vote no.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** An important skill.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We used to kid a lot about that after he was elected co-Speaker. I always told people that Skagit County was the only county that produced a Speaker and a half. We had a good relationship and still do. We get together every once in awhile.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you mentored him a little, did he also bring in some new ideas that you might consider? Did it go both ways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Our interests were a little bit different. He was always interested in the transportation issues and agriculture and fishing. He was pretty strong in those areas.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds like he knew a little about fishing from personal experience.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was his part of the district a little more agricultural than yours?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Actually, the Burlington/Mount Vernon area was pretty much agriculture. And then you had to the west the Anacortes area and the San Juans that were more towards the fishing. In the eastern part of the county was the timber industry—Sedro Woolley, Concrete and on, upriver.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You and he will be together representing the district for the next long while. He also had a long career in the Legislature. Was campaigning more fun with Duane?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. We had some good experiences, particularly campaigning in the San Juans. We always said that we had the best district in the state for campaigning.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds nice. Were you, besides your own election and perhaps Duane's, involved in any other campaigning that season? Helping any other representatives? There was still that big push to get more Republicans.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were involved in campaigning for other Republican candidates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of being caucus chair? That you would help others?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To some extent. Ordinarily the leadership of the caucus would help.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you travel much? Go to other districts and appear on stage with someone and say "This is a good person?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some of that went on, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What other kinds of things would the caucus chair do to help?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Help raise money and work on campaign materials.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about policy statements? Was there much of that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. That's pretty much an individual thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was thinking about all those statements about the "new Republican unity." Did the Party try to fashion more of a Republican statement? Not quite the "Blueprint for Progress" that Dan Evans came up with in a few years, but was there a beginning of an articulation of a point of view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think what happened was that more Republican officeholders and candidates were becoming involved in the Party's convention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be the work of Gummie Johnson?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think the Party platform was more reflective of legislative positions. There was a little more reasonable approach. You know, so many times Party platforms are just off the wall and there isn't any way that a candidate can say, "This is what I'm for."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Gummie Johnson move towards a more pragmatic, and less ideological approach?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was a master. You see, this was the era of the John Birch Society and, boy, some of my most interesting experiences were when I was chair of the state convention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be this year or later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess it would be later. Those were real experiences!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're a pretty tough group—well organized.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And we did have this ultra conservative movement going.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. By '62 it was definitely making itself known. Would you have had any of these sorts of people in your own district to deal with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, Ralph Rickdall's wife was very active in the John Birch Society. And Ralph was pretty conservative, but he wasn't out in front. I don't recall that there were any very structured formal groups in Skagit County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you know? They're kind of an underground thing, aren't they?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I couldn't identify—other than Ralph's wife—anyone who was really outspoken.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did she identify herself as a John Bircher?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're a little bit secretive. Didn't they meet in small groups and spread their message by word of mouth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess that could be true. I just wasn't aware. It did pose quite a problem for the party organization.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they call themselves Republicans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not particularly. Although they were probably more tuned into the Republican Party and platform and the general philosophy. They went beyond that, of course. That's where it caused some problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe for younger readers of this, we should identify what it meant to be a John Bircher in the early 1960s. Can you tell us what their particular point of view was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I pretty much ignored, or even acknowledged, that they were around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you know a member if you heard one talking? What sorts of things would they say, so that you'd think to yourself, I wonder if that person's a Bircher? Did they quote things or did they have certain lines that they adopted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were pretty much anti-government. And philosophically, I presume that the best definition would be that they were just the opposite of the liberal Democrats in the philosophy of issues and candidates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they be an embarrassment to the Party because they were so extreme in their anti-government pronouncements? I understand they were almost like anarchists, in that sense.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just an anti-mindset that they had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Anything that I've read about them seemed to indicate that they were almost paranoid. They were frightened of government.

They were frightened of the modern world and any kind of complexity to them was like a conspiracy of something.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a pretty good analysis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That begs a question about Ralph Rickdall. How he became a member of the Legislature if his wife held these feelings? How he reconciled that fear of government while being in the government?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She may have been active in the local cell prior to the time that he ran for the Legislature. But it seemed to me that she was more active and probably a little more outspoken after he was elected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe she felt a little more free?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a curious movement. I really don't know how many people were involved.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think really it was probably a pretty small number.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they had a certain following. They had an impact, or seemed to. I don't think they steered the debate in any way, but—

**Mr. Eldridge:** It stirred people up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were certainly vocal in saying things and passing out materials and calling certain things into questions that other people did not. How would the people of the John Birch Society relate to people like, say, Al Canwell? Would they shade into each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. And of course, with the era of the McCarthy groups at the national level.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What do you think caused this phenomena, I guess you'd call it? Sort of an anti-government hysteria and the whole anti-communism movement? The Cold War definitely was raging, but why did some people kind of go overboard?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a group of people who really felt there was a threat to the country. They became more vocal and more active as their numbers grew.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the early 1960s, with the Cuban missile crisis and the building of the Berlin Wall and all these events, I guess if you were of that mind you could find evidence, certainly internationally, that things were happening. But I'm not sure internally—inside the country—if there were things that made people especially worried in those days.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. It was just one of those things that sort of evolved and no one could really put their finger on any one or two or three events.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly, President Kennedy at the time was quite a Cold warrior. I don't think he'd ever claimed that he was soft on communism or any of that kind of thing. He was quite ready to rattle missiles with just about anybody.

So, back on the state level, did they attend, say, Party functions or try to influence the Republican Party? Was that part of what made their presence problematical?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were just kind of around. They engaged people in conversation and criticized, but it really wasn't an identifiable entity. In other words, I don't think that there was a really structured organization.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You do hear about these “cells” which seem to coalesce. I’m not sure how. Word of mouth.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose that those people talk to other like groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if you’d ever had the experience at being kind of “felt out” as to your own philosophy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I was fairly conservative and still am, but not to that extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. This is kind of a different realm. In the thirties, liberal Democrats were approached by communist leaning people to see if they would shade into their activities, and I wondered if it happened the other way with this sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t have any direct knowledge that that happened, although it certainly could.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would be pretty hard to document. Your own constituents, were they worried about communism? Were they worried about—not to this real fringe extent—but were some of them concerned about internal subversion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was some general concern.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that more of an international concern? It’s hard now to get back into that mindset, but there was the Alger Hiss case being reported in the press and one thing and another—a lot of people were genuinely worried that the country was being infiltrated. That there was a communist conspiracy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The most active people were in the labor unions, and in the 1920s I think the Communist Party was more in evidence in Skagit County by far than any of the radical John Birch people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that kind of fade after a while?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But not until labor had some upheaval and they replaced some of their leaders. And I think that labor eventually saw that they could gain for their members a greater financial stability by joining in to a lot of the business proposals and activities and I think there were more worker-owned businesses.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was an expanding economy in the early 1960s. People had a chance to open a small business; there was more economic security. But certainly, in 1962, there was still this issue. For instance, the libel trial brought by Representative John Goldmark against Ashley Holden, Al Canwell and the like. He had not been re-elected in the last election, partly through their efforts to brand him as a communist. He took exception to that and brought them to trial for libel, which he won. But it was still a live issue in some corners of the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, it was really his wife who was the lightning rod.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. She, like many people in the thirties who were working in the social services, strayed into the communist camp. But there were so many people in that category who then left that you could tar a lot of people with that one.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They used to say that after he was elected to the Legislature he received pretty sizeable checks. He flew his own airplane and used to fly back and forth from northeastern Washington to Olympia.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were people wondering where he got the money for that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course there were a lot of them who had their own ideas about where it came from.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you know him very well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you think of all this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I'm not one to rely too heavily on this kind of talk and innuendo. It's hard to sort out truth from fiction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sure. Some people's lives have a lot of areas that can be interpreted in different ways.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course, Senator Hallauer was kind of caught in the middle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. He championed him. He was even threatened physically at one meeting when he defended him. He had nothing but disdain for the attackers of John Goldmark. And, of course, Hallauer was a real supporter of civil liberties. He just was a very staunch believer in that you were allowed to have whatever views you had. How was that trial perceived in the Legislature? There must have been at least a ripple of interest through there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of people who wouldn't have anything to do with John Goldmark.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they worried about being tainted by an association somehow or they just disagreed with him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think it was just disagreement and, philosophically, they couldn't go along with what he was espousing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it send a little ripple of apprehension through legislators to think that somebody could conduct a campaign like the one that was conducted against him? Sort of the whispering and innuendo type of campaign? Whatever side you're on, that could bring a chill to the campaign process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't hear too much of that. But, yes. I think they did a number on him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a fairly remote part of the state. Would there be other parts of the state susceptible to that kind of ploy? Would Skagit County be another one of those places where people could get together like that and run a behind-the-scenes campaign? You had a somewhat similar economy—farming and logging.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy. There might be. Yes. And I think the areas that were highly unionized like the Anacortes area where they had both fishing and the timber industry there. And central Skagit County was primarily agriculture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Farmers don't get too worked up about this sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As long as the price on milk is reasonably high, why they're happy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were these pockets of very right wing people, here and there. Did mainstream Republicans talk about this? Did they worry about this and maybe try to balance it with something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I certainly don't recall of any activity like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It became an issue in the Party, within a few years.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once Gummie Johnson became the chairman, he took them all on, head-on at the Port Angeles meeting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he the first to really articulate a position on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But there were maybe some rumblings underneath—I don't think he could have stood alone on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There were certainly a number of people who felt the way he did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Poison is too strong a word perhaps, but does that kind of poison the political debate where it gets hard to have a sensible political discussion if some people espouse that extreme view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was at least one person who was elected that year, Mike Odell from Spokane who was supposedly an avowed Bircher. He only lasted one term. What was it like to work with him in the Legislature? Did he act differently from other people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as I was concerned, he was just another member. The other members just didn't pay too much attention to him. If by chance there was something with his name on it that they agreed with, why they'd support it. And if it was something they didn't agree with, why then they'd let everybody know about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wonder if he was very effective? If he was able to build coalitions or if he even believed in such a thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was pretty much a loner.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'd think it'd be kind of a difficult position to be in government and be against government at the same time. Other than Gummie Johnson, would the discussion have been a little more muted, the issue more unspoken? Just something that you might be noticing but not really bringing up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. And a lot of informal discussions with a group of three or four and just talking about things in general.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It kind of heated up all of a sudden, so I was wondering if there was a buildup or if something happened that suddenly made it a much more serious issue? Or they decided to kind of stomp it out before it became an issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the Christensen Senate campaign kind of worked into all of this. There was a lot of criticism, of particularly the business community around the state, that if they'd gotten behind Christensen, he could have beaten Magnuson. He wasn't that far out on that election.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He gave him a good scare. And certainly coming out of nowhere like he did, I think they were pretty surprised.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then of course, like so many of these people, after the election he just disappeared into the woodwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand he was quite a handsome sort of person. A minister. But knew absolutely nothing about politics, according to some people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He made a good appearance. But he was pretty inexperienced.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Generally you work your way up, the school board or something. You don't normally go for United States Senator right out of the gate. I wonder what would have happened to him? That's not an easy office for a novice.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Senate would have chewed him up. It took me a long time to figure out how some of these things worked. From the time I got into the Legislature until I began to move along, I really could care less about all the maneuvering and the different factions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The machinations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I didn't pay any attention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Dick Christensen seemed to have a different group of supporters. He reportedly drew on what nowadays is called the religious right. I don't think that they had a name back then, but church groups of the more evangelical persuasion. He had a lot of women supporters—maybe because of his good looks—at least that was the speculation by some commentators at the time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He had quite a following. "Women on the Warpath," they were called.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** His supporters, previous to this campaign, were apparently not really involved in politics. In looking back, this is said to be the first blush of what becomes a big movement culminating in Ronald Reagan's campaigns for the presidency. Christensen seemed to be touching a nerve here that other people hadn't. I don't know what his message was. Do you recall what he was saying that was so attractive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It didn't seem to me that it was the typical Republican message of no new taxes, efficiency in government, all that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. The more business oriented point of view. In my reading about him, very few articles actually say what he was for. I'm always left with this question of, if he was not saying the "normal message," what was he saying? Eventually, the same kind of people that supported him did support the candidacy of Barry Goldwater in 1964. Was that what prompted Gummie Johnson to step in? There was quite a lot of tension nationally in the Party, but I don't know about on the state level. Could you speak to that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just know that Barry Goldwater had a lot of supporters. And they weren't afraid to get out and hit the bricks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were really organized.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was pretty strong in the Congress. And of course, in his own state, being a businessman, owning a business and then coming from a farm state, he had the basic conservative support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the western states at that point were beginning to have more of a voice than had earlier. Not quite the "sagebrush rebellion" era yet, but certainly the beginning elements for that movement.

**Mr. Eldridge:** California was the keystone. Growing real fast, and those people reflected the thinking of where they were came from and I think had quite an influence in California. And then, of course, California became the dominant state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's so big. So populous. And a bell-weather state, like you said, because there were so many different kinds of people there.

Just to close the discussion about the John Birchers, philosophically each party likes to call itself the "big tent." Do they really want to be that big of a tent, to include—on either side, communist-leaning members for the Democrats or John Birchers in the Republican Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a limit to this big tent idea? Would it stop at the edge of the John Birchers? Where Republicans would say, "No, that's gone a little too far. You're not one of us."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a lot of that sentiment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a credibility issue where your tent stops and starts. What you include and what you say is not really within your reach, your point of view. I was wondering if the Party would, up to a certain point, include people like that and try to bring them a little bit closer to the middle? Convert them a little bit. Bring them in rather than have them out there like loose cannons.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think most of the people were interested in just knocking them down and ignoring them and getting on with things. Of course, that's what eventually happened in later conventions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. We'll talk about how you reached a breaking point in 1965 where they get read right out of the Party. That was a rather dramatic occasion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure that, generally speaking, they wanted to be truly identified with the Republican Party.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So maybe they were as ambivalent as you were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that they were interested in using the Party and Party activities as just a vehicle for getting their message out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As the communists used the Democrats in the thirties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that kind of problem inherent in a two-party system? Where there's no other way to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You get countries, you know, with fourteen different political parties, and there's a spot for just about any point of view there. But with two monolithic parties, it's pretty hard to be

anything else. So people sort of attach themselves, appropriately or not.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a hallmark of the American political system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they pose any kind of danger to the Party, or were they more on the nuisance level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they were pretty much a nuisance because I don't think they ever got to the point where they had any answers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A different state level issue—some Republicans had lain this to rest and said they weren't going to touch that one again, but others still grumbled about it—was the “right to work” issue. There were several newspaper accounts where some people wanted to bring that issue up again and have it as a rallying cry, and other people are saying, “Forget it. We already lost two elections over this.” Was that something that was still kind of rumbling around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I'll tell you, that's one I wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole. I didn't participate in any kind of activity on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sure doesn't seem worthwhile if you want to be elected, anyway. What would have been the issues that you would bring forward? What would be your favorite things to talk about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Education and appropriations and taxes were probably the things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little closer to home. Yes. You'd been involved with all those education efforts, the interim committees and discussions. You had a fair amount to say there.

You are handily re-elected in 1962. In fact, the Republicans increased their numbers. They advanced from forty to forty-eight members in the House. They almost approached the

Democratic majority. Fifty-one to forty-eight was a pretty narrow majority for the Democrats. That's going to become a significant number for this session.

Dan Evans was your floor leader, your minority leader. You're still the caucus chair. Were there any new contests for leadership? Was everyone set or were there people up and coming? Any jockeying for positions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No one who challenged anyone. No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You still had Damon Canfield as your assistant floor leader. Tom Copeland was whip and Mrs. Swayze as secretary. Curiously, Slade Gorton was again not a formal leader in this sense and neither was Joel Pritchard. Joel Pritchard always claimed he didn't want to be, but Slade Gorton had a different ambition. Where was he in all this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He's just lying in the weeds.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he want to concentrate on redistricting? Was that going to be his focus for this session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was certainly instrumental in jumping in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Being the point person for the caucus on redistricting was a big enough plate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he an informal leader then? It's hard to picture him not doing something.

**Mr. Eldridge:** After the coalition he was pretty much into things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We'll go into that story now. Let's set the stage. The Democrats were split. When they had their convention they had a big

walkout of dissident members who were protesting various positions. There was a lot going on there that we won't go too far into, but just before the session began in January, there were newspaper articles saying that John O'Brien did not have the Speakership confirmed and that he was being challenged within his own party by what the press calls the 'Day forces.' Representative William Day from Spokane was their leader.

Different names were floated for Speaker besides John O'Brien. Dick Kink was one. And Avery Garrett. Apparently—according to these articles, and I don't know how they knew this—that all these different groups would occasionally approach the Republicans to test for possible support. Of course, we will see that at least one group was successful, but I had not heard that other groups of people were trying similar overtures.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know of any instance where someone came over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe this reporter is off the deep end here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was just guessing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the Democrats who walked out of the convention, who were upset with John O'Brien—chiefly, it said, over private/public power issues—many of them, though not all of them, were from private power areas and felt that they had been not heard in the 1961 session during the big power battle.

Were you having discussions within your caucus, especially within the leadership, about the weakness of the Democratic Party and kind of watching what was going on there? Did you talk about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know the only discussion that I heard was that the Democrats were going to come together and there was no sense in us getting messed up in this thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just stay clear. Certainly, in 1961 when Leonard Sawyer challenged John O'Brien for the Speakership, it was pretty close. But then they came together more or less after that. Did this look like a similar kind of split?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In that instance, Sawyer did come to the Republican leadership and want to make a deal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that didn't quite work for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Nobody trusted Leonard Sawyer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did he want from you? Some of your votes? And then what would you get in return?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He offered some of the chairmanships and a different makeup of the Rules committee. Just a little piece here and a little piece there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No particular thing other than more share in the leadership? He's a difficult person to gauge. His actions and motivations have been so variously interpreted. Was the public power issue part of that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was never out in the open at any discussion that I was ever involved in with the leadership. I was reasonably close to Harry Lewis and he was just in it for a good scrap.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a pretty hot local issue. For him it was a district issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. He had a battle to win there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Apparently his local issue was somewhat taken care of at the next PUD election in Thurston County, though. So it became a little bit more muted as a district battle.

Was it at all tempting in 1961 for the Republicans to look at any kind of coalition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not considering who the players were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So what was different about 1963? It was not Leonard Sawyer this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You had two people who were interested in doing something, Slade Gorton and Bob Perry.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who, I understand, were fairly close.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were close and most people couldn't understand why because they weren't exactly out of the same mold.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you tell me more about Bob Perry?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was a labor leader. He was a big guy and pretty outspoken and he was pretty liberal. But he had a good head on him and he and Slade were quite a match.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What do you think drew them together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Slade was really concerned about the redistricting aspect.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he had this relationship somehow with Bob Perry? Was it one of those just very odd 'Mutt and Jeff' things that happens on occasion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Slade Gorton was particularly pro labor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I'm sure they had a lot of discussions about some pretty heavy issues, and probably went round and round.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somehow they clicked? Some kind of weird chemistry.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the core of the coalition was their friendship, do you think? Or at least it was the seed for the rest of what happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was the thing that triggered it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they trusted each other. Bob Perry, what was in it for him? Was he, obviously, not a supporter of John O'Brien.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was probably the key to his position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder why they couldn't defeat John O'Brien by other means?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Who knows?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a radical thing to do, so it begs some sort of explanation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had in their caucus some outstanding people who they could have turned to. I don't know why they just weren't smart enough to see it. I think a lot of them felt that John O'Brien was somebody they could deal with, and that things really hadn't been all that bad from a lot of members' standpoint.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were still in the majority, which counts, although they were slipping. So I wonder if that is making them a little jumpy and nervous.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Could be. They know how to count votes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was certainly a group that wasn't going to look back. They were mad and they were not going to forgive and forget.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were ready to jump ship.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. And then quite a few of them were fairly conservative Democrats and voted pretty often with the Republicans anyway, so they wouldn't have been uncomfortable for that reason.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the Republicans were kind of watching. There was this noise going on in the Democratic Party. When you did meet, did Slade Gorton urge you to pay more attention to what was going on? Did he start talking about it as an opportunity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You see, Slade came, not to the caucus, but to a group of us who were in leadership and just pointed out what the situation was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he have it somewhat worked out by then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He indicated that Perry wanted to put a coalition together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly your numbers being so close, was it somewhat tempting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Slade's pitch was, if we don't stop this, they're going to redistrict us right out of the state. That was his big issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly, you faced a Democratic House and Senate and Democratic governor; you would have been hard put to it to stop that. And they were supposed to redistrict.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So Slade met with us. I suppose there were maybe six or seven to begin with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall who was in that group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was Slade and Dan Evans and Joel Pritchard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would Damon Canfield have been there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about, say, Tom Copeland? Or was it mostly west side Republicans, then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, not Tom. Anyway, Slade said that the Democrats wanted to meet with us. So we arranged for this meeting down on the waterfront at this cabin. We agreed that it would be the Sunday night prior to the opening of the session. So we met in the Safeway parking lot downtown and all got into one car.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a bit like a B-grade movie, actually.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I know. It was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you kind of laughing at yourselves when you were doing this? Or was this deadly serious?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was serious. It would make a great TV movie. So we got in this car and drove out west of town and turned down towards the Bay at the golf course. Then we turned off of that road onto a driveway and quite a ways ahead you could see this house with the shades drawn, but you could see the light. We drove down and parked practically in front of the door and we all got out and walked up onto the front porch and knocked, and who should open the door but Si Holcomb, the Chief Clerk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a surprise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. So, anyway, we went in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you tell me your state of mind? What's going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just thought it was a little unusual, to say the least.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Chief Clerk is not really supposed to get mixed up in this sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, no. He was out on a limb. So we went in and Bob Perry and Slade kind of outlined what was going to happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall who else was in the room?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let's see. Mary Ellen McCaffree was there, and on the Democrats side, maybe, Dick Kink from Bellingham may have been there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And 'Daddy' Day, as he was called?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Pritchard was there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Anybody else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not that I recall. William Day, Bob Perry, possibly Dick Kink. Sid Snyder.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The assistant Chief Clerk?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Si Holcomb had written two scripts for the session the next day. One if the coalition elected the Speaker and the other one in case O'Brien was re-elected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've never heard of this plan B. What would have happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would have been out of our hands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was some kind of signal: “give it up?” “Forget it,” if it didn’t work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The vote would tell us that. Once we got the details worked out and the meeting adjourned, those of us who drove down together stopped someplace to figure out how we were going to operate as a caucus. You see, none of our members had any idea what was going on. Nobody from the Press had any idea.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which was good?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. It was the best-kept secret in the state. So, anyway, we had already announced a caucus for nine o’clock the next morning, so we decided that we’d get the caucus together and outline what the program was and then open it up for any questions or discussion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you fairly confident your caucus would go with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. We had a great caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because they’d see the chance that this meant?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And this was all about redistricting? Was there anything else that you were planning on accomplishing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get any sleep that night?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Nothing interrupts my sleep.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were feeling pretty calm about this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We got there at nine o’clock and called the roll. Everybody was there and we locked the door.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that dramatic in itself, locking the door?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Particularly to those people who had to go to the bathroom. So, anyway, we went through the whole routine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you all speak, or just some of you? You had it all orchestrated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just some of us. Slade and Dan presented the program and how it was going to work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How was it received? Were people astonished? Were they excited?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Damon Canfield got up in his own slow way and made quite a speech.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But he had a lot of fluff in there. And then Elmer Johnston from Spokane, who was an attorney from over there—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Part of the old guard?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And Elmer had to get into the act.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To get on board, or to caution people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Just to talk about it. We called him ‘Hands.’ He had to use his hands with everything he said. So it was all set.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was what, three hours you were in there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s a lot of talking.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right. And a lot of listening.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you talk about anything else or was it all just the coalition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Primarily how we were going to do this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did anyone oppose it? Wasn't there one person who just couldn't go along with the plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was Dwight Hawley.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were some people a little thunderstruck?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They may have talked about it, but just in kind of a "Let's be cautious about this." They didn't come out and say, "I'm opposed to this. Let's not do it."

We agreed that when Si Holcomb called the House to order and called for the nomination for Speaker, that we would nominate Dan. The regular Democrats would nominate O'Brien and the coalition group would nominate Bill Day, and that we would go through three roll calls because nobody would have a majority. Then on the third roll call—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that give you more than fifty percent?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There has to be a majority. Fifty percent won't do it. Then, when they started the third roll call, Al Adams, who was an orthopedic surgeon from Spokane—and he and Bill Day were going *like this* all the time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're making a motion to show conflict here with your fists.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Anyway, Al got up and made a pretty responsible nomination of Bill Day.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He didn't just say 'aye,' he said something more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He placed his name in nomination.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have raised some eyebrows.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tell you, if someone had struck a match the dome would have gone off the Capitol. The tension was unbelievable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And his name started with A.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So he was the first. Then as we went through the roll call, O'Brien and Snyder were there at the desk and they were checking the votes. We got about half way through and John knew he'd been had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have been kind of painful to watch.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But, you know, emotions were so high.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, were you keeping a straight face or were you sort of grinning from ear to ear at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was serious business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you're going through the roll call. I understand that John O'Brien jumped up and tried to make a deal at some point during the roll call. Dan Evans apparently told him to sit down. Did he think he could salvage the situation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was too late then.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now Leonard Sawyer was in an odd position. He was sticking with John O'Brien at this point. He was not part of this deal.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. He's in the O'Brien camp at this point.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's nothing in this for him.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Unless he'd cut some kind of a deal with O'Brien that he'd bring his people along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seems like nobody was talking to him at this point. He was not part of the negotiations.

When Margaret Hurley stood up earlier to nominate Bill Day, among other things, she said, "Will we carry out the will of the people as indicated by the election of these new members I see all around me, or thwart their desires by clinging to the same old program?" I guess she's referring to John O'Brien as the "same old program." Then Dick Kink seconded the nomination and Chet King, also. He said, "I don't think the Speaker of the House has stumped or homestead rights to that particular position for all time. ... Give somebody else an opportunity to show what he has and what he can do." Was part of the dissatisfaction just that John O'Brien had been the Speaker for so long?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose there was some of that and he got to the point where he was pretty arbitrary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The third vote was called and then Day had the nomination in hand. He had the votes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Si Holcomb announced the vote and turned the gavel over to Bill Day.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But there was one little thing that happened in between that was also orchestrated, as I understand, which was Representative Robert Schaefer voted—he could count too, but he was further down in the alphabet—he voted on the other side and then called for reconsideration. And Si Holcomb said that he didn't have the power to do that, only to run the Speaker's election. Then after that, that was it. Did you think that was a fair ruling?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Si Holcomb was there to conduct the election. And once Bill Day was elected, he was the presiding officer, and then the motion would have to be directed to him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which would negate the motion, in a sense.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He could not accept the motion or he could have one of his own people move to lay the motion on the table. There were any number of ways you could get rid of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think that would happen? Had you talked through what you would do if that happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Si Holcomb had been Chief Clerk, working closely with John O'Brien for many years. What happened there? Why did he join forces with the coalition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he felt that he hadn't been recognized by O'Brien for all his work. And I tell you, if you don't have a Chief Clerk with you, you're in deep trouble. They handle all the mechanics.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there personal animosity between the two of them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There may have been but it wasn't out in the open.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understood that there were some issues of pay. That John O'Brien would occasionally cut Si Holcomb's per diem type arrangement, when he said he wasn't performing his duties. That may have been a factor.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that, but it could very well have happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But Si Holcomb had been there an incredibly long period of time. Seemingly forever.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was a fixture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he stay as the Chief Clerk under the coalition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he putting his career on the line, so to speak?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If and when the regular Democrats ever came back in, had he kind of sawed off that branch?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so. He was well regarded by everyone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering what kind of risk he was running.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was a real professional.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Sid Snyder? Would he be tainted in any way by this action?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. He was just along for the ride.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just a fly on the wall. What was the noise level in the House while this was happening? Quiet as a pin or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was fairly quiet until we got down to that last vote. People were counting and they knew that school was out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think they guessed that it was preplanned?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so because it was such a quiet operation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's one of the most remarkable occurrences in the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Especially that no Press seemed to know about it. Did any lobbyists know about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't believe so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just your little group. That's got to be one of a kind right there.

Margaret Hurley, Bill McCormick, Chet King, Dick Kink, Bill O'Connell, and Bob Perry voted for Bill Day before the big deluge. I believe part of the signal was during that second vote whether or not he would pick up any more support, and then you would all swing behind. Something to that effect. And O'Connell was the other vote.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the aftermath of this vote, that there were all kinds of fights about this within the Democratic caucus. The group that came to be called the "regular Democrats" refused to take chairmanships of committees. They said it was "a game they were not going to play." But Marian Gleason did take a chairmanship and then paid rather dearly for doing so.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tell you, when she finally caved in, boy, she just really broke down. She just wanted that chairmanship more than anything in the world.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why was it so important to her?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think she was interested in legislation that would come to the committee, and then I think that—you know, being a committee chairman has some degree of importance to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was the Commerce and Economic Development committee that she chose. She was practically drummed out of the Democratic caucus. Did other people pay a price for this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, of course, John O'Brien and some of his people campaigned against the original seven but they all got re-elected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were thrown out of their Party for that session, more or less. Or got the 'frigid' shoulder—not just 'cold.' What happened there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It all boiled down to the fact that those legislators in their own district were very popular and all won by good margins over the years. Their constituents weren't going to throw them out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Constituents often don't care about Party; they care about the person?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the formation of the coalition have a big impact on the work of the session? There were weeks of tension trying to set up committees, make people take the chairmanships, get organized. That was a pretty slowed down schedule.

When you were, say, sponsoring bills—usually it was considered a good idea to get a Democrat on the bill to give it a little more bipartisan support—was that made more difficult by this coalition? Did the regular Democrats hang back and say, "You want that bill, go out and get it yourself?" Or did things kind of settle down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that they, by and large, settled down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Representative Hawley couldn't bring himself to vote for a Democrat for Speaker. He voted for Dan Evans and was the only one who did so, which didn't change the numbers any. You still got this through. Were there other Republicans who were uncomfortable with this as it transpired?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some who just didn't like supporting a Democrat and I think there were a few who just didn't believe in coalitions. I've always said coalitions are not good unless you get in a bind and have to have one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's an extraordinary circumstance, that's for sure. Periodically, in an earlier period, there had been coalitions in the Senate with conservative Democratic senators and Republicans and they did manage to work that way for quite a long time.

Was it sort of disruptive, though? You got a really late start. It's not until February that things really get off the ground. The Senate kept moving along, but the House was in some disarray. Each day you came in and it was not organized, what did you do with your time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Committees were still meeting. And as I recall, it turned out to be a pretty fair session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The regular amount of business got done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And we didn't pass any new taxes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's right. That was one of Bill Day's first pronouncements, actually. Did that make it easier for Republicans to get behind him? Did he support a somewhat Republican platform as Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think there were a number of individuals who saw it that way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As Speaker, he did not lead you down any path that you might not have gone down anyway?

You served on Rules and Order. And Ways and Means. There was a subcommittee for Appropriations which you served on with Dick Kink and Robert Goldsworthy. And you were on the Commerce and Economic Development

Committee with Marian Gleason. Was she a good chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She certainly wasn't a dynamic person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She paid so dearly for this chairmanship, I just wondered how she did. Did she have a particular piece of legislation she wanted besides being chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was it, basically. I think she was reasonably fair in running the committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You dropped Cities and Counties and Game and Game Fish, some of your old committees. Were you starting to focus your energies a little bit differently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I found after serving on those committees that they weren't all that I had hoped they'd be, as far as my interest in the legislation that they would be dealing with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With this new configuration of committees for you, was this more satisfactory? More your vehicle, shall we say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And finally, you were on the Commerce and Economic Development Committee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I mentioned, it was a pretty good session. I don't think there was any real bad legislation that was passed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a long session. You went into special session right after the regular session. Now, the missing piece in all this was the governor. What was the governor's relationship to the coalition? You had to work with him, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The governor worked more closely with the O'Brien group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you fear the veto power a little bit more during this session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a case of, if you craft good legislation, then it will pass?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And after all is said and done, Rosellini was a pretty good governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the Democratic Senate led by Senator Greive, who would have been no friend to you particularly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Of course, there were always movements to get Greive out of there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true. He had a bit of a shaky stand. Of course, his focus was redistricting which was the issue that brought the coalition into existence. Did that give redistricting a profile in this session that was much more heightened than it would have been otherwise? It was a long, dragged-out fight.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember it coloring the session very much or was it off to the side?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At that period of time, people always referred to the coalition session as being caused by the private/public power fight.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it good tactics to keep the redistricting issue a little bit muted? Maybe not shine too strong a light on that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think, at least people in leadership, knew that redistricting was going to be a real tough one and we needed to walk through it fairly softly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's fairly well documented what Senator Greive did on his part, with his map room and his tactic of bringing people in to see their districts and trying to convince them, basically one at a time to support his plan. How did the Republicans go about redistricting? What was your method of dealing with the members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Slade was always on top of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. He was your master of redistricting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he would come to the caucus and answer questions. And he had the maps, of course.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you also go into his little map room and check it out? Did he have the same kind of "show-and-tell" going as Senator Greive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think he had the same kind of an operation that Greive did. But he was certainly willing to explain what happened and why.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Obviously, each side was trying to redistrict to their own advantage to get as many possible Republican or Democratic seats as the numbers would allow. The Democrats would be trying to create Democratic districts, strong Democratic districts, and drawing the lines around where their incumbents lived and giving them as good a picture as they could, as would your side.

But I understand that the Republicans were really trying for a whole new territory. The suburban ring around Seattle was changing in nature and some people thought that might be an opportunity for the Republicans to gain that illusive majority. Do you remember that sort of discussion about creating new districts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know that there was always the reference to the east side, Bellevue, Redmond and up around there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that really growing then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were a few instances like our situation where we had three seats and Jim Ovenell had decided not to run again. So we could go in and say, here, here's a seat you can have.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was your area losing population, or just in relation to the rapidly growing areas, you were not growing as quickly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not growing as fast, no.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there within the Republican Party tensions between east and west, rural and urban areas? The different perspectives?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There always is. But I don't think it was real strong. The affected people pretty much sat down and worked it out among themselves.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were some people going to lose their seats, or be in danger of having to run in weakened areas?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure they were, but I can't give you the chapter and verse.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was an effort by people like Don Moos to introduce the idea that land should be represented as well as people. And that favors, of course, the more rural areas. What did you think of that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how you'd do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I couldn't rattle off the formula, but he had one. He pursued that idea for quite a while. It would have called for a Constitutional amendment and various mechanisms. Was that something where people say, "That's real interesting but it's not going to happen?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall ever being aware of any discussion of that at the time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did people in your party trust Slade Gorton to just take care of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, he did, I think, as far as redistricting was concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was considered the expert and the one who was going to best serve everybody's interest?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was generally the feeling. I think each legislator would look at his own situation and he was either happy or unhappy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you go in and negotiate a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure there was a change or two based on an individual coming in and probably having some pretty good reasons and maybe a map or two.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody knows their own district better than that person.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know that Slade Gorton was considered a master but, still, it's your district. You would know the neighborhoods. You would know where your support was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the end, redistricting stalled out. They couldn't get it to happen. After all that effort and the big risk of the coalition, there was no redistricting plan that passed. So it remained hanging over you. How much did legislators discuss that? Was that just a sideshow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, here again, it depended a lot on the individual legislator and what happened to his district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For some it might be a pretty hot issue. But not for you, I guess, once you had this sorted out, the third seat.

It was one of the issues that pushed you into special session, though. Things got held up. Another issue, having to do with the image of the Legislature itself, this one involving the Senate, added some controversy that year. Slim Rasmussen—a long time Tacoma senator—got up and attacked Senator Greive for his campaign practices, for contributions given to the “Greive fund.” He really tore into him, I guess. The Greive fund was money that Senator Greive collected from various lobbyists that he then would divvy out to senators for their campaigns, some said, to those who supported him as majority leader. That was, allegedly, the chief reason behind the fund. He said that he just wanted Democratic senators to be re-elected, whomever they supported. But, there was a fairly good correlation between who he gave money to and who voted for him as majority leader. Slim Rasmussen thought that was a corrupt relationship and it impacted the work of the Senate. I gather there was nothing like that in the House. That no one in the House had any thing going like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think there were any “funds.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But when people read about that in the newspapers—and it certainly got into the newspapers—doesn't that make the whole Legislature look bad? Do people say, “I always thought that was going on? Those crooks.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it rubs off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The coalition in-fighting. Redistricting battles, which for people outside the Legislature, looked like a whole lot of self-serving

deals. The “Greive fund.” Was there a sort of a cloud over the Legislature? The general population, did they have a little bit jaundiced view of the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t believe at that point there was too much evidence of dissatisfaction among the citizens. But I think there’s always some kind of undercurrent. I’m sure that on a situation like that the word gets around and gets to the areas of the people involved and I’m sure it has some influence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if on your trips to the district whether you had any kind of feedback on that “bad odor?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think you always have just a general dissatisfaction with government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Governmental ways can look mysterious, and the Press is rather fond, of course, of fanning any flames they come across.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was one other issue of that type. There was a new representative from Thurston County, Don Miles, who had kind of a soapbox issue. He was really worried about Committee Room X. Want to tell me a little bit about that story?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes! Committee Room X was actually a room up on the fourth floor where Brigham Young had his barbershop. He had been a representative. He was a barber by profession, and if somebody needed a trim they’d go in and he’d have a bottle and some ice and mixer and he’d fix a drink for them. Well, it got to the point where people were just going in and forgetting the haircut.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Skip the preliminaries?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And get down to the barroom.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a very tiny little room. Basically a closet.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a small room.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And so quite a few people were doing this, or just a few regulars?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really don’t know, because to this day I’ve never been in that room.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But this was a sort of subculture going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. After a hard day at the session, why, some would slip up there and have a drink.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is there much difference between having a drink in Committee Room X and going across the street to a bar or a lounge? Is there some kind of line there where one is seemly and one is not?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Or going to your own office. I think it just had a stigma attached to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just a little too like the “old boys” getting together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you didn’t go there yourself, did you think one thing or the other about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn’t have any thoughts about it one way or the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there, besides Committee Room X, much drinking in the Legislature? I know you had parties for *Sine Die* and for Saint Patrick’s Day and such.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that there was excessive drinking in the building.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No more than, say, businessmen getting together at the Elks at the end of the day, or any other kind of group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you supposed to be held to higher standards?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's one thing to have a drink at the end of a business day, but what about before the end of the business day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose that there were a few who had a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This issue gets either totally pooh-poohed and it is said nobody was really doing that, or it gets really blown up into oh, yes, it was pretty wild. It's hard to assess. So, there was some drinking, but it was not too excessive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That would be my estimation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would Don Miles make such an issue of this? Was he a Puritanical sort who could brook no gray areas here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, yes. He was kind of on a mission.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How was he received?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think most members just kind of treated it as a joke. And I don't remember whether that was an act of the Speaker that closed it down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Eventually it closed. Yes. Was it closed that year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, but I can't remember the mechanics of just how it was done. I don't think there was ever a vote taken.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He does have it as a bill that he puts in the hopper. It doesn't go very far. Was it kind of an embarrassment that he was making such a public thing of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would say that probably with a lot of the members, it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would be hard to defend, I guess. I must say that "Committee Room X" has a certain allure. If it had been called something else, perhaps it would have sounded a little bit better. Maybe the partying was getting too much publicity. Was this a shift in legislative mores? You would never have a Committee Room X now, for instance. But registering that shift in ethics or behavior is difficult.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it probably started in the governor's mansion where Wallgren was known for his poker parties and well stocked bar. And then when Langlie was elected, it all went out and he had milkshake machines and iceboxes with pop and that sort of thing. So there was a definite break.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Rosellini?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it all went back in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then does it shift again with Evans? I don't think Evans is entirely the milkshake sort— But maybe he's somewhere in between?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. I don't recall during my early sessions that when they had functions at the mansion, that liquor was served. But later on it was a common occurrence. They tell the story that when Evans was elected, one day a truck backed up to the mansion and it was a load of

liquor from the Liquor Board, and Dan turned them away at the gate. But just as an aside, when I was on the Liquor Board one of Dan's people came to me and said, "The Governor is having somebody from Timbuktu, or whatever, and we need this list of liquor." I said, "I'm sorry, I can't help you." Boy! I think they put me on a list. But anyway, over the years, it changed back and forth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Despite these distractions, you did accomplish things during that session. One of the things the Legislature did, which was of special interest for you, was create four new community colleges. Was that any kind of struggle, or was that something that people were ready for?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was a program whose time had come.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Gradually, every session, the community college law expanded.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were several liquor issues, Sunday blue laws, that sort of thing this session. You can almost feel an old way of life straining against a new way. People wanted to go shopping on Sunday and, if they were out for dinner, they didn't want the bar shut down at midnight Saturday night. There was just this pushing and pulling on these issues. They don't all bend at this point but there's a lot of discussion and movement here.

One thing that did pass, which was also one of these issues, pushing, pushing, over several years, was a local option gambling bill. It began in the Senate, Senate Bill 316. It seemed to be an issue of conscience because it's all over the place who voted for or against various amendments and eventually for the bill. Was it something your caucus would have talked about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. On those sorts of issues we very seldom took a caucus position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You probably couldn't, I suppose. How did you feel about gambling yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not too enthused about gambling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it like liquor, something the state should just regulate and keep track of, or should it ban gambling altogether?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wouldn't hurt my feelings if it were banned, but as long as we have it, then it needs to be regulated and pretty tightly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't recall if there was talk of a lottery at this point.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Slot machines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Now, was it true that Elks clubs and different places like that had all these machines, but that in other places if you weren't a member of the club, that it was still illegal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a disparity problem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only for the have-nots.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think liquor was somewhat in the same vein. You could get liquor by the drink in an Elks club long before anywhere else. Perhaps the tavern business groups saw that as unfair competition.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They have always pushed for the ability to serve mixed drinks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One curious aspect of gambling laws was that it got all mixed up with church

activities—Bingo and raffles and semi-harmless looking things that churches do to raise money, which some people found morally offensive or morally ambiguous. Was there such a spectrum in gambling from Bingo to hard core Reno-style gambling that it was really difficult to talk about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's more money involved. It doesn't really make any difference whether you're rolling dice or marking numbers on a Bingo card.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the threat of organized crime getting involved? I guess I just can't picture them taking over the Bingo scene. But maybe there's a lot of money in Bingo and I don't know anything about it. Was that part of the tension around gambling?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's always the threat of crime being involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These are the years the FBI and others were investigating the Mafia. They were in the headlines. So I was wondering if that was part of the issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a general trend across the country to take a good, hard look at the various forms of gambling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Meanwhile, the regulations were coming off. Or there's a lot of gambling and it's actually becoming regulated and brought into the control. Seems like there's always gambling of some kind of another whether or not it was acknowledged.

But this bill passed. It represented an important milestone for gambling legislation.

You, yourself, have only a handful of bills that you were pushing that session. I haven't actually counted session by session how many bills you sponsored, but this one seemed unusually quiet with just five or so. Was that a philosophical choice or because you were busy being caucus chair, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always held back on putting my name on bills. There were a number of sessions I didn't have my name on a single bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Many people think that passing bills is the job of a legislator. You obviously have a different take on that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** My job was to kill the bad ones!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall particular bills that you played a role in killing or making sure they did not pass? What sort of legislation would you really look for?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I recall early in my career I killed a bill that would have instituted daylight saving time and the farmers, of course, were always against that. I was able to knock that one in the head.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How do you go about killing a bill? In committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You can love it to death.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With amendments, you mean?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that particular one I was able to stop in the Rules committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the Rules committee, when somebody pulled the bill on daylight savings time, did you speak against it rather forcefully and then the members all kind of said, "Okay, put that one back under the rug?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Somebody may call for a vote. When I first went on the Rules committee, we just had voice votes on everything. Later on, they voted by ballot. Usually, if there's an objection to a bill by more than just one or two people, the Speaker or the chair of the committee may just say, "Well, this isn't going anyplace. Let's just pull it out of here."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you go around before a bill got pulled and say to different members who you thought would be amenable, “I really don’t like that one. Let’s get rid of it.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the Rules committee was really a good place for you to be if killing bills was your priority?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You see, there was a list of the eligible bills in front of you. And then you’d go around the table one by one and each in turn could pull a bill and then it would be discussed and voted on. And the Speaker could always have a little pile of special bills.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That never came to the top?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Either that or they would, because he always had people saying, “Would you pull House Bill 325 for me?” And they’d tell you why it was needed. A constituent or another member who wasn’t on the Rules committee would request a member to pull bills.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sure. You’re in that spot. You’ve got that power.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you only have so many pulls.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have to say to them, “No, because I’m going to actually pull this other one,” or not today?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You might say, “Well, there’s a lot of opposition to this bill. I don’t think it’ll get out of the Rules committee even if I pull it.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not necessarily tipping your hand that you are opposed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hundreds of bills are proposed. You were for certain things, but would there be groups of things you would just be against on principal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most generally a member of the Rules committee has his own little list of bills that he’s for and those that he’s against.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know you were for community colleges, but let’s say these gambling bills. Would you just as soon they died in Rules?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be some of the other issues like that, that would be pretty easy for you say, “No, I don’t like that?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** The major issues, like a Constitutional amendment to put an income tax on the ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that something that should rightfully come before the whole House that you shouldn’t kill in Rules? Were there ideas like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It takes sixty votes. There was usually a hall full of lobbyists, so when the meeting adjourned they all wanted to know what had happened on this bill or that bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Rules Committee meetings were not open to the public. Well, most meetings at that time were secret, but that one was kept secret or closed longer than any other committee in the Legislature. Would you get collared as you went out the door?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were just waiting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That’s true. Of course, it was supposed to be a confidential meeting as far as telling the Press or lobbyists or even other members what the results were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In that case, why did you have voice votes? Why not secret ballots?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You could move things along a lot faster with just a voice vote.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you call for a secret ballot if something was particularly sensitive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Before the times that we had a secret ballot on every bill, as I recall, if you wanted a secret ballot you could call for one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the Speaker who ran the meeting approve of that? If you called for it, could you just have it or did it have to be agreed upon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, if somebody wanted one, they'd get one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be almost like tipping your hand and saying, "I want a secret ballot because I'm going to vote in a way that's not expected?" What would be the kind of bills that would call for a ballot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those bills that were very controversial. And then those where there'd have to be some shifting around as to how people would support or vote against a particular bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there many surprises? Would you go in and find out what people were going to do or would there be occasionally shifting around right on the spot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** By and large, on any given bill, you'd know pretty much how the members would vote.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would discussions about these votes happen in caucus before Rules committee, or would it be voting your conscience or the party line, or how did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All of the above. There were some bills where a caucus would take a position and all the members of the Rules committee from that Party would support, whether it was for or against.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that what a 'bound' caucus was? Where you're more or less instructed what you're supposed to do, or was it more just understood?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They always accused our House Republican caucus of being a bound caucus. As a matter of fact, there was a cartoon of a group of people standing in a clump with a rope around them and then it says, 'the bound caucus.'

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that somehow problematical? Couldn't it also be seen as a strength that you voted together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was a strength.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there were two ways of looking at that. Either you're being herded in there by some leader, or you actually have a coherent statement to make?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I don't remember that we ever took a vote on what the position would be, but you could pretty much tell from your caucus meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, say some bill comes up and that the chairman or the ranking member of that committee would stand up and speak for it, or the sponsor or whomever was the right person, and then was there a like-mindedness in the caucus where you would say, "Oh, yes, that's a good plan, let's do that." Or how would it work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there was anything that definitive. I think you just got the feel for what the general caucus thinking was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There must have been some votes that didn't split on party lines, that split urban-rural or by other interests. Would then you just vote your conscience or whatever it was that guided you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty much up to the individual member of the Rules committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did secret ballots come in more and more? Was there a trend?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was a trend. It went from no secret ballots to the other extreme where everything was by secret ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why do you think that happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was just a sign of the times. There was a lot of outside pressure for more openness.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet this goes against the grain of openness, using secret ballots. Was that a kind of protection from all that pressure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that there were many members who felt that way. That this was one way to get the monkey off your back.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To create no record. That's an interesting middle ground, I guess, from being very open within the Rules Committee but closed to the public, to being open to the public but closed with each other.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're kind of caught in the middle there, in this change. Was there ever a discussion at this early date in 1963 about opening the Rules committee to the public?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was later. I don't think anyone at this point ever had an inkling that the Rules committee would ever be open to the public.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would change it entirely.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** About how many people served on the Rules Committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** About fifteen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they try to get—in each caucus—a spectrum of people to serve on Rules, or were you all appointed using some other criteria?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Committee on Committees always took the requests of the members and then made the recommendations as to the committee that they should serve on. There were always had a lot of members who put the Rules Committee on their list, who knew that they were probably not going to be appointed at that particular point.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You served on there for quite a few years. It was certainly a major committee for you, but was it also a favorite committee? One that you enjoyed serving on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a real interesting committee. It was an important committee because a lot of decisions made there were far reaching.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this is where you can really make your contribution?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there pretty freewheeling discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, it was pretty spirited.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this would be where you could really say something effective to make things happen—or not happen? More than, say, on the floor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how many minds were ever changed by speeches.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even in the Rules committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Even in the Rules committee. I think there was a lot of horse trading—"you vote for my bill and I'll vote for yours to get it out on the calendar."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about that feeling: "Just get it out, the whole House should vote on this."

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's quite a lot of that feeling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you'd be the gatekeeper for the bills that were a waste of time or were duplications of something else, or somehow not needed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We always looked over the list that the Speaker ordinarily prepared of non-controversial bills that we just automatically put on as a block. He would say, "Anybody have any objections to any of these bills? Okay, they're on the calendar."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These would be housekeeping bills, and then you'd hash over the more difficult ones?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We spent more time on the controversial ones.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you think of a bill that died in Rules that was a controversial bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not right offhand. But I know there were a number of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you can recall, for instance, where something was sent to Rules—like say, the power bill of 1961, for instance, was sent back to Rules and just never came out again.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So for that bill, would you just shuffle it to the bottom of the pile and that would be the end of it? Would there be that sort of tacit understanding that you weren't going to have that come back up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If someone would say, "I want that bill," the Speaker or the chairman of the Rules committee would say, "Well, I don't think we want to consider that now."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In effect, a pocket veto?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the members? That was it? There was no more discussion. The Speaker just said, "We're not doing it?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** The member could make a fuss about it, but it wouldn't go anyplace.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the Speaker had a lot of power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of power.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm not sure how the Legislature would work without the Rules committee, because there were so many bills to consider. You had to have some kind of winnowing process.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You had to have it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Back to our discussion about sponsoring—or in your case—not so often sponsoring bills. So, if you sponsored a bill, was that a signal that this was something that greatly mattered to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily. And then sometimes it would be an indication of what groups were interested in particular legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are you saying that you worked with certain groups of people and you would help sponsor their bills?

**Mr. Eldridge:** This would happen in many instances.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would you consider ‘your groups’ that would come to you and say, “We really want this piece of legislation.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because I think most everybody knew that I wasn’t particularly interested in being on a bill, I didn’t get as many requests as most members. But there were always bills having to do with community colleges, for example, and I always had an interest in cities legislation. And there were specific pieces of legislation having to do with the district that could be transportation or could be institutions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like the Northern State Hospital?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You have several to do with drainage and diking districts. With the Skagit River, you had a lot of issues like that right in your district.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I don’t know how many dike districts there are in Skagit County, but there were a lot of them and each one had its own commissioners.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That concern was something that shows up as a steady thread throughout your service.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those were just particularly district-interest type bills.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But your part of the state, doesn’t it have a bigger concentration of diking

districts than some other areas? Just looking at the geography.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Because you know, in central Washington, you had irrigation districts and then the port districts. There were a lot of specialty type groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It made sense, I guess, to have all those little districts. Those are local issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That year you had a bill for community colleges that you sponsored. It didn’t pass, but several things were in the works.

You had a couple of different bills having to do with retirement issues. Was that happenstance or were you interested in this area? They were both more or less housekeeping bills, although there was one revising teachers’ retirement that sounds a little more complicated. The other one has to do with port districts contributing to both private and state retirement funds. Was there any connection there with retirement issues? Why you would suddenly be involved with this issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think it was more the group. The port association asked for my involvement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then there’s one about designating scenic highways. That was a new topic coming up that people were talking about. More services for tourists.

You did have two concurrent resolutions that year and that’s a little bit unusual for you. One of them was with Duane Berentson and Representative Taylor, the Democrat from Snohomish County, to direct a feasibility study for a Skagit River overpass. How would this work? How would a concurrent resolution get something done? Would this be something that would go to the Department of Highways, or you would ask them to do this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Or it could go to the federal government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did this Skagit overpass get built? Did something come of it? It was one thing to get a resolution passed, but I wondered if anything came down the road.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that was all part of the interstate system and it may have been something urging them to hurry up and do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Move on it? Yes. The other one directs the Legislative Council to investigate "flagpole solicitation." What did that involve?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I recall that a company was coming into the state and going to all the cities and towns to sell flagpoles to put on their streetlight standards—down the main street and that sort of thing. They may have been using some unscrupulous sales tactics so somebody thought there ought to be a bill addressing that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're on that one with Harry Lewis, and it was such a curious sounding title, I just had to ask you what that was.

1963 was a long session. In fact, it was the longest session to date. You had a twenty-three day extraordinary session tacked onto your regular session. Apparently redistricting was holding things up because people were tying the budget debate somehow to redistricting. Trying to link the votes. Do you recall that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just know that there was a lot of horse trading going on. Redistricting hits right to the heart of the system. It affects everybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, yes. Very intimately. The Senate Democrats were trying to force redistricting into the budget negotiations, but eventually it was clear that it wasn't going to happen and redistricting was abandoned and you finally passed the budget. You don't usually show

up in the paper a lot, but you were quoted in an article in the *Seattle Times* saying, "Governor Rosellini is the one person in the state who is holding up the machinery of redistricting. If the Governor pussyfoots around until the last minute, chaos will result." This seemed to be part of the discussion where you wanted a special session to be called to separate redistricting and discussion of the budget. Do you remember saying this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But it sounds like it would reflect what I was thinking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the governor really the person holding up redistricting, or was it the Senate Democrats?

**Mr. Eldridge:** From a mechanical standpoint, the Senate Democrats were. But there wasn't any reason why the governor couldn't call the leadership in and say, "Let's do this or that or the other thing or forget it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think he had enough influence with his own party to force through a redistricting plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At that point I thought he did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was not something that actually impacted the governor. It was strictly a legislative issue. And sometimes there was some tension there. Legislators seemed to want the governor to stay out of this. I was a little taken aback to see you wanting to haul the governor into it. Or was this a way of pointing fingers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh sure. It's a political maneuver to stir things up a little bit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was an election coming up, and the governor was up for re-election, and I wondered how much that would play a role in redistricting or your comments on it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not very much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One thing that did turn out to be a big issue, Speaker Day—the controversial Speaker from the coalition session—had a hard time making appointments that year to the Legislative Council. Regular Democrats didn't want to help him out any. He finally did make his appointments, but he appointed only “coalition Democrats” and Republicans: Adams, Copeland, himself, Evans, Gorton, Marion Gleason, Jueling, Kink, O'Connell, Perry and Siler. No “regular” Democrats.

To the Legislative Budget Committee, the other really big interim committee, he appointed Representatives King, Hurley, Canfield, Swayze and Goldsworthy. Again, only coalition Democrats and Republicans. There was a lot of heat about that, but it came to nothing, because after the end of the special session, Governor Rosellini vetoed the funding for the Legislative Council committees. Do you remember that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I remember that happening, but I don't recall the specifics.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was kind of convoluted. Bob Perry and other legislators were trying to work up an investigation of the Liquor Control Board, concerning the governor's appointments and other issues. And other people were thought to be using the interim committee investigation not to investigate issues, but to investigate the governor for campaign purposes. Would you have any comments on that particular strategy? Could those committees be used in such a fashion? Were they open to that sort of construction?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I think so, although the interim committees didn't have that much influence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they have provided a platform for hearings for the Press to come in? If you were trying to uncover a scandal, would they

be a place where you could do that? There were not that many opportunities when you're out of session.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The use of a press release would have been more effective at this point in time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are some traces that suggested that Rosellini's fears were not totally unfounded, but there are other arguments that say, well, that's kind of ridiculous. But it's now very difficult to judge whether this was a real trap to get him or if he was just unduly worried. If you had been him, would you have been concerned about this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If I had made the decision to veto an appropriation for a committee established by the Legislature, yes, I think I'd be a little concerned. Although the general public really doesn't know and they don't really care.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's kind of an in-house thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he did, in a sense, create a scandal by vetoing the appropriation for the Council?

Interim committees, even if they were not that influential, yet they did craft bills and hold hearings and investigate various issues. They did play a legislative role. Was it kind of a setback not to have any?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The legislative interim committees provided a mechanism for getting problems and proposals to the Legislature. And it was also a vehicle for various individuals and groups to have some involvement in legislation directly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The big education committee that you served on seemed to have an important role in fashioning a lot of legislation that over the

next several years came forward. Not everything, but a lot of things that you discussed in those committees seemed to become the program.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the role of the Legislative Budget Committee? How important were they, or if they're not there, how important is that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They certainly provided a service to legislators. They held a lot of hearings with state agencies and, particularly in the field of education, where they met with college boards of trustees to go over their budgets.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of legwork.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this because there's just not time during the regular sessions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's a lot of that. And then there were so many different items for consideration that it's pretty hard to do it during the session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they sort out the big issues and create a sense of priority for some of the more difficult issues during the interim so that when the regular session opened you were not starting from square one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct. They provided a good service. What it did was educate a sizeable number of legislators who become "experts" in the field of appropriations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They reputedly had very good staff.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would those people have been available to you otherwise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were available during the session. They had an established office with staff, just like the Legislative Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happened to those people when the funds were vetoed? Were they out of a job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, they kept the people close by and involved. I presume that a lot of them, just because of their tremendous interest and loyalty to the cause, stayed on. I can't remember whether there was some supplemental funding, but it seemed like they functioned to some extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In a sort of skeleton way, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think it was the one and only time the Legislative Council was shut down in that way. And it may have been a tactical mistake. But, on the other hand, the Republicans were pressing Governor Rosellini pretty hard. He seemed vulnerable.

The Republicans had some good candidates this election. They were really out to win. There were was a lot of Press discussion, especially in the Seattle *Argus*, about what was called the Republicans' "will to lose." In previous elections, it was thought that the Party backed candidates that just weren't really up to it. The *Argus* suggested that the Republicans couldn't see themselves as the majority party. Do you think that was so? You'd been in the minority for a while. Was there a kind of feeling that the effort to be the majority party was beyond your resources?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were many Republicans who felt that they could do more in the minority than having to be out in front on everything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the other discussion was that yes, Republicans were more comfortable in the minority because they were the Party that liked to say no to government. Not to create new programs, but to put the brakes on things. In that sense they were more comfortable, philosophically, being a minority.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that's very true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But then, you have someone like Dan Evans who had a totally different view. He was an activist and he definitely wanted to be in the majority. He didn't want to take second seat. I don't know when he first began to look ahead at the governor's office, but when the campaign season opened in 1964, Evans put his hat in the ring.

I understand that within the Republican caucus, there were several people that the Party was considering as gubernatorial material, and Evans wasn't necessarily their first choice back in 1962, 1963. Do you remember any of that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, but I know that there was a feeling that he wasn't ready.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A bit too young, perhaps? One of the names put forward for governor was Seattle mayor, Gordon Clinton, but he declined. He was too busy being mayor. Some of the other people, I guess, never really took the bait. And so there was some further discussion and then there was the group with Herb Hadley who initiated a sort of impromptu campaign—"Evans for Governor"—before Dan Evans ever announced himself.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that truly the impetus for the whole thing? Or was that a bit more stage-managed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Really, I think Herb just came out of the floorboards on his own.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a very early supporter. Even a visionary in this case!

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was one of the twelve or thirteen of us who lived together out at the old mansion on East Bay Drive. There were a number of those who actually formed the nucleus for the Evans campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were close observers of him and they decided he was ready, or they were ready for him at any rate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. That must have been a bit of a surprise for him. He did announce his intentions, though, and began to campaign. He had James Dolliver helping him and some other people. He had quite a core team and then they relied very heavily on volunteers throughout the state.

Would he and his campaign team have come to you and asked, "Who do you know in your area that we can get to come to a breakfast or an event?" Would they go to legislators and pull in people from all over the state that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that their group was very effective with legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was his world. His opponent was coming from outside government, so his relationships with legislators all over the state was really one of his strengths. Now, his opponent, Mr. Christensen, what did you think of him? We've discussed him a bit.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't know him although I had been at various meetings where he was. He was a good-looking fellow and pretty articulate. There were those who felt that he didn't know enough about state government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Frankly, nothing. His claim to fame was that he had come out of nowhere and piled up an impressive number of votes against Senator Magnuson in the 1962 election two years before.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And if the business community had gotten behind him, he would have beaten Magnuson easily.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was his message? He's not a regular Party Republican.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But he was a good-government type. I think he had some fiscal concerns that were good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you hadn't had Dan Evans, would you have been happy with Christensen as a candidate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I could have been comfortable with him. The Republican Party has historically not had the best people as candidates for top offices.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why do you think that's so?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think many people who might very well be good candidates are just apprehensive about campaigning.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would that be more true in the Republican Party than the Democratic Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's a matter of philosophy about the office. I may be unfair, but it appears to me over the years that many Democrats are

interested in what they can get out of the office and in the financial aspect and the prestige that goes with the office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mean the reward side of it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And many of the Republicans have that kind of pie-in-the-sky attitude that they want to do things for the people, but they don't want to pay for it. They're always trying to push down on expenditures for government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was one of the contrasts that many people made between Evans and Christensen, was that Evans was a pragmatist and Christensen was an idealist. Do you mean your comments like that or in some other way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That may have been. At the outset of the campaign, that may have been the thrust, but Dan had never been one to pull back on new programs and the expenditures or worry about how we pay for it next time around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He just wanted to solve the problem. The "money will come," presumably?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And that was some of the objection that a lot of Republicans had. They just felt Dan was too liberal. Of course, Christensen was too conservative. There was some innuendo that he was tied up with the John Birch Society or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know if he was, but many of his followers—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, his followers were. They didn't have any place to light.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was quite a problem later in the Party. The descriptions of Christensen's campaign make it sound like a moral crusade,

not a political crusade. He made a lot of, frankly, anti-government statements and had rather derogatory things to say about legislators and politicians.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a legislator, how did you feel when a candidate from your own Party attacked your process? His favorite phrase was ‘smoke-filled rooms’ which is kind of interesting since so few of you actually smoked.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, that’s why most legislators were attracted to Dan.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He at least spoke their language.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happens to government when candidates use that approach as their platform? Is it irresponsible? It’s always a bit of a conundrum when a candidate for an office denigrates the office. You kind of wonder why they want it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there are those candidates who really feel that there’s something wrong with government and that there needs to be a change in the Legislature and other elected offices.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is there a kernel of truth in what he was saying, or was he speaking out of ignorance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was probably some truth in what he was saying. The only question that I always had in my own mind was how does he know? He’s never been there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Say he had been elected. Can a governor affect that clean sweep that he was talking about? They’re not the Legislature; that’s a different branch of government.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t think he would have had much influence on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he would have been a bit of a lame duck in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You never know because people do change and they can develop a different way of operating.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He may have learned—had he got there—what it was really all about. It made for a difficult primary campaign. It’s hard for us now to imagine someone talking about Dan Evans as a sort of shady character, but that was the kind of tenor of the campaign.

Whether or not Christensen could have modulated his message, it didn’t seem that his followers could, though. They were pretty ideologically driven. What happens when a candidate’s roots, or who they’re beholden to are very one-minded or narrowly based?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s a difficult situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What do you do with that? Do business people, for instance, look at that and think, “This isn’t going to work. We have to find someone else.” Is that why they didn’t really get behind him? He started out with very large numbers in the polls and lost them as Dan Evans gained. But they were his to lose. Did he throw away his broad support that he had with his message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that a lot of those people, after giving it some serious thought, just said, “Now wait a minute, I don’t think this guy will help us much.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He didn’t really spell out any kind of a program.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, he didn’t.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Whereas Dan Evans, of course, had the famous "Blueprint for Progress," which spelled out everything. There was a high contrast there.

They were both campaigning all over the state. If the candidates came to Mount Vernon, would you appear on the stage with one or the other of them, or would you steer clear of that implicit endorsement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think everyone in my area knew that I would support Dan. But I wouldn't have any misgivings about appearing with Dick Christensen at a campaign meeting or anything like that. But I was pretty obvious in my support of Evans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does a governor campaign only for himself or does he also campaign for legislators? If Evans came to your district, would you boost each other? You see presidential candidates doing that, but do potential governors also do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It might not be as direct, but if I were to introduce Dan at a political meeting I would certainly say a good word. And then he would reciprocate by thanking me for the wonderful introduction and maybe make a comment or two about my activity with the caucus or something like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you share resources in any way? Mailing lists or these appearances, or other ways of helping each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Lots of our ads would indicate support for other Republican candidates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those sample ballots where you just check through the list with everybody's name printed there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Incidentally, sample ballots are a pretty good campaign tool.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Get your name out there. Get people used to seeing that check beside your name?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They'll check the thing and carry it with them to the polls.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Get their homework done at home and they're all ready.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course now, you see, such a high percentage of people use absentee ballots which is what they do, then they sit down around the kitchen table and mark their ballots and put them in the mail.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little bit different, yes. The timing is different. The psychology is different.

Did you go outside of your district and campaign with anyone else, or did you stick close to home? Were you involved in other races during that year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I wasn't at that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of course, this was also a presidential election year. Would that play a role in getting people excited about an election? Is there more activity during a presidential year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of the local Republicans would be more involved with local candidates, legislative candidates rather than even congressional, senatorial and, of course, the presidential races.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering with all the races if there's just a heightened interest so more people were involved?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There would be some rub-off. I think more people are involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's in the news more. There's a certain level of activity that builds.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Even though there are more people involved, they're spread out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it actually dilute what's going on, then? Do they work against each other in any way or cross-fertilize?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose they have contests for funds and participation and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. If you've got one hundred dollars to give to political causes that year, and there's the president, your senator and the governor and your local guy and maybe somebody for your county government, you've got more choices.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a hot year, though, for presidential politics. You had Johnson, the incumbent, against Barry Goldwater, the senator from Arizona. Two very different kinds of people and positions. Were you involved in any way in any of the presidential activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not directly. I had a sign in my store window and I probably signed on for a list supporting the president, that sort of thing. I may have even addressed some mailings, but I wasn't directly involved in a campaign committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Goldwater your chosen candidate? There was quite a field that year of top Republicans of quite different views. You had some real choices.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was supporting Goldwater.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What appealed to you about him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I supported him because he was a business person. He owned a store in Arizona and understood the problems of small business people.

The in 1968, when we had Rockefeller and Nixon, I was a delegate to the national Republican convention and Dan Evans was also. We sat side by side in our delegation. Of course, Dan was strong for Rockefeller.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, he gave an important speech supporting him. But did you feel the same way about Rockefeller as a candidate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Although I could have lived with him. But he certainly wasn't my first choice. I supported Nixon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the Goldwater campaign divisive for state level Republicans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think to some extent, although I wasn't close to any kind of a problem. I wasn't involved with the Party at that time. I was pretty much devoting my efforts to my own situation and my campaign. But I thought Goldwater was very forthright and he certainly gave the appearance of being well versed in government. I think he gave the feeling to a lot of people that he could be trusted and that he was a hard worker and could offer some real leadership.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had a kind of charisma, didn't he? That kind of power that draws people? He could be somewhat abrasive, but sometimes that's attractive to people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They knew where he stood and they were more apt to follow him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've been reading about him. There were mainstream Republicans who were very supportive of him, especially after the primary when he was the candidate for your party, but he seemed to create a whole new base of supporters of people who had not previously been involved in party politics. Whether he attracted them or whether they came out of the woodwork, or whatever, there was a different kind of person

who supported Goldwater as a candidate who were—as some people described—new Republicans or not even Republicans at all, but something else all together. They were more—conservative isn't the word there, but they had a different perspective from the mainline Republicans.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Persons who, for one reason or another, thought that Goldwater was their kind of person. Would that kind of discussion be difficult within the Republican Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To a certain extent, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Especially when you have the same people and arguments showing up in the governor's race, apparently. They kind of fed on each other and bounced between the races at the state and national levels.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The people who supported Christensen would gravitate naturally toward Goldwater.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the connection? Was it that Nelson Rockefeller definitely would not attract those people? Or was there something in Goldwater that could reach that spectrum?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think his conservative stance was a major consideration. And then, I think coming from a small state had some appeal. And he was a good legislator at the congressional level. He had a lot of appeal and a lot of support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** His message, as we remember it now, has been reduced to "sound bites" and distorted quite a bit. Impressions of his campaigns are chiefly filtered through Johnson's remarks about him these days. Maybe you could give us a little more accurate view of how he

looked to you: What kinds of things you thought he stood for, beyond the small business aspect; what kind of programs he would have supported?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know any specifics, but I certainly liked his general stand on government. Pretty conservative and I think trying to hold down the spread of government. And he was a strong military supporter.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Vietnam war was becoming more of an issue during this period. Did you feel that he would handle it better?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really did. And I think, looking back, I think he would have done a better job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's ironic that Johnson was the peace keeper, so-called. Of course, that's not how it turned out at all. It's really interesting to think about what it would have been like with Goldwater instead.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he wouldn't have stopped at the point we stopped. I think he would have gone right on in and wiped them out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which is what scared a lot of people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And ended it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think he would have used nuclear weapons? People were worried about that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that he would have used nuclear weapons, but I think he would have continued with a strong military presence. When you get into a war you have to win or lose.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a new kind of war, that's for sure. Of course, in 1964 I don't think anyone could have guessed that it would go on for a decade more, a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It went on, but it didn't go on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was Goldwater's actual campaign, but leaving that aside, there was what these followers of his were saying—which was not always the same thing. There was some kind of semi-wild talk from Goldwater and Christensen supporters alike, virtually the same people in this case, about repealing the federal income tax, impeaching Chief Justice Earl Warren, getting the United States out of the UN, a lot of talk about the internal communist conspiracy. They were very sincere. Those were serious issues, but what kind of political conversations would that engender? Were you called upon to comment on this sort of thing? Or could you stick to your own issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did. I didn't comment or get involved. I tried to consider the issues that were paramount to my district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have people at a campaign meeting and different gatherings who would be bringing up these sorts of things and wanting to know your position on them? How do you handle that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My kind of stock answer was that these are not issues that we're going to be directly concerned with, and consequently I'm not going to spend a lot of time getting involved in them when we've got all kinds of other problems to tackle that I can have something to do with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if these issues are somewhat like a "litmus test" questions, as abortion became later for some groups. If you would be judged on your responses.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've heard of people doorbelling and being confronted with this sort

of thing, or in campaign meetings or in different forums. It would take a certain finesse to turn the conversation, because I read that for these people it was a moral issue, and not just political. And if you looked like you were ducking it, that you were one of those "shady" politicians they were so worried about. I just wondered if you had that kind of experience?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't run into that. But some of these people were just adamant. Almost to the point of being violent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Apparently some people wrote a lot of threatening letters to Dan Evans later with a pretty rough-looking questions. These were one-issue voters. Perhaps the beginning of that kind of phenomenon.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They sure were. The first time I was the state Republican convention chairman we really took care of them at that convention. Poof! We practically just drove them right out of the park.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of percentage, do you think, of party activists fell into this camp?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, gosh, I don't know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they more loud than numerous? They got a lot of press.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were quite a few of them. They had quite a few followers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they have the energy of new converts? They were excited?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But, this is the other thing. They took their shot and then they disappeared. They weren't interested in the Party or electing Republicans, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was something that created quite a lot of discussion. Were these

really Republicans? Were these people taking over the Party or were they just using the Party for their own purposes? How did the mainstream Republicans respond? Do you give them some space and hope that if you bring them into the tent that they'd become good Republicans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Particularly on the local level, that was being done, where they would encourage them to come in, work for other candidates and become part of the machinery.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they be amenable to that or be much more interested in just their own agenda?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of them were just one-issue people as you indicated, and they're the worst kind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're not interested in the process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which, if you're deeply engaged in the process, is kind of difficult to take.

There was a lot of ferment. Finally, it was the primary election day. Dan Evans beat the bushes all over the state, and he won. I'm not sure who was more surprised. He certainly did his homework. Did you feel that he was an assured candidate or was it a near thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I felt comfortable and optimistic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When we hear accounts of it now, it was a tense and unrelenting effort. His whole campaign was really a crescendo of activity and effort, quite a big story.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He had some real smart people. You take Slade Gorton and Joel Pritchard and his brother Frank, and Mary Ellen McCaffree and Jim Dolliver. They were just good people

and they had their heads screwed on straight. They did a tremendous job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** After the primary at least you knew who your candidates were; the dust settled a bit. You did have a split in your Party that didn't heal right away. The Christensen campaign people—though their candidate was gracious and threw his support behind Dan Evans—didn't necessarily follow his lead. There was quite a problem there. Many of these people were still very engaged in campaigning for Goldwater and were very active, but seemed to fade out of the local scene. We'll have to watch to see how the Party leadership puts that back together.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Although I would say that I don't think there were very many who defected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. I can't imagine them turning and voting for a Democrat. What would they do, not vote at all or vote grudgingly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that there were a number who didn't vote at all, and there were others who held their nose and voted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They had painted Evans in pretty dark colors. He was one of those politicians in the smoke-filled rooms as they kept saying over and over. For many, it was a black and white issue. They weren't really Party people, as you say.

Meanwhile, the Legislature, members of the House and half the Senate, were up for election and there had been a lot of talk in your caucus that this is the year that you're going to be the majority. You had a certain forward movement in the last several elections, getting more and more members. You looked pretty good going into the election and you had a lot of strong candidates. But in fact, you don't go forward, you went backward. What happened? Was it the Johnson landslide or something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there's that, but historically, in Washington, it goes in waves. This was just a low point. I don't think anybody was jumping off buildings or bridges, but it was a disappointment for sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Especially because there was a lot of open talk about "this year we're going to make it." That must have been a little hard. You do get the governor's chair. You win the Secretary of State with Lud Kramer. But your party lost eight seats in the House and two more senators. But finally the election season was over. Was there a postmortem after elections? Do you get together and say, "Okay, what happened here? What should we do now?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's more of that within the Party structure. The state central committee gets together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you involved on that level at this point? Would you go to those meetings? It's not really clear to me where a legislator fits in all that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They don't, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So those are the precinct people and county people and like that? It would be the campaign workers and all the activists, but not necessarily the office holders?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When I was looking at this lineup, would your defeat in other areas—on the national level, too, as well as the state level—would that actually add to the stature of your winning candidate, Dan Evans and the ones who did make it? Would it make you club behind them even more? Would it have that converse effect?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it was to any great extent, but I'm sure there's some of that. People kind of like to go with the winners.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was the best show in town.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But there was still a lot of uneasiness, because there were still a lot of people out there who just considered Dan too liberal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, he was kind of on point now? He's got to bring those people in? Or did he just forge ahead and be himself? What's the choice there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he pretty much kept to his own program, hoping that he could bring all these folks in, and I think he did a pretty good job of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How does a governor do that? Can you do it through appointments? Do you do it through talking to people and making them get excited about what you're doing? Do you do it partly because you've won? There's a certain energy there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And he had the opportunity to make speeches to Rotary clubs, education and business organizations about his program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he'd still be campaigning, in a sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that Evans would beat Rosellini once he won the primary? Had Rosellini already crested, so to speak? Did it feel that he was a weakened governor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought it was going to be a cliffhanger, but I felt that Dan would ultimately win out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How do you get a feel for that? Do you just listen to people and realize that a lot of people are saying the same thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, there's that. And then, of course, I had such a great deal of respect for him even though I, on a number of occasions, didn't agree with what he was saying and doing, but I certainly didn't have any problem supporting him and talking to people about him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the response would be generally positive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that would give you the feeling that he was going to be successful?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the things he had to do, because he's the titular head of the Party, the highest elected official, was rebuild the Party after these splits that we talked about. It was quite an effort to reorganize: to rebuild from the precinct level and up. There have been studies done in Washington State how the Goldwater people—the more extreme of the Goldwater people—had captured the precinct level offices—deliberately, as a plan. That's how they operated. And there was this feeling that the Party had to get those positions back in the mainstream. Always careful to say that not all Goldwater supporters were—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Non mainstream people, but there was a contingent that was very active who were not regular Republicans. King County, Spokane, some parts of Snohomish County were hotbeds of this—I don't know what you call it, it's not really a revolt or a revolution, but it's a kind of a—

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Capturing of the Party? One of the first things that Evans pushed through to engage this struggle was the election of Gummie Johnson—Montgomery Johnson—as the state chair of the central committee. He would be the top person—we talked about the precinct level, the county level and the state level—he would be the lead person. That was a contested election, but Dan Evans openly supported him and some other people too, who were not elected. It was a mixed bag who was elected to the top leadership slots.

Maybe that was a good thing to bring in some of the people not in Dan Evans' camp? The person most often quoted as being on the other side, the split side, is Ken Rogstad from King County, who was aligned with the more extreme wing. Many newspaper accounts described this as a deep and pretty bitter struggle. How did that impact the Party when you've got these really divisive issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It certainly has an effect on the Party and it has an effect on the elected officials.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel pressure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some elected officials and candidates who would choose one side or the other and that was a difficult situation. But you just have to give Gummie Johnson credit for getting the thing turned around. He was a tremendous organizer and, of course, had the support of Dan and most of the top Republican people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were legislators split? Were there some who preferred a different camp? Did it come right into the Legislature or did it stay outside?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty much out of the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the Party platform? You're looking pained! What do you do when say a splinter group constructs the platform?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most candidates don't pay any attention to it anyway, and the general public, they could care less. I think we'd be better off if we'd just forget the platform. Maybe have just a general statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "These are Republican principles?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Principles, yes. And forget it. Because in some campaign, somebody is always going to pick something out of the platform and throw it right at you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "You're a Republican and your platform says this. Where do you stand?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And there you are in the headlights. Maybe you don't support the platform, but it's too complicated to explain why. It's really interesting that there is this complex organization that labors and produces this major statement, which is actually detrimental to those running for office.

## CHAPTER 11

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### EVANS IN GOVERNOR'S SEAT

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We talked about how Dan Evans set out to re-craft the Republican message, bring it back into the middle ground. Gummie Johnson did the same. Do you get together and decide on the caucus level what your message was and your plan and what you were going to do in the next session, the 1965 session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't that cut and dried. But there certainly were some discussions. Although the caucus actually doesn't meet except during the session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a leadership group that met prior to the session to decide, for instance, who was going to hold which positions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just kind of depends.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do people within the caucus campaign for leadership positions? Say you want to be floor leader, or whatever? Are there phone calls where people will let it be known that they would like that position?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But no formal structure for how these decisions are made? You had been the caucus chair, but you didn't return as the caucus chair. Was that a choice you made yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Although I've always enjoyed presiding. As the caucus chairman, I had the ability to steer the discussions and be fair about who I recognized and when to shut off the conversation and get on to something else or vote. I think I was reasonably successful as the chairman.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you just not feel like doing it again or you wanted to do something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just thought that it was probably time to move on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have the philosophy that leadership should be shared and there should be a revolving group of people who assumed different positions? That it's good for the Party to not always have the same people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I've always been one to think that these positions ought to be moved around, but I didn't envision any set plan.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're not necessarily one who feels like a position is yours once you have had it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You went on to other things. You dropped right out of the leadership group. I couldn't help but wonder if that was your choice or if something happened to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was my choice. I wasn't railroaded out!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With Evans leaving for the governorship, there was going to be movement one way or the other, because he had been your leader. There was really quite a big turnover. I'd like to know the stories behind some of this change.

Robert Goldsworthy became the caucus chair. The new floor leader was Tom Copeland, who had been the whip, replacing Dan Evans. His assistant minority floor leader was Jim Andersen, who had often worked with Tom on different things. Jim Andersen replaced Damon Canfield who dropped out of leadership also. Was he going on to other things as well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was looking forward to the time when he was going to leave the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was thinking about retiring? Taking a less active role? Then Robert Brachtenbach became the whip, taking what had been Tom Copeland's place. He was a new person in your leadership group. And then Gladys Kirk replaced Frances Swayze as secretary. Now, I have to ask, is that some kind of slot for women in the leadership?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not necessarily.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just strikes me when I see two women in a row as secretary.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There may have been some of that in the back of everybody's head.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand she was a fairly effective legislator.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. And her husband had been in the Legislature and she was twice the legislator he was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a kind of trait, I guess, whatever it is. You either have it or you don't.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was in that first category; she was a good legislator and just a wonderful person as well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this new group, was this a change in direction or a change in style? Was there any kind of meaning that we can gather from this new slate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so. At this point, it was kind of a popularity contest. Although I think if Bob Brachtenbach had stayed in the Legislature, he would have been the Speaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do certain people just stand out that way? They have a quality?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Of course, he wound up on the Supreme Court.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Not exactly a demotion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But he was a good attorney and a good legislator and just a regular person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Robert Goldsworthy was well known for his skills in dealing with the budget. What about Jim Andersen? How did he operate in the new group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Jimmy Andersen and Tom Copeland were old Walla Wallans and had known each other for years. Jimmy is one of these off-the-wall people. He'd get up on the floor and rant and rave about this person or this issue, but he was very popular in his district. Always was elected by big margins.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had a large district. It was that whole swath down the east side of Lake Washington. Quite an up and coming area, a lot of growth; it was quite a dynamic part of the state.

Would this have been the group that would work closest with the governor to bring in his agenda? Or would they have their own—or both?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There really isn't a lot of organization as such. I think that Republicans kind of fly by the seat of their pants.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting because I had thought of you as highly organized types, but maybe not?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I, personally, am an optimistic fatalist. "It's going to happen, but it's going to be good."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, all in good time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you arrived in Olympia for the 1965 session, you had your new governor, but the Republicans were still the minority Party in the House and Senate. There were thirty-two Democrats in the Senate to seventeen Republicans. Not a very good balance there. In the House, there were sixty Democrats to thirty-nine Republicans. Again, very lopsided. Did you feel that you still had a role to play and you were going to be active?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You just dump it right on the Democrats. "Here! You've got everything. You've got two-thirds majority in both Houses. If you want an income tax on the ballot, be my guest."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. So, maybe it's a good thing to be the minority on occasion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because what it comes down to it, the Democrats didn't want an income tax any more than we did, they just wanted the issue. They just wanted to beat us over the head with it every election.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So was this the time to call their bluff?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was not that session, but the next one that we passed it and put it on the ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It certainly comes up often.

The first thing, of course, that happens in the session is the election of the Speaker. Robert Schaefer was nominated. Could you give me a thumbnail sketch of what kind of a Speaker he was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Bob was a good Speaker. He wasn't a dynamic Speaker, but he wasn't an arbitrary Speaker. And he just kept things moving.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I am very interested in what makes a person a good Speaker. He was a fairly new legislator wasn't he? I don't think he'd been there a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a long time, no. Bob was a successful attorney in Vancouver and was a very likeable person. He had a lot of friends in the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he have friends on both sides of the aisle? Was he approachable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You could approach him, but I wouldn't say that he was out cultivating people on both sides of the aisle. But he was certainly easy to work with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he have certain things that he was known for as a Speaker besides his fairness?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that he had any burning issues. I have never considered him a strong Speaker, unlike John O'Brien.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a transition person for the Democrats? He was only Speaker for one session, after the tumultuous coalition session. Was he the Speaker to mend the fences within the Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably. I'm not sure Bob was strong enough to pull that one off, but I think that was probably the right time and the right place to do something like that. He wasn't a lightning rod.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Speaking of the coalition, going into the '65 session, were there still traces of it? Did you shake hands and say, "Thank you very much. Now go back to your Party?" How did the coalition end?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just with the election. Then it was just as though we picked right up where we ended before the coalition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it was clear that the coalition was over? It wasn't a temptation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Coalitions are not good. But sometimes they are necessary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did get something out of that one. Some time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, you see, we were backed right up against the wall. They could have just killed us with redistricting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know how much you would know about internal Democratic matters, but were the coalitionists back in their Party or were they in some kind of odd, grey area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was still a lot of resentment with the regular Democrats towards the coalitionists. That was quite a shock to the Party.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It's like pulling the rug out from underneath somebody. Was there a feeling of unease or tension or lingering doubts about these people? Which way they were going to go? I noticed they still voted with the Republicans on some issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As they had prior to the coalition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true. But they didn't have a label before as they did now. So, I wondered if regular Democrats said, "Oh, there they go again,"

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't recall anything like that. Although it was a traumatic experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you keep up any kind of relationships with them even informally?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only on a kind of a one-to-one basis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they just faded back into their Party as much as they could. I understand that it wasn't easy. That coming back into the Party took some work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure it was difficult on both sides.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But, you still had redistricting hanging over your heads. With Evans as governor, you didn't have all three bodies wrapped up by the other party. There's an infamous story that deals with redistricting where the Democrats tried to ram through a redistricting bill during the first two days of the new session while Rosellini was still the governor and before Dan Evans was sworn in. Do you remember those two days?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember that concern and it was one thing that we vowed wasn't going to happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What were you prepared to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You can stall and there are maneuvers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it be a filibuster?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Just maneuvers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just stall for two days? Were you privy to that story about Dan Evans being sworn in early if necessary? Did you hear that rumor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I knew that there was some talk of that. But I think that if you try to Mickey Mouse around, it's going to come back and bite you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You would have had to swear the new governor in at midnight, which would have been constitutional—maybe not the spirit of the law, but the letter of the law might have been observed. I don't know if there's any comparable story to beat that one.

One of the very first bills to be considered was the redistricting bill that came over from the Senate. But it didn't really fly in the House. The Democratic Senate had taken care of its own members, but not necessarily to the good of their own House Democrats. So House members would have had to vote for a bill that wasn't actually in their interest. Did you know that House Democrats weren't really happy with this plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We knew that it wasn't going to do anything for them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that help you feel a little calmer about the situation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was more of a big question—what are they going to do?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a lot of activity and intense discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because there was a certainty that somebody over there was going to be out of a job. There was going to be some shifting around that had to be done and lines changed. There were going to be some people who would lose their seats.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Quite a few people, actually.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a big change that would have to occur.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they have the map rooms as they had previously, where you'd go down there and look at where the district lines were and discuss it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. One of the committee rooms had the maps out all over the desks and that's where Slade and Bob Greive held forth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, Slade Gorton was again not in the caucus leadership again this session. Was that because he was continuing to take the lead on this big task of heading up the redistricting effort?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then there were just a lot of people who didn't trust Slade. Consequently—I'm not sure he could get the votes for most anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But did they still trust him on redistricting to look after their best interests?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because he could just outsmart anybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he your best bet against Senator Greive who was also a master at this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I tell you, the two of them, that was a combination. I'd like to have been a little mouse in the corner at some of those sessions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They are so unlike it's hard to picture them working together. Of course they're working against each other, but—

**Mr. Eldridge:** A couple of traps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Very different kinds of minds. Both lawyers though, weren't they?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just to look at redistricting a little bit more, let's quickly review what the issue was. You had had several battles the last number of years, and they got to such a pitch that it was

getting to be all consuming, but you were never able to pass a bill. Too many interests were involved to actually come to an agreement.

The court got involved. There were some lawsuits on the grounds that the districts were so disproportionate that people felt that they weren't being represented—the crux of the issue. Finally, the district court ordered the Legislature not to do any business before they passed a redistricting plan. That, then, was the first order of business for the 1965 regular session; the court was going to hold your feet to the fire. You were not allowed to pass bills or do any legislative business until you redistricted. That was the biggest threat of all, I guess, short of taking it right out of your hands altogether and having the court, or somebody appointed by the court, redistrict for you.

When this ruling came down, did everyone understand what that meant? How you would operate? What would happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't aware of any great panic. The Legislature wasn't going to be easily threatened by either the court system or the administration.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you would have just carried on in your normal fashion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that there was any decision made as to how we would proceed, but I would think that would certainly be a choice.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To defy the court?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just to carry on business as usual.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Representative Robert Brachtenbach wanted more clarification. He wanted to know exactly what you could do and what you couldn't do. There was correspondence with the Attorney General, O'Connell, getting opinions about where the line

was to be drawn. There was some talk that you weren't supposed to do anything—not meet in committee, not hold hearings, certainly not pass bills. That was kind of the extreme end of the interpretation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just close it down!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your instructions, when they came, were that you could do everything but pass bills. You could hold committee hearings. You could go through first and second readings on bills, but you couldn't actually finally pass anything—which created a pile-up of pending legislation. This seemed to take a while to sort out. Do you remember that discussion about what you were really supposed to do in this situation? It was a bit unprecedented.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that was a discussion that was had by Brachtenbach and Gorton.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a more lawyerly thing to be worried about? The letter of the law?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But other legislators were quite ready to take this in their stride?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's probably true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you met and went through the process: introduced bills. Moved them along. Did you feel this as a pressure? As a sort of goad to get this redistricting taken care of? Or was redistricting way off to one the side? Something that this one group of people were doing and nobody else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that, generally speaking, the caucus was overly concerned. Now, they probably should have been, but I know a lot of the members figured, "We've got some good people who are working the problem. Let's just stay out of their way."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And yet you were being called in as members to look at your district lines, and if they weren't so good for you, would you feel pressure to acquiesce if it was for the good of the whole? Would there be that kind of push?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have your individual feelings about the district as it affects you personally, and then you have the situation of how much loyalty to the Party do I have, and how far do I need to go in that direction?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did have one or two legislators, when it was finally all said and done, who say, "Do what you need to do and I'll take my lumps." But that seemed very unusual.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There weren't a lot of those, but there were some.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some who were planning to retire and it didn't matter. But there weren't very many of those, so it must have been a little tense. Your own district went through some changes. Did you go down there fairly often, or just a couple of times?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't ever remember going down to the map room.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you were aware they were tinkering around the edges of your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some talk of your district losing the San Juan Islands to the Forty-first District. Would that have been a problem for you? Would that have changed the nature of your district in a marked way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The San Juan County vote is strongly Republican. And so it would have a considerable effect on the district. That was a proposal but it didn't happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you able to go down and say, "No, this is an important part of my district and this is how it's connected geographically, economically?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just told Slade, "Don't let this happen."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And just going to Slade was that enough to save you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He knew that I'd be out after him if he didn't!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If they had taken away the San Juans, would they have given you something else in return?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to me that one of the plans would have extended the district south to take in the Stanwood, East Stanwood area of Snohomish County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the character of that area? Would they have been Republicans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's primarily agriculture. That area would be about fifty-fifty.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So your work would be cut out for you? You'd have to campaign a little harder? You wouldn't know those people in the same way. You wouldn't have any track record with them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of the problem, that people got to know their districts and they didn't want to have to campaign in some new area where they didn't have any contacts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It calls for a lot more effort. It's like starting over. So this isn't something that you kept close tabs on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because there wasn't really too much they could do to the district. You're not going to go east and go over the mountains. And if you go north you get into Whatcom County and it's pretty much the same as Skagit County. It wouldn't be as critical as some other parts of the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Several bills and resolutions originating in the Legislature wanted to take redistricting out of the hands of the Legislature. Was that a general kind of sentiment, or just a few people who thought that maybe this really was not workable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any direct conversation, but I think, generally speaking, legislators didn't want an outside group tinkering with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Eventually, it came to that. The Commission for redistricting was established in the 1980s. You served on an earlier version of the Commission as we know it today. Now that you've experienced both sides, do you have a feeling about which one is best?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that it works best, but I think the way it ought to be done is for the Legislature to do it. It's difficult for people who are going to be involved who don't live in the areas that are going to be affected and you're getting everything secondhand. I just think it's better. There may need to be some pressure items put into play that would force the Legislature to get at it and to get it done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could it have been more strict than this court order of 1965?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The court order just said, "Do it." It didn't tell you how to do it, and I think there needed to be some guidance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What do you think would have helped this impasse? If somebody had come along and said, "Do it this way," would that have untied the knots?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can't visualize a procedure that would do that. There needed to be input from the various districts, and it takes a lot of study as to what the impact is going to be. When you start getting into that then you get into all kinds of problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the issues you were having this go-round of redistricting, was the leader in the Democratic redistricting was Senator Greive and he was really looking out for the senators. He didn't seem to have as much concern or wasn't in touch in the same way with Democratic House members. And on the Republican side you had Representative Slade Gorton. He was definitely looking after the Republican House members, but I don't really know how he felt about Republican senators. Whether that connection was a little weaker. So it was as much Senate versus House as it was Republican versus Democrat. Did the whole discussion become unbalanced?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was part of the problem. It might have been easier if there were a cohesive Democrat group that was looking out for both House and Senate Democrats, and a Republican person or persons who were looking out for the Republican House and Senate. But, you know, there always has and there always will be a certain amount of conflict between House and Senate members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if some kind of conference committee situation where you got the four caucuses together would have been better? Get all the voices in one room?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that might have been better.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand the Democratic House members were very wary of what was going on and felt left out of the discussion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were uneasy. The other thing was the size of the two groups. You're dealing with so many more people in the House and you start getting all of these plans and objections.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Everybody's got their little thing from their district that they want, which doesn't necessarily add up. It's amazing it ever gets done, actually, when you look at it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the impasse also have something to do with the personalities involved? They had such different ways of looking at things and operating.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We probably had the two most knowledgeable and the two most—hard-headed is not quite the word—but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They weren't going to back down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You couldn't have two people who would stand fast and were more intelligent and could present their case, and then go back to their caucuses and defend the position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can almost picture them relishing the challenge with each other because they were equally, if not differently, gifted in redistricting. They were worthy adversaries.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. It got to be a real contest.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And a bit of a game.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At first, it looked like an uneven contest, because the Democrats had both the House and Senate majorities. Previous to Dan Evans taking the governor's chair, they had all three, but they still couldn't pass a bill for one reason or another. Finally, you got at least a governor who's a Republican who can exercise his veto if things get a little out of hand. But, even so, much to the chagrin of the House Democrats, it was pretty equally matched in the negotiations.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that when you've got right down to cases, Slade and Bob probably were able to work it out between the two of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They seemed to. I don't know if we'll ever understand or even want to, all the different things that happened as lines were drawn and redrawn I don't know how many times. Certain areas, of course, were pretty much a given. In fact, most of the state was not under scrutiny, but there were certain parts of it—

**Mr. Eldridge:** That were really difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where a few blocks here and there seemed to make a big difference.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you know, they were right down to, well, if you move the district line one block it's going to affect X number of votes one way or the other. They were right down to going house to house and counting the voters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That gets almost a little too precise. So, it was pretty intense. Of course, it involved a lot of bringing things back to the caucuses and back and forth in the Houses, so not only were you under this court order but the preoccupation with district boundaries was overwhelming.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's remarkable that it got done. It's also remarkable that it didn't turn out all that bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did it turn out? Did it change things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think either side picked up any appreciable number of votes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that's successful redistricting. The status quo.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It means that something must be right!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Both Dan Evans and Slade Gorton brought up the fact again and again—they use it in their speeches about redistricting—that the Republicans received a percentage of the vote in the previous election that was not reflected in their numbers of seats. That always puzzles me. What do they mean by that? The Legislature is not proportional representation, it's "winner take all."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. It's just an arbitrary taking of numbers and saying, "Here are the number of votes in that district and we got fifty-six percent and the Democrats got forty-four percent, but in the representation from that district they have all the seats."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do they mean district by district the percent, or do they mean overall in the state the Republicans got, say, fifty-two percent of the vote, therefore they should have fifty-two percent of the seats? Is that just a sort of rhetorical kind of statement for campaign purposes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's just a kind of an example. Just something to throw out there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I never quite understood what they meant by it.

Your district didn't really change very much, then? I noticed on the map there were a few little bumps and lines that were a bit different, but not anything very appreciative.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was pretty much the same.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the nature of your area, of where you would campaign, what you would be representing, was pretty stable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Over time, if your area was growing, are you then representing more people? I was thinking of Jim Andersen's district and how much it changed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not as fast as that, but we were beginning to experience growth. There's some growth, but it was not explosive.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not whole, new communities? Just more people in the same areas?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just more. The growth has been pretty gradual and fairly uniform.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That put you on pretty solid ground. Did some areas, because of industry or one thing or another, change their nature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Snohomish County, the Everett, Edmonds area, changed considerably. Southern Snohomish County became a bedroom area for Seattle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would suburban people vote differently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends on whether they're management or blue collar communities. Blue collar people would be more unionized and tend to be Democrats. The mid-management people, we think that they'll be Republican. But it's not for sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did some people eventually lose out in their areas, not necessarily because of redistricting, but because the areas themselves

changed? And they would have difficulty keeping up with the times?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Tri-Cities area tended to swing a little more Republican. Now, the Yakima area was traditionally quite Republican, but I think it began to swing a little Democrat as the number of Hispanics grew. And they were getting more industry, although it's still primarily agriculture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Clark County/Vancouver area has had a big surge in high-tech industry that has reputedly changed the nature of that community to a more conservative area.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It swings back and forth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of these redistricting plans had to adjust the lines for people leaving the city of Seattle and settling in a ring of suburbs around the city. Especially on the east side of Lake Washington. I don't know if those kinds of people are easy to characterize or not.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That first bit of growth on the east side tended to be Republican.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Seattle had many Republican representatives in your day and now it has none. They seem to have all migrated to the suburbs. You were just in the middle of that change in the mid sixties. I wonder if you could tell then which way the wind was blowing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And when we went into the election of '66, I don't think anyone really had a clue what was going to happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But there was a feeling that you'd held some kind of line and you had a better chance now with this redistricting? There was a lot of hope pinned on this development. Did you feel that somehow there was a breakthrough coming?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we've always been pretty optimistic. It really comes down to whether you have good candidates or not. It can make all the difference in the world.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We'll see what happens then. That's a big effort that session. Let's look more into what you were actually doing yourself. You sat on four different committees, where the real work takes place: Commerce and Economic Development, with Representative Witherbee being the chair. Local Government, with a subcommittee on Cities and Towns, with Sam Smith as the chair. There was another subcommittee for that on counties and junior taxing districts. And then on Rules with Speaker Schaefer. And on Ways and Means and the subcommittee on Appropriations with Wes Uhlman being the chair there. And, of course, the other subcommittee is Revenue.

You could meet and discuss bills and hold hearings. But did you have to do anything differently in the committee process with the redistricting court order hanging over you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't any real change in the operation of the committees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Early in the session you had a discussion about salaries—legislator's salaries. That was always a difficult subject. Almost like redistricting. Voting on your own salary increases seems to be almost impossible for legislators to deal with. It's painful. It's public. You deserve to be paid and yet there's some kind of shame involved there, according to the Press.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How do you feel about that? Should legislators take care of that issue like they should do redistricting, or should there be a commission, or some other solution?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's such a difficult problem!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why is it not more straightforward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It becomes a political thing, and you've got the people who vote against the salary increase and then use it in all their hero speeches. Then you have a group of people who actually need the additional money, although it didn't amount to very much at any one time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And we are, to remind ourselves, talking about very small sums of money. You are not exactly well paid.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. You can certainly justify it on a reasonable, factual basis, but once it's done, it doesn't become either reasonable or factual.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why was this such a perennial issue for the Press, that they just love to kick you around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's just the Press. I get so upset with the media.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You, after all, have expenses and you're away from your businesses and sacrificing your family time, and yet you're supposed to do it for peanuts. Was this all part of the mystique of the citizen legislator, where you go down to the Legislature and serve the community? That somehow you're supposed to not need any money while you're doing it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. The public has a misconception of what it's all about. They don't understand the system, really, and they don't understand what's involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any way to educate the public? Legislators played into this, too, with their speeches. The discussion always sounds the same.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Nothing's changed!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did get a little bit more pay.

There was an issue which was recorded in the Journal and I was wondering if you could explain it to me. You asked a question of Representative Sawyer. You say, "I had a conversation before the session with Mr. O'Brien. I wasn't sure of the reason why a superior court judge or supreme court judge, or the members of the Legislature were omitted from this bill" that you were discussing. "It seems to me that in the past the recommendations given by you and other speakers in favor of the salary increase would apply as well to these other offices. What is the reason these have been taken out of this particular bill?" I'm a little confused as to what you're referring to. It says the name of the act is "Relating to state government. Increasing state salaries of elected state officers." Was this everybody *but* legislators getting a raise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to me that we did have a proposal that was for all others, but not legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wasn't it easier to discuss this if you all went together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. But the Legislature takes most of the flack, and by leaving the legislators out of there, then the other increases for the other state officials should be easier to pass.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that leaves you all alone and then if you're going to get any kind of raise, you have to stand out like a sore thumb.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know what the reasoning behind it was, but it was different than it had been. And that was the only thing I was questioning—what was the reason?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Leonard Sawyer answered, "These elected officials will not officially take office until Wednesday, the very beginning part

of the session, and by passing the bill prior to their taking office, we will enable them to receive the additional compensation." Was it that if you passed it after they were sworn in, it wouldn't take effect until the following session or year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. It seems to me that you can't vote yourself an increase—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That benefits yourself? Or at least not that session.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. During that session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, say, if you voted an increase for legislators, it would take effect the following session. Theoretically, there's an election in between so that raise might not be for yourself. You're sort of a fresh slate with each election? Is that the way it was justified?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That would be it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then Representative O'Brien got into the discussion. He said, "Perhaps I could answer your question. The federal court apparently wouldn't approve legislators receiving salary increases with the elected officials and judges, so that is the reason the legislators were omitted from this bill. However, I was greatly interested in the fact that you, Mr. Eldridge, and also Mr. Copeland, have expressed concern about the low pay of legislators." Had you been in various conversations, going around talking about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we had just made our comments about acknowledging that yes, they were out of line.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall what you were paid in those days? I think it was three-hundred dollars a month, but I'm not sure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** At one point, that's what we were getting, but I don't think it was that much in '65.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then you got a small per diem. Not very much. Nobody's making a lot of money doing this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. In '53, my first session, you got five dollars a day, plus one roundtrip travel.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Per session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Then that went, I think, to twenty-five dollars, which was a big jump. It still didn't amount to a lot of money. Today I think they're up around \$28,000 a year or something like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm not sure. It's still not a lot of money.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, it isn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's probably below the poverty level.

O'Brien went on to say, "The only way you're going to attract talented people of great ability and necessary qualifications to hold these all important public offices is by paying them adequately." Did you agree with that kind of statement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet, you were all serving for less, and many people think that your time in the Legislature was the golden era, that it had the best legislators. So you were still attracting good people, but was it getting harder and harder to do this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it was the salary that attracted them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hardly. Was this both true and not true?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, we're talking there about the state elected officials, the Secretary of State, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Treasurer, Auditor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are their salaries tied in some way to yours? Are they proportionate somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They're finally getting those up to where they're fairly reasonable. They're still probably low.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you compare, say, what the governor got with what a CEO of a corporation gets, there's no comparison.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And yet they're expected to run the entire state with many more people than any corporation and with many more issues and problems.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I saw a report at one time that the doctors at DSHS, many of them were getting far more than the governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or professors at the University of Washington. Or the football coach!

**Mr. Eldridge:** The football coach! That's really out of the ballpark.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now we're talking real money! It's interesting what society values. Somehow it's shameful for legislators to be paid as much as the janitors, but football coaches, of course, are a different thing all together.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know what kind of a message that is to a legislator. In the end you vote against this measure. It's very bipartisan. Democrats and Republicans were well represented on both sides of this issue. Did you

just find this inadequate or it didn't do what you needed it to do? Some people always voted a certain way on this issue. Were you disgruntled about this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I just kind of threw up my hands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was one difficult issue. Those two things, redistricting and your own salaries, are real headaches for the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They sure are.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That they should be discussed in the same session was just very difficult. But, of course, there were many more things to talk about.

I wanted to look at the bills that you sponsored. You had several having to do with community colleges. Nineteen sixty-five was right in the middle of the process of shifting from the school board-run thirteenth and fourteenth grades to an entirely new system. You were still building that. One bill that you cosponsored added four new colleges to the system. Now that was just expanding it. That one didn't pass, but there was another one sponsored by some other legislators that wanted to add five, and that did pass. Why one over the other? Did they take care of different regions or it just happened that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they probably needed the votes and added a college where there were a number of legislators who would support it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They could get behind it then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You could pick up a few extra votes that way. That does happen!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Something that did pass that you were involved in: you were a sponsor with Representatives Brouillet and Flanagan, of House Bill 104 to create community college districts. In this process, what would a district do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be the administrative body for a particular community college that would cover more than just one local school district, which is what had happened before.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they follow any particular boundaries? How would you decide what constituted a district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the basic community college district took in the area that the college had been serving students from.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, say, the community college here in Olympia, would it cover the district? Could it be several counties? Students would come from Mason County, Lewis County and Thurston County and all go to the community college here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much, yes. And I think basically they followed county lines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the whole state be divided into districts so that there would be a community college for every area, or would there be some blank spaces?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There'd be some blank spaces. I think the districts evolved, thinking that, well, here's an area that eventually is going to have a community college and so we'll leave that pretty much intact.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Say, the northeast corner of the state might have a kind of a block up there, and that area could support a community college?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many districts did you end up with? Ten, twenty?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would have been, I would say, closer to twenty.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I lost track of how many community colleges there were. Each district would have one community college, but not more than one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure, because in King County they have a number of colleges.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. But did they, at this point, or did that come later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they added a number.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Say, in King County you've got one community college. Then, when you build another one, would you divide the district in half or thirds? Maybe the districts geographically got smaller, but denser in population?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because I don't think that there was any district that had more than one college. Now, that may have changed with the example of say, King County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the governing structure for these districts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There is a board of trustees that's the governing body. But the executive officer is the president of the community college. Under the old system, they were called dean. The dean of the community college. But I think they did change that to president at some point in time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Before, you had the school board and that'd be the superintendent who would be the top official?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The executive officer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the school district would be, of course, political. And then they would hire the superintendent. So these districts, how did they work? Did they have the equivalent to a school board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They have a board of trustees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they're not elected, are they? They're appointed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. They're appointed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that changed the nature of this board? And then they hire the president of the college? Did that remove some politics from the whole system?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that there was any real political overtone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they were still seen as representative of their areas even though they weren't elected officials?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think over the years the appointees have been representative of their communities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the governor, who does the appointing, he would take recommendations from the community?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it would still be very community based?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was another bill that sounded like it did pretty much the same thing, but in this case your bill passed and the other one didn't. A lot of people are putting forward solutions and different language and then somehow through the legislative process you sorted it out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was kind of a virgin area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You teamed with Buster Brouillet for several of these bills. You also were a sponsor of another bill to create an advisory board on higher education. That one didn't pass at this time. What were you thinking there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just some citizen input as to what direction higher education in the state ought to take.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was for community colleges and the four-year colleges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had in mind everything. There didn't seem to any reason why both the University of Washington and Washington State University should have forestry departments, for instance. I think that, actually, the boards of trustees of the five institutions of higher education get together periodically with some staff people and I think they, just among themselves, determined who's going to do what.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of those programs are pretty expensive to equip labs and various things and build libraries and get the best professors. They were competing with each other.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your vision of this advisory board, did this eventually become what is now the Higher Education Coordinating Board? Or does the HEC board do a different job than what you were picturing here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think to some extent they pretty well cover that area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this is an early vision. One bill that I thought was interesting which didn't pass, with Buster Brouillet and Frank Connor, was to raise the age of compulsory attendance at school to eighteen, rather than sixteen.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Legislature at one point had changed the age of maturity to eighteen, and it was our thinking that up until that point they ought to be considered juveniles or under-age persons.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And shouldn't yet be able to make important decisions about school attendance independent of their parents?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are so many gradations in what kids can do. When they can buy cigarettes, when they can drink, are drafted, drive a car, get married. They're all pegged at slightly different ages. It might be a good idea if it was more consistent. Did people just look at you like this was an idea from left field, or did you get some mileage with this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was some visible support, but it wasn't an overwhelming mandate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would be resistant to this idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's always a group of people who just don't want the government messing in anything, and they would be against it. And I think you probably have some people who support younger people in their attempt to move into adult type activity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they should have the freedom to quit school and go to work, for instance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if this was in response to the dropout rate? If one way of handling that sticky problem was to not allow kids to drop out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that there would be a sizeable number who would feel that way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think I've ever heard of this idea coming up again. And yet the government does, in many ways, legislate when teenagers can do various things. The latest effort being driving, with the new graduated licenses. People seem to be accepting that. That one didn't pass, but it was an interesting bill. Would you have, say, gone around to your Republican members and Frank Brouillet go to the Democrats and sound everyone out on this one? When you have cosponsors like that, I was just wondering how you worked that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, if it was something a little more burning than this, you'd do that. I don't think that either one of us put a great deal of effort in getting support for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering how you came up with it and how you got together with Brouillet and Connor. A conversation in the hall, or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I have an idea that probably somebody in Connor's district was pounding on the table and saying, "You know, these kids are getting into this too early. It needs to be eighteen instead of sixteen," or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would he then bring forward the bill and look for people who were supportive of education issues and bring it to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he probably talked to Buster first. And then Brouillet probably came to me because we had always gotten along real well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're with him on all these other education bills.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he was kind of the expert, so to speak.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they would converse and they'd say, "We need a Republican. I know Don Eldridge. He might cosponsor this. He's interested in school issues," or something like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that's probably the way it happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting how certain people get known for different areas even though you've never been on the regular education committee.

Some bills have one sponsor. Some have cosponsors and those seem to be the most common. And then some bills have ten, twenty sponsors. There was one bill that you joined in on as one of many sponsors, calling for regulation of campaign contributions. If somebody were to chart it out, if you get multiple sponsors on a bill, is the chance of passing a bill any greater? Some of those bills don't go anywhere at all even though they've got a lot of cosponsors. Is that a kind of bandwagon thing or is there any relationship at all of sponsorship to actual passage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There is no relationship at all between the number of sponsors and a bill's success in passage.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Many legislators swear bipartisan sponsored bills have the best chance, but it doesn't always seem to be the case, either.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It depends on the issue so many times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's another bill that you worked on to deduct credit losses from retail sales tax. Do you recall that issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. If you are in business and you sell an item to someone and they pay the sales tax on it, and it's a charge item, and then they don't pay, you've already turned the sales

tax money into the state and we just felt that you ought to be able to get that back.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mean if the person's check bounced or something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Or they left the country or just didn't pay.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a merchant, would that be hard to track? Would that amount to very much money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could. If it's something you turned over to a collection agency you'd only get about ten percent return on collection items. If people are deadbeats, it's pretty hard to recoup anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this was an added sting to dealing with deadbeat customers? You're also paying this tax when you haven't actually sold anything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This doesn't pass. Was it just something that didn't resonate with non-merchants?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably the revenue department came in and cried about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Too much paperwork?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And that would be a terrible thing! The amount wasn't very much—to them it might have been insignificant—but to an individual retailer it can amount to quite a little.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Here's a different one. It did pass. It's a bill you sponsored with O'Brien and Juelsing to change safety requirements for underground labor. Are we talking coal miners? How did you happen to get onto this bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Utility people. For underground wiring. It was a kind of a business type piece of legislation. I suspect that I had some people from the district who talked to me about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were people getting hurt down there and they wanted some changes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You have cave-ins occasionally. It's not a big problem, but it is a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes this kind of bill is spurred by an actual event, and then somebody realizes this is an issue. There's a gap in the legislation or somehow it's not taken care of.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I don't recall any particular incident, but I'm sure that if I was contacted, it was by somebody who had had some experience with that. Either an injured person or an employer who had to pay the bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a little inexplicable—outside your normal range of interests.

Another bill that did seem like something you would be interested in was a House Joint Resolution, again with multiple sponsors, proposing a Constitutional amendment to provide additional authority and powers for city home rule. There were a lot of Constitutional amendments in these years trying to adjust the powers of the state and local governments. Earlier, you said Republicans cared about local government powers. They wanted to strengthen local governments. That what happened in local areas should be governed by local bodies and then up the scale depending on the issues. Would this be something that would help cities and counties govern themselves better?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The home rule amendment was designed to make it easier for local entities to put together their type of government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that the changeover from say, commission governments to strong mayor governments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could be, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've heard of different home rule charters. Didn't King County use this mechanism to change their county government to an executive form? And Pierce County, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Here in Thurston County, the city of Olympia went from a commission type to a council/mayor form of government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That's kind of a movement in this period. Was this the mechanism that made that change possible?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We talked about all the bills and resolutions having to do with redistricting. And then there were many having to do with tax reforms: net income tax, graduated income tax. Those are perennials. There's another one, a call for annual sessions. These come up regularly.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's more than one that calls for a Constitutional convention. By the late sixties, there was quite a crescendo of resolutions and bills calling for a Constitutional convention. Was there something going on in this state that was pushing at the edges of all these issues? Were people beginning to say that the Constitution was too constrictive, we needed something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I couldn't name the groups, but there were groups that were pushing in this direction. And of course there were many of us who felt if you put the Constitution out there and opened it up, you didn't know what you were going to get. And that was a great fear that many had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly Dan Evans was regularly calling for a Constitutional convention as governor. So, you were not that supportive of that idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about amendments? Is that a safer way to go, just piece by piece? Taking it issue by issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably. Because I think you would give more consideration to a smaller bite out of the problem than to try to deal with the whole thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were so many schools of thought on that one. One is if you put the whole thing on the table you'll end up with a more coherent, consistent document and you could bring it up to date. That there's so much in the Washington State Constitution that's archaic, and was more reflective of the issues of 1889 but that no longer had any relevance. And other people were more of your way of thinking that that was a very dangerous thing to do and who knows what you're going to end up with.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think any of the people who felt like I did would object to taking things out of the Constitution.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that harder to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to be easier. It shouldn't be, but it is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would call for a plan of many years, I would guess, if you wanted to gradually amend the Constitution and bring it up to date. How would you come up with such a plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd have to have a committee or a commission or some group that would sit down and hear all the facts and the proposals and study it to death.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Part of the issue that people brought up when they talked about having a convention was who appoints those people? Who are these experts? Can we trust them? Do they really represent the people? That was always part of the discussion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And there are those who say, "The only thing they want is an income tax."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That does seem to shadow a lot of the discussion. At any rate, this call for a convention is starting to show up more regularly along with the issue of annual sessions. What did you think of the annual session issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We virtually had annual sessions. We got to the point where we were having special sessions every year and legislators were spending more and more time. I had some misgivings that once you had annual sessions then you would proliferate the staff people, and you would get bigger, and have more people introducing more bills. Consequently, it was just going to increase state government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was no natural lid on any of these activities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But eventually annual sessions arrived.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was government getting more complicated as society got more crowded and complex?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. But the problem as I see it is, if that's true, then the answer appears to be, well, just hire more staff people. So we're getting legislation by staff, not by elected officials.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The case for annual sessions usually cited was if you set a budget, say in 1965, then it had to be good until 1967 when you came back. And the complaints were that it was too hard to know what was going to happen over a

two-year period. The economy fluctuates or issues come up that impact the state. Was that a real problem in your mind?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a legitimate statement. The budget was always a problem—you've indicated the difficulty in projecting for two years ahead. It was difficult. I think legislators more and more began to feel that there needed to be a more frequent perusal of the budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another piece of this was the Legislature was meeting every second year, but the governor was there all the time. So the power flowed to whoever was there: the governor and the executive branch and the agencies. They were the constants and you legislators were not. And so there was some talk that the Legislature felt itself to be in a weak position and wanted to deal with that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. There was a lot of that feeling that they just weren't able to keep on top of things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The sessions were short, crowded and then over, and then with the gaps in between... though you could bridge them with special sessions and the Legislative Council and some other mechanisms. If you have annual sessions you know when they are. If you have special sessions they're unpredictable. Which way of doing it is harder for business people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The unknown is always difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You think you're going home, but you get called back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** But, on the other hand, why schedule a meeting every six months or year or whatever it is, when, if there's an emergency, you can call a special session for that particular problem, deal with it and then go back home.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But once you open up a session, then did everybody rush in with their pet projects?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you can deal with that. You can get an agreement with leadership in the House and the Senate and the governor's office and say, "We're only going to consider this one bill or these five bills." So you can limit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If it's a special session. But, say, if you went to annual sessions—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. Then it's open season.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There you go. I noticed in the several special sessions coming up under Governor Evans that he in no way confined his program to one or two issues. He brought up the whole program. Did that change the nature of special sessions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it just reinforces the people who want annual sessions or more frequent sessions on a regular basis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was hard to tell what was an emergency—an immediate issue—and what he just wanted to get passed because it didn't pass during the regular session. Those tended to start to bleed into the list of justifications.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Show up on the list. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One bill that seemed very sensible but failed called for fiscal notes on appropriation bills. It was a little surprising to find out that you didn't have fiscal notes yet.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It eventually came to pass.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It must have been hard to be on Appropriations and not know what you were passing. What the ramifications were. Why would members not see that as a good tool?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can't tell you what the thinking was because it didn't make sense to me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now we take fiscal notes for granted. So much so that it's hard to imagine the Legislature without them. It's authority without responsibility.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's very easy to pass a bill if you have no idea what it would cost. That seems like a traditional Republican way of thinking: that there should be a dollar amount attached, but you were not there yet.

A big issue that may have interested you at that time and certainly became an interest of yours later, had to do with the industrial insurance and compensation area. There were two bills that generated quite a discussion that session. They both originated in the Senate. Senate Bill 39 and Senate Bill 422. They went into minute detail about how working people should be compensated for various injuries down to every digit and body part. I was surprised at the charts that you were given to work with, how detailed they were. I don't know how they arrived at the dollar figures attached to each finger and toe. Do you recall looking at those charts and dealing with how it was all going to play out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The thing that prompted it to be pretty descriptive and precise was that there were such abuses that they needed to be tightened down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Abuses which way? Workers making inflated claims?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The system, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it somewhat arbitrary? Say you hurt your back, would some workers get quite a bit and some workers not get very much depending on which doctor they went to, or how it worked out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know that they were very precise about fingers and toes and arms and legs and that sort of thing. But you were speaking of backs. We had instances where someone would have been lifting something and their back went out and they'd file a claim. And two weeks later somebody would be driving by the worker's house and he'd be up on the roof shingling or repairing the chimney or something like that. Climbing up and down the ladder.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Evidently not too injured.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were lots of instances where there were abuses.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That hurts everybody in the system. The honest ones with the not so honest. Not to mention the employer. Were you trying to build in more checks where people had to report in for medical check-ups more regularly? Or document a little better what was going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was just a general tightening up of the system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These two bills both passed. Senate Bill 39, sponsored by Greive, Bailey and Rasmussen, "Raising certain benefits under industrial insurance" went all the way through. Then, Senate Bill 422, put forward by senators Mardesich, Charette and Durkan, for "Increasing industrial insurance permanent partial disability benefits" made it through the legislative process but was vetoed—totally—by Governor Evans. I don't know if these bills were competing with each other or offering different visions of the same thing or covering slightly different concerns.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they were covering different situations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because if you have one you might not need the other one if they covered similar things? Evans liked Senate Bill 39, and he said, "Yes, we need increases in benefits." But then

he said, "But I also recognize that injured workmen, usually the more seriously disabled, have been victimized by unnecessarily technical processes built into the appellate structure of the Act which permit unjustifiable delay in payment of awards, and which are totally foreign to the original intent of the framers of this progressive method of replacing lost earnings resulting from work-incurred injuries." And he charges that this bill, 422, did nothing about these delays.

**Mr. Eldridge:** All it did was increase the benefits.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it didn't answer this other problem, I guess.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then he said—even though it's very detailed, "It makes no attempt to adopt a schedule of benefits based on a nationally recognized guide of relative values for various disabilities." And he kind of chided the labor people for getting behind this bill even though it didn't help many classes of workers. So labor groups themselves lobbying the Legislature were somewhat divided on this issue? Do you recall how that played out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't remember specifically, but the service industries as opposed to the construction industries, for instance, many times were on either side of the fence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So labor didn't speak with one voice here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Ordinarily, when they spoke with one voice, it was on a matter of increased benefits. And then they're usually together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Evans went on to say, "I'm disappointed that the president of the United Labor Lobby did not urge the Legislature to amend Senate Bill 422 to include my proposal"—this issue of the delays in service.

"However, there is still time in this Legislature to adopt this increased benefits schedule and modernize appeals procedures, thereby accepting its responsibility and meeting the needs of the injured workmen." Because it doesn't do this, he vetoed the whole thing and threw it back. Was he saying, "Get with it! You didn't really reform."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he's kind of putting it to labor. "You want this but you aren't willing to support something that would directly help the injured worker."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm surprised that he charges labor with keeping a more archaic system. You'd think that would have come from a different direction. There's a lot of back and forth on this. Many Republicans, including yourself, voted against the bill. You inserted an explanation of the final vote. "We voted," all the undersigned, of which you were one, "as it was originally amended and passed by the House of Representatives." And then it was sent to the Senate. I guess the Senate is where the discussion took place. "We have, however, been forced to vote against this bill in the form in which it has now been redrafted by the Joint Conference Committee of the House and Senate basically for the following three reasons: It reduces the benefits to be paid injured workmen... It deletes all provisions to speed up the intolerable two-year time lag... It deletes the revised awards schedules which would update our present antiquated rating schedule..."

So, it sounds like you in the House had done the piece that Governor Evans was referring to and that it was taken out in the Senate? Do you recall?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Other than that happens frequently.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Very interesting though, since the Senate was Democratic and had strong labor

leadership there, that they actually weakened the bill or certainly changed it. It's curious. In the end, your point of view was represented because the governor vetoed the bill.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And that's probably why the Senate Democrats were opposed to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think that they knew that he would veto it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure they had a visit from him after it passed the House and went to the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That he liked that version and then they, for their own reasons, changed it? That was kind of an interesting thing that happened there.

Later, of course, you get quite involved in industrial insurance and compensation. Were you already interested at this stage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not particularly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't have many employees yourself. Was this something that just didn't really come up for you that much?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And in the retail business, when the debate on the floor ever turned to injuries and one thing and another, and they'd always turn and say, "You're in business and you have employees," and my response was always, "We aren't in a hazardous business. The only time an employee would get hurt would be if their hand got caught in the cash register."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose bringing in stock or something you could hurt your back, but for the most part...

**Mr. Eldridge:** But ordinarily it's not like working on a food line in the cannery.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or in lumbering or fishing, both dangerous occupations. Standing in a store, it's hard to hurt yourself. Did you feel, as a business person in general, more connected to other businessmen dealing with their workers on this? Did you have a feeling one way or the other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It used to be the Association of Washington Industry—now it's the Association of Washington Business—but that group would be really concerned about this sort of thing. While we certainly weren't considered an industry, I usually would support the things that they were interested in and were supporting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be more Boeing and Weyerhaeuser and the big corporations? Their workmen's compensation bills would be fairly substantial?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Whereas yours would not. But is there a kind of fellow feeling there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just as Democrats perhaps, who even if they are not union employees themselves, may have more of a fellow feeling for the labor groups?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's one of the few areas of legislation that assumes more of a partisan nature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You kind of choose up sides.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. You worked on the bill in the House and got it to your satisfaction and then passed it to the Senate, where the Senate changed it rather radically. And then it went to the Conference Committee, and even some of the Conference Committee members, like Tom

Copeland, voted against the bill. So it sounds like the process there was quite difficult.

There were few bills that truly stand out as “marking cultural shifts.” One that I would like to discuss is House Bill 433. House members were appealing a statutory exemption for women from serving on jury duty. Does that mean what it sounds like—that women could claim an exemption just because they were women from serving on juries?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, probably some group felt that women shouldn't have to leave their housework and care of children to serve on juries.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not all women work at home or have children.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. That's why it's kind of a mismatch. And of course, the women's movement was beginning to stir around a little. On one hand, they wanted to be more involved and make more decisions, and then turn around and wanted to be exempt from...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, apparently, the women who wanted to be more involved were lining up and asking for repeal of this statute, of this exemption. It passed the House, but it died in the Senate, but not all women members of the Legislature voted for this repeal. Several voted against it, so it wasn't just a women's issue but... Eventually I think this does get repealed. I don't think anymore you could claim as a woman, that you shouldn't serve on a jury.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Women, in the very early days were considered unreliable on juries, too emotional, too secluded from the real world. But in 1965, let's hope that was fading. Do you recall this discussion? Do you remember people bringing this up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I don't remember the issue at all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think it probably got a lot of attention but it did pass.

There was another bill that failed. It was a Joint Resolution calling for warning labels on cigarettes. I remember seeing more and more articles printed in this period, saying that cigarettes are thought to cause cancer. It's was fairly new idea in the mid-sixties.

**Mr. Eldridge.** Yes, it was. I know that there was some talk about the labeling. There was considerable concern about juveniles smoking and I think this was just one of the things involved in trying to get that headed off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there much consensus that yes, cigarettes were a dangerous product or was that still too new of an idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just recall that smokers always said, “Well, you know, if it's bad, we ought to be making the decision, and we shouldn't have the government telling us what to do. If we want to ruin our health, then that's our decision.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know if the warning labels that they have now actually get people to change their minds or not. Everybody is still arguing about that one.

You do have a very interesting discussion that year on the murals that you wanted to display in the Legislative Building. This became quite a controversy but at this stage it was still an innocent discussion. The heart of the issue seemed to be role of the Arts Commission. They came in and gave a report on these murals to decorate the Senate and House chambers. There was kind of a blank area there that was meant for murals and so far, in 1965, there was nothing there in either chambers. Do you remember how this discussion went, why it was coming up now? Was somebody tired of looking at that blank wall?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All I remember is that somebody went down in the basement and brought up a whole stack of examples of what ought to be up there and they were more of a historical/pioneering-type thing and they were all designed for the shape of each individual location, but just reduced in size.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Something fairly pictorial. Did members say, “Well yes, let’s go forward with this; let’s just finish the building?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was pushed aside and then they got into the discussion with the Arts Commission.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Arts Commission came forward and they said that they were requested by the House of Representatives to make a presentation. They said, “Recognizing that the scenic panoramas of our state should be the subject matter of the mural, we also recognize”—the Arts Commission does—“that the depiction of these scenic wonders can be accomplished in a variety of ways.”

Here is where we have this interesting departure: “The Arts Commission felt the responsibility to explore a number of approaches to the mural concept, keeping in mind contemporary art forms as well as traditional.” Was that any kind of flag for anyone when they brought in this discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think just generally speaking, everybody kind of shook their heads and raised their eyes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then they said that they had some artists that they wanted you to consider. It’s not clear in this discussion who makes this decision. And just who should be considered. The Commissioners gave names of several artists and a very brief description of these artists’ current mode of expression and then they say that they’re all qualified to produce these murals. Did they

show you samples? Did they bring you into the discussion in any informed way? Were you left in the dark unless you were an art aficionado yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Take it or leave it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You might not know these names. They do show some portfolios but I’m not clear who looked at them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then they thanked you and offered their help. I don’t know what happened next. Do you remember when the murals were actually painted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I don’t.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering how long this process took. If they would come in every once in awhile, give progress reports?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t recall any discussion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When the murals are brought in—just to finish the discussion—they were apparently not at all what the Legislature thought it was going to get. They are fairly abstract; they are in no way traditional murals.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s for sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But, was it considered too late then? They are large, very expensive, very abstract and they were ‘there.’ Did you just hold your noses and say, “Well, that’s art,” or was there a vast outcry?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some torrid discussions by a number of the members. This was after I retired.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you didn’t have to weigh in on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I remember they put them up in the early eighties and then they almost immediately covered them up and eventually I think they put them down. I don't know whether Centralia Community College has them in the library or...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I believe they have at least one of the "Hercules" series. I'm not sure, the other one is by Alden Mason, I believe. I'm not sure where those went.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, Alden Mason, is from Skagit County. But he got off the tracks some place along the line.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They are beautiful paintings, but are they appropriate, you might ask? Somehow the Legislature lost control of this process and the murals took on a life of their own.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, they did. You know, I could never understand why the original proposals weren't even considered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm surprised that there were not drawings or something showing you the work before the deed was done. That there wasn't some kind of final vote on this. I know that John O'Brien became quite a defender of the murals.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh yes. He was strong; he was always a favorite of the Arts Commission.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did he achieve that status?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. He was quite a fan of the artsy folks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, he was representing Seattle. I imagine that has more of an art community than say, Skagit County.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Art-oriented, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that was a major fiasco of that period.

Now, something much more easy and more in your line: you brought forward a resolution marking the fifty-fifth anniversary of the founding the Boys Scouts of America, and that was unanimously adopted; that was an easy one. What happens with these resolutions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, it would be written just like a bill and then it would go through the process and when it came up for passage, then of course, you got up and made your remarks. And there may be others who supported it and once in awhile there was somebody that would oppose a resolution like that. But if it passes, then they send copies to the organization and whomever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would someone have asked you to do this or was this your own idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because we were doing that sort of thing almost every day, I just thought it would be appropriate and everybody knew that I was associated with the organization.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, it was certainly well received. And it gives us an opportunity to talk about the nature of these resolutions, where they come from, what they do. They appear in the Journal with some regularity, but it's not clear what that means. Was there something special about the fifty-fifth anniversary to commemorate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just think we happened to be in session at that time of the year.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With redistricting and other issues holding up the session or somehow making life more complicated for you, the Legislature was called back almost immediately into special session after adjournment. The budget had not been passed yet, which made for quite a long special session.

The proclamation by the governor laid it out: “Whereas the session failed to enact appropriation and revenue measures, . . . and other measures important to the welfare of the people to state of Washington were not enacted to deal with human needs, including laws to provide adequate and accessible housing for all our citizens”—I’m not sure quite what bill that refers to—“Increased unemployment compensation benefits”—that was after his veto. I think he was still hoping that you’ll take care of that—“Increased industrial insurance benefits with a reform in appellate procedures” that he had mentioned. And “clean, ethical government including laws to provide reporting of campaign contributions and expenditures, more effective Code of Ethics, elimination of politically appointed estate appraisers and liquor representatives”—those are part of his blueprint for progress. In the area of education: “free future permanent school fund monies for school construction to reduce reliance on bonded debt for school financing, and equalize the level of local tax support for school districts to reduce reliance upon special levies for basic operations,” and he also called for an Advisory Council on Higher Education. Various things for business: modernization of government. Evans called for the merging of the Toll Bridge Authority and Highway Commission into the Transportation agency that he’s been asking for, and also called for a Constitutional convention.

These were major bills; this was his entire program practically. Was this a departure for a special session to call for so many pieces of legislation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, a special session is to deal with just the budget; ordinarily that would be it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a laundry list of everything; everything that he wanted at the beginning of the session that he didn’t get. He was not letting go of a thing. What did legislators think of a list like this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Good luck!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Off you went for fifty-four days, practically as long as the first session. You finally passed the budget but you didn’t make much headway through this list; many of these issues showed up for several sessions running.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Time after time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was going on with your business and your family while you are having this prolonged session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh boy, it was difficult. My mother, of course, was involved in the business and my wife got to be a big help. She began to be more involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The children are a little older by now.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you are missing family life, community life, all your normal activities. Was this a strain for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it was. It’s hard to adjust to that kind of a situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you were in Olympia, it was tense, busy every minute, you are with a lot of people. It’s fairly social; there was a lot of activity. Does Mount Vernon become another world, in a sense, for awhile?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I’ll tell you, it was close enough so I would usually go home on the weekends and that certainly helped.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn’t ever bring your family down, did you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some legislators did that. They pulled their kids out of school and enrolled them in a school in Olympia. That seems difficult.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. That's a tougher situation than mine for instance, where I could get back home and check in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you able to straddle both worlds? You knew what your children were doing, were they able to see you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When I got home on the weekend, there would usually be an athletic event that my kids would be involved in and the girls were in Campfire and both boys were in the Scouts. And then, I'll tell you the other thing that I missed was my association with my friends in the community—business associates or people I have grown up with in the neighborhood—and that, really, I think was as difficult as anything. You can always bounce things off of them and you'd get a different kind of perspective and it was always helpful to be able to have those discussions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Both personally and as a legislator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think along with low pay, it's important to note the strain of this service on your personal and business life and your community. You were a fairly active person in your community. Did your involvement in community activities have to take a bit of a back seat?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then it was certainly hard on the family. I remember that I hadn't been gone long that first session I attended and the measles hit. It just seemed to be one thing after another and I'll tell you, that was hard on my wife. It was real difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the midst of all this, early on the morning of April 29<sup>th</sup> you experienced a different kind of event: there was a rather major earthquake that shook Olympia. I'm not sure how far up the coast it went, if it hit Mount Vernon, for instance. Where were you that morning; what were you doing when the earthquake happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was kind of an unusual situation. Duane Berentson and I were living together; we had rented a house from the widow of a judge, the next street over from the State Library. There was a big window in the living room and I was up and dressed and Duane was fussing around in the kitchen, and I was looking out this window. There was a telephone pole right on the corner of the property and I had it lined in my sight with the Capitol Building and all of the sudden it was going like this...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You are waving your hands back and forth.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The building was actually moving...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The dome?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I could line it up so I knew that it was moving.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you feel the earth move?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh yes. And loose things began to fall off tables and shelves. I remember there was one little antique vase that flipped off the shelf and hit the floor and broke into a thousand pieces. And then, when the judge's wife came back after the session was over, she had a conniption about how we broke her antique vase. So anyway, yes, we knew what was happening.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had you been in earthquakes before? That strong of an earthquake?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, there was one in '49. When we came down to Olympia in '53 for the session, they were still working on repairs. That one we felt a little up in our area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did this one get as far as Mount Vernon? Did you call home and see how they were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't believe there was any problem up there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they would have heard about it? So you were able to report that you were safe?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh yes. It was on the news.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it frightening or exciting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just thought that it was unusual. I wasn't afraid and didn't think that the house was going to come down or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you happy enough not to be in the Legislative Building while it rocked back and forth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh yes! I was that. The glass skylight in the House chambers came right down on where Representative Sam Smith's desk was. Just covered his desk with broken glass.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Fortunately he wasn't there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He would really have been sliced up if he'd been under that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No one was hurt?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Fortunately it was too early in the day, I guess, for many people to be out and about. The damage to the Capitol was fairly

extensive. Were you given any kind of tour afterwards to see what happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We went down and they were already starting to clean things up. As I recall, we went to committee meetings in the morning and most of the interior spaces were not damaged.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In this more recent earthquake a year or two ago, they closed the building and examined it from top to bottom to see what the structural damage was. Did they allow you back in the building very quickly, then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Things were more loose in those days than they are today. We didn't have all the environmental groups that have to examine everything minutely.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some parts of the building were really shaken up. You had no concerns about your safety going back into the building?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you see much damage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were cracks in walls and doorways and the corner of the trim had pulled apart.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did they do with the skylights?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they replaced them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With more glass?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever have a moment where you looked up there and wiped your brow? You had had a close call.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We always figured that the materials were going to be better now than they were then and we won't have the problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In this more recent earthquake, of course, the Capitol Building rocked and swayed, but it fortunately held. There was apparently a very loud kind of grinding, growling noise in the building that was quite shattering to many people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll bet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But since most people were not yet inside the Legislative building in 1965, I guess it was a different experience.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that if I had been in the building during this, I'd have a different perspective.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it just more of an adventure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just an incident.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the Journal there is just a brief mention. On the forty-sixth day, for the morning session it says, "The Speaker called the House to order at 11:00 a.m. A quorum was present," which I guess is not a large number of people. "On motion of Mr. O'Brien, the House gave consent to the Senate to adjourn until 12:00 noon Monday due to earthquake damage to the Capitol." And then the Senate did the same. Then you adjourned. So you did take a few days to regroup. That was one stand-out experience of that session.

But then you go back to work and you finally adjourned on May 7. Finally, you get to go home. The *Sine Die* tree had certainly bloomed and come and gone. But your service wasn't finished because you were appointed to the Legislative Council, as you had hoped. So you continued to go to meetings and study issues and consider legislation.

The Council had not met the year before as the appropriation for it had been vetoed by Governor Rosellini. But now, with Governor Evans in office, a supporter of the Legislative Council, you met that year. Did the Legislative Council change over time? Did it become more powerful and more of a vehicle for considering legislation? More of an institution?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And the impact of legislation presented by the Council I think maybe had a little more impact than it did in the earlier days. I think that the work of the Council was appreciated. And, I think, even more so, was the budget committee, which was an ongoing group like the Legislative Council. They did excellent work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever wish to serve on that committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a quick answer. Maybe after being on Appropriations, you'd had your fill of budget figures. Did the Legislative Council have a broader range of issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It covered a lot more territory.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it was more interesting? Is that what drew you to that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Earlier you said that being on the Legislative Council was really at the heart of the process, the place to be. A great opportunity to look into things in more depth and really get involved and build relationships.

The chair that year of the Council was, of course, Speaker Robert Schaefer, a traditional appointment. The vice chair was Senator Gissberg. And you, yourself, nominated Tom

Copeland for secretary. I don't know what the duties of the secretary of the Legislative Council would be.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just makes that person part of the leadership. You might say the executive committee of the group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Tom that sort of person, a kind of organizer, a make-things-happen kind of person?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was very good at that and I think he really enjoyed pulling things together and working on projects.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So these nominations, would you have gone to him previously and said, "I want to nominate you for this. Do you want to do it?" Or would you just do it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think in this instance I just felt that he would be good to represent the caucus on the executive level.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was the only Republican, of course, in this little group.

One thing that was noted in the records was that Representative Ann O'Donnell died during that period. She had been on the Council. I know she had been an active person.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was. I'm not sure just what the circumstances were, but I think it was cancer. I think it must have been quite sudden, because I don't recall any indication that she was having problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seems to have come up suddenly. She was appointed to the Council and then it wasn't that much longer than that, and the notice came. The Legislature is like a very close society, so when one of your members dies or is ill, does it have a special meaning?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always felt that you got to know people in the Legislature better than you knew the people who lived next door to you at home.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It's such an uncommon experience, with its own language and interests. It's a little peculiar to other people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. But it's an institution that certainly pulls people together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are plenty of speeches in the Journal, especially at the end of session, where you can almost see people welling up with emotions, saying goodbye to or thanking different people for various things. It seems like a very tight group. No matter if you've been fighting with that person the whole session, you still had this big experience in common.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct. It's one of those things that I always felt that if every citizen in the state could spend a session in the Legislature, everybody would be better off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That'd be quite a cycling through, but it's impossible to understand, I think, until you're there. It's just peculiar.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's very true. It's different.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It has its own rules, its own way of getting things done, which seem impenetrable even to the Press who watch you closely, but whose stories very rarely seem to capture what you're really doing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct. And the media, those people really don't understand what it's all about. But that may be by design!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. They're always prodding you to leave town just as soon as you get there, which doesn't seem very productive.

Let's look at what you did on the Council that year. You served on two committees this time. One was the Commerce, Industry, Trades and Professions committee, chaired by Senator Greive. You looked at a whole slew of issues. Maybe we can make our way through some of these things and you can tell me what brought that to the fore, and what you thought about it.

There were several things having to do with regulating the economy. You took a look at what government participation should be in the financing of industrial development. It looked like people were trying to develop industrial parks and they needed some help from government. They needed zoning changes. They needed different approaches to financing these efforts. It was difficult to follow.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was difficult to follow but I think this was the forerunner of what we have today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a new activity for government?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. To the best of my knowledge, it was the first indication that there was some concern about development.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The language was so tentative it was hard to figure out if you actually did this or if it was just such a new idea.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was probably just a lot of talk and maneuvering.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel yourself about giving government help in getting industrial areas off the ground?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had some misgivings about it. I've always had the feeling that the less government we have the better off we'll be. But there are some things that you can't do alone and state government has some capabilities that you can't find anyplace else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of these issues seem to be a matter of regulation as well as support. Either changing things to make it easier or adding some new regulations to facilitate the zoning or the various issues. Some of them had to do with flood control. That seemed more like a government activity. There were some places in Kent and Tukwila that were coming to you and saying they needed a special levy or some kind of help, or they were even asking for the use of the state's credit to open up these areas. I'm not exactly sure what they wanted to do there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, that Kent valley was beginning to grow. It had been settled by Japanese truck farmers, and because of its proximity to Seattle and the fact that you had a rail system running right down the valley and the highway, it lent itself pretty much to farming.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it was flat. What about the idea that that was some of the richest soil in the whole state? A lot of people are beginning to look at that valley and regret the industrial development that came in there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And of course that's happened in a good many instances.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Up in your area, too. You're having that kind of pressure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did anyone even bring up that question?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that anyone at the time even mentioned that it was a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One thing that was mentioned was that some of these things that people were asking for would facilitate bringing in new industries, but the old industries that were already there were not too pleased that their competitors would get this extra boost.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was always a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seemed to create a certain amount of tension. How would you deal with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You bet. There were those who suggested that those benefits ought to be extended to existing businesses. It's a matter again of splitting the pie, and it was most difficult. I could sympathize with the existing businesses. But on the other hand, if you were to open it up, it would be just an insurmountable task.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Where would it end? That was a thorny little topic for you. There were some people who were also concerned about the importation of foreign products. They wanted public agencies to pledge that they would "buy American first," as the saying went. And there was some concern about Japanese products beginning to come in, and log exports, also. Balancing those things. Some protectionism for local industry.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of discussion, but not much action.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this something a state can do, or is this a national policy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I expect the state could probably invoke some sort of controls. But there's such a competition between states that then you get the situation where you have one state doing some things and then the other state feels that in order to be competitive they have to do something.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little bit of a bidding war. You can get into some strange situations.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It can cause a lot of problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those seemed like some hot issues to discuss. One of the other proposals was for a world trade center at the Port of Seattle.

There was some land there that they wanted to use for that purpose. The argument was it would be this marvelous facility that would be good for Seattle and bring in all these trade opportunities with conventions and display areas and places to meet.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know there was a lot of discussion, but here again, I don't think there was anything that really moved ahead at this point in time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can only trace the discussion, but I can't figure out if you did anything with it. The committee also talked about regulating telephone solicitations, which is really interesting. We still have that problem.

On a very different set of issues, you talked a lot about a clean air act. People were beginning to talk about air pollution, emission control, standards for automobiles and different things. The big issue seemed to be, who should have authority over these issues? Is it a county matter? A state matter? How do you figure out the jurisdiction? That seemed to be the crux of your discussions.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had a lot of county people involved in that who were interested in getting into that sort of control. But I think that it fell by the wayside because the state felt they had control, but they really didn't want it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it just too hard to regulate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of unknowns, and I think the feeling in a lot of instances was, "Let's let somebody else try it and see how it works."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Looking ahead, Washington State formed one of the first departments of ecology in the nation. So perhaps you already were ahead in looking at this problem and there was no one else that you could look to as a model.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. They were certainly doing something in California, which is always where you look to see what's happening.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They've probably got a worse problem, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But I suppose that's also a caution to you, to see that you don't do something to turn out like California! That image of brown smog hanging over everything.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. There was a lot of concern, and I think people were becoming more and more aware of the problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was more science developing and more understanding, and more publicity, for sure. There was talk of dividing the state into regions bigger than counties to deal with this. Some of the big counties could maybe handle it, but the smaller ones might group together. You talked about all kinds of ranking systems.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was the desire of a lot of people to regionalize the issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The air doesn't recognize county boundaries.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, it doesn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of people came in to testify. You had all kinds of health organizations. And then, of course, you had industry, the paper and pulp people. Some of the most vociferous arguments were coming from the people who burned garbage. That was an entire industry. Were incinerators a common method of dealing with garbage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was beginning to be used more and more. I know up in Skagit County

they had quite an installation out west of town and it just didn't last because there was so much objection to it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it put out a lot of smoke and particulates in the air?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall specifically what the objections were. It was after I had left the area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People began to understand that wasn't just smoke, that it contained particulates and heavy metals and all kinds of things that you wouldn't exactly want to have in the air. So there was a growing understanding of that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know that the pulp mills up in the Anacortes area, particularly, were having a real problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know if there's any clean way of dealing with pulp. You either seem to have the by-products in the water or the air. It seems to be a very caustic process.

One of the other issues discussed was raised by the logging companies. They were worried about slash burning, which was a very common practice, and whether or not that would be allowed. Did you begin to regulate some of these activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to me that the industry itself was moving into taking care of that themselves.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they want to make the move before you started to get into the act and tell them what to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably. It was just a defensive measure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was even talk then of tax credits for industries that employed control devices. They would get a tax break if they installed scrubbers and different mechanisms.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I don't think that really had a lot of support. There was certainly some interest, but, boy, when you get into giving tax breaks, you just open up a whole new can of worms.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are tax breaks more effective than fines, or is it just a different kind of problem? Carrots instead of sticks?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really is. But that kind of control doesn't come cheap.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the committee minutes, you spoke up, saying basically, "All this is well and good, but there are no scientific standards yet for emissions and how can we tell people what to do if we don't know what is okay and at what level it's not okay?" So you were trying to establish, what? Better science or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some guidelines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm not sure how you would regulate clean air if you don't have measurements.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You've got to have some sort of scientific backup.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And this would be science driven, this type of legislation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes it's political. That was interesting to see someone speaking up for science.

Another very interesting group that came before the subcommittee—there were several groups actually—they had names like

"Housewives' efforts for lower prices" and "Women for lower food prices." They were very concerned about the inflation of food prices. There were a lot of pieces to this. One of the pieces was the replacement of local merchants with chain stores. Could government do anything about that social phenomena?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They wanted to tax chain stores more or somehow penalize them to preserve local merchants.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that that ever could become a reality.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It certainly doesn't seem as if it has. We still have this argument with big box stores versus locally owned businesses.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering. You were a local merchant and these chain stores—maybe these were grocery stores, but perhaps there were chain stores in your line of work, too. Was that having a big impact on local merchants?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It may have in the grocery business, but I don't think the usual run of retail stores, the shoe store, the hardware store, the stationery store, I don't think that the impact was as great there. Although it is now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess it started with the grocery stores. If the bigger stores came in, would they force the smaller stores out and then raise prices? It would wipe out the competition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That, of course, was one of the suggestions of what would happen.

Now, one kind of personal sidelight to this at this time: The labor unions were beginning to stir around and they were going after Safeway

primarily. For instance, they came into Mount Vernon and were trying to organize the retail clerks, but they were really after Safeway. But it pulled everybody else in and that had quite an impact. I think that was part of the whole situation, because with unionization, you're bound to get increases in wages, and when you have that, then that has more of an effect on the small mom-and-pop store than having Safeway there. From the standpoint of a small retailer, it was thought Safeway attracted a lot of people into the community, and if they're walking down the street to get to Safeway, they're going to pass your place of business and they might very well stop in and see something they want. So the other side of the coin, according to this perspective, is that the large type retailers attract a lot of foot traffic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If they're located near you. The new pattern was of putting them on the periphery of town so that people wouldn't go downtown. They would go to where the big parking lots were on the edges of town.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But that's also attracted the smaller businesses out there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They get into the sort of strip mall effect of clustering near these bigger stores. What could you say to these women? They were very earnest. They had a lot of materials they brought you. They seemed to be testifying in fairly big numbers.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, the answer is: this is up to you and your shopping habits. If you don't feel that you get better service and keep the money in town to help the businesses that by and large support the schools and the community events and all that, then that's a decision you have to make.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "If you don't like those stores, don't shop there."

What about one of the other pieces, the "green stamp" issue? You had John Sylvester, a former Speaker of the House, come in and defend the green stamp industry. Perhaps you could explain that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes! The debate on that issue was really interesting. I recall that Joel Pritchard took to the floor a number of times and just really gave them you-know-what.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I recall he did not like green stamps!

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, he didn't. He called them "prizes."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've read somewhere that the way the green stamp people made their money is that most people wouldn't turn them in. They'd lose them or forget about them and not cash them in.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's probably a pretty good explanation. I recall that the grocery stores were the first to use them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they similar to coupons?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The coupons, you'd have a coupon that you could get something—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Two for one or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Or something like that. Green stamps—when you paid your grocery bill, they gave you so many green stamps and then you had a book and you'd put the green stamps in the book. And when you got the book filled, it would be worth so much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a substantial amount? Was it worth doing all this? Are we talking about a dollar, or ten dollars?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can't remember. Two dollars kind of sticks in my mind but I don't remember how many stamps it took to fill a book.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So maybe a lot of fooling around keeping track of all this stuff and not very much money. It makes sense that a lot of people would throw them away.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. I know my grandmother and grandfather religiously kept their green stamp book. They dealt with a local grocer who gave green stamps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would be a promotional gimmick? "Come to my store; I give green stamps."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that it was ever a big out front come-on, but it was there. There'd be a sign in the window: "we give green stamps," or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a separate organization that would create all these green stamps and then stores would contract with them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They'd buy the stamps and the books from them and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the green stamp manufacturers, or whatever they were, would get their money from the stores and whether it would filter down to customers was a matter of conjecture?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. S&H was the big green stamp company.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And John Sylvester was their spokesperson, their lobbyist? And he came to this meeting and gave a pitch?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. He was very much in evidence around the legislative halls.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So when he retired, he took on this new role?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he effective? Did you think that his presentation was good?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that he swung a lot of votes because this was an issue where, like abortion, you're either for it or against it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's hard to get that excited about green stamps, but they get a lot of print. I can remember reading about green stamps in newspaper accounts for several years. People don't seem to be very comfortable with green stamps. But I didn't know why they were such an issue. It sounds like gambling.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was an issue that kept reoccurring and it just wouldn't go away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they want to legislate them out of existence? Was that the idea? I just can't understand why it was a legislative cause.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, if you don't like something and all else fails, you get a bill introduced.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Make a law against it. These women organized boycotts and pickets and were fairly active, but food prices, as we all know, just continued to rise. Certainly the chain stores didn't go away. So I'm not sure what happened next with this.

Another interesting piece that you dealt with on this committee was the question of a sports stadium for football. Some people wanted the University of Washington to open their stadium to professional football, but they were very reluctant to do so. John Cherberg came and testified before your committee. There were a lot of questions about this. Why does this arise; what's going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was one group that said, "Why should we pour money into another football stadium that's only going to be used twelve times a year when we've got the University of Washington stadium that's only being used ten or twelve times a year for football games?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounds like that issue is still with us. Would they conflict? Football's a season. They'd all be playing at the same time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They'd have to play the university games on Saturday and the professional games on Sunday, which is what they do now, anyway. The opponents talked about the increase in traffic around the stadium and the maintenance of the facility.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The wear-and-tear factor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the UW didn't see this as a revenue source, for instance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They didn't at that time. Now, with the crunch, they might feel differently about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did legislators look at this differently? Did they want to urge the UW to open up a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was certainly a group that was in favor of having it opened up to professional games. I really didn't have any strong feeling one way or the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to be a football fan to care?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that if you were a strong football fan you were interested in having a stadium where they could attract a professional team.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Seattle did not yet have a professional football team. The Seahawks came in the late seventies. So was this the first piece in somehow attracting a team?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. It kind of activated the supporters and they kept growing and growing and becoming more active.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Seattle had its world's fair in 1962 and was kind of putting itself on the map, and growing in various ways. And this was a fairly boom period with Boeing. Perhaps they were looking around and thinking, "Why don't we have a professional football team?" Getting a professional team of some sort seems to be an identity issue for cities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And you see they've reached the point now where they have a football team, a baseball team, and a basketball team all playing in a national league. And next is going to be hockey. They have a team that's in a kind of minor league, I guess, now. Seattle is a very sports minded community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It seems to be.

You did look at some other issues, but this discussion shows the spectrum of things that could come before that committee. Some seemingly outside the purview of the Legislature, others pretty central to your mission. And some, you can't solve them. You can't do anything much, it seems, but listen.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. And the number one item, of course, is financing. All of these things that we've talked about, they all take money and where do you go for it?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. How do you use government money? What is the proper role of government in the economy? And this runs the whole gamut here. Did the committee have divisions? Did you pretty much agree on what

was your proper role or what were the things you just couldn't do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I don't think it was a clear-cut yes or no. It just kind of slid along and then disappeared like so many of these issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you wouldn't say to some of these people, "No, I'm sorry."

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You would try to make them feel listened to and happy, but not necessarily give them anything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of these interim committees just kind of went through the motions and if there was a strong support from members of the Legislature, then they'd get in and try to find a way to solve the problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it help if these various groups coming before you had an actual solution in mind? Some of these issues seem shapeless. How are you supposed to change a whole social shift of say, chain stores coming in? You'd anger as many people as you'd please. It's not really clear what they were asking you to do.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They were just unhappy and wanted something to be done or somebody to listen to them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you act like a safety valve in some ways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a pretty good terminology.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They came. They told you their story. You listened. You took some notes, but evidently you'd be saying, "Well, we'll have to see next session." It wouldn't be immediate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then they'd go home and either fire up again for the next time or just say, "Well, let's forget it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This process also kept you in touch with different issues. Who's out there? Who cares? How many people are they? It seemed to be a pretty good mechanism for reaching out into the community and finding out what was bothering people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think this is all part of the process and I don't see any problem with it. And in a good many instances there are some things you can do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Good. Then, you served on another committee, the Revenue and Regulation committee. Senator Gissberg was your chairperson. Some of the issues overlapped a little bit. Again, tax credits for industry came up in this committee. One of the points being made was that people were worried that the Puget Sound area was too dependent on Boeing and other defense industries, and that was too volatile a sector. You know how they go—huge orders and then crash a bit, and up and down. They were trying to find ways to smooth out that cycle and diversify the economy. Were you able to find creative ways to address that issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I certainly wasn't and I don't recall that anyone came up with any kind of a good answer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a real problem in this part of the country.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. And you have a lot of suppliers that are affected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The ripple effect is incredible when Boeing goes up and down. It was interesting because this is a fairly expansive time period when the economy was doing quite well,

but somebody was thinking about this not lasting forever. "We need to look at this now." I'm not sure what kind of groups would bring that issue to you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Chambers of commerce and business groups, I presume. The active group in Washington used to be the Association of Washington Industry, now called the Association of Washington Business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were looking at the entire revenue program and talking about tax reform, an issue that was close to Governor Evans' heart. You were looking at assessment issues on forests and farmlands—the difference between assessing them based on what's sometimes called their "highest use."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Highest and best use.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or their present use, which isn't the same thing at all. This was part of that pressure, I would think, down in the Kent Valley for instance, of changing farmland over to industrial development. How could the state help or hinder this with their tax policies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose that you could change the portion of the property tax, for instance, that goes to the state, like some of the regulations on school levies and bond issues and so on. You have to be real careful, though, that you don't discriminate. And in those days discrimination was not the buzz word that it is today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. It had a different meaning. There were two directions going here. There was trying to diversify the economy, which involved building more, smaller types of factories and encouraging different kinds of manufacturers. There was also trying to save open spaces from that very kind of development. So right here in one committee you had this dilemma. How did you sort out your values here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a real problem and it was a concern of the Legislature as to how you deal with that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you try to direct the newer industries into, say, these developing industrial parks? Or would you do studies of where the best farms were and try to keep industry out of those areas? How did you sort this out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I never did hear anybody propose anything that really dealt with the problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Governor Evans began to talk about it more and more. I don't know what the outcome was. But it was really interesting to me to see this right in the same committee. It looked, on the surface at least, to be going in diametrically opposed directions.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It certainly was. Dealing with taxes and economic development and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** —the opposite, holding off a little here and there. Then there were all the different—as well as tax credits—tax exemptions. Different kinds of property were taxed in so many different ways that this committee actually called for an inventory of all the property in the state to figure out who was being taxed in which ways. That seemed like a good place to start.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was an approach that I don't think had ever been considered or used. But here again, if you have the information, then maybe you can sort out how to solve the problem. But without that basic information, it's pretty difficult to do anything, or even to propose anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You wouldn't know what you were talking about.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of this, so far as state land was involved, went towards support of schools, which is considered a good thing. But there were all these tensions around these different rates of assessment. That in itself was quite a complicated thing.

You wanted to look at how county assessors were determining these rates. That's a county elected official, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were complaining to your committee that they needed more resources and staff. Better pay, better qualifications and bigger budgets to do their job properly. Would that be a state issue or a county rule?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose the state could step in and offer some guidelines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They seem to want it a little bit both ways. They wanted more state support, but they wanted the state to stay out of local assessing practices.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Less control, but more money.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember that discussion about the business of how property is assessed and the county assessor's role in determining the taxes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know there was a lot of discussion, and then the school people got involved also, because they were very concerned about property taxes. They, of course, received a lot of revenue from the school trust lands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it true that assessors in more rural districts would undervalue the property—because, of course, rural people are “property rich,” but they don't necessarily have high incomes—to spare those people, and that,

comparatively, property in more urban areas would be assessed at greater value, and so that those people would carry more of the burden for property taxes? And that there came to be some resentment about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was certainly a consideration. You know, an acre of land in the city of Seattle certainly had more value than an acre of land out here in Thurston County. The assessor has the opportunity to place the value on the land in his county. But there certainly are some discrepancies and it's a difficult thing to resolve. There's no win-win situation here.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Conflict almost seems built right into the office. This is a locally elected official. Are they really going to go out and put high assessments on people to whom they owe their office? Or will they try to find a way to keep their constituents happy? It seems a built-in problem.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It certainly is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it have been better if it were not an elective position? Or does that lead to a different problem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then how do you get them? Do the county commissioners appoint the assessor? I think one problem just leads to another.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. I don't know how you would weigh out the different issues. But there was so much discussion in this era about undervalued property and how the state was losing all this revenue, and what could you do about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everybody complains about their property taxes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Property taxes, along with the sales tax.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They hit close to home, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was one of the things that came before your committee. You also talk about B&O taxes and some inequities with them in state purchasing practices. In-state bidders were upset because they had to pay B&O taxes and out-of-state companies didn't have to, and so they thought that was an unfair advantage and they wanted some kind of break that way. It sounded very complicated.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But here again, when you start tinkering with laws that allow for you to bring in revenue, you're not going to tinker with it very much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. You would just open up a different set of issues. Some of these seem intractable. You even discussed the income tax and the need for a Constitutional amendment to bring that in. So you had the full range here.

You also discussed some things that are not tax related or seemingly not. You wanted to regulate TV antenna systems. Was that a precursor of the cell phone tower issue? This was before cable TV, I guess—so what exactly was this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was the precursor to the cable system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a monopoly issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could be. The telephone companies were involved to try to head off anything that would get into their line of work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, we still have that issue.

Another issue that you looked at was boating legislation: registration, identification, enforcement of boating laws, issues of safety, water pollution. Were boats unregistered, unfettered by any of the kinds of regulations? Were boats looked at differently from cars or other vehicles?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Coast Guard was involved with the boater registration and gradually local authorities were beginning to get into the safety aspect of it. Primarily, most of the new regulations were county wide and each county could have a little different approach to their regulations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you trying for more uniformity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People were complaining about mobility issues? I guess they'd start out in one place with their boat and motor up the coast and hit a different set of regulations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it make sense for this to be not a local issue but a statewide issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were more people getting boats? Was this a growing issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a growing trend. And we were getting more boat manufacturers coming into the state. I think the volunteer boating groups, associations, were beginning to grow.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Boating legislation kind of takes on a life of its own. All of a sudden there's a lot of discussion about boats. And here it is coming to your committee.

Do you remember coming up with any solutions for this, or was this just the beginning?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was just a lot of discussion. You have to talk about it for awhile.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another piece that you discussed was the comparative tax structures for natural gas, oil and electric energy companies.

Primarily as revenue generators for the state as well as, of course, energy companies. I think natural gas was a fairly new phenomenon in the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You discussed a pipeline that was being developed for bringing natural gas into the state. Was that the kind of activity that then bumps up against the other industries and you have to begin to look at the whole picture?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was the thrust of all this discussion. It was a competitive situation, and a lot of people coming into the state had been from areas where natural gas was the energy source.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the state favor one over the other, or they wanted to develop all three?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there was any preference.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be a good strategy? In times of shortage of one thing or another, you'd always have these other systems?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was no particular mention of nuclear energy in this discussion. Developing "the peaceful atom?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That was a little bit early for nuclear power.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** About seventy bills came out of the Legislative Council that year, and many of them passed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The track record was pretty good for Council legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How much time would you have spent at these meetings? I noticed they're

in different parts of the state, so you were doing some traveling. Would this be a big chunk of your interim time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The full council would maybe meet once a month. Then the subcommittees, depending on their load, could meet two or three times a month.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were getting out there in the community and seeing different parts of the state. Was it also a way to build relationships with other legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Different jurisdictions. All of these issues have a different impact, depending on where you are. It's always good to hear what the locals have to say.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get to choose which subcommittees you were on? Did you put your word in, "I'd really like to do this or this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had some opportunity to at least indicate what we'd like to work on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So these, Revenue and Regulation and Commerce, Industry, Trades and Professions—these were things you're interested in at this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had served on the education committee. These were a little bit more business oriented. Did this also give you good background for, say, your work on the Appropriations Committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because almost all these have some tinge of revenue and appropriation activity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tax policy. For many people, of course, tax policy is something to flee from. It's very technical, it's difficult, fraught with hot-

button issues. You make some people unhappy at any rate, no matter what you do. But yet you were drawn to it. Did you find the issues intrinsically interesting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was always kind of concerned about the money that agencies received and what they did with it. And having been on the board of Western Washington College, I had a pretty intimate working with the budget so far as higher education was concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is one of the core things, of course, that legislators do, is manage money. So you were getting right in the thick of things with that kind of committee involvement.

The interim meetings went on through the summer and fall, but you also had an election. So you were busy with some campaign activities, as well. Would your Legislative Council activities be something you would ever talk about as a campaign issue? Would you say, "Look, I'm involved in all these things. I'm bringing back all this knowledge." Would that be a plus? Would people understand what that was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think if you isolated a particular activity or a particular area of state government, I think it would be helpful. But if you just throw it out there and say, "I was on this and this and this and this, and I'm looking out for your welfare," I don't think that sells too well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's too hard for people to understand? So it's not necessarily something you'd put on your campaign brochure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You might just say you're a member of the Legislative Council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not every member of the Legislature was, so is it a way of distinguishing yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think if people knew anything about the legislative process, they recognized that

the Legislative Council was important and it did have considerable amount of influence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a way of saying, "I'm doing my homework? I'm involved."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you could put it that way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What were your campaign issues? Do you recall what kinds of things you were saying to explain your record or your values?

**Mr. Eldridge:** People are always concerned about taxes. And then anything that is local, whether it's a highway project or closing down a state hospital. There are always some things that are hot buttons for a local area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you can speak knowledgeably and coherently on say, tax policy, even if you're not saying what they really want to hear, does that build confidence in your constituents?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That you know what you're doing and you're to be trusted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Of course a lot depends on the group that you're talking to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Let's say somebody in a forum asks you a hard tax question and you can answer. You know the vocabulary. You know the issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that helps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were re-elected, obviously. In fact the Republicans, for the first time since 1953, gained a majority. What happened that election to have that breakthrough? Did you have a new message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that there was anything in particular other than I think we were better organized and we had some help with our campaigns.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who was doing the helping?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would say that Gummie Johnson was probably the key to a lot of this activity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know earlier you said that the state Republican Party did practically nothing. So this sounds like a big change.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, Dan Evans was leading the charge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because he's already in office and is building a record, was he a useful spokesperson to go around the state articulating the Republican program? He's already out there and he's not running for re-election this year. He was free to make appearances?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. I think that it was very helpful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he considered an attractive asset? Say, if he came to Mount Vernon, you'd want to be on the stage with him and he would draw people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And he was well respected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he have charisma?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was beginning to develop it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems to be a slippery factor—that people either have it or they don't, and it really makes a difference when they do. But you said earlier he could hardly speak and was a little wooden.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He developed a lot, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Besides the activities of Gummie Johnson and Dan Evans, were there other differences that helped the Republicans this year? You made a huge leap. A lot of new freshmen came in.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the recruiting was better. We had some real good candidates. They followed the manual and were successful. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you going from not much organization to a fairly good working organization? Somebody was pulling all this together and reaching the public in a way that you hadn't for years. Was there also something changing in society that made people ready to hear you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a little more awareness of the problems in the state. And I think people were ready to listen to what some of the solutions might be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certain eras seem to get bogged down with no solutions to anything. And other eras are dynamic and forward moving and have a lot of ideas. When you were out campaigning, did you feel a different kind of energy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a lot more interest, and a lot more concern. People seemed more interested in becoming a part of what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was certainly an era where people seem to be turning to government for solutions rather than turning away to other parts of society—perhaps a golden opportunity for things to come together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At any rate, at the end of the election, you had fifty-five House Republicans to

forty-four Democrats. It was an enormous change. The Senate was still Democratic, but you were closing the gap there. They had twenty-nine Democrats to your twenty Republicans.

They still had their same leadership that had its grip on the Senate for quite a while. But there was a fair amount of tension in the Senate about leadership issues, especially among the Democrats. Did that impact the House in any way, or was that a little bit removed from you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that there was any real important impact. There was awareness, but not any tremendous influence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered about the campaign, whether the Republicans were pushing really hard in the Senate? We've talked about the energy of the House Republicans, but not too much about the Senate Republicans.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Senate is a little different ballgame.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that you had the governor, and now you had the House, that you were making pretty good gains?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** During your entire period of service, your Party never won the majority in the Senate. Not until the 1980s.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a kind of a lean period of time there. It was interesting when in 1953 we had a majority in the House and the Senate. But then we lost the majority in the House the next session, but the Senate Republicans continued on with the majority for another two sessions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People must not have been voting the party line. They're not pulling the lever on the one whole party or the other. They had to be picking and choosing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's sort of been the pattern in this state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder if they purposely split their tickets? Or if they voted so much for the individual that this is what you end up with? Who was your senator for your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Paul Luvera was there during part of the time that I was in the Legislature. Ralph Rickdall for one session. But Fred Martin was the Democrat senator for a number of years there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you had a split there, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And Lowell Peterson is the senator now, and he has been for a number of years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you and Duane Berentson were both re-elected quite handily.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

## CHAPTER 12

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### MR. SPEAKER

**Mr. Eldridge:** In 1967, I had no preconceived notion about being considered for Speaker. I was just planning to go to Olympia for another session. I think Dan and their group would have preferred Slade Gorton as the Speaker, but they knew he couldn't get elected. There were a lot of people who just didn't like Slade.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he kind of a hot and cold person? You either really liked him or you didn't? Some people have that quality.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Although there are people like myself who respected him for his intelligence and his enthusiasm and energy. He wasn't quite as liberal as Dan. His family were business people and had experience with the ups and downs of government regulations and the taxes and all of that, so he understood that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had a wealthier background?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. His family was very successful. But Slade grabbed me and we went around the state and called on any number of legislators in their homes, asking for support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who decided leadership positions? Let's back up a bit. Tom Copeland had been the majority leader. In the normal course of affairs when your party gained the majority, he

would expect to become Speaker. That isn't what happened. Instead, he lost the majority leadership position and Slade Gorton became your majority leader. And as we know, you become Speaker. What happened there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't have any idea. I had been the caucus chairman for a couple of sessions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You weren't gunning for the Speakership?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I suspect it was Slade and Hal Wolf who got me involved. Slade just said, "Now, be ready next weekend. We're going to get in the car and make some calls," which we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he told you why, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you surprised?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little bit, because I knew how much Slade had really wanted to be Speaker. But, you see, he just knew he couldn't be elected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would he prefer, then, to be the king maker? Was that what was going on here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suspect. You see, the other thing was if Bob Brachtenbach hadn't decided not to run again for the Legislature, I'm sure he would have been Speaker. Later, in 1972, Dan appointed him to the Supreme Court.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. He had been the whip. What happened to Tom Copeland? Why was he not chosen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think—and I'm just pulling this one right off the wall—I think that Tom had ruffled some feathers in the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this an eastern Washington, western Washington issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Maybe a little bit. I don't know what the final count was, but I think it was just one or two-vote difference.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was very close. How does one run for Speaker? Do you make promises? Do you say, "If I'm Speaker, I'll do it this way?" Do you make some kind of statement? How do you persuade people to vote for you and not someone else? Is it a kind of underground campaign?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't any of that. On the calls that we made, there wasn't any, "I can do a better job than Tom Copeland can," because I'm not so sure we actually were convinced that that's the way it was going to work out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You go to, say, a freshman and say, "Would you support me for Speaker?" Don't you have to say more than that? How would you persuade someone that you're the winning candidate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd talk some about your record in the caucus and then kind of your standing in your own community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it a style issue as much as a substance issue? People are comfortable with you? You have a certain way of reaching out to people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there's a lot of that. And the fact that I had been state president of the Jaycees and knew a lot of people in every community, so I wasn't just somebody walking in off the street.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would certainly help. So if Slade Gorton kind of sprung this on you, at what point did you say to yourself, "Yes, I want

to be Speaker? And I want to be Speaker because—why?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think I ever reached that point.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even when you were Speaker? Or when you started on the campaign?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I never had an agenda.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if the office sort of captured your imagination at some point, where you thought, "Wow! I would like to be Speaker, and I can be a good Speaker?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was always, from the very outset—when I got into the Legislature, I was always apprehensive about the role of the Speaker. I'd sit there and watch Mort Frayn and say, "Oh, boy, I don't think I could ever do that."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you still feeling that way at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think having been the caucus chairman kind of eased that apprehension somewhat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people have a real thirst for being the Speaker. They go into the Legislature and that is all they want. They climb the ladder. But you don't seem to have that particular need to be the Speaker in the way that some people did.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But at some point, did you kind of work out for yourself what kind of Speaker you would be? What would be your mode? What you would be known for?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I really didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just be yourself up there and it'll come through?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think the thing that I really enjoyed most about being the Speaker was presiding.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I want to talk in fair detail about what it was like to be Speaker. Let's explore that in a moment, if that's alright.

Did you have to mend fences with Tom Copeland, or approach him in some way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, I have a great deal of respect for Tom and did then. And so I talked with Slade and some of the other key people and said, "I'd like to have Tom be the Speaker Pro Tem, and let's expand the responsibilities of that office," which we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You transformed it entirely.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We turned over the personnel and the scheduling of committee meetings and the calendars for the day. A lot of those things. Then he and John O'Brien got into the facilities area, and of course they just really tore the place apart. But I knew that Tom could certainly fill an important position in the operation of the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of those were brand new activities. Some of them, I suppose, had been more traditional Speaker activities. Did you diminish the Speakership in any way by shaving off some of the other jobs, or did you free yourself to focus on what you thought was essentially the Speaker's job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it diminished the role of Speaker. I think it may have changed it some. I wasn't one to get a few people together and go in my office and maneuver around and make deals and all that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that the way it had been under other Speakers, say, John O'Brien's way? He was the Speaker who'd been there "forever."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that I would say that about John. He was very firm and he had control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Well, let's see. In your experience, you've had Mort Frayn. You've had John O'Brien. You've had Bill Day and then Robert Schaefer for the previous sessions. So those would be your most immediate models for the Speakership. Did you think back on the various ways the office had been handled and say to yourself, "Well, I think that works pretty well. I'll do it that way." Or did you fashion it more to suit your own personality?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that I was flying by the seat of my pants.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is the Speakership somewhat elastic in that sense? Where you can say, "These are my strengths; this is what I'm going to bring to this, so this is what I'm going to do?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. A lot has to do with the people who you have around you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You mean your staff people or the other legislators, people in your caucus?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just the members. You have some prima donnas in there and you've got to deal with them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Republicans had been out of the majority for a long time, so none of you were used to being committee chairs, being in charge, running things. You were starting fresh.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had to reinvent the wheel.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. And if you wanted to make some changes, here was your opportunity. First, there has to be some kind of meeting where you voted and you actually became the Speaker. When did that happen, exactly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We have an organization meeting of the caucus when these things are determined. You have to know who's going to make the nomination, who was going to make the second and what happens if you don't have the votes. Then, when we go out on the floor on the first day, we have an election.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be a big surprise.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It would.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of like the coalition year. Can you describe that meeting where the vote was taken for the Speakership? This was a contested election, was it not? So I'm just curious to know, how does that work? Did you each make a speech?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that either one of us made a speech.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did someone make a speech about you? Slade Gorton, for instance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You're nominated and there's some discussion and they pass the ballots out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're secret ballots?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you don't actually know who voted for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's probably a good thing, when you think about it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As I say, I don't know to this day what the margin was. I just know that it was close.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there tension about this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a foregone conclusion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Among some people? Did anyone know the outcome? Had they counted the noses? Had they kind of rounded people up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Slade probably had a pretty good idea how it was going to bounce.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can some people say, "oh, yes, yes," and then vote differently? Would that be unheard of?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could be done, but I don't think it would happen. But it was not a very exciting situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It kind of sets the stage though, for who's going to do what. These other leadership positions, majority leader, caucus chair, are they also decided at that same meeting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that somewhat of a self-selection? How were those persons chosen for the different positions? For instance, Slade Gorton being majority leader. If he didn't think he could make Speaker, was there any issue about him being majority leader?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was also a foregone conclusion? Do certain people just stand out in that way? I mean, you just know that that's what they should do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And they let it be known that, yes, that is what they want to do. I wondered if he had any rivals for that position? If your caucus had groups that supported different people? If anyone else had wanted to be majority leader?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, we just had an excellent caucus. We had good people who were pretty flexible. I tell you, I had to shift Gladys Kirk three or four times as a committee chairperson because I had the prima donnas. The one thing that I regret I didn't do was to say, "Duane Berentson's going to be chairman of the Transportation Committee." But I had Al Leland crying all over the place and so we made co-chairs and it worked out all right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that's what happens? As soon as this is sorted out, then that's the next piece was who is going to be chair of what committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Bob McDougall became the assistant majority leader, replacing Jimmy Andersen who went to the Senate, I think, about then. Robert Goldsworthy stayed caucus chair, so that was stable. Representative Brachtenbach who had been the whip moved on, so Stuart Bledsoe took that position. His is a name that's going to rise fast in your caucus leadership. I think he was still fairly new, but he was a person headed in that direction. I don't know much about Bob McDougall. Can you tell me about him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was from Wenatchee and was in the apple business. A good legislator, and

was not only a businessman, but he represented agriculture in that area as well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you try to balance up—geographically—the leadership? Was that's one of the things in the back of your mind?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You try to, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Stuart Bledsoe was also from eastern Washington, as was Tom Copeland. But you, Slade and Gladys Kirk are from the Puget Sound area. Robert Goldsworthy was also from eastern Washington, so you've got quite a goodly number. Was eastern Washington one of the strongholds of the Republican Party so you would have quite a few leaders from there? Or are these more like individuals who are really good leaders?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think both. But just because they individually are, you might say, born leaders.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Some people just do stand out. Of course, Robert Goldsworthy had been in leadership positions for a while. Certainly in Appropriations.

On the other side of the aisle, John O'Brien was the minority leader, assisted by Mark Litchman. The caucus chair was Buster Brouillet, with Leonard Sawyer rising into leadership as the whip. How did you match up with this group? They're pretty seasoned legislators. They've all been around for quite a while.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, by and large, we had a pretty good relationship going.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they easy to work with or more adversarial? What was that relationship like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Litchman and Sawyer and O'Brien were sometimes a little tough to work with. But I had been associated with Buster

Brouillet on the education committee. And then Bob Charette was another one whom we got along very well with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a kind of rising star. Would you try to build relationships across the aisle, or would they happen circumstantially?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they just sort of happened. You get thrown together on committees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people are more congenial.

You came into session, then, in January, 1967. The certificates of election were brought in. You took your oaths of office as legislators. James Andersen then tendered his resignation to move to the Senate. Was that something that you knew was going to happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a vacancy, so we knew he would be moving up. And that his leadership position would be vacated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. He had been one of your very active people. He was replaced by Richard Chapin who was nominated by his county commissioners. James Andersen was a very seasoned legislator, and this was a brand new person coming in. That makes for a change.

After those activities, the first thing you discussed were the rules that govern your proceedings. And it seems, judging from the discussion, that you had already—previous to the session—thought about this issue a great deal, or someone had at least. Was that something you would have discussed in this earlier meeting or subsequent meetings before session? Exactly how you wanted the rules to work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We would have a caucus before we went onto the floor with the rule changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why are the rules changed so frequently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends on what you want to do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do changing the rules favored certain kinds of activities and loosened up certain things, or made other things much harder?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** While you were in the minority, were there certain frustrations building where you thought, “Well, if we had a different kind of rule, we would actually have more say or we would be able to do X and Y?” And then when you were in the majority, would you want to change the rules? There was a long and complicated discussion. I was curious about it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t think we had any major changes that we wanted to make. I would just say this, that, basically, we tried to be more fair about the makeup of the committees and the procedures. And I think we were pretty successful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it because some rules were perceived as creating unfair situations or was it because you wanted to do new things and here was your chance? Maybe because the Democrats have been in the majority for so long, things had become a little ossified, and here’s your chance to make some reforms? It’s hard to understand.

Slade Gorton brought in a whole new set of rules that he wanted to discuss. Most of them, I think, were the way they always were. But there were a few changes and it’s difficult to figure out what they might have meant. So I just want to pick your brains for a few minutes. You began with, “Be it resolved that the permanent rules of the Thirty-ninth session be the temporary rules of the Fortieth session.” So you don’t start in a total vacuum. “With the exception of the following rules which shall be amended,” and then you worked through some of the issues.

You had quite a discussion about organizational matters to do with staffing and appointment of pages but more critical to your process was the discussion surrounding Rule Thirty-two about the ranking of motions. I would have thought a lot of that would be based on tradition, but there was a long discussion about: “A motion to lay an amendment on the table shall not carry the main question with it unless so specified in the motion to table.” This rule became a very big issue and there was a lot of pushing on this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** What happened was, that if you had a bill, for instance, that said you shall do something within sixty days, and the bill had to do with maybe fishing or hunting regulations and somebody amended it or proposed an amendment to change that sixty to thirty, and if that amendment was defeated, then it wiped the whole bill out. And so what this did was you would only deal with the amendment; it didn't then have any effect on the bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your bill would still be sitting there. You could still work with it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. You can debate the whole bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had this been something that you had been frustrated with in previous sessions and said, “Let's make a change? Let's do it this way.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** It had never bothered me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was certainly bothering someone. There was a lot of heat generated on this issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's something that likely was being considered by somebody like Slade.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was the one bringing it forward.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Those that understood the parliamentary concerns and what effect they had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As the incoming Speaker, all these privileged motions, subsidiary motions, incidental motions, was this something you were going to have to study and master as the presiding officer?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only as it came up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you would need to be more or less aware of what all these things were and how they interacted with each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this discussion would have some bearing on how you were going to rule on things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then there were other rules having to do with the numbers of standing committees and the number of members. And this was where you were trying to put in some reforms, I believe. Weren't you trying to reduce the number of committees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we had some discussion on that, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There had been twenty-four and then you reduced that number to sixteen, which is quite a difference.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was part of a larger reform that Tom Copeland was pushing at the time too, which was to have a calendar and not have meetings called in a haphazard fashion with no notice by the chairperson and not have so many committees that members couldn't possibly attend all their meetings.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a conflict, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you were reducing the number of committees, would you increase the number of members on each committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not necessarily. And you see how we got into that situation was the Democrats always took care of their members. Somebody would say, "Boy! I don't have a committee chairmanship," so they'd establish a new committee and make him the chairman. And that was just one of the procedures. And we got so we had a bunch of committees. Probably some of them didn't even have any bills.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did jurisdictions overlap? That sort of thing, so that people wouldn't necessarily know where a bill would go to this committee or that because there was no particular logic to that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No set pattern.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you were deciding, "Okay, we're only going to have sixteen," did you then take a look at what business does each committee cover and what was the logical division of labor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And where our bills were to be directed. To what committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And committee names were simplified. There used to be the Agriculture and Livestock Committee, and that's just reduced to "Agriculture."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were some quite complicated ones: Natural Resources, Harbors and Waterways; Parks, Capitol Buildings and Grounds; Water Resources and Pollution Control, that sort of thing. You reduced that to Agriculture; Appropriations; Business and Professions;

Education and Libraries; Financial Institutions and Insurance; Higher Education; Judiciary; Labor and Employment Security; Local Government; Natural Resources; Public Health and Welfare; Public Institutions and Youth Development; Revenue and Taxation; Rules and Administration—rather than Rules and Order, as it used to be called. I'm not sure if that meant something different. State Government and Legislative Procedures, and Transportation. There were several committees in the previous lineup that covered transportation issues and you seemed to have rolled them all into one here, under Transportation. So, was this a struggle, or did both sides see the logic of this change?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think it was pretty well agreed upon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Rule sixty was about how committees operated with different bills, memorials and resolutions. One line that seems to be different, "No standing committee shall vote on any issue by secret written ballot."

**Mr. Eldridge:** The beginning of the open meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People were immediately worried about the Rules Committee. That's the holdout committee for secrecy. And there are good arguments on both sides.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I think there was a certain amount of self preservation to protect the members from the harassment that they would get when you walk out the door after the committee meeting and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The great crush of lobbyists greeting you with questions? Were all these committee meetings now open to the public? What does that represent as a change? Lobbyists can come in? Constituents? The Press? How closed were the committee meetings and how open did they become?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You had pretty much open meetings, but then the committee would go into executive session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You would have hearings—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then call for an executive session and clear the room, except for the members of the committee, and then you'd discuss the merits of the bill and either pass it out or kill it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody would know who voted which way, ultimately, in the committees? That was, up until this point, still secret? Did you want voice votes, raising of hands, or what did this mean?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a little confusion about that particular phrase in there. There was quite a discussion about open meetings and secret meetings. And over the years, there were a number of changes having to do with the taking of a vote. I think this period of time was probably the beginning of opening up the legislative process to the Press and the public. And today, of course, everything is open. Virtually so. I don't know that it had any great effect on the final outcome of legislation, but it certainly did give people an opportunity to see what was going on and how the decisions were being made and reported.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If it was not a secret ballot, would legislators have voted differently? Would some of the outcomes be different if they had to be more public about their stand?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There might be some changes. But I don't think there would be too many legislators who would use this as an excuse to do one thing or the other.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've heard some people say that if you're in an open meeting and you have constituents or lobbyists in the front row staring at you as you have to vote, that it's much harder

to, say, kill a bill that you think is not a good bill, but someone in your district is interested in.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's very true. It's always more difficult to make a decision, particularly if it's going to be a different one than you actually feel. But as I say, I don't know that the final outcome would be changed much by that being the situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel yourself about these rule changes? You'd served under the old school, and now—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I am inclined to feel that there needs to be some sort of mechanism for disposing of questionable legislation without having it come back to bite you. I think the Rules committee was the place where a lot of bad legislation was disposed of. And of course, it was much easier to do that with a secret ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could committee chairs simply not bring up certain things? Was that one way you could avoid some of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. The pocket veto has been used over the years where a committee chairman can just put the bill in his pocket and it's not considered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The way it's written in the Journal, it looked like a partisan argument. The Republicans were bringing in these changes and the Democrats looked somewhat resistant. Were these issues you would have talked over with them, or did they clearly come from your caucus? Were they changes whose time had come or were you pushing a new agenda?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think in the instance of this package of changes that Representative Gorton would have discussed them with the caucus. He would have presented this as a report and I don't recall that there was any great matter of discussion. The caucus just backed him up and in most instances the changes were adopted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any attempt to bring the Democrats on board? Were these changes a surprise to them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so. I believe that the majority of the Democrats, particularly in their leadership positions, recognized that when the majority changes, that there's going to be some changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a kind of opportunity. They questioned this Rule 60 pretty vigorously and there was a lot of back and forth about it. Whether or not it was going to include the Rules committee—that was one amendment. That was not adopted at this point. Interestingly enough, that was brought forward by Margaret Hurley who had used the secrecy in the Rules committee to her advantage on occasion. So she had some experience there.

John O'Brien tried to bring in some amendments. Sam Smith had questions about one of the other issues, when is a bill dead? The tabling issue seems to be a complicated one. I'd like to better understand your methods there. Were you doing something very different there about the whole tabling motion, which takes precedence over other motions, I gather?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that there's anything unusual about that. The rules are set up to facilitate the movement of legislation through the body. There are always procedures that can get you out of anything that you don't like. In a lot of instances you don't need a rules change to facilitate that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Slade Gorton the master on your side of the aisle of these different motions and parliamentary maneuvers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was the lead person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He went head-to-head with John O'Brien on this, who would have known these backwards and forwards. The discussion

gets somewhat heated, but Slade Gorton was answering in a very cool fashion, but even a motion to recess for lunch gets voted down. Were people just wanting to finish this process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. You spend so much time on an issue, and people get rigid and just want to get it over with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if a motion to recess for lunch was actually a motion so that people could get in a corner and talk about what was going on.

Different members were questioning Slade Gorton and he made quite a big speech about the tabling motion. Mr. O'Brien called attention to Rule 38: "The motion to postpone indefinitely may be made at any stage of the bill except when on first reading. This was inserted into the House rules to take care of an abuse which existed at one time when a motion could be made to postpone a bill indefinitely on first reading. To prohibit this type of motion this rule was adopted, which makes it materially different from the one you had here."

Gorton denied that that was the case, and then there were more questions, and then Gorton said, "The reason you have this is so that you won't keep going over the same propositions again and again and again. The same is true when you pass a bill out of the House. It goes over to the Senate and then it's too late to change your mind. A motion to postpone indefinitely is a motion to deal with the bill on a final basis." So, he was just trying to expedite things and kind of clean up some of these practices of haggling back and forth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was to facilitate the movement of legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of the rule changes that you were putting forward had that quality of wanting to speed things up a little bit or at least remove some of the snags. Was it just a movement to keep everything moving along?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was an attempt to do that. To clean up the procedures. To either do something with it or get rid of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that in any way cut down on the discussion of issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't believe so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because, after this all went through, Representative Chatalas said, "I would like to have the record show that the muzzle was placed on the Democrats by the Republicans at exactly one-fifty-one." Was that grandstanding or is that—were they in danger of losing some places where their input would be recognized?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I think he was just speaking to the Press.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you finally nailed down the rules by which the House would operate. But later you were still arguing about them—a remonstrance was inserted into the Journal on February 17, brought forward by John O'Brien. Again, I can't tell if this was grandstanding or if they're really upset or what exactly is going on, but he does go on the record with this. He lists several issues, but the one that seems to speak to this is "Whereas, the proper and deliberative nature of this body has been endangered by excessively political considerations dictated by the Republican majority in the House of Representatives." What was he getting at?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know what he's talking about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Democrats had been in the majority for a long time. They were used to running the show. Was this difficult for them to accept that the shoe could be on the other foot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. But I don't think there was any great upheaval.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were the Speaker. You're the one controlling some of the discussion and who got to speak.

**Mr. Eldridge:** My position through all of this was "Let 'em talk and when it's over with and we want to cut it off, we've got the votes," and so when people get tired of it, we'll cut it off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you weren't arbitrary in the sense of cutting them off before they were finished?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That was one thing that I think Jack Pyle who was a reporter for the *Tacoma News Tribune*, had said in one of his stories that I had been most fair about allowing both sides to talk and then move along in an orderly manner.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** John O'Brien went on to say: "Members of majority and minority parties alike have publicly objected to the steamroller tactics of the Republican leadership that has denied the legislative branch of state government adequate time to verify administrative facts and figures." What did he mean there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think that's just talk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he shaking his finger at you? Or did you think, well, "This is just part of what you need to do here," or what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He just needed to say something and he did it and we really didn't pay too much attention to it and moved along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he was, as the leader of the minority, duty bound?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. Then, of course, the other thing is, there was no question that John O'Brien knew and understood the rules and he knew how to use them. So we just gave him lots of rope

and pretty soon he'd be all through and we'd move along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this is just a tool that the minority can use to get some statements made?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Republicans obviously used this, too. There were several instances of remonstrances in the Journal from your side when you were in the minority.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. They say whenever you're in the majority, vote. When you're in the minority, talk. And that's about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. He did have some rather pointed charges. He said: "The Republican leadership has felt it necessary to make repeated and highly unusual changes in committee membership for no apparent reasons other than an inability to maintain party responsibility on their own side of the aisle." I don't know what he's trying to say.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't either, because in setting up the committee structure we were very fair in allocating a fair share of seats on any given committee to the minority party.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was done proportionally, wasn't it? More or less?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's just very interesting. There's something about committee meetings that was irritating to him, or some kind of issue. He went on—I don't want to beat this into the bushes, but I'd like to understand changes made to committee meetings—"Where one man is appointed in order to protect the majority because the majority is having difficulty in securing a majority in the committee"—I'm not clear about

that—"and a switch of membership is made at a late date is also something that's been absolutely in disregard of the policy of good legislative practice." Were people trading committee positions or something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once in a while you'd get a situation where if someone had a particular problem and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They could be reappointed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They could be switched with another member, or there are some instances where you might even increase the number of members on a committee. It didn't happen very often. And that was a maneuver that the Democrat Senate used quite a bit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He really kind of went on and on and then Slade Gorton stood up and he gave an answer to it. He denied, basically, the truth of it. "There's some point that the minority is most upset about, the fact that we have been working on Saturdays. The particular point of remonstrance on Saturday work states that, at least to the sponsors of the remonstrance, the only observable work done was to listen to a dialogue between two Republican leaders. As I remember the last Saturday session there were some twenty-five bills on the second and third reading calendars. I'm sorry the only observable thing to the minority leader was an entirely different matter." Was working on Saturdays unusual?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. During the first few years I was in the Legislature we worked nights and Saturdays and occasionally on Sunday. There were times when the old saying was, "You work 'em until they're too tired to know what's going on and they want to get out of there, and then you adjourn."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Wear them down.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's kind of a ploy. But sometimes you have to resort to maneuvers like that in order to keep things going.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine you get up a head of steam when you're close to resolution on something, and then you don't just take a break and run off. You finish?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, I would think that that would just be the way it was. Was working on Sunday kind of an issue with some people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't do that very often. As a matter of fact, I can't recall a specific issue that we took up on a Sunday.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was still some respite?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was all this rhetoric. It's interesting to sort it out.

But let's go back to the actual nomination for Speaker, which was a highlight for you, of course. How was it decided who would do the nominating? It seemed to be a matter of some importance.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Leadership made the ultimate decision, but there were individuals who say, "I want to second the nomination or I want to make the nomination." Those are generally considered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a feeling of "I would really like so-and-so to nominate me?" Or was that not something you would say? If you had, say, a special friend or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was perfectly happy with Stu making the nomination.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think he did a good job of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Stewart Bledsoe. He was in line to become the majority leader the following session. He went on at some length, of course, but I wanted to call attention to a couple of things that he said about you. "We are fortunate to have within our body and within our membership a man of substantial experience and wide knowledge." You were one of the senior members of your caucus by then, I imagine.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd been there since 1953. Were there older members who were not in the running? Who were not considered Speaker material, who would have been senior to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Zeke Clark was still there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. He was. But of your caucus, you've been there a little longer than many?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then Representative Bledsoe went on to say: "Whose will is both strong and good. Whose ability to lead us in the days to come is without peer." That's a nice thing to say. And then he puts forward your name.

Zeke Clark, or Newman Clark to give him his full name, was your seconder, I guess that'd be called. He talked a little about his own hopes. I guess at one time he was nominated to be Speaker fourteen years ago.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think that's what he's alluding to, and he says: "We have the same privilege now in Don Eldridge. He's a man who has served this body capably and forthrightly who will, as Speaker, be outstanding." He seconded the nomination.

And then you had a third person—you don't always have three, I think—speak for you, and that was Mary Ellen McCaffree. You had someone from the eastern part of the state. You had an older member and a woman. A nice balance here. I don't know if that was deliberate or just the way it turned out. She said many nice things about you, too: "He has been a dedicated legislator with integrity and honesty." These are words often used about you. "He is a man with a keen sense of responsibility and obligation with fairness to all." And then the usual things urging support for your nomination. And, of course, being in the majority, your election is somewhat a foregone conclusion even though the Democrats do nominate John O'Brien as their nominee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you just sitting in your normal seat at this point? Or were you somewhat at the front?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Pretty much towards the middle. I think I was on the aisle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How were you feeling when people were saying these wonderful things about you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It makes you feel good, of course, that your peers appreciate you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It must be kind of a crowning moment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. And over the years I had always had some uneasiness when I ever thought about the possibility of being the Speaker. And now I "are one!"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any qualms?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because we had a great caucus and we had a lot of good people, and I didn't have any misgivings at all about being able to do the job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes a person has a moment of anxiety when the big moment arrives. So, they went through the voting and, of course, you got fifty-five votes. Everyone voted for you on your side. And then you were escorted to the Rostrum by Representatives Berentson, Goldsworthy and Garrett for the swearing-in ceremony. Justice Matthew Hill of the Supreme Court administered the oath. Do you happen to remember what words you said?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't. I had known Matt Hill for a good many years. We were both on the local Boy Scout executive board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it by chance he's the one swearing you in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was by request.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's nice. I think it's a rather brief oath. Something like: "I will do the duties."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then at that point do you stay on the Rostrum? You're "it?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm in. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If this had been England, you'd probably don some kind of gorgeous robe and maybe even a wig if you're lucky, but the American ceremony is much more plain and simple.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's more informal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had you ever sat in the Speaker's chair before?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Every once in a while, John O'Brien, when he'd have to leave the Rostrum and go to meet somebody in his office, or whatever, he'd turn the gavel over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even someone in the other party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I didn't know that. So you had actually been an acting Speaker on occasion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I recall one time that I was on the rostrum with the gavel and Joel Pritchard got up and I recognized him, and he said, "Mr. Speaker, you're going to have to do something. The glare from your head is just too bright and we can't see what's going on very well."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, my! So what'd you do, put a Kleenex on your head?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I gaveled him down! But I tell you, there was quite a commotion and John O'Brien came flying out of his office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He thought you were doing something wild?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He thought I'd probably adjourned the session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, dear. Well, they had to rib you a little bit about that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He didn't have a great deal of hair either.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. He was joining me pretty fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You assumed the chair as Speaker, and gave a little speech. And you began with the classic toastmaster ploy, which is a joke. You said, "I may be Speaker of the House here in this body, but back home I'm still considered by my family the chairman of the entertainment committee." So that was setting a tone. Then,

of course, you thanked everyone. It's not quite the Academy Awards where you thank everyone down to your newspaper boy, but it's a nice occasion to thank your wife, your mother, your children, your colleagues. And your family was in the gallery, I gather, looking at you, which is kind of sweet.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there some kind of reception or anything afterwards? All the families being there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think in later years they had some sort of a reception.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then you gave a little talk about some of the changes you'd be making. You say: "The session will have a new look in a number of respects. We will enjoy the convenience of new office space." So this is when you were actually moved into your own offices? When the new legislators came in, they were no longer just at their desks?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Physically, there were office spaces.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a really big change. You mentioned you would have new equipment. What would that have been?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think probably Selectric typewriters and some dictation equipment. And then in the workroom, better copying machines. And I think the whole telephone system was upgraded.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For the first time legislators actually had their own telephones. So that's a big change. You say there was an improved communication system. Was that within the chamber itself? Did you have some kind of new device?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Prior to this session the rostrum had a phone that was linked to the majority leader and to the minority leader so that the Speaker could talk directly to them. And then I think in this session we had the intercom system that was piped into all the committee rooms, the caucus rooms, and into the gallery, so that the citizens could hear what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the microphone was somehow on the floor so that they could hear the speeches better?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. You went on to say: "The operation of the House will be facilitated by the advent of pre-filing of bills." So before the session even begins, members could bring bills down to the code reviser and get them in shape? Was that part of speeding things up a little bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Previous to that, you had to wait until session started?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That'd be a crush of work for the code reviser, wouldn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. And that was one of the reasons that we instituted this procedure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Otherwise everybody would bring their stuff forward on the first day? There must have been a mountain of it. And another change: "The early appointment of committee chairmen and the assignment of members to the individual committees." I understood that sometimes took quite a while to achieve, but that you pushed that forward. How much time did you save there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It would be a number of days, up to a few weeks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In a sixty-day session, that's quite a bit.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And that makes quite a difference.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, basically, the first day of session you were pretty much ready to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ready to go!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a breakthrough. Were any of these controversial or problematic in any way? Or just good things that everybody felt were necessary?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think anybody who had been there before recognized that we needed some of these things. And of course the first-year members didn't know anything different so it usually sounded pretty efficient to them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's important for us to chart these changes. Now we take this for granted, but someone had to think this up and implement it.

This new organizational plan allowed members to serve on only three committees in most cases "thereby eliminating conflicts and providing the members a better opportunity to fully consider all legislation before this body." Previous to that members could sit on how many committees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Four or more. It was a real mish-mash.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Things could all be happening simultaneously. What would you do, pick your favorite committees and go to them and the rest would just sort of die on the vine?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. There were some committees that just didn't have a quorum to operate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they be committees where there wasn't much legislation going forward, so people would just sort of say, "Well, that one's not so important?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why even have them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was the next step, to cut down on the number of committees and consolidate some.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of that the system you were reforming had been in place for years. What makes it finally come to a head where you say, "This is too frustrating. This doesn't work." Why 1967? Why not 1957, for instance? What is it that brings these things forward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the group of new members that I came in with in 1953 were moving along, and these were some of the things that we had grumbled about early on and so now we had a chance to do something about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So now you were in a position where you could say, "All right, let's do this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was John O'Brien a holdout? He had been part of the older system.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, some of the things that we put in motion were suggested and promoted by John O'Brien.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why didn't the Democrats do this earlier?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Who knows?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's always the question: why now, why not some other time? But it takes a

certain type of leadership. Who in your caucus was really keen on all these different changes and putting it together as a package?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Tom Copeland was very instrumental in a lot of these changes and he worked with the proposals and saw them put into place and to work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have meetings where you analyzed the process and said, "Okay, this is what we need to do here, and here, this is what we can do differently?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not on a strictly formal basis. When we set up the leadership and Tom was selected as the Speaker Pro Tem, it was one of the things that I insisted that we broaden the responsibility and we said, "These are the things that you're going to take charge of," and he did, and did an excellent job. And he worked well with John O'Brien. They instituted a lot of the changes, particularly in the facilities area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of these changes, you needed those new facilities to make this a reality. There's a connectedness here. To get all these things to move you had to have certain things in place. And that's the very next thing you said in your speech; you thanked Tom Copeland and John O'Brien who both were helping put together all these reforms. Were there other innovations that you considered that you decided not to go for at this point, or was this pretty much the whole package?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that we accomplished almost everything that had been suggested.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were some of these seen as experiments that if they didn't work as you wished, you would go back to something else? Think up something new?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there was any formal discussion in that regard, but I think everyone

considered that if things didn't work, you can always change them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering how sure of yourselves you were that these were the right combination of changes. Or if they were somewhat tentative: "Let's do this and see how it works out."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that there was a pretty firm resolve that these were things that needed to be done and that they were going to work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it help that they were a package? Would it have been harder to bring this forward one at a time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They didn't all happen at once, all at the same time. They did come along in stages. But I would have to say that many of them did take place pretty much at the same time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes when you change a lot of things at once, people resist or they get a little flummoxed or it's just too much. And other times it really works because the new changes support each other. Which way did it go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I think that there was a pretty general agreement that the changes needed to be made and that at least our caucus said, "We'll support it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were ready?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Change is always one of those very tricky things. How you frame it, how you present it can make it seem like a bitter pill or else a wonderful thing. It just depends on how you do it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, then, after this, it's almost like a pep talk. There are the nominations for the Speaker Pro Tem, in your case Tom Copeland and that went through pretty smoothly. And he was duly elected. The next election was for the office of Chief Clerk. Now that's something that you as Speaker decide, isn't it, more or less?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you chose your old friend, Malcolm McBeath, sometimes called "Dutch." I think you said he was from Whatcom County?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And he had been a member of the House, but had been out for a bit but was still interested in the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was elected in '52 the same year I was, and he and Hal Arnason represented the district from Whatcom County. As a matter of fact, for the two sessions that we both served, the three of us lived together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you'd be pretty close?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And I had known him prior to the Legislature in the Junior Chamber. So we had known each other for a number of years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What qualities were you looking for in your Chief Clerk besides this legislative background?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was the number one. And someone I figured wouldn't be an embarrassment to the caucus or to the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As in having personal problems of some kind?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I would say this, that Dutch wasn't quite as knowledgeable as I would have

hoped for, but one of the things we did was to suggest that the Democrats nominate an Assistant Chief Clerk. And they selected Sid Snyder. There's no question but Sid added a great deal to the operation because of his tremendous knowledge and the fact that he got along well with everybody; he and Dutch got along real well. Sid took care of a lot of the mechanical things and it worked out very well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was a new thing, wasn't it? To have an assistant from a different Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I had hoped that we could continue having an Assistant Chief Clerk from the minority party. But once the Democrats got back in control that went out the window.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, well. But it worked well this time at any rate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seemed to. And it gave them a chance to have some input into the operation of the House.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this part of where you got your reputation for fairness?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suspect that had something to do with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It makes a nice combination if you want to bring in a new person to have somebody around who definitely knows the ropes. Could you review what the Chief Clerk does? They're the administrative officer of the House? A lot of responsibilities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. His primary duty, I think, is to manage the flow of the paperwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a mountain.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. During the course of a session the Chief Clerk has all the paperwork right there in front of him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's all the bills and all the committee—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. All the reports and everything. And he just hands those to the Speaker as they come up on the order of business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he's your right-hand man.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Aren't they also in charge of the staff of the House to some extent?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many people would that be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If you count the doormen and the hostesses and the pages, it amounts to quite a number.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Keeping track of a whole lot of people is also a big job. Making sure everybody is doing their duties and upholding the "dignity of the House."

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have a personnel committee that works with the Chief Clerk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be legislators on that committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If there were any problems, it would go to that committee or would you, too, be involved?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only if it were something major.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does the buck stop on your desk?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have a Sergeant-at-Arms and a number of assistants, and the Sergeant-at-Arms was the person who you worked with. And then, as far as pages were concerned, you had maybe a page mother or two who—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Watched over them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. To see that they were doing their homework and that they were adhering to their schedules when they were to be working.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did pages still work the whole session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think most of them worked at least half the session. There were some who worked the whole session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Much longer than they do now. That would be a pretty big outlay of time for them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they'd really get to know what was going on.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And those whose families moved to Olympia were ordinarily enrolled in local schools. And then the others would have assignments from home and they'd have a regular study hall and spend so much time each day on their schoolwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What an experience.

It was actually Slade Gorton who nominated Sid Snyder and he mentioned this plan of having a Chief Clerk from one party and an Assistant Chief Clerk from the other. Then he said "so that in future legislatures, the succession can be made from one party to the other as smoothly as can be." So, if there's a switch in majorities, you've got somebody with experience. That seems like a very good idea.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You do have a change in the Sergeant-at-Arms position. You had had Elmer Hyppa for quite a few years, I believe, and he was still nominated by the Democrats, but you had your own person. You wanted to bring forward Eugene Prince. He had been there as an assistant to the Chief Clerk for two sessions, I understand. And perhaps in some other capacities. So he was a person well known to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What qualities does a Sergeant-at-Arms have to have? What's their job? It's kind of an odd title.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose their basic role is to keep order in the Chambers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When there's a Call of the House, they lock the doors?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And if they have to go out and bring somebody in, then they go wherever they have to go. That doesn't happen too often.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are they security officers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little bit. The assistants are around and visible. If there's any disturbance, why they usually handle it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Disturbance among the members or somebody, say, in the gallery?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that happen very often?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, you know, we had the Hell's Angeles swoop down on the Legislative Building and John Cherberg just completely went to pieces. He just panicked. Boy! He locked the doors and called the State Patrol.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did they want? Were you trying to pass a helmet law again?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They just wanted to disturb things. But we just ignored them over on our side and didn't have any trouble. They packed up and went away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They can be kind of a fierce group!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. They're intimidating.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So Gene Prince was a steady sort of person? Level-headed, good people skills, that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he had a good knowledge of the system and was well informed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's a wheat farmer from Thornton, Washington, way over in the Palouse. How does a person like that get fascinated by the Legislature? It just gets under your skin?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was involved with the party over in Whitman County and, of course, he knew Elmer Huntley and Goldsworthy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they have said, "We've got this guy. He's really good. He's really keen." Would they have brought him forward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They might have made mention and then supported him, of course.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He worked there for a long time, but he also—much later—became a senator. Eventually he crossed the line into the electoral field. He became a well respected member of your caucus.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happened to Elmer Hyppa?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he may have wound up as a doorman. You see, he was a member at one time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There are those people who have that long association and just stay on in some capacity.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The person who was low man on the totem pole in my district when I was elected, Grant Sisson, had been there for a number of years before as a member and his father had been in the Legislature. After he was defeated, he wanted to be around, so he took a position as a doorman.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that kind of a hard transition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He really had his nose broken. I know it was tough for him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounds kind of hard, to go from being a member to a doorman. He just loved it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He just wanted to be there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are those who will do anything to stay involved. And others, who, when they're retired, they walk away and that's that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's it. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Chief Clerk and the Sergeant-at-Arms, were these still considered patronage positions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there other positions of that kind where people would have brought names to you and you had the power to say yes or no?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Although this was pretty much turned over to Tom Copeland and the Sergeant-at-Arms.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering how much responsibility and discretion the Speaker has with all of these positions.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends how much you take.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this was not something that was a front burner issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But the Speaker could actually sit in his office and have everything come in, all these things we've talked about and say, "We'll do this or we won't do this, or we'll hire this person or we won't hire this person."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Keep all the reins in your hands?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You can do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or you can delegate? Were you more of the delegating sort?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think that the Speakership was also going through some kind of transition where previous Speakers had really held those rights rather jealously and you seemed to be willing to spread the power around a little bit more and bring more people in.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. I always liked to look for people who were qualified, dedicated and trustworthy, honest—and would do the job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then let them do it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How much reporting in did people do to you? Did you have to keep on top of everything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. We would have leadership meetings. We used to get together for breakfast once a week in the Speaker's office and we'd usually have Gracie Shea, who was our receptionist, arrange for the cafeteria to have coffee and rolls or whatever. Her claim to fame was pouring a cup of coffee all over the Speaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'll bet that woke you up!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Woo-ee! That smarts!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I hope she just this did once.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I'll tell you, everybody thereafter would bring it up, you know, and she always laughed about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. After it was all over. And then we recruited the Senate Republican leadership.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that an innovation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that happened very often, prior. But we had Jimmy Andersen from the Senate and he was one of the key people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would probably expedite a few things. Though they weren't in the majority, the Republicans in the Senate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But they at least knew what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm sure they appreciated that. How many people would come to these meetings?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There'd be ten or twelve. It filled the office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where were you located? Right off the floor, more or less?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Where it is now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many staff people did you have there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The majority leader had his office just off to the side. He had his secretary. I had a secretary and then Gracie was the receptionist who kind of rode herd. And then down the hall on the other side was the Speaker Pro Tem's office and he had a secretary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You are just swimming in staff all of a sudden. From nothing to this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then the Speaker had an attorney. I started out with Charlie Schmidt from Friday Harbor and he wasn't there but more than a few weeks and had a heart attack.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, dear. Were you working him too hard, or was this just bad luck?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think he had some physical problems. And then I got Tom Loftus, who was a Seattle attorney. A young guy who was quite active in the party in King County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he was a person known to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't know him, but he was recommended and he did a good job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The attorneys sat up there on the rostrum with you and advised you on rulings, if there was something going on, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The attorney usually was close by there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they help you with all the different parliamentary maneuvers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. John O'Brien, when he was Speaker, and his attorney used to prepare a loose-leaf book, and he'd have a résumé of every bill that was going to be discussed. He would know the pitfalls, and that résumé would say "the AFL-CIO is for this" or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Little annotations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** "The WEA is against this." So you'd have some idea of—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Whether you wanted it or not?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And did you copy that? Did you do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Tom Loftus did, but he got carried away. He had a book about that thick.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're motioning about three inches there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always figured, boy, I don't need this. I'll wing it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that frustrating for him? He was doing all this preparatory work and you were not reading it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He figured that I must have at least gone through it and looked at it. And I did to some extent. But it was just too much. And you know, actually, when you come right down to it, you make your decisions on gut reaction. What you've learned over the years and the people who have talked to you about legislation.

John O'Brien used to always say, "I don't know how you ever got by without knowing the rules any better than you did." I said, "John, as long as you've got a firm grip on that gavel and you've got the votes to back you up, you don't need to know too much." He said, "Well, I guess that's right."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you study up on all the little ins and outs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had just absorbed enough by experience? Even with the eagle eye of John O'Brien watching your every move? You're a brave man!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I always figured that I had Slade Gorton sitting down there, and, boy, if I ever got in a jam, he could always get me out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have little hand signals or something? What did you do? Would he call you up on the telephone and say, "Let's go this direction?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We were in contact. And there were times when I'd talk to John O'Brien and say, "Look, let's get rid of this thing." He'd say, "Okay."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would he tell you some maneuver you could do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Or he'd say, "I'll move it back to Rules Committee or whatever." So I'd recognize him, and away we'd go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. I wanted to go through, really, what does it mean to be the Speaker? So I'd like to ask you a series of

questions about how it worked. You're considered the leader of your party in the House, right? So you would meet regularly with your caucus, your leadership group, and would you be an equal among equals or would you be more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just always considered myself one of the members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the procedures would fall to you to move things through or would that be more Slade Gorton or Stewart Bledsoe?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Your majority leader usually handles the ball on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you would work very closely with him to map out what you were going to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And then the other thing that happened. We had the leadership meetings of our caucus, but we also met with Governor Evans and with the Senate leaders, and we'd go over the governor's legislation and let him know that, "Governor, forget it. This isn't going anyplace."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had a huge agenda. He was a very activist governor. He kept lists up and down his sleeve of what he wanted to do. Would he put pressure on you to bring certain things forward? You represented the House. You're a different institution. And he represented the executive branch. He *was* the executive branch. Would you be partners? Would you be equal partners, or would he be the senior member hoping you're going to push through his agenda?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think in the case of Governor Evans, he was pretty much the key, and we all sort of played off of him and his program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, really, his program was the place you began, or did the House have a separate agenda of its own?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not as a formal entity. But individual members of the House—Republican caucus members—had things that they considered the caucus ought to take a stand.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Things they needed for their districts, or just things that they thought were really important?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Generally speaking, statewide issues. But there were members of our caucus who had their own agenda. We had two or three members of the caucus who were the artsy type. They wanted to take the Arts Commission's program and run with it. Then you had, of course, the farm group. You could kind of break out a lot of special interest groups that had members in the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Say, bankers or insurance people or things of that type?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Ex-military people, although we very seldom had any military issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were some veterans' issues that I recall. Minor things, I guess, with the National Guard or the state. But that didn't come up too often.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you had educators and attorneys.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever get into conflict with the governor? You said that sometimes there'd be times when you'd have to say, "Well, it's not going to happen." Would there be times when he would want something whereas the leadership of the House would say, "That's too much." Was he trying to build up the executive somewhat at the expense of the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the big issue was his support of putting the income tax on the ballot again. We had quite a few members of the caucus who just weren't going to go along with that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you, as Speaker, somewhat duty bound to push his agenda?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I tell you, the only reason I supported this was because I had such a great deal of respect for the governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In your position, not you as a person, does the Speaker work that closely with the governor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, yes. But I traveled around with him on this income tax thing and oh, boy, I had to bite my tongue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes you did, yes. There's a newspaper article analyzing the Republican House; from the *Seattle Times* by Lyle Burt. He made several points outlining why this would be an important, but difficult session for your Party. He said: "There are twenty-six freshmen Republican legislators in the lower chamber unused to the involved, intricate and sometimes startling methods of doing business. One of the problems of the leadership now will be to keep the twenty-six freshmen in line during the trying days of the 1967 session. It's not been unusual in the past for well-meaning freshmen who did not fully understand the workings of the Legislature to embarrass their parties by their stands on politically hot issues." He intimated that it was your job, and various other leaders' jobs, to watch over these twenty-six fledglings and make sure they didn't get out of line. How would you go about doing that? Twenty-six is quite a big number.

Did you have meetings with the freshmen? Would you teach them the ropes? Did you have that little school at the beginning of session where freshmen were taught how to do things? Where the bathrooms were, and how things worked?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It wasn't really about the real world, but it was just kind of some of the things that they ought to know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** John O'Brien had done it in his day, and I was wondering if you carried on that tradition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, I think it was for all freshmen. I think John continued that. It really didn't have a partisan concept.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Everybody has to know the same things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was kind of a review of the mechanical end of the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seems like a large number of freshmen, but how many normally would you get in any one year? Would they feel like a class unto themselves a bit? Did you encourage them to be active, or were you just as happy to keep them in the background?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We had a lot of talent there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I have a feeling this was a new era. That you were not going to say, "Sit down and be quiet for ten years." That age had passed. You'd want to bring these people forward. Would you have ways of doing that? Were there ways to communicate and bring these people on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have to get with them one-on-one or in small groups and go over issues and programs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Look for the rising stars?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the party almost transformed by now from, say, when you entered to 1967? There are still a few people who had been there quite a while, but were the majority fairly new?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had a whole new group of legislators of a different generation. Was that part of the new activist stance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To some extent. Although out of that first group that I was with, there were still a large number of those who were in the caucus in '67.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And were you really coming into your own by then? You're the Speaker and who else would have been there in the senior positions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Damon Canfield and Cecil Clark. And Elmer Johnston was still there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you had Newman Clark, or Zeke, as he's called. But then, you had the whole new wave coming in with Dan Evans who reshaped the caucus.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Dan and Joel Pritchard and Mary Ellen McCaffree and Slade. And Duane Berentson was beginning to move up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Stewart Bledsoe and all the people coming into leadership then were younger than you. Younger in their service. I don't know about age. You were a little bit senior to them. So it was an exciting time.

You were meeting with some Senate members, but those were Republican members, who were in the minority in the Senate. What about the majority Democrats in the Senate? Did you need to meet with them? You were trying to bring in a lot of changes and those changes would be most effective if both houses participated.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tell you. When you're dealing with the Senate, it didn't make any difference which party was in control, it was always a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're just a totally different body?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They played their own tune. But on the Legislative Council, we had Bob Greive and Bill Gissberg. And then Augie Mardesich was a power in the Senate. Bob Bailey was a good, solid person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You could work with them? They had Martin Durkan. There's quite a few jockeying around there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Durkan was a power to be reckoned with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Did those relationships on the Legislative Council come to your aid when it came time to working with the Senate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** On some legislation, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about these organizational matters?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think they were pretty much on their own.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had a bit of a knockdown about the committee structure. You wanted to reduce the number of committees fairly substantially, and they didn't. So how did that work when you were passing legislation? It should go from companion committee to committee, shouldn't it? If their structure was quite different from yours, how was it assigned?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, they would find some way to fit it in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's sort of their problem? You get it out of your house and they'd have to deal with it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that they were fairly resistant to some of the changes that you

were putting forward in the House. Especially the committee structure and the printing of the calendar. The new openness. Everybody was getting this calendar and everybody had this chance to get to hearings and meetings because there was advance notice—for the first time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The Senate over the years has been pretty much a closed corporation, and they didn't want anybody messing with the way they operated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, were you like the little upstarts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they actually treat you as junior members of the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't see any direct evidence of that. I didn't pay any attention to it if it was there. I don't think it really affected our success or failure as far as legislation was concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your counterpart in the Senate was the President of the Senate, the Lieutenant Governor, John Cherberg. Would you have had a lot of meetings with him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course, the Lieutenant Governor is just the presiding officer, really, rather than a legislator. The majority leader is the big gun.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It is different. In this case, that would have been Senator Greive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Only as far as the Legislative Council was concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you were really pretty separate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The only time I really had a meeting with Bob Greive was when he wanted

the council to hire a friend of his who was a disbarred attorney from Oregon. Bob came over to my office and we sat down and I just said, "No. That ends it." He wasn't too happy with that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Speaker was the chair of the Legislative Council, right? So you had the ultimate say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. That ended it right there. And then, the upshot of that was, after Evans had nominated me for the Liquor Board, Greive and a couple of his buddies from his group came over to my office and Bob said, "You know, I can hold up this appointment. There are two or three things we'd like to talk to you about that we think maybe the board ought to consider." And I said, "Look, Bob, just vote me up or vote me down, but don't be giving me any of this Mickey Mouse stuff."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He wanted to deal on something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So he and his buddies got up and left and there was a third one out in the hall and he said, "Well, did you tell him? Did you tell him?" And Greive said, "Just forget it," and they walked on off. Oh, I tell you. He was something else!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A different school of politics. A different approach much practiced by some and not at all by others.

Continuing with what does it mean to be Speaker, were you considered the spokesperson for your party, or was that the majority leader's role? Where's the dividing line between your two jobs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the House, the Speaker, I'm sure, is considered the spokesman for the caucus and the majority leader handles the legislation on the floor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More the internal things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The mechanics.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you hold press conferences?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once in awhile we did, but not often.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the Press go to you for the word on whatever was going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They would come in and say, "How do you feel about this?" or why did this or that happen?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have much practice dealing with the Press?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. It didn't bother me, but I just didn't particularly care for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they try to trick you into saying things that you didn't mean to say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some of them who were a little devious. But by and large, the press was pretty good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who do you recall practicing in those days? Who were the main Press people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You had Leroy Hittle from the Associated Press. Lyle Burt was with the *Seattle Times*.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would be with the *P.I.* in those days? Was Shelby Scates there yet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Shelby was there, yes. And Mike Layton was from the *Olympian*.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Ross Cunningham? Was he still there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think Ross was still there. But he was there when I first went to the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had been quite a power, actually. What about Adele Ferguson?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. She was there. I liked her. We still get together and have lunch once in awhile. She was working all the time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She's lively, I imagine. She certainly had a nose for news and had a fairly powerful column, I understand.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And wide circulation. She was in a lot of the little weekly newspapers all over the state. People knew who she was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there times you felt misrepresented, mistreated by the Press, or did you feel that they were quite fair with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The only time I ever felt that I was stomped on was by my own paper in Mount Vernon. In '67, the front page had a heading that said "Eldridge elected Speaker." And then there was a quarter page picture of a Vietnamese elder with a beard and the sideburns and the turban and the whole works, you know, and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that mixed in with your article as if that were you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And over here in the other corner was a little story about being elected Speaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess you weren't as big news as you wanted to be.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't care about that, but man, I was really steaming. I got the paper that evening and I went to the telephone and called the editor and I said, "Who in the H made up your front page tonight?" He said, "Why? What's the

matter?" And I said, "Go and look at it." And then the next week at the Rotary meeting a couple of the wags took the paper and mounted it and then they wrote at the bottom "Politics is hell, folks. It sure ages a guy." Anyway, that kept folks busy for a few days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But not really the way you wanted.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But that kind of stuff doesn't really bother me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. But still, it's a bit deflating. Here's your moment and—

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I'm not sure that it was done on purpose. I think that it was just some guy that made up the paper and didn't even give it a second thought.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, dear. Well, it keeps you humble.

Were there other duties? We've gone through various relationships with different groups and setting forward various parts of what the Speaker did. Were there other things behind the scenes that I'm not aware of?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You got called on to be part of a forum or speak to this group or that group. That's just part of the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you seen as a person who would go and say what was going on in the session, or talk about government or the Legislature? The sort of big-brush topics?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All of the above.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of a civic leader of the state? You're called upon to do that. Did you enjoy that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I liked talking to larger groups. I had more problems sitting down with

four or five people around a table and discussing things. That's the kind of thing that Stewart Bledsoe would just eat up and he was great at it. He could sit down with two or three folks around a table and just really go at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, really, if your leadership caucus had these different kinds of talent: somebody's good at this, somebody's good at that, you can cover all the bases.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. We had a good group. Stu would put on his cowboy hat and boots and wade into the Chamber of Commerce in Seattle and just really have a great time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's no longer with us, so maybe you could tell me a little more. He sounds colorful and dynamic.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was. And a good legislator. He could think things through and pick apart the phony stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds like he brought real strength to your group. He rose in leadership pretty quickly.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of your other duties is that the Speaker was to serve as the chair of Rules Committee. You'd been a member of Rules, but now you were chairing it. That shifted your responsibilities. What was this new position like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You had to sort out things and you continued the practice of getting the important bills out on the calendar. And then we'd go right around the table and each member could pull a bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you know beforehand what they wanted to do? I just wondered how much behind the scenes work there would be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once in awhile, a member would say, "I'm going to pull this bill on my turn," or something like that. But there usually weren't any big surprises because everybody can count and they know where the votes are in the Rules committee to get a particular piece of legislation moving.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it still true that the Rules committee was made up of more senior members, more experienced people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They have been through the ropes before, so they're not going to pull off any astonishing acts.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is this where you separate the wheat from the chaff and the bills that should die just never quite make it onto the agenda? Did you practice the pocket veto?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, if it was something with wide spread opposition, why the Rules committee can—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Shuffle it to the bottom of the pile?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be that kind of discussion? Would there be some kind of quick acknowledgment around the table that a certain measure just ought to not see the light of day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You could say that sort of thing, outright?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of course, it's a bipartisan committee. Did you have fights in there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. There'd be some disagreement, but as I remember no knock-down-drag-outs over a bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be things that you would give the minority party? Obviously you can count and you've got the votes, but would there be, for good government reasons, things that the minority party could say, "This is really important to us, we need this," and you would help them out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then we'd put together a consent calendar where we'd put out bills that there was no objection to by either party.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Probably a lot of housekeeping bills would fall under that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And we'd just automatically put those out and they could rise and fall on their own merit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many bills would come through Rules? Hundreds? What are we talking about here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm just trying to visualize the list. See, you'd have the bills that would be going out of Rules onto second reading where they could be amended. And then you'd have another list of bills that would be going out for final passage.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because after second reading they come back to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that more or less a pass through, or did you still take a vigorous look?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Lots of times when they got back out on the floor on second reading, they'd be amended and you wouldn't recognize they were the same bill. So then they'd go down like the Titanic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you'd still have a chance to do something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. Did you still have secrecy in Rules? I'm confused about when Rules was opened up. At this point, you did away with the secret ballot, but Rules was still not a publicly open committee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there other innovations in Rules at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't too much tinkering that you could do at this point because you get two shots at a bill and they've been pretty well screened before they get to Rules.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are these various places as legislation moves through where you can have an impact. Rules, of course, was one of the big ones. So if you want to reform the Legislature, I was wondering if the Rules Committee was the place where you could make real changes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure there's a great deal that you can do to make changes, whether or not changes are really needed. You've got to have a final decision, and that's the place that it has to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess the biggest issue always with Rules is "open or closed." Did you, as chair, decide who was going to be on Rules? Did you appoint the committee members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The two caucuses would pretty much make the decision on who was going to go on Rules. If the Democrats had seven members, then they would submit the seven names.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At one point, didn't the Speaker have a lot more power to appoint committee members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the Speaker could always make those decisions if he wanted to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel about that sort of shift?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I pretty much figured that each caucus ought to make their own decision as to who was going to go on committees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have a final say, or would it be more of a consensus decision?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be a consensus decision.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that different? Maybe on a spectrum of it used to be more the absolute power of the Speaker, moving to much more of a caucus discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure what actually happened in each Speaker's regime.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if you'd be aware of making changes or of just saying to yourself, "This is how I'm going to do it." Or if other people would be saying to you, "Well, that's different," or "we didn't used to do it that way."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any great discussion about that sort of procedure change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a quotation in *Reed's Parliamentary Rules* that I thought was kind of interesting. It says, "Parliamentary law is not a series of arbitrary rules, but a plain, consistent system founded on common sense and

sanctioned by the experience of mankind." From the outside, observing some of the parliamentary maneuvers, it seemed a little more arcane than this statement. But from the inside, all the series of motions and things that people can do, once you've been in the Legislature for a few sessions, does that become second nature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But, *Reed's Rules* really wasn't used that often. Your rule book, which is what we were talking about earlier, about changes, amendments and so on, if somebody was referring to rules, that's what they would be referring to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel any kind of connection way back to all the Speakers through parliamentary times, that you were part of a long chain of Speakers upholding tradition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It never entered my mind. It probably should have.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you're perhaps more quintessentially American in that sense where you're not steeped in this tradition.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had never considered it in an historical way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It probably freed you to move around a little bit. Of course, parliamentary rule is somewhat elastic. It changes over time and allows movement and new thought. That's supposed to be one of its great attributes, is that it's not rigid. That there are places in there where you can adapt to new situations.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's a rule to take care of almost any situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's a very good tool in that sense. One of the mystiques of the office of the Speaker is the gavel. What kind of gaveler were you? Were you vigorous?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suspect in some instances I was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You talk about keeping a firm grip on the gavel as being your prop. Further into the session you were given a ceremonial gavel. Former state representative, Frank Jackson of King County made a visit to the Chambers and presented you with a gavel. I guess he made these as a hobby?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was a wood turner. He always presented the Speaker with a gavel.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was kind of a little ceremony. He gave Tom Copeland one, too. Did you use that one or was that more of a keepsake? Do you get to keep your gavels? Are they your personal possessions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The one that Frank gave me had a band on it that had my name and “Speaker of the House of Representatives” and the date. It was a ceremonial gavel. Although, during the Legislature and even after I got out of the Legislature, when I was chairman of the state Republican convention a couple of times, I used that gavel because it had a fairly heavy head and it felt good. It could speak with some authority.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were some of them flimsy and not very well made? If you really rapped them, would they break? You hear of different people doing that and having the head fly off and nearly hit people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** John O’Brien a couple of times got a little excited and he missed the block and broke the glass on the rostrum. And another time he came down with the gavel and there were some pencils there and they just flew all over the place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you’d try not to do that. Not smack your own fingers or anything.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. But, you know, talking about gavels, my wife’s sister came up from Florida this summer and she brought a gavel that she got at a garage sale. It was a gavel that was used by Jerry Ford when he was still in the House and was chairman of the national Republican convention. It had a band on it with the engraving and everything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I’ll bet she snatched that up. That’s a real prize.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So she gave it to me and it’s really interesting to have.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be quite a special thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because he wound up being president.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Did you have many gavels? Did you have a little collection?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I do have a few. Joel Pritchard gave me one, and I think he must have had a whole box of them, that had the band on it that said “Lieutenant Governor, Joel Pritchard,” and “Honorary Lieutenant Governor.” I think he had those to give out to visiting dignitaries. But anyway, he gave me one of those and it was shortly after that that he passed away. That was very nice.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It’s your symbol of office.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you get up there, that’s your weapon of choice. And people have such different styles. You often hear remarks about, “He was this kind of gaveler” or “he was a vigorous wielder,” or not. I imagine it would be rather satisfying to be up there rapping people into place.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The best part for me of being Speaker, was presiding. I really looked forward to that every day.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you stand the whole time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would sit after we got things going and we got into debates on bills. While people out there were talking, I would sit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd have to really pay attention, wouldn't you? Keep track of all the movement on the floor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many hours a day would you preside, more or less? How intense was it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It depended. A lot of times you'd go in and you'd open the session and go through the first five or six items on the calendar and then adjourn.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then go into committee meetings, caucus, or whatever?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But near the end of the session, say, was that a much more rigorous activity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd be there for hours at a time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it hard to maintain your attention span? Was it pretty tiring?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, to some extent. It got to be tiring.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In your second term as Speaker, you broke your arm. Did that make presiding difficult?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was skiing with my two daughters on New Year's Day, 1970.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pretty close to the opening of session.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were up at Stevens Pass and it was getting along late in the afternoon and it was, "Come on, Dad, just one more run." So up we went to the top, and just as we got to the top and got maneuvered around to go down the run, they turned the lights on. There were a lot of moguls that day and with the lights on you had the shadows and it was terrible. Jean went down first and she was ahead of us and then Sally went down. I started down and got maybe a hundred yards and I hit one of those moguls and I just (demonstrating end-over-end). What happened was when I finally fell, I had one ski that was back under me and my arm somehow got across the edge of the ski and then my body turned and the weight... I broke my upper arm in five places. It was just as though you had taken kindling and snapped it like that! I was on the side hill there and one daughter stayed with me and the other one skied on down and got the ski patrol. They came up with a basket and they strapped me in it, and then skied on down. One of the girls got the car and got me into it and the other one had called ahead to our doctor in Mount Vernon and he said, "I'll meet you at the hospital." It was quite a little way. So, anyway, we got there and got into the hospital and my doctor had called in an orthopedic specialist.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you know your arm was really badly broken? Were you in a lot of pain?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really wasn't. The shock probably took it off. And they put a kind of wire mesh splint on it and then fastened it to my body so I couldn't move it. And I knew that it was in pretty bad shape. They got me into the back seat and we headed down the mountain. I hadn't had anything to eat so we stopped someplace along the way and I had a sandwich and a glass of milk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to have surgery?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We went to the hospital and they got my shirt and jacket off and the orthopedic surgeon told my doctor—they took X-rays and you could see it was just smashed—so he said, “We’d better just keep him here in the hospital and put him in traction.” Bolt me to the bed. And my doctor said, “Hey, we can’t do that. He’s got to be in Olympia next week.” But he said, “I hope you haven’t had anything to eat because of the anesthetic?” So they had to use something else. I was conscious all the time they were setting that thing—you could feel him maneuvering the pieces into alignment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which arm was it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was this one. My gavel hand was all right. So anyway, they decided they’d just put it in a cast. I had forty pounds of plaster of Paris on there and in a sling. So when I opened the session, here I was with this big cast on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn’t use that lightweight material they have now.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I had the thing on that whole session and then I was appointed to the Liquor Control Board and for the first week I was there I had it on. Then I went back home that weekend and they sawed it off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you wear a suit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just threw it over my shoulder. I wore a lot of sweaters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like a cape, I guess. Very dashing! But you had to let go of a little decorum, I guess?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, it was pretty informal.

## CHAPTER 13

### WIELDING THE GAVEL: 1967

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**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's continue our discussion of you as Speaker in 1967. I don't think many people understand the role of the Speaker as the head of the Party.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The governor would be, in this case. There's a progression, and I think that the Speaker is probably number three down the line.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In case of the governor's demise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Then the Lieutenant Governor would be next and then, I think, the Speaker, and then after that the Secretary of State.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hopefully we wouldn't have that much of a disaster.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I wouldn't think that would be very likely.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that cross your mind, that you were in the line of succession?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That really had never entered my mind. I suppose if the governor had been a ninety-year-old person who had one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel, I might have given some thought to it. But Dan Evans was in his prime and healthy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It has happened a few times in Washington's history that a governor has died in office, but it would be hard to picture Dan Evans as being in any kind of danger other than from say, a mountain climbing accident.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Or he might fall down the stairs in the mansion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you were definitely in the upper part of the hierarchy in the Party, especially because the Senate was Democratic.

I'm trying to get a sense of how closely you would work with the governor. Whether you had one foot in his camp as well as the House, or where did the line fall?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because we had served together in the Legislature, I think he pretty much had his own group that were not all office holders at that time, Slade and Mary Ellen McCaffree and Joel Pritchard, who were very close to him. And then, of course, Jim Dolliver was on his staff. Most of us had worked with Jim.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he look at you as his right-hand man to direct his affairs within the House? Were you supposed to implement them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He kind of counted on me to see that his program got all the attention it deserved. And I think we were fairly successful there. There was a lot of opposition to the things that he was proposing because he really had a basket full of things that he was interested in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Within your own Party or just generally?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think within our caucus we had quite a few grumbles about his program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he considered too liberal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, I had made the statement to maybe Adele Ferguson, that I had to bite my tongue on a lot of his proposals, but that I had such a great deal of respect for him that I would go along and do what I could.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he change your own views of things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had always been a fiscal conservative. Some of the social changes that were floating around I wasn't too enthused about, but I would say that, by and large, we had a fairly successful program. And you know, the state is still floundering around and I don't think we did too much damage!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of those ideas are still current.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, they are.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if Dan Evans had a way of presenting his program that would not just get people like yourself on board—who weren't necessarily quite of the same frame of mind—but would be persuasive and would sound so good that you would not just reluctantly support his program but actually become an advocate of his program? And not just because of your title, but because it made sense to you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He did a great deal to get the support of the Republican organization in the state, and he was well regarded by party leaders in almost every county.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he pay attention to them in a way that hadn't been true before?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that he worked with the volunteers more closely than other governors. The most recent one would have been Langlie and he wasn't noted for his ability to get people behind him. And of course, he had a disastrous session of the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's key, then, for a governor to make that personal contact and connect with people so that they have some kind of feeling about him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. It's very important. Governor Rosellini was a master at bringing the workers on board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand he knew everyone's name, and was able to get right down in the trenches.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Very personable. Philosophically, I could never be enthusiastic about Rosellini, but I certainly appreciated his ability to work with people. The thing that really impressed me was, if a legislator would go down to the governor's office, the receptionist would immediately call the governor's administrative assistant to come out. He'd find out what you were there for and without any question at all he'd go back into the governor's office and he'd bring him out and explain a little bit about what the person wanted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A big open door.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Absolutely. With Dan you could wait for fifteen or twenty minutes to even talk to anybody about it, and then they'd have to see about maybe getting an appointment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even you as Speaker? Maybe the door was a little more open to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so. Not for me personally, but just the office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can see how that would add up to a certain type of impression and either smooth things so that you felt like you were really working together or put up some barriers where it was a little bit harder.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it made it a little more difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he aware of the contrast?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was just his way of doing business. I'm not sure that he ever really considered the effects.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On the person waiting, yes. On the other hand, if you're actually trying to get some work done, to be constantly interrupted wouldn't be so good either.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You can surely justify that. But Governor Rosellini would always come out, and he'd say, "I'm in a meeting, but Joe here can take care of your problem."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you felt heard?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that that was a consideration. At least he recognized that you were there and you had a problem or whatever it was you wanted to talk to him about. And then somebody would get on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine every governor has a style. How often would you meet with Governor Evans? Weekly? Daily?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think during that first term we met just occasionally. And then my second term, we used to get the Republican leadership from the Senate and the House leadership and the governor. We'd always have coffee and rolls or doughnuts or something in my office and the governor would come up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he'd come to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Sit in. And we'd just go over his program and if we had any problems why we'd relay those along to him. I think it worked out pretty well. But we had real good people, both in the House and the Senate, and that really made a difference.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm sure. Yes. With a governor with such a large agenda, was there room for House Republicans to have their own list of things they wanted to accomplish? Or were you so taken up with the governor's program that that pretty much hit every issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was hard to find anything that he didn't have on the list.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about your take on those issues? It might not be exactly the same as his.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There might be a few kind of wild side issues that some of our members would want to stir up a little. But by and large, I think we worked very closely with the governor and his program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are some opinions that the governor really built up the executive branch. Not necessarily at the expense of the legislative branch—the Legislature had been making some gains—but there's always, not exactly a power struggle, but a search for balance, shall we say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the executive overwhelm the Legislature or did you struggle to maintain an equal relationship?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that so many people felt as I did. They had such a great deal of respect for Dan that they were able to work with him and you didn't have too much outside static or people pushing other items particularly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a fairly harmonious time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I would think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that last? Or, after a while, were there little tensions and differences that built up? He was kind of in his golden period in his

first term. I was just wondering how long he could sustain that close relationship?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as I was personally concerned, I didn't really have a problem until he got down to the last few weeks of the special session in '70. We were dealing with a couple of labor issues and I went along with the governor on a couple of those that I've regretted ever since. And my friends in the business community really let me know about it, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We'll have to talk about those in awhile. Setting aside the income tax issue for the moment, were there other programs that were difficult for you to get on board with? There were a lot of environmental issues. A lot of education issues. How many of those were you able to feel like you could be on the same wavelength?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some of the environmental issues. I think most members of our caucus really kind of had to shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, let's get it over with."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The governor came in the third day of the session and gave his State of the State address. I made a very short list that nowhere near encompasses all the different things that he brought forward. I would just like to get your reactions to some of them.

A lot of them have to do with reorganizing government. He dearly wanted a Department of Transportation and he didn't get it, but he tried for it many times. He wanted other more umbrella-type agencies, like what became Department of Social and Health Services. He wanted an office of community affairs. He created the Department of Revenue and in the early days, the Department of Water Resources, which eventually became part of the Department of Ecology. What did you think of that sort of reorganization and the trend of gathering small agencies together and making big agencies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those things always look good on paper, but in reality some of them, I think, would better serve the state being independent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a business person, did you bring that perspective to some of these issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always had hopes that it would evolve into some monetary savings and a more efficient operation. And I guess to some extent that happened. Although I think DSHS just really got out of hand.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems to be the one most people choke on. Some of the other ones, especially all the little transportation agencies, many people have thought that they overlapped and then there were holes where nothing seemed to be anybody's province, and that seemed to make sense. But, in fact, that was the hardest one for the governor to get.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Too many turf battles there, I guess. But DSHS does seem to be the one that was the sort of worst case scenario for many people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Natural Resources was one of the real logical ones, and I think one that has worked reasonably well. And at that point in time we didn't address the fisheries department, the game and fish. We should have dealt with those.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That comes later, doesn't it? Were those agencies already showing signs of some problems, but weren't quite on the horizon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that you could safely say that there were some problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Nisqually fish war was going on at that time. Did the state play much of a role in that issue, or was that more federal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was federal. Judge Bolt was the one who really stirred that one up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was part of an era when a lot of people were stirred up. Inner city areas were aflame during this era. Students. The black power movement.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of unrest.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Many Americans were finding their voice. And you had an activist government. Was this just a time of great turmoil and everybody's got a lot to say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does one thing feed another? Did you feel a sort of excitement or trepidation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I just kind of shook my head and said, "Boy, this is going nowhere."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that things were changing perhaps too rapidly? Too much was going on? Or were you feeling like, no, the state had a pretty good handle on what it was doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that my feeling was, we might as well do it and get at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you'd be part of this reorganization movement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I felt that we had good leadership and, sure, there'd be some mistakes, but we can always make changes or revert back to where you were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes it's wrong to do nothing, too. Was it a feeling of "seize the moment?" You Republicans had at least two branches of government. The Republicans have not been in the majority in the House for quite a while. So, maybe it's your turn.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was quite a lot of that sort of feeling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's also a time of fairly great prosperity, which of course made it easier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The economy was pretty good. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Unemployment was low. There was a lot of growth in population of people flocking into Washington State. That was both an exciting thing and quite a challenge for those providing government services.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It provided a lot of problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you had to address that. Schools, higher education, everything's just kind of exploding. Did the Republican way of looking at government services have to change in periods like this of rapid growth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that you certainly have to move off the ultra conservative stance both fiscally and socially. And I think that the Republicans during these years did a good job in funding education. I think we were up in the upper ten states as far as funding was concerned. And in higher education there was a lot of expansion. Of course, the new community college system helped that. A lot of construction was funded so that public schools really expanded their facilities during this period and the colleges and universities were able to provide additional construction facilities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a period of expansion. People expected to do better. And not just a little bit better, a lot better. They wanted more—more services, more schools. They weren't afraid of government growing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a good analysis. That there was a lot of optimism. People seemed

to be willing to take a chance on new programs and to dig down and fund them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It does take both, doesn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** An exciting time. Dan Evans, in his State of the State address, noted over and over how everything was booming. But he also talked about the sort of shadow side of that, about how open spaces were being threatened and of the danger of paving over the state if we weren't careful. About pollution and just taking some note of the downside of all this growth if you don't plan properly and really look out for the future.

What about this issue of planning? He's an engineer. He is a planner. That's his mindset. Republicans were not often thought of as people who liked or were comfortable with social planning. How did that sit with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can't say as far as social issues aside from education. I think there was real concern and a lot of thought given by Republicans in the matter of education. There was more interest and I think they backed off from the position that educators are all bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had that been the position?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a lot of uneasiness. I think Pearl Wanamaker probably stirred that up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With Langlie, for instance, there was this sort of parsimonious attitude toward schools, especially kindergartens. That era seemed to be over.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of support for education during that period.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm really curious about Pearl Wanamaker. Because she was so, maybe even

overbearing, in her approach, did she create opposition where there might not have been? Did she polarize things a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, whether it was intentional or not, she really promoted that stance. There's no question about it that she was a very astute politician. She had served in the Legislature and as Superintendent of Public Instruction. She covered the state and had a dynamic following.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But did that cause resentment? Can that go too far?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think maybe that's the key. That she maybe overstepped— And of course, she had her own program. She really worked the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People have said that they felt worked over. There's a fine line there, isn't there, between being a strong proponent and maybe being a little too—stepping on people's toes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She really had a network.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is a better approach to bring people in as partners in the enterprise? Rather than bulldoze over them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think a lot depends on the situation. But I recall my first session. I was on the Appropriations Committee and I was on the subcommittee on education. Of course, those were before the days of private offices and secretaries and administrative assistants and all that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was no barrier. You were just in the fishbowl.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You sat right on the floor and that was your office. And I recall after the budget came out, I looked up and there was Pearl standing right beside my desk. I had the budget

bill on the desk and she said, "Eldridge, what do you think of my budget?" And I looked at her and I said, "Well, it looks a little high to me," and she just turned around and walked off the floor. And when I got to my desk the next morning I couldn't see it. I had telegrams and special delivery letters and messages to call so-and-so. She pushed the button and got the response.

But I was always pretty supportive of education. And I felt that the education budget was, by and large, supported by the professional people. You had a few splinter groups that were kind of radical, but I always felt that when the educators came in to testify on a budget, they were pretty straightforward and knowledgeable and usually could back up their requests with facts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And most of you had children in school.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was not a foreign subject to you. It was not yet the period where the court ruled that education is the paramount duty of the state, but was there that recognition, even if unspoken?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that most legislators recognized that was true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there other duties like that that were fairly clear cut? Where it was clearly the state's responsibility? You were moving into some new areas, like ecology and the environment. The state had regulated the environment to some degree, but not as much as they were about to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't recall. I think maybe, it was at that time the division of forestry, and the regulation of state lands. And while that was almost directly tied to education, you needed the funds. But I think that was another area where

the state had professional people who were making the determinations and handling the procedures for dealing with the state lands. It was not only timber but also grazing lands and mining rights and a lot of different things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Water didn't fall under that, did it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not at that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was just a surge in these years of water legislation. There seems to be almost a new recognition that water is an important issue. Stream levels, pollution, there's a lot of water legislation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most counties had water districts, drainage districts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So water would be more of a county level government issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did it become a state issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To get uniformity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Fairness?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, would it be a matter of resources? Obviously, rivers flow through counties and across borders, but would counties regulate differently and so one stretch of stream would have one set of regulations and further down would be a little bit different?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let me give you an example dealing with diking districts. Here would be a dike district that would maybe have a levy to increase either the height of their dikes or extend

them. Okay, they'd do that, but what it did was to divert the water off of their lands and that district onto the adjoining district and cause all kinds of problems. So there needed to be some uniformity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That makes sense. Also, I suppose, more well-to-do districts would be taking care of certain things, and then other districts might not and the flooding would go across the lines or whatever. Or other kinds of problems would not respect those county boundaries.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And you see, in Skagit County we had I don't know how many dike districts because they reclaimed a lot of that Skagit River delta.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a fairly big flood plain, isn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You hear about catastrophic, historic floods in Skagit. Your area would have had the motivation to do that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We've had some real doozies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a fairly powerful river coming out of the mountains there.

But you have talked about how your initial philosophy was that local areas should control certain things, the state should control other things, and the federal should be something else. This, of course, was a time when the federal government was also growing and reaching out through both its law-making capacity and also through funding and requiring the states to do certain things. Partly with the carrot and stick with funding and partly through civil rights laws and other big social changes of that nature.

Dan Evans, particularly, seemed to be nervous about that boundary between the federal level and the state level, and was always trying to shore up the state presence so that there would be no vacuum for the federals to come in. Was that something that everybody was worried about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a certain concern during this period about the federal government and how it was overreaching. Groups would go to the federal government and want funding for this project or that project or whatever, and with that funding came a lot of control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Strings were always attached.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They'd give you the money and then they'd tell you how to spend it. That caused some concerns.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was just this whole new web of regulations and demands. Some of President Johnson's programs were really transforming society. Did you feel that you were under a lot of pressure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess, maybe, at that time I didn't recognize the importance of that federal impact. We sat around and grumbled about the federal government with all these regulations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you recall some instances of things coming at you from that direction, where the state had to do things differently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. It seems to me that in the matter of welfare there was quite a change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Change in approach or just—

**Mr. Eldridge:** In approach and in the organization of welfare programs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Medicare passed in the sixties. There's a lot of contention now between the federals and the state on health care issues. I don't know if that was also true back then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there was any great discussion on that. I think it was considered pretty much just a federal program and the feds were going to staff it and run it and pay for it, and that was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wasn't one of those things where you had to have matching programs or matching grants?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall, but I presume there must have been at least a start of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a foot in the door, that's for sure. How did you feel about these tensions between the levels of government? The cities were also crying for more—and the counties—for more jurisdiction, more ways to raise money for themselves. Was that a relief from that end? That maybe the state could hand over some responsibilities for the cities, which were certainly going through a great deal of turmoil. That they could maybe solve some of their own problems?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of push for that. That cities and counties needed more control over their own destinies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly the movements for social equality took place mostly in cities and there was a great deal of racial tension, especially in Seattle and somewhat in Tacoma, and I think perhaps some in Spokane. Would there be some sense of "they know best what to do with that so they should have the power to address those issues," or did that feel like a state issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that in many respects the feeling was that this was a local problem. "Let the local jurisdiction take care of it." But give them the ability to do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Figure out what tools you can give them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And then, of course, as the state moved into turning over some of these things to the local jurisdictions, and they'd come back and say, "Well, that's fine, we'll do it, but we've got to have the ability to pay for this. You've given us this responsibility, now let's have some money to pay the bills."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the state be in the same position as the cities and counties? That the federal government was handing down problems to the state, as in mandating certain things and then needing you to come up with the money? Those "unfunded mandates" as I think they were called.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a pretty solid statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any discussions about, "What is the role of government and what are the boundaries between these different powers?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of discussion about the responsibilities that the local jurisdictions should take on. And there was never too much discussion about funding. And I think that's the same thing that happened at the federal level as far as the states were concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was no discussion on how it would actually happen? Was that a missing piece?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I don't know whether people just didn't think about that, or whether they figured that the solution will come along as we got into it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Although I suppose the people on the receiving end of it were immediately thinking about that. Interesting. Did you have to

change your views during this period of growth and change to match the situation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was concerned along with local officials about how these things were going to be funded and tried to ask the question as we passed a lot of this legislation, “Okay, now if we’ve told them to do this, who’s going to pay for it?”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s usually the bottom line, isn’t it? If you really want people to do things there’s got to be some money somewhere.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you know, it’s surprising how little was said about it or even acknowledged that there was a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It’s a very inconvenient question!

**Mr. Eldridge:** And a lot of people just figured, “Oh, it will take care of itself.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. Somebody has to pay attention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The government was also getting more involved in the economy. Not running it necessarily, but trying to help it. We talked a little bit about that when you were on the Legislative Council, some trade issues and different things the state could do to promote industry and help businesses connect up with foreign countries and things of that nature. And that was certainly part of what Dan Evans was pushing. He wanted an entire agency to take over issues of that kind and be successful in that area. Did you agree that that was a proper role for government?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only if it didn’t embroil local businesses in more regulations, more fees, and all that sort of thing. I’m not sure that we’ve really dealt with that problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was reading about some different towns, that had really gone out of their way to give tax breaks and different perks to businesses who then didn’t stay very long and would go to the next town and—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Do the same thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That gets a little predatory. Were there ways the state could—I don’t know what the word would be, not regulate that, but help so that you didn’t get that situation where everybody’s putting out their candy—tax breaks and other perks—to see what—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that education is the answer to that. Getting chambers of commerce and public officials to sit down and say, “We just can’t be hammering each other, let’s work together.” And I think that there was a lot of that that was done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be part of the new agency that Dan Evans was trying to create at this time so that things would be a little more coordinated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that was the intent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And not be so competitive, within the state at least?

Well, plenty to do. Always the big issue of the session was the budget, of course. I was wondering, you used to be on the Appropriations Committee. Did you still play any kind of role in the budget deliberations now that you were Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not directly. No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I noticed that you no longer sponsored bills. Was that inherent in the Speaker’s position, or is that just something that you chose not to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that many Speakers actually sponsored legislation. It's a matter of time. And of course I never did sponsor much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. You were literally off the page now. You're not sponsoring any. You're also, of course, not on a lot of committees, which would also have had an impact on that sort of activity. But, if you wanted something in particular, would you go to another member and say, "I'm interested in this legislation. Could you sponsor it?" Would you still be able to do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you're not cut off completely from that sort of activity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And even without being Speaker, that's a good maneuver because you can get someone who's real knowledgeable about the issue that you're interested in, and you could actually have a bill drafted and take it to them and say, "What do you think of this, and would you be the prime sponsor?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, say, if a person had great credibility in education issues or some other kind of field, they would be the person of whom other legislators would say, "Oh, well if he's sponsoring it, then it's got to be good?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And that happened a good many times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As the Speaker, you were the chair of Rules. We've discussed some of your duties there. How often would Rules meet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Daily.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it was a fairly big responsibility. It's the gatekeeper committee.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's the final screening.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have to know something about pretty much every bill going through there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little bit. Now—and I learned this from John O'Brien, he always had his attorney prepare a brief of every bill. And then when they came to the Rules committee, he'd have a book with all the synopses in there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sort of like a paragraph saying, "This is what this bill will do?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And these are the organizations or the individuals who oppose it or favor it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you could quickly get the sense of who wanted it, who hated it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were probably plenty of those that were more or less housekeeping bills that were not controversial. What kind of percentage of bills would be controversial?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably ten percent would be really controversial and then from there it would be more until you got to the non-controversial. We'd lots of times put out a calendar of nothing but just housekeeping measures.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The easy ones. At least you could move things along. Can you recall any instances where it was critical to stop a bill in Rules that was controversial?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy. There were a number of them!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were different eras in Rules where the vote was more or less secret and then you transitioned to more openness over the years, but there were times when people could

vote with those little “biscuits,” as you called them, or with their hand or voice vote. Do you recall where you were at in that spectrum?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just know that on a number of occasions I would call for a vote and we’d call for the ‘yes’ votes and they’d raise their hands, and the Chief Clerk who was at the table, would count.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he count, or would he also record who voted which way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. If we had a roll call he’d use a roster of the members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could a member call for that procedure in Rules?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to me that we did entertain a motion for a roll call vote.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that would be unusual?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Unless it was a vote where it was apt to be real close. But on most bills that came into the Rules Committee, you’d just say, “As many as are in favor say ‘aye’ and those opposed, ‘no,’” and that would be it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happened in Rules if it was really divided? If it was tight?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of the time I think someone would just say, “Let’s hold this over.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some, but not all votes would be partisan. I imagine there would be some bills that would be a case of individual conscience.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Or they could be rural-urban. They would choose up sides.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were public and private power issues by 1967 less of a dividing line?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think within a year or two, weren’t they collaborating rather than competing with each other? That represented a major shift in thinking. I’m not sure exactly how that came about.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’m not either. I think it was one of those things that just kind of slid in under the door.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Probably one of the more surprising developments, considering the earlier history.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just seemed to me that it wasn’t an overriding issue after a few years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think there was a power issue in 1967, but I think it was settled by negotiation. It began controversial and then somehow it ended up kind of muted.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t recall. As happens often in the Legislature things that you think will never come together, a few members will get together sometime after the session and sit down and have a beer and work it out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The great lubricant. Well, that’s probably as good a method as any.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You find in a non-formal situation that you can discuss something and ordinarily work it out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Find some common ground?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think maybe that’s the problem with the Legislature today. There isn’t enough of that informal discussion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The venue for that seems to have disappeared somehow. People talk about

that but it's hard to say exactly why that should be the case. Members are a little more reluctant to be seen sitting down with so-and-so because that has a message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I think at the present time you have more one-issue people who don't want to even think about anything else except the one issue they're interested in. Either for or against it. Of course, I think the open meeting legislation had a lot to do with that. People are always looking over their shoulders to see who's taking notes or counting noses or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a certain glare over what's going on that must make it a little bit difficult to negotiate and reach those accords that can't always be done in the full light of day. That doesn't mean they're shady; it means they're delicate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And then you have a person who maybe his caucus or his area has taken a position on something, but he personally is opposed to it or he knows that it isn't right, and he won't stand up and be counted supporting it or if he is in the back room and they decide what they're going to do, he can say, "This is a bad bill and I'm with you. I'll oppose it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think some of the reforms have had many unintended consequences, that people would have been surprised at some of the outcomes. It seems like for every problem you solve, you just create a different one that you hadn't thought of before.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems to be true with campaign finance reform and all of these open meeting issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ethics. Everything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The ability of lawyers to serve in the Legislature has certainly been impacted, with some gains and some losses. It's never clear cut, at least according to many people who were deeply involved.

I wanted to talk about the 1967 budget, which is always a complex issue. There are intense negotiations and all kinds of things that go into creating a budget every session. When you finally brought it to the floor—and I believe it was probably Goldsworthy who was in charge of it at that point—about February 17 or so, you had a session that lasted all night. Now, was that a chosen strategy or is that just happenstance? Was that to wear people down? Lower their resistance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There is some of that, no question about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I recall there were different times recorded in the Journal for two in the morning, three...

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had some long sessions. It's certainly a maneuver.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The person with the most stamina wins?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those who stay sober.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or those who have the clearest idea of the budget in the first place, so by the time it's two a.m. they still have at least a glimmer of what they were trying to do? There was one tactic that you used which was highly controversial, which was the "committee of the whole." Maybe you could explain that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's where you take the whole membership of the Legislature, of the House, and then you debate the merits of the particular bill that you're considering. And it operates just like a standing committee, except that it's got every member. I tell you, that's a dangerous situation!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tell me more about the implications of choosing that method.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd get a lot of just ridiculous testimony, speeches. A lot of hero speeches when you get into the committee of the whole.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does that open it up so that everybody feels they should speak?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of them do, of course. And then you have more of an opportunity for parliamentary maneuvering.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that why you would choose to do this? It was your Party that pushed this through. The Democrats howled. They hated it, at least on paper.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It does give the majority Party probably a leg up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the notion that votes are not recorded individually? That there is a sort of a smokescreen hanging over who does what exactly. That was the charge that the Democrats brought forth.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a little bit like the discussion we just had about supporting something that you really didn't believe in. And with so many people, it kind of gets lost in the shuffle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it be hard to maintain Party discipline in such a setting? Would you be able to keep your caucus moving along?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends on what your history has been in the unified group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you pretty tight at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Our caucus was pretty dedicated. We had Hal Wolf as the whip. And of course that was his job, to circulate and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can just picture a sheep dog nipping at the heels there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** —bring the strays into the fold.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he pretty skilled at keeping them together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was very good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a grocery store owner in Yelm. Was he a very personable, social guy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Very. He was big. He was tall and good looking and he was articulate and he could be funny if he needed to be, to kind of put a humorous spin on things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That often helps, I imagine.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure does. Things would get a little tense, you know, and he could—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The right touch. So pretty attractive as a whip?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was very good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And so if you had the right people marshalling, then there would be less chafing at the edges there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Democrats used various delaying tactics. A lot of amendments and different things, but you just kept pushing it along and you, of course, played a role there as Speaker. You seemed to rely on a tactic of letting people say a certain amount and then cutting them off. Did you think about that or was that just the kind of flow that happened? Did you have a strategy you were actually employing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tried to let everybody get up and speak. I tried to have a speaker from the

pros and then from the cons, and shift back and forth. Then the position that each speaker had, as you say, kind of let them run their course and then decide that was it and I'd signal Slade or Stu Bledsoe to move to close off the debate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You often seem to use a little bit of humor. Not casualness, but a kind of—I'm not sure how to put it—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Off the wall.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. I thought you had kind of an interesting touch. "He would listen to people," or at least that's how it appears in the Journal. But then you'd cut them off, but not harshly. You would do it, I don't know, maybe with a little bit of a smile. Was that just your way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I hope so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you have any sense of how effective that was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I got through the session pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People, of course, made lots of flowery speeches at the end. It's very difficult to tell what they really thought.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. But I always tried to be fair. And that was one of the things that I endeavored to do and sometimes you have to use little devices to get to that conclusion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it run through your mind in certain instances, "What would John O'Brien do at this moment?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You really were your own man up there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any picture in your mind as to the "proper Speaker" method?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just had my own.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Home grown?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Home grown. I don't think it ever entered my mind to try to consider what somebody else would have done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, this two and three a.m. time, did you preside the entire time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily I did. But on occasion I turned the gavel over to, maybe, Tom Copeland. Or on some occasions I'd call John O'Brien or Bob Charette or, you know, every once in a while let a Democrat preside.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that unusual?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. John O'Brien, that's one thing he did, because I remember I was the caucus chairman for the Republicans and I know he called me to the rostrum and turned the gavel over. It's kind of a courtesy, I think. And I think it's a good procedure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It includes people. It brings them in. How much stamina did it take to be up there presiding over such a contentious issue, regulating the debate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You get tired. There's no question about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to pay attention on a special level more than anybody else in the room?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's sometimes hard to keep everything in order.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Because they're trying to trip you up, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were a lot of challenges and pushing. I don't pretend to understand it, but just reading through the Journal, just noticing all the different kinds of motions and how you had to keep track of what has precedence over what and what maneuvers are going on, and then what to say about them. It seems like a test of endurance and patience and paying attention.

**Mr. Eldridge:** John O'Brien was a master. He was probably better than anyone else in the House, and knew and understood the rules and he could keep things sorted out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's definitely up there challenging you and saying, "Mr. Speaker, what about rule such-and-such." Was that unnerving?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because, by and large, I didn't pay any attention to it. John was very good in that regard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It certainly would take some self assurance to preside with him watching your every move, which he seemed to be doing on many occasions. You did finally, in the early hours of the next day, push the bill through to final passage. That debate, of course, colored just about everything else that was going on, so we'll probably return to the budget again and again.

What became controversial, which was part of a long series of measures that you've already been involved in, was the Community College Act. The 1967 Community College Act was like the piece in a big puzzle that you'd been putting together since at least 1961 or so. It was fiercely resisted by people in, for instance, Pierce County. They did not want to give up their local jurisdiction. Do you remember, did they come and lobby? How was that expressed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had met with their legislators and I think, it came through the members of the Legislature from Pierce County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Louis Bruno was also from Pierce County, wasn't he? He was the Superintendent of Public Instruction at that time, and he also had some issues here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They didn't want to lose control of the funding.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If I understand it correctly, local districts through their administration of what had been the thirteenth and fourteenth grades, had facilities that they had built or acquired in one way or another, and part of this bill didn't want to reimburse them for those facilities, but just take them over and put them under a different jurisdiction. A community college district rather than a school district.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seemed to be one of the points of friction. Was it because it's all government money, and why should the government pay one part of government instead of another? Exactly how was that thought about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. There was a lot of discussion about that. And the one that I had a little more knowledge of was the Centralia situation. Morrill Folsom was a member of the House from Centralia. He was just adamant that the local school district retain control. Not only the administration, but also the funding and financing. We kind of nosed around a little on that one and they were using the money for a lot of different things. See, it was the first junior college in the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was their college actually under-funded because they were taking money and putting it into other programs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't really know—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would their college have been better funded under the new system?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So a person who wanted to support community colleges would not necessarily be supportive of how the school districts were doing it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you overcome this difficulty?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had some real strong discussions with Morrill Folsom. We were good friends but he was just adamant.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he personally adamant or his district was adamant?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Both.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a true believer. Did you ever win him over?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He sure was. But I think in the end he voted right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that another one of those "hold your nose" issues? It must have been hard for him.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. It was inevitable it was going to happen, so you might as well get on board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he take some heat from his district? Did the school district people get a little upset?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know if that's when he didn't run again or whether it was later.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was ready to retire? So he could take a hard vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the state charged with unfairness that they weren't going to reimburse the school districts? Was that a problem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or you just kind of said, "Well, that's the way it is."

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, you can't have everything!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can imagine how that could be worded in the press so that you would look like the bullies, or something not quite right there, if school districts played it that way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, here again, that they figured there was going to be funding and that every junior college district was going to need some financial help for building construction. So I don't think there was a lot of concern to the point that they just violently opposed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose the average citizen sees that his or her town is getting a college or that their college is going to be a bigger thing, and that they would think that was a good thing and not worry too much about exactly who got the money. As long as the college was there serving the kids in the community and getting this new, good thing, maybe the general public didn't care too much about the insides of the issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think they did. And I think, by and large, they accepted the new concept.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Other than this turf battle over who got the money and who got to be in charge, was anyone ever against community colleges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just one of those winning situations, weren't they? What about the

vocational tech piece of this? There was always a lot of worry about whether they would still exist or be swamped or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was sort of the keystone of the original concept of the junior college. That it would provide primarily vocational education for kids in the community that couldn't afford to go to a four-year college or weren't really ready for a four-year college.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There are plenty of occupations and employments that don't require a four-year arts degree.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was always very supportive of the vocational aspect of the community college. And I think South Puget Sound Community College is a good example of one that has stayed with the vocational aspect and they have a tremendous program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think you can go there and learn to be a blacksmith, for instance or a horse farrier? Putting shoes on horses? That's just one thing.

Well, despite some resistance and some last-ditch efforts by Pierce County, you did create twenty-two districts around the state for community colleges. The constitutionality of this was questioned but overcome. There was some talk of a court challenge. I don't think it materialized, did it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think anything came of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you aware that this was the last big piece? Was this the culmination of all of the work put in since the early sixties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I knew that was really going to seal it in concrete. And then of course, the next thing was to make recommendations for members of the trustees of each district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine there were little bills along the way that finesse what you've done here, but this is the last big building block?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a great sense of achievement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It got down to the point where we'd just talked it to death and I think everybody felt, "Well, we've done it. Let's move on."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In retrospect, how do you feel? This is a pretty large accomplishment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was a good move. And I think if you look back and see what's happened in the last twenty-five, thirty years that it's a good system and it's working, I think, successfully.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's definitely one of the success stories of your era of service that most people point to with pride and without any reservations.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's served a lot of people over the last thirty years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, that's success.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not only college-age students but the adult education. The night classes and all have really provided an opportunity for a lot of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And now even high school students can take many college courses in their Running Start program. They're reaching out in both directions. And they bring cultural events to communities and speakers and shows and other events. Imagining them not existing would change the whole landscape of education.

There was one other higher education issue which burned through that session which was the creation of what became The Evergreen State College. Do you remember that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You see, there were a number of communities that wanted the college. Arlington was one. I fully supported that location, but we got a lot of objection because of the proximity of Western in Bellingham. There was a lot of wrangling around about that. But I think that the people in Olympia did a good job of selling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The college was finally located just outside of town. Did you see that as a problem? Was it too isolated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It just seemed to be pretty far out—in more ways than one!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, yes. But you didn't know that then, did you? Actually, what struck me in the conversation is that I never saw any traces of what kind of college it would be. Just the argument about where it should be. Was there any discussion about the innovations in grading and focus and other characteristics that we now associate with the college?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think those of us close to it considered it was going to be another Western or Eastern. It was just a matter of location.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So how did it become such an experimental college? Quite different from those other colleges. How did that happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know who made the final choices on faculty, but I think that was where the image took place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting. Evergreen, whatever you may think of it, has a distinctive character. Of course, now it's an award-winning college and nationally recognized. But not so accepted locally as perhaps nationally. It's not

at all clear who decided that. It's just nowhere in this discussion that you're actually going to create something new and different.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think it happened by a group or an individual sitting down and saying, "This is what we're going to do and say A, B, C, D."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, somebody had some vision pretty early on.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know where that came from.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But, once a college is created, does it take on a life of its own?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, pretty much. You've got a board of trustees that govern and they hire a president and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Off they go.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The president pretty much picks the faculty and sets the tone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was curious to find that out that that wasn't at all part of the statutory creation of the college.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There was really not an awful lot of direction from the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have felt differently had you been in that discussion? Is that a proper area for legislators to begin with? Or is that strictly educational?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not. As a matter of fact, I was on the board at Western at the time this was all going on. I guess maybe I was looking for somewhat that type of an institution. Although Western had its problems in the early days, too. It was almost to the point where people considered it influenced by communism. President Fisher was practically railroaded out of town.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, that's an academic freedom issue, that's a pretty tricky one for a state funded institution.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And then Dr. Haggard who was president at the time I was on the board, was really an old grandmother. He was fairly liberal in his views, but his mode of operation was certainly low key. And you know, he was quite a person. He smoked cigars and every once in awhile he'd put a cigar in my pocket. We'd talk about cigar smoking and pipe smoking and so on. He'd say, "I'll tell you. You're a real confirmed cigar smoker when you have to get up in the middle of the night and have one."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you enjoy the cigars at that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I did occasionally like a cigar.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Legislature was still, of course, a very smoke-filled institution.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People smoked on the floor, didn't they? It wasn't just in the proverbial back rooms? People just smoked everywhere. Nobody thought anything of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was every place. And Vernon Smith, who worked for Pacific Car and Foundry, sat just a couple of seats from me and he was a cigar smoker. After you had a bill passed, you had cigars that the Pages took around. And Vern would always go around and say, "Are you going to smoke that cigar?" "No." "Can I have it?" He'd wind up with a whole handful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** My goodness! He'd never have to buy one.

Right in the heat of session I remember seeing in the Journal, you'd been working pretty hard, and Sid Morrison brought in a whole bunch of apples, and you, as Speaker, made a comment that well, "Usually we don't have 'goodies' on the floor" and that was the word you used. I guess maybe candy was okay to eat, but not like sandwiches and apples and things? But you said, "We've all been working very hard, let's have an apple." And it was this kind of homey, "Let's take a break." Do things like that help create a sort of esprit de corps, and help relax the tension just a little bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then Sid Morrison gave a little spiel on apple country and everybody got their apple. Maybe that was a long day and it was a little bit of a grind, and this would be a way to make people a little bit happier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It kind of broke the tension.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I thought that was interesting. Was that an innovation or were there actual rules like that? Or was that just an understood behavior code?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you know, members of the Legislature get closer and closer as the days go on. You become closer to the person you sit next to than your next door neighbor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody else can understand what you're going through.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And they take a lot of criticism, but really they're a great bunch of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You certainly worked all night long and kept at it. And faced up to some pretty tough issues. I would think that even the people you disagreed with, you're still in this big thing together.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would create a bond that would be, as some people say, life-long. That they always felt that way. Especially, as in your case, when you had a fairly long period of service, twenty years almost. That's a big chunk of your life.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it is. Yes, it is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Statistically I haven't quite worked this out—but it seemed like there were more people who served for a long period of time with less turnover in your day.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just seemed like you see the same names again and again. There are always freshmen and there's always some attrition, but on the whole there were people whom you've served with for long periods of time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Although you were getting to the stage where you are getting to be one of a handful of senior members among House members.

The other really big issue, getting back to looking at the session, besides the budget and some of these education bills, was, of course, the income tax. Distasteful as that may be, we have to discuss it! Mary Ellen McCaffree was the person who seemed to take the lead on that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I'm not sure she had her heart and soul in it, but here again, the governor wanted a shot at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess she'd been interested in tax issues for quite a long time, and was certainly an expert.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. She was very knowledgeable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've said that on several occasions you went around with Dan Evans and helped him present it in different forums. Do you remember two or three different places where you appeared with him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember flying into Yakima, I think, and we had a meeting with an education group. Then we had an evening meeting that was a large gathering. I can't remember whether that was a Republican group or a chamber of commerce group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would have been your role? Would he speak and you also speak, or would you be just part of the team, or how would that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'd kind of be there. I don't recall ever giving a formal type speech, but I'd be available and help field questions from the audience and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you perhaps introduce the governor and kind of set it up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would go? How big a group would you be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There'd be maybe three or four people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, say, Mary Ellen McCaffree, yourself, the governor, maybe an aide or somebody like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would depend on where you were going.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you try to have the person from that area, the legislator, be present?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They'd be involved, too. Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tie them in? And also gain their support, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Dan Evans travel all over the state doing this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He hit a lot of communities, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you spend a lot of your time doing this with him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't go on too many.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just enough. Would you talk privately with people? Like, say, there'd be the presentations and then would there be a session where you'd kind of mill around and people would ask you questions and you would help support the cause?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And oh, boy, that was tough!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you actually have to act? Or were you able to do this—I don't want to say with integrity—but with heartfelt—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had some degree of knowledge about the history of the issue. My thrust was I'm not in favor of an income tax, but I'm in favor of letting the people take another vote on it. That was my whole philosophy on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a business person, I would think it would be persuasive, if not to be for an income tax but for something that addressed the B&O tax, which was somewhat unfair to businesses.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We certainly discussed that aspect of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've often heard of this discussion as a "three-legged stool" where you're reducing some things and adding this other leg so that you can take the weight off the B&O tax and the sales tax.

**Mr. Eldridge:** My whole thrust had been we've got three levels of government. We have the income tax which I say the federal government has pretty well taken over. And the state, we've got the sales tax. And at the local level we have the property tax. And I think that we ought to maintain some degree of separation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any kind of state involvement in property taxes? They certainly seem to regulate property taxes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can't remember whether there was any property tax money that actually went directly to the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With all the tax reform discussion currently, I've learned a new fact which I didn't know before, at one point you could deduct state income taxes from federal income taxes, and then the law was changed, I gather, on the federal level. Was that an argument in your favor at that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was. And then, of course, the other thing, the proposals, some of them said, "Well, the state income tax shall be a percentage of what you pay on your federal income tax."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Less paperwork.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But that didn't get much support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The school forces, Representative Buster Brouillet, the WEA and other groups, were highly supportive of the income tax because school levies were beginning to fail. It was losing balance on that end of things. I gather that they believed that if you could reduce

the pressure on property taxes and special levies with an income tax, that you could support schools better, or at least with less stress and chaos.

Levies were failing. Schools would plan on them passing and then they wouldn't pass, and then they'd have to regroup. So that seemed to be a big piece of this argument was that this is going to be good for schools.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the main thing was they figured that once they got an income tax it's going to be easier to raise the rate and get more money.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which is also an argument against it for some people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that's a bit of a double-edged situation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. I know that Buster Brouillet was very enthusiastic about this and a big supporter. One of the few Democrats who was willing to cross the aisle. Many Democrats, of course, wanted an income tax, but not on Republican terms. And not as a Republican achievement.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I'll tell you, by and large, the Democrats didn't want an income tax, but they wanted the issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Buster Brouillet was definitely one of the few who saw it differently for his own reasons. In your presentations, was the school factor a big one? The Republicans were pretty tied to school issues in this era and are known to be big supporters of schools. Did that help in the discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had some credibility? It's very complicated. You needed a constitutional amendment, a vote of the people. You wanted to link that with a statutory reduction in the sales tax. I don't know what the sales tax was, but you wanted to bring it down to 3.5 and eliminate taxes on food and drugs. You were calling for another constitutional amendment to reduce the property tax assessment level from fifty percent to twenty-five percent. And to raise the mill ceiling from forty mills to fifty mills. I'm already lost because I'm in no way a tax expert, so can you tell me a little bit about what all that meant?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A forty mill limit was—if you think this was a controversial—that was a real hot one in the Legislature! That limited the amount of the property tax to forty mills.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Tell me exactly what that means. I want to go real basic here. Is that if your property is assessed at, say, a nice round number like one-hundred thousand dollars, you would pay—what would it be? If it was at forty mills that's about four thousand dollars?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, let's see. That was a percentage. A mill is one-tenth of one percent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you put a ceiling on it and lower the ceiling, what did that mean?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Bring in less money.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that part. Why would that be controversial? Wouldn't people like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Unless you wanted to protect the amount of money you were getting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** From the state's point of view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If you're going to lower it, why then it would—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this sort of like voting against the car tabs? Where you just cut off a whole area of revenue and you don't have anything to replace it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that's a good example.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And in the area of assessment of property, it was very controversial. The governor didn't really have that much control over assessments, so that got very uneven. The state needed the money but the local officials—separately elected official in each county—didn't want to take the heat and jurisdictions got kind of messy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The whole matter of taxes is a pain.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. And it seemed there was a disconnect between paying taxes and then what you got: services. From what I could tell, government failed to do a good job of communicating the direct relationship between the two. Even some legislators voted for every appropriation but not the taxes to support them. There's just this intellectual hole there. What would have been good in your mind?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I suppose if you have to have an income tax, a flat tax would probably be the most fair.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the Democrats, of course, wanted a graduated one. Why is a flat tax more fair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It hits everybody. See, the Democrats would like to have a higher rate for people who have been successful in making money and a big block of people who wouldn't be paying any, and they're the ones who get most of the services. That's sort of the rationale.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read a letter to the editor the other day—this is back in the news, an income tax proposal—somebody said, and I thought it was an interesting point, that they thought a sales tax was more fair because everybody buys things. Poor people buy fewer things than rich people, therefore they pay fewer taxes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there's some validity to that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Usually the argument goes the other direction, where they say poor people have to spend a greater proportion of their income to get the basics than rich people. They have less disposable income, so they're paying on everything, whereas rich people can buy the basics and still have a fair chunk of money left over.

**Mr. Eldridge:** To put in the bank.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that that is inequitable. There's so many ways of looking at this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then, of course, there are people who don't want to pay anything. It seemed like part of the issue here was the sheer complexity: you needed two Constitutional amendments, you needed people to understand all the pieces and how they fit together. I mean, we're sitting here and we're having a hard time sorting through it to just describe it properly, whereas most—many—people, wouldn't bother to figure out how it all fit together.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that an inherent problem that you could never overcome, that it had to be complex? That there was no way to do a simple reform? All the pieces had to come together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you've got to have a lot of different approaches just to take care of all of the different problems with the tax structure. It wasn't easy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could it have been done piecemeal, or did you have to have the whole thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you've got to have it all together because you never know what the voters are going to do if you do one piece at a time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You might be stuck with a very unworkable mess?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And part of this was building trust. You were making promises that, bringing an income tax, you were going to lower these other taxes. People didn't seem to believe that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's what I was going to say. There's always a question of reliability.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How do you prove you're going to do something in the future when you haven't yet done it? But you couldn't, unilaterally, lower the sales tax before you had the income tax because then you would have had a very big shortfall.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The other thing, of course, complicating this entire discussion was the budget deliberations. Dan Evans was expanding the government and wanted more money. He didn't just want to reform taxes, he actually wanted more revenue. People didn't trust that, seemingly.

You were also growing the government. You just added all these community colleges for instance, and you added some other new programs. So, yes, you needed more staff, you needed more facilities, you needed more revenue,

but the mixture seemed to be a bit fatal. People could not buy that. They could just see that the government was growing and they were asking for more taxes. Was there any way of separating those things out like that and not having that happen all at once?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was a real hazard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wouldn't it have made your arguments a little more difficult?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course it's difficult enough to talk about an income tax. I don't think this thing will ever get off the ground. If it ever gets on the ballot again, it will go down again like the Titanic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not a good record.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There's just no way that the people in this state are going to vote for an income tax. I don't care how much frosting you put on it. I, basically, have always opposed the income tax but I think we as a caucus took the position that let's go ahead and put it out to the people and they'll knock it in the head anyway, so let's at least give them the chance. We did pick up a few Democrat votes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Buster Brouillet and the public school people. If you thought that the people would turn it down—here's a provocative question—why not bend to the Democrats and do the graduated net income tax and try for the Constitutional amendment and put that to the people? And then you would have had to peel off more Democrats. I mean you would have grabbed their argument. Was that too far out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't want to get into the position of agreeing too much with their whole tax program. The flat tax kind of coincides with the principle of the sales tax: that you have the same rate for everybody and everybody's included.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read somewhere that to get at least some Republicans to even approach this at all was as far a compromise as you could manage in your party. But going any further you would have lost the support of your own party.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's probably pretty true. Because, basically, most Republicans opposed an income tax of any kind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But, what you then ended up relying on was the B&O tax which hurts business, which is generally thought of as a Republican base of support. What would have worked?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Looking back I'm not sure that anything would have worked!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, it's true that nobody likes taxes, but there has to be some kind of patchwork that allows the state to move along.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you know the trend has always been, and the liberals always say, well, we want participation by the public. And any time you put a tax proposal of any kind to the public, they're going to vote against it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems to be the case, but the public likes the services taxes buy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. It may be that we're going to have to have more user type taxes. If you use this service, then you pay for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like toll roads or what would be some other equivalents? If your children go to school, you would pay a special tax?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be an interesting departure. There are still major commissions looking at the tax structure and coming up with pretty much the same numbers as they always have.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Dan Evans really pushed hard for this for several reasons, but one of them was that the state was growing in population at a very rapid rate, and one of his arguments that I read about was—you can tell me if I've got this correct—that you shouldn't wait until all your government services are overwhelmed with this huge population surge coming in, you should get a little bit ahead of the curve and build to anticipate the growth that was clearly coming. Was that an argument that made sense to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he stated his position very well. Now, whether it made sense or not, I'm not sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Okay. What was he referring to, schools, roads, things of that nature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Public assistance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The caseloads going up? Just the sheer growth.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he even had in the back of his mind that there probably needed to be a change in the correction system. And I think all these things have been borne out in the last ten, twenty years. Thirty years, maybe.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It does seem that way. One of his other big concerns was with this growing population and growing city population, specifically. That people would need more open spaces, more parks, more places to get away from the city, and that the state had a role in acquiring and maintaining those places. Was that something that you felt was important?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I agreed with that. I think most legislators agreed with that position. But here again, it was a matter of how you paid for it. And then who maintains it once you acquire these properties.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. I remember your stories of when you were a kid getting out and camping and how easy that seemed to be for you. I just don't know if it's that easy anymore.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It isn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a loss of experience that's pretty important. Could you think ahead to your prospective grandchildren and imagine—could anyone imagine how the state would grow and fill up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think there was any thought.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd really have to be quite a visionary to get to what we've got now.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the war had a lot to do with that because we had an influx of service people from out of the state and they were stationed all around the Puget Sound area and they liked it and many of them came back. A lot of them just stayed after they got out of the service.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Boeing, of course, was growing by leaps and bounds in the early 1960s.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. At the same time. I think Dan Evans probably came as close to looking ahead—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He certainly tried, from rapid transit and various things that would have made a difference. But unfortunately they didn't happen.

Back to these taxes. In what ways would your caucus have worked to try to peel off a few Democrats to see if you could get this to pass? How would you go about approaching members of the other caucus?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd take the tax itself and the income from it and approach them on the basis

of "look what we can do for education and public assistance, public health."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Things they cared about. And did that help? Was that a persuasive argument?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it helped measurably. Then, of course, there's always the political consideration. You know, "your district would probably think you had done a great job if you supported an income tax." If you were in a low income area, why it particularly would be effective.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because those districts, I suppose, would benefit more than they would pay out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was supported by people like Buster Brouillet for school reasons. People in farming areas seemed to like it because it would give some relief on property taxes which, of course, farmers are land rich and perhaps cash poor. So it would break away from some of those patterns.

But labor did not like it. Labor leader, Harold Tipton, was going for all-or-nothing. It had to be a graduated income tax stand. What do you do with people like that who have got to have everything? They won't go for the half loaf.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you bite your tongue and just forget about them and move on. It's a no-win situation. And then there were so many other things that the Republicans were at loggerheads with labor about, that it just added another plank.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was an anti tax move from Yakima called the "Let's be Heard Committee" whose spokesperson was Larry Robinson, who actually preferred the sales tax over the income tax. They were arguing like you said: it taxes everybody, and in their case they were saying even the welfare recipients, which

seems a little tough sounding. You're getting it from the left and you're getting it from the right and you were steering down the middle there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a difficult issue. There's no easy answer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you had members of your own party, of course, who were certainly not getting on board. How would you be persuasive with them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, we had a caucus that you could appeal to on the basis of unity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they could still make up their own minds?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Although we were accused of having a bound caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe you wished?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We came pretty close just voluntarily.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How does a caucus bind itself? You hear that phrase, but how would you have actually enforced such a thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be pretty hard. I would say that basically the Democrats have been united in such a way that they can put the pressure on their members by interim committee assignments, committee chairmanships, all sorts of things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those methods don't work as well for your Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you be aware of which of your members were not going to stick with the Party on this vote, and then you would have to go over and see if you could get a corresponding number of Democrats?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You always try to change your own people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sure. Start there. Did it help that it was for a referendum vote, not that you were going to decide, but it was really a vote to let the people decide? Was that a helpful strategy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Yes. And then of course, the interested agencies and other groups who were inclined to work pretty well with Democrats, they had quite an influence on picking up some votes for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, say, the agriculture committee for maybe the eastern Washington farming districts? Things like that or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I would say in terms of like the Grange and the WEA and the labor—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some labor groups weren't, of course, united on this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They were all over the lot. But I think basically the labor, Central Labor Council, was probably sympathetic towards the issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In this, the schools argument, would be a strong one. Everyone has school districts. This was in part, according to the literature, a response to increasing school levies and increasingly failing school levies. Something else had to happen. The schools were getting in kind of a bad financial hole.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Districts were spending most of their time trying to get levies and bond issues passed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Levies also take up a lot of manpower to organize and pass.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They sure does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Part of what complicated this discussion is that you actually had more money that year. You had quite a good sized pot to work from. It's not as if you had the extra push of a budget crunch. But this was supposed to be a budget-neutral kind of thing, not to raise taxes but to shift sources.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But people apparently didn't believe that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They don't. Taxes are taxes. We aren't interested in where they come from.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But, in fact, you also, you and the governor perhaps, wanted to raise the sales tax for immediate relief of some of the budget issues. You had more money but the budget was even bigger than the large amount of money you had because of all these growth issues and all the new things that the governor wanted to do.

Some people, I've read, thought that asking for a tax increase at the same time you were doing tax reform, killed it. A deadly combination. On one hand you're saying, "No, it's going to be revenue neutral, but it will take a couple of years to take effect so right now we need this in place," and people just—all they heard was that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It made it real difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You went home over Easter to discuss this with your constituents and perhaps take a little rest. Doesn't sound very restful. Did you get a barrage of response from your district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was pretty much just a general: you know, "We just don't want any higher taxes."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have something to say in response?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tried to explain what was going on and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Taxes are an enormously complicated issue. There were all kinds of different amendments to delete the mill limitation and different combinations of tax ideas. It was just a plethora of things on the table. All through the session you fought this one. It ended up in the special session and ultimately failed. It went through lots of different gyrations. Mike McCormack, a legislator from eastern Washington, suddenly popped up with his own package at one point. Trying to follow this was difficult because there were so many different pieces.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it like that as a legislator—everybody had a plan? Everybody had their own little thing that they were trying to push?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There weren't a lot of them, but there were quite a number like Mike who were pretty dedicated to what they felt and as you say, they had their own plan. Mike was from the Tri-Cities and he eventually ended up in Congress.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where was the Senate? Most of the articles talk about the governor and the House Republicans, but very few articles talk about what the Senate was doing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Senate just kind of lied in wait and ready to pounce.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were controlled by the Democrats. Senator Greive was the majority leader, I believe.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course they always said, "Well, we need some balance and we need a level playing field" and all of the clichés that you hear.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you do much negotiating with them? Or did you stick to your own house?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much. Yes. The governor met with the Republican senators and I'm sure worked with them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a sinking feeling as you sent over legislation to the Senate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of. It's a point of no return.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For a lot of your legislation, yes. Of course, because this was a Constitutional amendment you needed a two-thirds vote.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which, like passing school levies, is a hard one to accomplish.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a tough sell.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You never did get that. So there's a lot of writing about "next year." It sounded like a sports team: we're going to win next year. Did you feel discouraged or did you feel, yes, we'll get this eventually?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I tell you, only because Dan Evans was out on point—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was his big thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I tell you, people may have disagreed with him, but they had a great deal of respect for him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he using up a lot of political capital on this issue? He didn't look like the type who was afraid to spend it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure he was calling in some IOUs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's about to run again for his second term. Was he kind of out on a limb here? Was this a risky thing to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always thought so. But, here again, I think the citizens of the state had a great deal of respect for him and I think they considered him a good leader and that if he said we need this and it'll work, why he'd pick up a lot of support out in the hinterlands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, if someone else had been pushing this it would have been dead in the water a lot quicker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He did do something. Not exactly in this area, but he created, with your help of course, the Department of Revenue which took over the powers of the tax commission which was then abolished. And also a board of tax appeals to take care of the part of hearing appeals which was independent of the department of revenue. Did you think that was an effective reorganization?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought it was worthwhile, but I wasn't enough of a technician to know whether it was the way to go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's very busy in all these years refashioning some agencies and grouping things together or pulling them apart according to his vision.

The tax issue, of course, was a Constitutional issue. And also in these years there was a lot of debate about Constitutional revision from piecemeal efforts to "let's call a convention and we'll do the whole thing." There's an advisory council appointed that year to examine the issues. There were all kinds of conferences and meetings and reports made. Were you inundated? Were you reading all these things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is this an issue that meant something to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The first thing—I think basically our caucus was opposed to a Constitutional convention or a revision, a rewrite of the whole thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the amending process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think most of them felt that if we want to change things, we ought to do it that way, a piece at a time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The gateway amendment idea? It would be quite an undertaking and who knows where it would lead, to do the whole thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's it. If you opened it up, you don't know what's going to go in there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also a move to do this kind of wholesale revision on the national level, which I understand Washington State quietly pulled away from. There was a message sent to Congress to counteract a previous call for a convention that the state actually retracted. They said, "No thanks. We don't want it."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Slade Gorton had something to do with it.

There were several other Constitutional issues. There was the eighteen-year-old vote. Some wanted the nineteen-year-old vote, but the eighteen-year-old vote was the number most often tossed around. That seemed to most be referred to in light of the Vietnam war—if our young people can go over to southeast Asia and fight and die, they should at least be able to vote. That seemed to be the drift of that argument. How did you feel about that one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I supported it. Not full-bore, but I thought, yes, we should recognize it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that the argument that made sense to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That and I was a little concerned as to whether, you know, are they going to increase the driving age to eighteen?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Make everything the same?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Or at eighteen or are they going to be allowed to go in and drink or buy liquor, or that sort of thing? You know there are a lot of things floating around there that are going to be important, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true. This would have built an argument one way or the other.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just kind of depends which side of the issue you were on as to how you want to use those.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I hadn't thought of linking it to some of those other things. How old were your own kids about this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were high school age.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they in favor of voting at an earlier age?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think they really gave it too much thought.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if you pictured your own kids soon being able to vote and participate in the political process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure I'd want to turn them loose on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know some legislators were subjected to some pressure—you know, at the dinner table. I don't know if that was the case in your family.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, as a family we didn't discuss a lot of this kind of stuff. With the boys we'd be talking about where's your next hike going to go to, and are you signed up for Scout camp yet?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "How are your grades?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. This sort of thing. A little more down to earth. But we didn't get into the political area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though there you were at the height of your political power. Were your kids interested in what you were doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. They thought it was just another committee meeting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another budget meeting that Dad was going to?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right. Although they participated. They helped lick stamps and address postcards and the usual kind of stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the Vietnam war? Did you discuss that at the dinner table, or was that not something you wanted to bring up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I guess I didn't get too excited about the Vietnam war, and I probably should have more.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you do have sons. Did it loom large over their lives?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think they would go? Would they be drafted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't think of it in that term. They were interested in their own activities, Scouts and athletics. The two girls were interested in their music and Campfire. Everybody was busy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's hard to look at those things when your family is busy and happy and productive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you know, as I look back, I suppose that if I had really paid attention, I probably would have been right out in front of the protests about the war and all this sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You must have had some opinion about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought it was necessary and I thought that the failure was that they didn't just finish the job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Go all out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even now people will argue which way it should have gone.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More Constitutional issues. There was growing support for annual sessions which would have had to be an amendment. There were various formulas for this—how many days and which year, even and uneven. Who would call it and what it would look like. Some wanted a thirty-day session in even years, still with special sessions. The Senate wanted a seventy-five day session and then a small budget session. It kind of went all over the place. How did you feel about annual sessions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought that we were coming to that and I pretty much favored a ninety and a

sixty. But I was a little intrigued by the Senate proposition with a budget session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just budget, nothing else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just budget. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think they could have ever been disciplined enough to just do the budget and not tack on a few little things here and there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would have been difficult because of course the budget's driven by appropriations and if you have bills that have large appropriations is that a budget issue or is that something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's pretty hard to figure out where that line is.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would have been a mess.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't suppose there's a tidy way of doing it. Annual sessions are predictable, better perhaps than special sessions, long sessions that you don't know when they're going to be and what they're going to be. Does that help you as a business person and a community person plan your life a little better?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably. But you know, I still, and I feel now, that sixty-day sessions with special sessions called by the governor in quote "emergencies," ought to be the way we go. But I know that's not practical because of the population growth and the vast number of critical issues that need to be taken care of.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There just seem to be more and more. Now, we seem to have both. We have annual sessions and special sessions, so in a sense we didn't take care of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And then the campaigns are getting to be longer, and now we're talking about moving the primaries up and that's going to make a tremendous change in things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there will always be a political season of one kind or another?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And then we gradually moved into a full time legislative situation. It was getting there because the interim committees were meeting more often and for longer periods of time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you feeling kind of squeezed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It became more difficult all the time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think this year, 1967, was touted as one of the longest ever. You had the regular sixty-day session and you had a fifty-two day special session which almost much matched it. There was not even a break in between. Did that give you more than you actually signed up to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I don't know. I just felt that this is part of the job and you might as well tighten your belt and get on with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, as leader, didn't you have meetings continuously to keep things moving and get things ready, and then clean up afterwards? And in the interim you were on the Legislative Council. In fact, you're the chair. So you're a pretty busy guy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a lot of talk about legislative ethics this year. Finally, there was the creation of an ethics board to examine various kinds of behaviors. The discussions seemed to

come down to who should be on the board. Should it be legislators or should it be others? Some legislators said they wanted a board of their peers and others thought that legislators should not sit in judgment of their colleagues. Which way did you think that should go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought probably it should be a citizens group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does that have a better aura to it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** From the public's standpoint I think it does. Of course, so much depends on the individuals who are on the commission or the committee or whatever it is. If they're knowledgeable people and objective and want to be fair, then I think that would be the way to go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would appoint them? Where would they come from?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suspect that probably they ought to be recommended by the four caucuses or approved by the governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think the idea was that each house would have a board. One idea that was being examined was proposed as an amendment. I don't know if this version passed: "Each caucus of the House of Representatives and each caucus of the state Senate shall appoint two members at least one of which shall not be an active member of the Legislature." So, say, former legislators. They would certainly be in tune with what it's like to be a legislator. The bill did ultimately pass and was signed. The commission was created.

The other group that opposed this new level of scrutiny was the lobbyists. This discussion is part of a long train of events that leads eventually to the creation of the Public Disclosure Commission. There was a call for tighter regulations. More registration and reporting of expenditures. Was lobbying a growth industry?

Were there more and more lobbyists? Was there more and more money? Was it getting out of hand?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think it's increased a little bit more.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To the point where people are saying, hey, we've got to look at this? Or did something happen where lobbying or lobbyist practices became an issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there was any great scandal or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes that is what precipitates a new reform movement. Now, both the creation of the ethics board and the lobbying practices bill went to conference committees and you, as Speaker, wouldn't you be the one who appointed the members of conference committees? I don't know about those bills, but when you appoint somebody to that kind of committee how do you choose?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, if the sponsor of the bill is on the committee that's considering it, they certainly would likely be one of the persons. And then on something like this where it has some political implication, you'd want to have one of each party at least.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you try to pick somebody of a certain kind of temperament or political wisdom, say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would hope so. You've got to have reasonable people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you can find the right people, you might get a better outcome?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, there's no question about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And there'd be certain people you'd probably want to avoid, for instance.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your caucus guide you, or was this a thing that you did by yourself as Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You get some feedback from the caucus. And then there are some self-starters, too. People who will volunteer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are those the ones to watch out for, or really a good idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you'd want to take a good look. Now why are they really pushing to get on this commission or board or whatever it is?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems like a very important responsibility or authority, of the Speaker to get the right people in the right places. It seems like it would have an influence as to how things turned out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And then, of course, you always have a Committee on Committees at the outset of the session, and that could be a group that would be involved also.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even for this ad hoc kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so because they've been dealing with the members and screening people for various positions. You're going to have some of the same names appear.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who's reliable? Who's a little flighty?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this really comes down to really knowing your fellow members.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The people. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What their interests are. What their weaknesses and strengths are. Their character.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Can you depend on them?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Their districts, even. This is a lot of experience, I guess.

Another issue that year was a whole slew of insurance reform bills, if you recall. Stepping back a bit, there had been an interim committee on insurance reform, I guess the session before, and it had brought forward a lot of different bills. I think there were twelve or so? And there had been also a lot of newspaper stories, especially in the *Seattle P.I.*, about insurance reform, about the whole industry, really kind of beating them over the head with a stick about some of their practices and about some of these reforms that the newspaper was pushing.

The person leading that interim committee was Karl Herrmann, a Democrat from Spokane. People really felt hot and cold about this. Some people thought that Karl Herrmann really had a grasp of this. The *P.I.* called his slate of reforms "the greatest reform of legislation in state history." They praised him to the skies. They said that he brought forward these twelve different reforms, "but that the Republican controlled House tried to block these." Other people thought that Herrmann was an opportunist and was manipulating the committee for political gain. And in fact, he did run for insurance commissioner the following year and was elected. Whether that's a good thing or a bad thing you can say, I don't know. But how did it look from the House point of view? The Republican House members got some bad press here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think just basically, right or wrong, the people in our caucus just didn't trust Karl Herrmann. He was chairman of the insurance committee in the Senate before he got involved in this. And he was sort of part of the Greive routine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that taint him in your eyes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It did with a lot of people, yes. Because it was at this point that Greive was just on his way out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There had already been discussion of the Greive fund?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And there were a goodly number of the Democrat caucus in the Senate who just wanted to get rid of Bob Greive.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Karl Herrmann?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how strong the opposition in the Senate was towards him. There was certainly some.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps it had to be muted since he was one of their own Party.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think the insurance industry probably had a lot to do with the position that some of the members took.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The House Republicans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And in the Senate, also. That's a pretty strong lobby.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly. The *PI.* article had a great deal to say on this. There was a bill brought forward by two Spokane Democrats who may or may not have been aligned with Karl Herrmann, Margaret Hurley and William Day, Senate Bill 519. It's described here, quote, as "at the heart of the issue is a bill strongly opposed by the insurance lobby to allow the parents of a wrongfully killed child to recover damages for loss of love and affection." Not just medical costs and funeral expenses and whatnot, but a rather incalculable, I would think, loss of love and affection. I'm not quite sure how you assign a dollar value to that. Is that the kind of bill that would make you squirm, basically?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a kind of a bill that the lines were pretty well drawn.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As in you just couldn't go that far?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you stated it. "How do you determine?" I class that as a punitive damage type situation. And you get a good trial lawyer who takes that and gets in front of a jury, and you can just imagine how he'd have everybody crying.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, sure. It's a terrible thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. But how do you put a value on it?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know. The quote that I'm interested in having you respond to begins here: "Mrs. Hurley said she had personally asked Speaker of the House, Don Eldridge, Mount Vernon Republican, that she be recognized for the purpose of making a motion to advance the bill. She said he had assured her he would so recognize her, but when the bill came up on the calendar he, Eldridge, "moved it into the Rules committee so fast he almost stumbled over his words," said Mrs. Hurley. She said she had no chance to make her motion." Do you remember her coming to you with this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I remember her going to John O'Brien on another bill and asking, and that he just ignored it. And even to this day she talks about that. But I don't remember having a problem with recognizing her.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She definitely had a problem. Then the reporter came to you and he writes: "Eldridge told this reporter that he had thought Mrs. Hurley was interested in another bill. He said at first that he was not opposed to this bill, SB 519. However, when reminded that he had reportedly voted against putting the bill back on

the calendar at a Rules committee meeting Thursday afternoon, Eldridge grew hostile.” Wasn’t Rules still secret? Or was it open enough that people knew what actions—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think at this point that it was open.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Okay. It’s just newly opened then? This is unusual press for you. People don’t normally call you things like hostile, so that kind of jumped off the page.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. It all depends on who the reporter is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. So this is different. It went on. “Representative May said that after Eldridge had gavelled the bill back into Rules”—was that a way to kill it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends on how the members of the Rules committee line up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you already know that, or what were you doing? As the Speaker, what’s the mechanism being used here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Getting it off the floor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because you didn’t want it to come up for a vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If you don’t have any idea of what’s going to happen, then you—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wait until you have a better idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It’s a delaying tactic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you’re not necessarily killing it, but you’re giving yourself a chance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, no. You’re wounding it!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s an important distinction! It goes on like that. “A member of the House Rules committee, May, said he later tried to put the measure back on the calendar at the Thursday meeting of Rules, but it was turned down in a straight party-line vote by the Republicans who control Rules in the lower chamber.” So, by then do you have a clear idea of what this bill’s about and your group said, “Let’s not do this.” That kills it right there, doesn’t it? If it doesn’t make it out of Rules?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The House could pull a bill from Rules, but it’s not done very often.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is effectively very “wounded,” then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That’s true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They talked about the insurance lobby not liking it. Would insurance lobbyists have, in between these maneuvers, come to the Republicans and said, “These are the reasons we really don’t like this,” and laid it out and then you would be either convinced or not convinced that they were right? Would there be that sort of discussion? Would this be the time when you’d need more input?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We would still pretty much leave it up to the individual members. They might get a call from one of their insurance agents in their local community. They might get letters from their home area from insurance people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which would be somewhat orchestrated I would imagine?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** “This is how this is going to hit our industry.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, I can’t even remember who the lobbyist for the industry was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know. The article never gave any names. So, the *P-I* went on carrying water for this issue. Eventually, a lot of insurance reform bills do make it through. "Twelve different reforms embodied in nine measures made it through both houses to the governor's desk. And most of them were pushed by Karl Herrmann's committee." But how many did the House Republicans managed to stop?

I remember you telling me that one of your important roles in the Legislature was not necessarily how many bills you passed, but how many you killed. You're nodding. Is this an instance where that was something that you could achieve? It's quite a steamroller here, but you do stop some.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall being adamantly opposed to these insurance reform bills. Now I can't remember, but I may have gotten lots of pressure from the industry.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be something that would matter to you? Would their case be a cogent one for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could very well be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of them are very big dollar items.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One thing the insurance industry was wary of is whether or not the interim committee would be reappointed for another go-round. And it was. They are reconstituted in the interim again and are very active. You, again, get to appoint the interim committee members from the House, at any rate. Did you, in that sort of opportunity, get to choose people who you thought would support the Republican point of view? You appointed Representatives Anderson, George Clarke, Gladder, Litchman and Swayze. Was there any significance to whom you chose?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My basic consideration were that these were responsible, objective people. I suppose that the industry had some input as to who they could work with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were any of these people from the industry itself? Or members who would be pretty familiar with insurance issues. It's like tax reform, isn't it? A complicated specialist field?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Gladder may have been in an insurance group. Swayze is an attorney. And Litchman, yes. I'm not sure what George Clarke was doing at that time. But this was before he moved to the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Senate—of course, Senator Greive having a big hand in it—got to appoint members as well and they appointed Senators Andersen, Conner, Freise, Herr and Karl Herrmann, who was the person the industry seemed most concerned about. Then he ran for insurance commissioner the following year and won.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can't even remember who the Republican candidate was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Anyway, this received a lot of press attention, some of it a little more pointed than what you usually received.

Another effort to liberalize gambling that session was related in part to raising revenue. Another one of those perennial issues. Several central Washington legislators got together, led by Representative Day. They were promoting what they called the Central Washington Bazaar: a gambling center in the middle of nowhere, really. And they projected revenues of one-hundred-million dollars that they were going to earn in this gambling center. It was going to be the new Las Vegas.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably Ephrata or—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, somewhere in the middle of the state there. In Nevada, gambling is located out in the hot desert country, so perhaps that's part of the inspiration. This was considered somewhat unsavory, this idea. Do you remember much about this discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember there was a lot of talk about it, but really not much push.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think one-hundred-million dollars is totally—

**Mr. Eldridge:** That probably isn't out of line.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Really? It seems like a very big number. Evans was very cool to it. He didn't think this was how you should raise revenues for government.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He wanted a slightly cleaner operation. There were a lot of gambling issues all through these years around tolerance policies—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Slot machines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Whether you should ban them, or control them and tax them. The temptations were going both ways. Which is the proper way to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I certainly wasn't enthused about it, but I didn't object to somebody going to Nevada or if they wanted to put something up in the middle of the state out in the desert. I couldn't get too excited about that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, anyway, you all shied away from it and it certainly didn't happen. It was later, according to press accounts, in various elections, held against William Day, as a sort of disgraceful idea. People held onto that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** This was kind of unusual because Day was a strong Catholic and the Catholic churches are notorious for their Bingo halls and all of their activities. A lot of people considered it hypocritical that they would oppose Day as a community which is strongly Catholic in Spokane.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps this resort idea was a little more over the top.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it was out of their area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they weren't going to actually get any benefit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And that may have been the real reason for the opposition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or, were people somehow squeamish about a certain level of gambling? If it's below a certain threshold, it's innocent. It's your local group, you're working for a charity. Whereas, if you get into the Las Vegas end of things, that seems to have a very different meaning to many people. Show girls and crime.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's subject to corruption.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's no longer your grandma, it's something else entirely. Well, that was something that didn't materialize. One of the biggest, hottest issues that session, also in the "sin" variety, was the wine bill.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** House Bill 435 by Ceccarelli, Litchman, Lewis, Sprague, Holman, Chapin and Elicker. It came out of the committee, a substitute bill was sent to Rules on February 22, and there it stayed 'till the end of the session. It was revived in the special session, it went back and forth, and there are a lot of pieces to it. It was said to have been lobbied extremely heavily. That was actually one of the things most remembered about

this bill was the heavy-handed lobbying. Can you tell me about the pressures from the wine industry?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You had Sid Abrams and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Ivan Kearns?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He represented the Washington wineries.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which did not want this bill.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They didn't. And Vic Allison, who also represented Washington wine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And Sid Abrams represented?

**Mr. Eldridge:** What is now the Wine Institute. It was the California wine industry, really. Tom Owens, I think, was the other key player from this state who was a lobbyist and involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was for which side?

**Mr. Eldridge:** For the California wine bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Okay. Just wanted to line everybody up. This was a bill—you can chime in and make sure we have this right. The Washington wine industry had been developing, but not at a very rapid pace. And they mostly created sweet dessert wines, and then sort of cheaper wines, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not exactly high class.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And not very good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. This is the part that we have to understand carefully—they got a preferential treatment as a developing industry? Is that it? Through tariffs—

**Mr. Eldridge:** That wasn't the reason, really. Early on, you couldn't buy anything—when they opened it up a little to grocery stores to sell wine—they opened it up to Washington wines only. And, of course, Safeway was interested in having California wines, and they were a big push for this bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In liquor stores were they priced the same? Washington wines didn't get a break in Washington state liquor stores? I thought that out-of-state wines had to pay extra.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some sort of differential.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I'm not sure what the difference was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It must have been enough to get attention. They felt that there should be a level playing field and that Washington wines should be made to compete with California or whomever.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people, I've read, thought that this would actually be good for Washington wines. If they were made to compete, they would produce better wines. So there was that argument. Other people thought that this was just a grab by the California wineries with no protection for Washington wines but to be driven out of business. I believe that happened in Oregon, more or less, that when California wines were allowed into Oregon on a parity basis, that it actually was devastating to the Oregon industry. So it's not simple.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It isn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then there's apparently a growing population of Washington citizens who

were much more interested in getting better class wines at their convenience.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At their convenience in Safeway stores, for instance. So they were weighing in, too. So what was the lobbying like? There were a lot of charges of money flowing, high pressure tactics and the like.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really don't think it was any worse or any better than any other issue. It was probably a little more intense.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be a real arm-twisting, a real breathing-down-your-neck kind of style?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sid Abrams and Tom Owens, that was quite a combination, because Sid Abrams is a kind of a quiet, mousey little guy but smart as a whip. And Tom Owens was an excellent lobbyist. He knew what he was talking about and was pretty persuasive. And I think just by personal contact they probably divided up the players and each of them took a group and then they just picked them off one at a time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were some charges of undue pressure. Do you think that that was true, or just something that was said? Senator Greive made complaints about that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, well. Greive would say anything if he thought he could get away with it. And he was probably unhappy because he wasn't involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you believe that was a bit of a reckless charge?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You, yourself, made statements that the pressure was disgusting to you. There's

some hint that you killed the bill because you were disgusted with the lobbying effort.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You see, it came down to the vote and it was tied. And I hadn't voted yet. So I just pulled the switch no the first time around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would you do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, one, I was supporting a Washington industry even though I recognized that it wasn't doing the kind of a job it should be doing. Pretty haphazard, really. And the wines were terrible. They were jug wines and the transients and the kids were all drinking Thunderbird and it was awful stuff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's kind of legendary how bad it was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. It was terrible. We had the winery which is out towards the coast. And then on Stretch Island there was another one. Small wineries that put out this low-grade wine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have sort of conflicting principles, shall we say—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Did I vote wet and drink dry?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. I don't really mean that because I think that's probably getting to be past news. But this is a protectionist bill for a not very robust industry and some people are economic protectionists and other people are economic free-traders. Did you have a stance on that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I probably was in the middle someplace.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which is pretty hard when you've got to say yes or no.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. That was a difficult vote for me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have some regrets or qualms?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I really didn't. But then during the intervening period until it came up again—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that it would?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't really know. But when it did come up again I didn't have any problem with switching to the yes side.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there something different about the next time? The following session, in fact.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I began to really recognize that it was an issue of quality. I wasn't a particularly heavy wine drinker, but I had a lot of friends who were and they always grumbled about not being able to get California wines or better wines. So, from that standpoint, I think that was sort of the deciding factor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The way it's sometimes written up, while we're talking about this, is that the Wine Institute changed their tactics the following session. They were much more soft-sell. And much more focused on building on the quality issue and how this was actually going to be a good thing for Washington wines. The really heavy-gun stuff went away. Did that make it easier to consider the issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More palatable, to use a wine term. Do lobbying tactics sometimes harm their own cause?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. You can get too excited about an issue and drive away people who might otherwise support your position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe put the bar so high that you wonder why it's so high and why it's so important? Does it make you suspicious, that you might have missed something somewhere?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of money was involved here for some people—grocery stores—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hal Wolf, a Republican House member who was also a grocer, was very much in favor of this measure. Would he have lobbied the bill, or supported it strongly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He would have certainly talked to some of the members. I think he was probably one that I sort of relied on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if Hal said this was a good thing, then it helped?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was somewhat concerned that if California wines were not accepted at parity in Washington that they would retaliate with our apples and beer and, I believe, potatoes. And that that would harm the breweries and apple industry here. That it would be a tit-for-tat kind of thing. Was there that kind of argument going around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There is on a lot of legislation. You always get, well, "It's going to harm our industry"—whatever it happens to be—but I don't know how many votes that changed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you were on the fence and you needed to choose one side or the other, some of these things might be persuasive if you thought that they were distinct possibilities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It certainly has somewhat of an influence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was certainly hard fought, back and forth. And in the end when it did pass, of course the wine industry in Washington now is big, robust, healthy and producing very good wine. So, do you think that there's actually any truth to the concerns?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the comment that was made that this would force Washington to do a better job in the wine industry, and I think it had some effect on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly something did. WSU and different places were looking very closely at better winemaking and had courses that you could take. It was just kind of taking off right about then. Some people argued that just give us a little more time. And other people said, "No. What you really need is a little kick to force-start this." In the end, it did pass.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Whatever occurred, it certainly has improved the wine industry because I guess now we're right up there with New York.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think so. Yes. It's quite a big thing. You go to eastern Washington and there are now miles of fields of grapevines and a lot of wineries.

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of wineries between Yakima and Sunnyside. Seems like there's one every hundred yards.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's transforming that whole area. It's a whole new industry. So, you never know how these things are really going to turn out, but it was a huge deal in 1967 and of course, again, in 1969.

Those were pretty much all the issues I wanted to discuss for that session. There was, of course, the special session and it kind of went on and on. Governor Evans brought in a huge

list of things he wanted. It was almost like another session. Still: tax reform, highway safety, creation of the Department of Transportation, creation of community health centers for mental health and retardation and that issue. Reforming unemployment compensation. Preserving natural resources, constitutional reform. He had as long a list as any governor brings forward for a regular session. Was that overwhelming?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was overwhelming to a lot of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Obviously he didn't get all of these things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of them he never got. Not tax reform and not creation of DOT. Was he biting off more than you could chew? Would it have been better if he had focused a little more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think anyone was surprised with his laundry list. He wasn't backing down on any of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. Was that his strategy? Just keep pushing hard and you'll get there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that he recognized that if he was going to get anything he had to put it out there and then push it. And he did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He certainly did. Would he have discussed this with you? Or was it strictly his business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was always putting these things out and encouraging people in the caucus to support those issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But when he was going to bring down this list, did he have a meeting with the caucus and leadership? Did you have any say in this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we got the list and that was it. I don't recall any arm twisting or any real, strong pressure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But how about collaboration? Do you get to have anything on this list or was it all governor-driven?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure there were some other things that were going to be considered aside from the list.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You went at it for fifty-two days. Not everything was accomplished and finally you do get to go home. It's an election year. It's an extraordinary long period of time in an election year to still be in session. Did that have an impact on people's re-election plans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. A lot of them were really stomping to get out of there and get home.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does the election year impact what you do in session? Do people try to take stands that can be counted, or do they try to avoid certain things, or do they mostly just try to get out of there in time to go home and campaign?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think all of the above. It's a hectic time when you get down towards the end of a session, particularly in an election year.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel good about this session? Did you feel like you had actually accomplished something of importance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just relief.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't pass some of the big things, but you did a lot of the state's business.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was a fairly good session. I wouldn't say it was really extremely successful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't get tax reform. That was the big thing. But you did a lot of things.

You were, of course, also on the Legislative Council in the interim and there were quite a large number of interim committees that involved many, if not most members. You looked at workman's compensation. You looked at taxing districts. You looked at quite a long list of things. Was this becoming a full time job for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I certainly didn't encourage it to go that direction, but from just a practical standpoint, it did take a lot more time. The Council covered a wide range of subjects and, by and large, the members of the Council spent a lot of time on those issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And traveled more too, going around the state. Various investigations of one thing or another. You did have some fun. Is that the period when you got to go to the World's Fair in Osaka, Japan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think it was in '68 after the session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's talk about that in a bit. You do have to campaign for your own re-election. It turns out to have been, I guess, your last campaign.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I would say this, that from the '64 election—no, the '66 election—things got a little tougher. I didn't get the majorities that I did the first two times that I ran.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the nature of your district changing somehow?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some. And then the longer you're there, the more opposition groups you get because you're always going to be voting no on somebody's project. And so they turn on you the next time around. You may have given them ninety-nine percent of your support, but it's that just one issue and they—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** “What have you done for me today?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That’s right. So, you know, I started out and I had good support from educators, but then the WEA got in there and got them all stirred up and I began to lose a lot of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What were they charging you with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just the budget wasn’t as much as they wanted—and it almost always came down to appropriations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They wanted more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** More.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you’re now at the pinnacle of where you can go in the House. You’re the Speaker. Was that cause for pride in your district or the notion that you can get them even more because you’ve risen so high? Does it work both ways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it both a wonderful thing and “Gee, if he’s so powerful, why doesn’t he give us everything we want?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** “How come?” I think there’s a lot of that. But, you know, I resigned after the special session in ’70. I’m almost certain that had I stayed in and run in ’70, I think they probably would have caught up with me. I don’t have anything to base that on except that I just have kind of a gut feeling that groups like the WEA would turn up the heat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you were feeling that in, say, ’67 or so, would you act any differently? Go home more? Campaign harder?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I went full bore and let the chips fall where they may.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don’t think everyone takes that chance.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I don’t know, my popularity may have continued on. I don’t have any way of knowing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At least you got to choose when you had done what you thought was enough, rather than getting booted out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I wouldn’t want to be defeated, I’m sure of that. And people were always after me to run for the Senate. I had no desire to be in the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Lots of people liked it because they didn’t have to campaign so much.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s the only saving grace is that you only have to campaign half as much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people like the Senate because it’s quieter and fewer people. Easier to manage things. But that wasn’t an attraction?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I liked the House and I would have stayed even if I hadn’t been elected Speaker. The people seemed to be a little more regular. You get in that Senate and they think that the sun sets on them and rises on them. They’re really not any more important than House members in the total scheme of things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it also unattractive because it was so thoroughly, at that point, in Democratic hands? You’d been a minority member for a great deal of your career. You were finally in the majority. Do you just want to stay there? Finally, you get to do some creative things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. I think there was an advantage to being in the House when I was in the majority.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Leaving while you're finally ahead would be hard. Did many Republicans shy away from the Senate because it just seemed like a political graveyard for them in that era? There was such a large Democratic majority. Did you feel, between the Republican House and the governor that you would get to do some programmatic things? That this would be your chance to make a mark?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really hadn't given it a lot of consideration. After the governor appointed me to the Liquor Board, Ralph Davis, who was the CEO at Puget Power—and I'd known him for years. He was in the Jaycees in Bellingham when I was active in Mount Vernon, and we had known each other. When I first went to the Legislature he was on the attorney general's staff—he was an assistant attorney general or whatever they call them. He came to me and said, "How come you took that Liquor Board appointment?" And I said, "It was offered and it's a pretty good deal." He said, "I had you all lined up to go on the Utilities and Transportation Commission."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Bu he neglected to tell you that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He didn't mention it to me and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get the feeling people were planning your life for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess he didn't figure that I had anything in mind and was just going to retire from the Legislature and from politics.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Go back to the store. Would you have enjoyed that appointment?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, except there's an awful lot of reading.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's pretty technical.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I think the basic decisions I could make without any problem, but all that background stuff, boy!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That's a lot of issues. Especially both transportation *and* utilities. Well, all the might-have-beens. That's interesting. Were you thinking a little bit about maybe getting a commission job or some other kind of service? Shifting gears a little?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really hadn't given it a lot of thought.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering with these long sessions and whatnot, if you were reaching some kind of point where keeping your own business going, your family in Mount Vernon, whether that was getting to be a strain? Within two years you make a decision to do something else so I was wondering when you began to look about? You wouldn't have taken that Liquor Control Board job, presumably, if you were totally happy and everything was working really well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't very long after I took the Liquor Board job that I did sell the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a real turning point for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was quite a shift.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if in your personal life you were already feeling some—tensions may be too strong a word—but some kind of strain there where you were trying to do a lot of things. How long you could have held that course.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that it would have been difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Interesting. Just looking at the sheer number of days you were involved there.

But it wasn't all work and no fun. You once told me about a North Cascades trek you took at about this time we were discussing, with your son and Duane Berentson and his sons and Governor Evans. According to an article you gave me, there was no North Cascades road even, the reporter calls it a mere trail. If you could describe that for us, what it was like, because now, of course, it's a beautiful highway. Take us back to "before."

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a trail across the mountains. You could get a horse on there, but a lot of people packed across. This was actually the second time I had done this trip. The Mount Vernon Rotary Club, a number of members there, organized a trip, I think it was two years before this, and we rode across and back.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that pretty strenuous? How far is that? How many days of riding?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It probably took us three days, or I should say it probably took us three nights. Three stops. But riding in between, of course.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you ride horses often? Were you a little sore?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. This was my first time. And I was sore!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's not something you just do after being on a desk job.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Oh, boy! It was a great trip. And the kids all had a good time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the first time you went with the Rotary. The second time you went with your son, John, and—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Dave and Dan Berentson.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And their dad, of course, came with you. Your fellow legislator.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who went on this trip?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, gosh. Dan Evans was there and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The reporter says a "host of other dignitaries." County commissioner, Howard Miller. Yourself. Was this just an adventure or was this to scout out where the road should go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Get some support for the highway.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this publicized, or was this a private adventure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just a group that got together and decided to take the trip across the mountains.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this your idea since you'd done it before?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I'm trying to think. I think the editor of the *Skagit Valley Herald*, Matt Glover, was kind of instrumental in getting some support for this, and then he wound up not going.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there'd be a guide or some kind of service that would have the horses and equipment?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I remember Knight Smith and his wife from the Coupeville area, had some horses and he didn't go on the trip, but she did. I remember I had to borrow a saddle and a blanket and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You rode horses and you also had some packhorses for your food and gear?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there enough of a trail so you couldn't get lost? Was there anything out there, little towns or anything, or just nothing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You could follow it, yes, pretty well. You're just out in the woods. And you follow the south side of the Skagit River and then you cross a swinging bridge to the north side and go up the north side and finally back across and then you pick up another river that takes you down into Mazama and Winthrop and that direction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How were the horses on the swinging bridge?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were pretty good there. A little skittish.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How about the kids?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They just had a great time. But, you know, after we crossed the river the first time, the trail was cut into the side of the mountain so it was just kind of a ledge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of those things where you look down the other side and it's kind of a drop?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's just one side and you look down into the river canyon there. But anyway, I was riding behind a fellow who was on a thoroughbred horse, which is not a trail horse.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. A little more spirited?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And all of a sudden the horse reared up and got to the edge of the trail and went right down over. And the rider held onto the reins and went right down with him. And I tell you, that horse looked like hamburger. Just took all the hide right off him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to destroy the horse?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I tell you. They sent a crew down there and they built a trail up out of the canyon and finally got the horse back up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have been a little terrifying?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did your horse do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It kind of got a little jumpy, but stayed on the trail.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the man hurt?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did your kids witness this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they were ahead. But then, Danny Evans, we were up going through kind of a meadow area, and one of the horses ahead of him kicked up a hornet's nest. And so these hornets all gathered around his legs and oh, boy! he was yelling and screaming and the horse took off through the heather. Dan was yelling at Danny to "Rein him up. Rein him up. Get him stopped!" And the horse just kept going. They finally—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How old was he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was younger than these three.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like ten or something? Probably not very experienced with horses, either.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But anyway, he'll remember that for a good many years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to soak him in cold water or anything? He must have been badly bitten.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think somebody had some lotion or something that they put on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many kids were with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were just the four boys.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So each night you would camp and have a campfire and all that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were all of you men Boy Scouts? Former Boy Scouts? Certainly Dan Evans was. You were.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Duane wasn't. I don't know that there were any who were identified as former Scouts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At least some of you had some experience.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And, of course, a lot of them had probably more experience than I did. A lot of the fellows who were along had ridden before and had been on mountain trails.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And so you finally pull up over in the Winthrop area. How do you get the horses and yourselves back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The owners of the horses had trucks or trailers and they picked them up there and brought them back. And then we had family people who met us and then we drove back. On the first trip, we started over there and came back across the other way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting you'd do this twice. You must have enjoyed yourselves.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it was. It was a good trip.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's quite an adventure. Was this just a private thing or did you get to use this in talks or anything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were two or three county commissioners with us and I was trying to think of the other legislators there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It doesn't mention that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The senator from Okanogan County. Can't remember who it was then. To answer your questions, yes, when this was included in the transportation budget—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When was that? Soon afterwards?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was fairly soon. I don't know that it was the next session, but it could have been the one after that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of the allure of doing this is that soon you wouldn't be able to?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. No. Our pitch was that this is the northern third of the state that doesn't have a cross-state highway.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It certainly would have an impact on your district. It would be a tremendous link for you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Although it didn't have the economic commercial value that people kept talking about because it's not an all-weather pass. So a trucker who was on a schedule of some sort wouldn't be able to really use it effectively.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's not the easiest road. It's a little twisty.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It's a long way from Sedro Woolley to Wenatchee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. What about tourism?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's great.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think it might be better for that. It opens up a whole part of the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right. I think Winthrop really benefited from it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It connects you to a part of the state that is not the most economically developed. The northern high country. But it had been thought that it would be some kind of market road?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They always talked about it in terms of farm-to-market. They were always talking about the wheat from central Washington coming across to Everett and Bellingham and Anacortes for shipping.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that strike you as a real possibility when they're already funneling to Tacoma and Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was always that glimmer of hope that would develop.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're a little closer to the apple country, but the wheat country seems like a fairly remote idea.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was reaching.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any opposition to opening up that area of the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The environmental movement wasn't too strong at that point, although there was some opposition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly it allows people to go hiking in the mountains easier. Which is part of the environmental movement. There's a huge trail system in there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. It opened up a whole big area. You get to the summit and you can hit the Cascade Crest Trail either north or south.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a real plus for your district? For you, when this passed, did this have any impact at all?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not particularly. No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's one more thing that happened in your district about this time; you get—it's a state park, isn't it—on San Juan Island? They combined a couple of tracts and created a park there. Was that considered a good thing? Did people like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are a lot of people who live on the islands who just don't want anybody coming in there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "We've got our paradise now, so go away?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can understand that. Anticipating the election campaign of '68, there was still a movement to get control of the Dan Evans' wing of the Republican Party. It was rather contentious. Several things happened that year that are interesting to look at. The Young Republicans, for instance, were quite an active group and they were experiencing a lot of infighting. What influence did regular party people have with the Young Republicans? What's the relationship?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In our area, off and on, we had a viable Young Republican group. But it wasn't a very continuing sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By young, are these college-age? The "Young" Republicans refers to their actual age?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think we went up to thirty-five.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they the cutting edge of the Republican Party or are they the sort of a fringe? I don't quite know what to call them.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they responsible? Do they grow into the party? Do they bring in new blood? Or were they actually a problem at this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think in this time they were coming along and becoming more active. We had quite a number of that group who were running for precinct committeemen, they called them in those days, and they were beginning to take an active part in the state and county organizations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was certainly a period where many people were trying to build up the party and keep the majority and in fact take the Senate. How much influence would you have had, say in your own district, over grass-roots Republicans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was president of the local Young Republican group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little before this time. Yes. And there were quite a number of those people who worked in my campaign and also in Ralph Rickdall's.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you had some pretty good ties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they listen to you? Would they consider you a leader?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess in some areas there were some pretty serious splits. A lot of infighting. Part of it was driven by the up-and-coming presidential race. Nixon and Reagan, in some cases. And a whole slew of what some people saw as more moderate Republicans. Governor Rockefeller, for instance, was a lightning rod for some people. There were quite a few Republicans who were possibilities: George Romney from Michigan. Scranton from Pennsylvania.

I wanted to ask you about this, because there were so many Republicans vying for this next grab at the presidency. Everybody had their favorites, jockeying. Gummie Johnson, the state chair, was trying to direct, or shall we say, get a handle on what these different groups were doing. How much would legislators such as yourself have anything to do with party matters of this kind?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends on the district they were from. Because most of the legislators would be allied with one group or another.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about you? How did this play for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was pretty much with Nixon. And as a matter of fact, Dan and I were both delegates to the national convention in '68. He, of course, was strong for Rockefeller.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you declare? Did he know you were for Nixon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And as a matter of fact, one of the Seattle papers had a picture of Dan and I. We sat next to each other at the convention and it mentioned it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That you weren't on the same side?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That we weren't on the same side. Rockefeller had been to the state and I had gone to a dinner, I guess, and met him. I was impressed with him and I would have been satisfied if he had been the candidate. I wouldn't have had any problem with that. Of course, my wife, Nanci was strong for Rockefeller. And then we had a very close family friend that lived in Bellingham. They used to live in Mount Vernon and then moved to Bellingham and one of their girls was in Rockefeller's office as a staff person. And so she was real enthused about him. I don't know, I guess I was taken by Nixon's strong positions when he was in California.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it wasn't that there was something wrong with Rockefeller, you were more impressed with Nixon? What was it that Nixon did that swayed you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** For one thing he took on Helen Douglas and I figured that he was probably more conservative and more kind of in tune with my philosophy. And then, of course, he went off the deep end. Up until the Watergate thing, I didn't have any problem with him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nixon had a pretty strong foreign policy reputation. Was that already in evidence? He'd been the vice president, of course.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't too enthused. He's been lauded for opening up China. I wasn't all too enthusiastic about that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Democrats, in '67 and increasingly in '68, were in disarray. The anti-war movement was decimating the party. President Johnson announced that he was not going to run again. As a Republican, did you feel that you were going to win this time? That this was an opening?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so.

## CHAPTER 14

### A TUMULTUOUS SESSION: 1969

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**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had a bit of a break over the summer but in the fall of the following year, you had an opportunity to do a very special thing. As a part of the World's Fair interim committee that you had been serving on, you went to Japan, to Osaka. Were you helping to plan the Washington exhibit there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Actually, we went to meet with the architect who was designing the pavilion for the Washington state exhibit. We also were hosted by Mr. Toraichi Nakabayashi who was the speaker of the Hyogo Prefecture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Washington had a sister state relationship with Hyogo, I believe, since at least 1963?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A Prefecture is a state. Yes. It was for a number of years. We visited their legislative chamber. They weren't in session, but at least we had a chance to tour their building.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was their building like? How would it compare to ours, say? Different architecture, I'm sure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As I recall it was kind of like an office building rather than—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not ornate? Not ceremonial looking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not like our Capitol building. And the legislative chamber was pretty plain.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How does their system compare to ours? Do they have as many members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The equivalent of their House would have fewer members than ours. I don't recall about the Senate, what the makeup was number-wise.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do they have a governor like we do? Do they have the same branches?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's similar. They have the executive branch and the legislative branch. And then I'm not too sure how their judicial is made up. But I'm sure that they have a judicial branch or something that would be the equivalent of our judicial branch.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Interesting. So you got taken around. You went with Senator Harry Lewis?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Harry Lewis. And Dan Ward who was the director of Commerce and Economic Development at that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think he was the chair of the group, wasn't he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Dave Ceccarelli was the other House member. And John Cherberg was supposed to go, but at the last minute he decided he didn't want to go or couldn't go or something. Anyway, there were just the four of us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The architect for the Washington pavilion, was this person Japanese or were they just from here but over there working on the fair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a local firm, but I can't remember. I think they were from Seattle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall what the Washington exhibit was going to feature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were going to have lumbering and fishing and Boeing. Those components were pretty much the major items.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are those the main things that we sell to Japan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then there was quite an agriculture part that had a lot to do with apples primarily.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were these the years we were trying to open up trade with Japan more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know we're still working on that, but I recall a lot of discussion about trade barriers and trying to get, for instance, our apples for sale over there and things of that nature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And how it was really quite difficult. So, these fairs, are they kind of spiking the effort of a concentrated program for getting more connected, economically and otherwise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And of course, the technical part and the direct contacts were made by the department. Dan Ward had some private meetings while we were there with business leaders and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you brought just as dignitaries?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Window dressing!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I would not have put it quite like that, but just sort of to give it a little more official cache, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What is the role of legislators on these trips? I understand in their culture that is an honor to have you come over there. It brings the level of the discussion up a little bit, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was an eye-opener to me. As the Speaker, I had a Mercedes with a driver.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All to yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then they had another Mercedes with a driver for the rest of the crew. But most of the time we were with the Speaker. His daughter, who was in medical school and just a lovely young woman, attended most of the things that we were involved with. Then the Speaker's primary staff person, whose name was Takiuchi—just real good looking and a little larger stature than you ordinarily think of Japanese people, good looking and very articulate—he traveled with us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did everyone you work with speak English or did you need interpreters?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They spoke English.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That certainly makes it easier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you attend a lot of state dinners and special events?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had lunch one day at the Speaker's home and his wife was there. We ate out in a little courtyard in the back of their house that had a fish pond with carp in it. It was really nice.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get to go to any of the special sites or see the temples?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We were at Kyoto where there are temples just one on top of the other. We rode the bullet train. One evening we went to a—I suppose it was—it wasn't an opera, but it was something like an opera—musical with lots of people involved. It was interesting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that the first time you'd been in Japan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it the only time or did you get to go back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was the only time I went there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, if you're going to go, that's certainly the—

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's the way to do it!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These relationships. They're cultural. They're trade relationships. They're government to government. It's a form of diplomacy, I guess.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's more of an individual type. One of the interesting things: I had something and I couldn't leave at the same time as the others did, so they were on a flight half a day ahead of me. I don't remember what airline it was, but when I got on that plane it was full of Japanese people. And of course being small, they were five or six across and you were just jammed in there like this, you know, and it's a long flight.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you stop in Hawaii and then go on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall it was direct, non-stop. For the first meal they brought us a little cardboard box and it had all kinds of raw fish in it, which I don't care for. I just use that for bait.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You weren't quite ready to eat that? Did your heart sink a little wondering how you were going to manage this trip?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I figured that I'd get by alright.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many days were you gone?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, gosh. We must have been gone ten days to two weeks. It was quite a while. And we were in Tokyo for two or three days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you toured the site for the Washington exhibit, I imagine all the decisions had already been made about what they were going to do there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it was just more a promotional trip?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To kind of reconfirm what was going to happen, and that yes, we were going to have an exhibit and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was part of it that you would then come back to the state and give presentations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just to the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you take a lot of pictures and that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I took mighty few pictures, but not too many of them were involved with the project. We were certainly well treated, and the next year, which was when we were in session, the Speaker and his assistant, Mr. Kaz Kusano, came over and were here for a few days.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read that they were on some kind of world tour promoting—was it for the World's Fair, or just something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm really not sure what their mission was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was called a "global goodwill tour." I suppose they were promoting the fair. That makes sense that they'd be going everywhere and drumming up interest in the World's Fair.

They came the second day of the session so the timing was quite nice. You got to introduce them, and there was a special resolution welcoming them and honoring them, and you gave them a copy of that. It said that you'd entered into a sister-state relationship with them in October, 1963, "from which has evolved a steadily growing interchange between the various cultural and economic and educational activities." It went on in that vein. Anyway, then he gave quite a flowery speech about seeing Mount Rainier and comparing it to Mount Fuji. The friendship of the two peoples. And you presented him with a gavel and this resolution. Did you have any reception or anything like that for them while they were there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think it was just primarily the leadership people in the House and Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These are really nice things. Does it make you think about the dignity of your office?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. This is probably the highlight of that of all the time that I was Speaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a fascinating experience.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It worked out just right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Back to the mundane, then. To get to do these things, of course, you have to be elected and the 1968 election was a big one because it was also a presidential election and a gubernatorial one. Governor Evans had decided that he would try for a second term. Were you involved in any of the planning or deliberations to do with his campaign?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Only that I, of course, supported it fully and took part directly, primarily with party groups at the outset.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you would appear together as a group somewhere, the leadership?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was thinking in terms of introducing him at functions and having a few remarks about him and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have divided up the state regionally, and say, you would take the lead in your part of the state and somebody else in their part? How did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that his campaign committee would give me a call and say, "The governor's going to be in Bellingham or Everett or Vancouver or wherever, and could you make arrangements to be there?" And then we'd work out the details of who was going to do what.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That sounds like a fairly big commitment if you're traveling around the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't get into a lot of that. But it was always an opportunity to visit with the governor and kind of find out what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine he was pretty busy campaigning all over the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He really was. He covered a lot of ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was his campaign like the first one, very grassroots and showing up everywhere and speaking everywhere? Or was it different now that he was an incumbent?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the campaign was a little more pulled back.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I believe that for his first campaign that only three or four percent of the population polled had ever heard of him, so I imagine his profile was, by now, much higher. He wouldn't have to always be introducing himself for the very first time to everyone. That would make it a little easier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And people were attracted to him. Once they met him, why then they would kind of expand their influence.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that help the whole Republican Party in the state when you've got an attractive candidate? Were there definite coattails here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. You bet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering how the national election affected local elections. More people vote in a presidential year? It just brings out more people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does the whole level of discussion kind of pull up a few notches because people are thinking more about politics?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. I think there's more interest and there's more exposure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you find people confusing the federal and state level? Like people coming up to you and demanding that you end the Vietnam war or various things? I have sometimes read letters to the editor where the person's complaining about a local issue and wishing their state representative would take care of it, or things like that where they've got the different levels of government confused.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I've had people who would come to me and say, "Well, how come you aren't back

in Washington, D.C. taking care of our problems?" Or, "Has it been hot in Washington this last month?" You could tell that they had no idea of—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They knew you were somebody but they didn't really know who. How do you answer something like that? Do you say, "Well, Olympia's not really a different climate zone?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** There is a lot of confusion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In a presidential year does that confusion get to be even more so, of thinking about all the different levels together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's a lot of confusion. And the fact that we have two Washingtons.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. One thing I've read many times is that Dan Evans, when he was campaigning and as governor, played to the middle of the voting spectrum and worked pretty hard to bring Democrats in as crossover voters. And relied on that, actually.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He certainly did a lot of that, and much to the consternation of some of the regular Republican Party people—a lot of them just figured he was too liberal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that confuse the Republican message when your standard-bearer was closer to the center than many of the members?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it certainly had an effect, but I don't think it was bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The middle is where most voters are, so it can be a good thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** In this state a lot of people are identified with neither party and they'd say, "Oh, I vote for the man." That's probably true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you look at the numbers, how people voted was all over the place.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I know. You know when we used paper ballots, you'd go down and it would be like this (demonstrates a zigzag). All over the ballot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were huge numbers for Warren Magnuson, and then big numbers for a Republican candidate for a different office, and you think, well, these same people have got to be voting for both of those. Many people think that weakens parties. Is it a good or bad thing? What do you think?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it does weaken the party, and I think that the Republican Party pulled away and I think the candidates pulled away from the strict Republican philosophy. Eisenhower was criticized a lot because they just didn't feel that he understood or had been through any of the Republican ranks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He just kind of came in at the top.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Then there are those who said, "Well, Ike isn't really a Republican."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he was elect-able. Which I understand goes a long way!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. It sure does. A dead hero isn't any good. And you can't do anything unless you're there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've got to be in office. Is that a tempering influence? If you're very pure, say, but you're not elected, that doesn't really do you a lot of good.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, it doesn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people would rather be right than be elected, but does it force most politicians into this middle arena?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that a good thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It probably is in the overall picture, but it sure raises heck with the party system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's hard to have a strong party identity when everybody's kind of cherry-picking.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you crafted your own message, were you swayed by Dan Evans' message, or would you still have your own line that you put forward for yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I pretty much followed his basic precepts as far as issues and so on are concerned, even though I wasn't one-hundred percent gung-ho for all of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have said different things had it been a different governor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you are part of a larger thing. Did you see yourself as a team player in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I still had my own opinions and my own thrust on a lot of things in my own area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have to craft your speeches a little bit to your audience in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm not saying this is a bad thing, I think everybody does this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. After all, those are the people you're going to represent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had other roles, too. You were the state convention chair in a fairly divided party.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, that was really something.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pretty tough. How did you become the state convention chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably by reason of the fact I was the Speaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you enjoy this role?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did. I like presiding. Of course, we had the John Birch Society to deal with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the King County, Ken Rogstad faction, as it's often called. There were several counties, not just King County, that were challenging the Dan Evans movement.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Snohomish, King. Who else? There were several counties.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there were a couple of eastern Washington ones.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who sets the agenda for these things? Did you meet with the different groups?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The state central committee's executive board pretty much determines how things are going to go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So your role was just to preside? You don't have to do much of the planning?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, somebody like Gummie Johnson would have already set up what was going to happen there? Would you have worked closely with him to set the game plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I suppose you could say that we did. And the governor was ordinarily included. And Jim Dolliver.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a particular strategy for taking this on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't have any preconceived idea of how to get from here to there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But did you know where the potholes might be for how it was going to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I sure learned in a hurry. I guess I was probably a little hard on the opposition, but we needed to get ahead. And sometimes you're blind in one eye if not both and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm sure they weren't giving you any quarter either.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, no. No. They had some pretty rough people there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't sound like they were the easiest group.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They played for keeps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they have challenged you on procedural grounds? Trying to assert themselves? Seizing any opportunity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was quite a lot of that. And then when you get into the platform then they're all over the lot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they have particular things they really wanted in the platform that you, for instance, might wish to keep out? Can you recall what the hot-button issues were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were some of those. Abortion is always a—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even back then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Let's see, I'm trying to think what else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Things like keeping the U.S. out of the UN, and that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there was a specific move to address that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just trying to recall what the John Birch platform generally included: a lot of isolationist, anti-communist stands of the really extreme variety. I'm not sure what else. Did they have economic issues? No income tax?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No income tax. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were for no taxes at all in some cases.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, you know, it was really a pretty loose sort of a group—there wasn't a precise organization. It was just a lot of people who had the same feelings that were at the same place at the same time. And ordinarily they'd vote as a block, but they really hadn't pre-planned it, I don't believe. It just was a meeting of their minds.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This convention was to choose delegates for the national convention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What's the mechanism? How does that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, you'll go into congressional district groups and then they'll elect their delegates.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, the people coming to this convention, the state convention, were precinct people or the next level up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They're elected by their county conventions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So all the different little precincts get together and have their county convention, and then they elect delegates?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And are those people sworn to support different presidential candidates already?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I presume there are some counties that bind their delegates to support candidates. They have their own determination there. But ordinarily you get to sort out who's supporting what candidate and then you try to get the votes to get those people elected as a delegate to the state convention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there would be Nixon people, Rockefeller people—Reagan people at this stage, in '68?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There may have been some Goldwater folks, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Anybody else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the purpose of this convention was to pick these delegates who are going to go on, and also write a platform?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Anything else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's pretty much it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a tall enough order.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And ordinarily listen to a speech by a fairly prominent person. Either somebody from the national organization or a congressman from maybe Oregon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall who came and spoke at this one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Boy, I don't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All the speeches sound alike after a while?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I was a little busy with other things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. You were presiding and trying to keep control of things. Would you just be taking care of the mechanics of making things move along?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I did in the Legislature, I tried to be fair as far as recognizing one person from each side, alternately, so that they could make their pitch and then we could move on. As you move along through the convention you begin to get a feel of how many votes you have and after you've let everybody have their say and it's time to move on, why I usually had somebody in one of the delegations who I'd recognize and he'd move to adjourn or to accept the motion or whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So would you kind of signal to that person and then they'd raise their hand or something? A little eye contact?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Ordinarily.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It has to come from the floor, I guess. You've got to make it happen.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Now in the House, in a regular session, my first session as Speaker, I'd always give Slade the nod and then he'd make

the motion. Then the next session it was Stu Bledsoe. And we got so we could kind of communicate, say, with eye contact.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about in a situation like this? How many of these people would be familiar to you? For you to know which side they were going to be on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It doesn't take long because people will pop up to make a statement, and boy, you can tell right away which side they're on. And you have sort of the leaders of the opposition who are popping up on every issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they kind of standing in a group, or were they scattered throughout the hall? Little islands—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everyone's seated by county. You'd have the chairman of that county delegation who ordinarily would make the motions and decide with his delegation who was going to do the talking and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So would at least those people be familiar to you? You'd know the names of the county chairs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of them at that point. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering how you would, say, use Island County or the Snohomish County delegate? Would you actually know their names, or would you just be able to know kind of generally who they were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of them I knew by name.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would help. About how many people attended a convention like that? Hundreds?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There'd be five or six hundred, I suppose.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, pretty big. People are familiar with national conventions with the balloons and the banners and hoopla. What's a state convention like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's pretty much a smaller scale.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But a lot of noise and excitement? Bands and rah-rah stuff?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Quite a little.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there a lot of people with signs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of signs. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a theme this year, or does it go like that? Sometimes it seems like there's a kind of a catch line or even a song.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there was anything special.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a little piece in the *P.I.*, an article about the convention, and it talked about Dan Evans speaking and his program. And then the reporter said: "Evans got an appreciative laugh from the Republican audience when he threatened to rent rooms in the mansion if the Legislature adopts a proposal to raise its daily expense allowance to fifty dollars. But the House Speaker, Don Eldridge, got the biggest laugh when he quipped: Hang on to your wallets!" So you were quite a team up there. And then it went on to say, "Eldridge added in what may have been only partial jest, 'The governor has assured me that for the first six months of the biennium there will be no increase in taxes, but after that it's anybody's guess.'" Are you two playing off each other and kind of warming up the crowd here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To some extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then there was a little note that the previous Legislature had run to 112 days.

And I don't know if they're suggesting that that may be so again or what. It just gives a little bit of a picture as to what your role at these conventions might have been. A bit of a straight man for the governor! You said you were a little hard on the opposition, but were there ways to bring them in and try to get them to be more cooperative?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most people were pretty well set in what they believed in and the people they wanted to support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they have someone else in mind for governor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Boy, at that point in time, no. I think Dan had gotten himself pretty well established.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think that was a sore spot for them, that he was so clearly a winner?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they were probably disappointed, but, you know, if you can't beat 'em you better join 'em.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did this group get behind legislators, or did they work more at the county level? The precinct level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would say that, by and large, most of the people at the state convention worked more at the county level. Although there was a lot of statewide support for various statewide candidates. As you got down the ballot it dwindled, but those who were better known had their supporters there. And then, of course, the governor and congressional and senatorial candidates would have a cadre of supporters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had only two Republican congressmen at that time, Tom Pelly and Catherine May, out of seven possible positions. It was a fairly solid Democratic representation.

You also had the two Democratic senators, Magnuson and Jackson, who were somewhat impregnable.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They owned the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Jack Metcalf ran against Magnuson that year. Did you have any involvement in that campaign?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not directly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the national race? Would you have had any involvement in that? The presidential race?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There again, not directly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, from the state convention, was that how you also happened to attend the national convention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was elected, I think, an at-large delegate from the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you attended with Dan Evans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was there. And I would say that the core group of our delegation was probably party officials. Glen Anderson and the woman from Hooper in central Washington, then there was a doctor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Mrs. William McGregor of Hooper, from Whitman County?

**Mr. Eldridge:** McGregor, yes. Her husband, Bill McGregor, was a very successful cattleman in that area. Then there was a doctor from Oak Harbor. I think we roomed together, as a matter of fact, in Miami.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to declare who you supported to become this delegate-at-large? Were you a known entity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Seems to me that we didn't have to commit, but I think everyone knew pretty much who was for who. It was kind of interesting because Dan and I sat alongside each other in the delegate group and he, of course, was for Rockefeller and I wasn't, but I certainly would have accepted and campaigned for Rockefeller if he had been the chosen candidate. As a matter of fact, he came to the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember what he stood for that was different from Nixon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Specifically, I don't know, but he was certainly a little more what we'd call today a moderate. I think on social programs he was a little more to the left.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read that his views and Dan Evans' views were almost totally congruent. It didn't go on to explain what that meant, but it was an interesting statement.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that they were both reading from the same page.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So when you're down there in Miami was that the first national convention that you had attended?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it exciting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hard work? What's it like in there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot going on!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there an attempt to sway your vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd have each of the campaign groups would send people to your delegation and

they'd make the pitch and stand around and answer questions and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to vote as a group? Like when they count it down—"Washington proudly votes for"—Or can a delegate say, *X* votes for so-and-so, so many for so-and-so? Was there pressure to all vote the same?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I don't think we had any great debate over that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When people go to conventions, are their minds already made up, or do they go there somewhat open and flexible?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would say that the majority know what they're going to do when they get there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Unless it deadlocks, I suppose, then you'd have to re-think.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then you would have to think it over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How close was this one? Was Nixon an overwhelming winner right off the bat, or was it more of a contest?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that he had it pretty well locked up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a suggestion that people could still be swayed. Dan Evans had the honor of being the keynote speaker and there was some suggestion in the discussion of his speech that he still hoped to bring people over to Rockefeller, though he doesn't actually mention his name in the speech, at least in the transcript I read.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that it was pretty obvious that Dan would do whatever he could to help Rockefeller.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did he happen to get chosen for that honor, do you know?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He and Rockefeller were both involved in the governor's conference, and Dan was pretty well regarded in that group. I suppose they wanted a fresh, young face.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had done the amazing thing of being elected a Republican governor in the sweep of '64 that knocked out so many other people, so that I imagine that gave him a certain profile.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then went on from there to be very popular in his own state. But Washington is such a small, out of the way state, we don't often get that kind of attention.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Now, you know, Don Eastvold was a keynote speaker a number of years before that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's not unheard of?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's good to know. When he was up there speaking, did you have sort of a little feeling of pride?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. Yes. Because at this point in time he was a good speaker and he presented himself well. It was a real transformation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He found his feet, that's for sure. His talk centered on a couple of themes. Vietnam was a big one. He saw it as tearing the country apart. A war that was not really going anywhere. Unwinable, I guess you could say, or directionless. Splitting the country in a real damaging way. The other piece that he talked about, sort of a dark theme also, was urban

poverty. He talked about the urban ghettos and the civil rights and justice movement and what side the Republican Party should be on in those issues.

He talked more hopefully about bringing youth into the Republican Party and getting them involved and how the Republican Party could be this vibrant place of new ideas. He talked about leadership and a kind of back-handed jab at the failed Democratic leadership of Lyndon Johnson and how this was a great opportunity for the Republican Party to do new things, important things, for the country. He looked to private enterprise to restore dignity rather than, say, welfare reform. He talked a lot about how this was an opportunity.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many of the things that he said were resonating with you? Did you feel that he had captured the spirit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought he was on the right track. They were all issues that had been hashed and rehashed over and over again. But it seemed to me that we had a new group of leaders and had an opportunity to do some of these things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering when you said new leaders. Is that where he's talking about Rockefeller, because Nixon was not really new? He'd been a congressman for a long time. He was the Vice President. Or, was he also refashioning himself with a new message so that he could be considered fresh?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's probably true. That he considered himself a new person on the block with some new ideas.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Coming up from the shadow of Eisenhower and setting up his own persona?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then I think Dan thought a lot about himself in that vein.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It certainly could strike a person that way. I know that within the state he was thinking a lot about this youth issue and it showed up in all kinds of efforts. Going out there and really trying to pull people into the party in a—it does feel like—a new way. A lot of these issues, his twist on them seemed different from the traditional Republican analysis.

But 1968 and '69 were really tough political years. You had the chaotic Democratic convention with riots, police and mayhem. You had the assassination of Robert Kennedy and then later Martin Luther King. You've got people marching on Washington—people in the streets. The colleges—all kinds of unrest on campuses all across the country. It was an exciting year. If you were to line up all those things, what did it feel like? Did you feel like your country was on the brink here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I felt pretty optimistic through all of this. Of course, being a partisan, I felt that if the Republicans could get control and begin to put some of these things back together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a thought in mind as to how the party would go about doing that? What they would put out there to solve some of these problems?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't at that point in time. I guess I'm not much of an idea person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The reporting on this era is kind of feverish. So it's interesting to think, okay, if somebody handed you the opportunity to solve these problems, what exactly would you do? It's kind of hard to contemplate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, during this period I think the press was beginning to flex its muscles and beginning to make the news instead of trying to report it. It's worse now, but I think it was kind of in this era that it started.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel like you were on the crest of a wave that was going to come through and do something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I felt very good about what was happening and the people involved and that we had an opportunity to make some changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Many people thought that the Johnson administration had discredited itself in many ways. Certainly the Vietnam war was a big issue. But also the Great Society programs, the huge government programs that he put in place, many Republicans seemed to be saying that they were a failure and that they had a better idea, and that part of it was to return the power to the states and not have everything be federally initiated and rolling over the states.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a lot of that. People felt the federal government was just too big and was too impersonal, and that the states could be closer to the people and do a better job of providing for them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a theme that Dan Evans brought up again and again. Did that seem more congruent with your own beliefs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think the fact that he was so involved with other governors, that it became sort of a rallying point for a lot of governors. That they wanted to accept the challenge of taking care of these things in their own states.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a notion that Dan Evans might be nominated for vice president. Did you think that was a real possibility?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He certainly was gaining in stature and popularity, so, yes, I thought it was a possibility. But I think his interest in state government was probably more important to him than getting into the national picture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would have been a great honor, but I always thought of Dan Evans as a real activist. And of course, the vice presidency is a bit of a holding pattern.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Kind of a dead-end street.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would have been very difficult for him, perhaps, and a waste of his talents. He wouldn't have had the platform to do what he wanted to do in that sense. Do you think he was at all tempted, though?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. That's one thing about him, it's pretty hard to tell what he's thinking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Keeps it to himself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I don't know at that point whether he was beginning to take a look at the Senate or not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The U.S. Senate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Or whether that came on later.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Other people were floating that idea, even if he wasn't. That he should take on Magnuson. Perhaps that was a long term idea. If he had done either of those things, what would have happened to the governorship? You didn't exactly have someone else waiting in the wings, did you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We weren't loaded with leadership people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not quite. Was that a worry to you in any way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because I really hadn't given an awful lot of thought to him doing something else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would have changed the picture pretty drastically.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, it sure would. I don't think Slade would have been interested in going through a gubernatorial campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it a function of the Party to try to groom people? They have a little bit of a stable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The Democrats have been good at that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They seem to have quite a cast of hopefuls.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They've got a great farm system. They groom people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you don't in your Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We haven't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or was Dan Evans kind of head and shoulders above everybody so that nobody else was on that scale?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was that. You'd always have somebody who'd maybe express an interest and people would just shake their heads and say, "No, not this time."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there anybody floating around out there who could have been a possibility, do you think? Were you mentally crossing off various people and saying no, no, no? Well, fortunately for you, he did run and win. You didn't have to face that just yet.

The election results were all over the map as is often the case in Washington. Nixon won nationally but not in Washington State. Humphrey beat him there by a fair amount. Magnuson, of course, beat Jack Metcalf by rather large numbers.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that's not that surprising. Tom Pelly and Catherine May were re-elected as were five Democratic Congress people. Dan Evans was re-elected for his second term with more votes than Nixon. This is where the crossover voters seemed to come in. A big chunk of people came over and voted for him that would have voted for, say, Magnuson also.

Slade Gorton, your leader in the House, made the move to run for Attorney General against John McCutcheon. He didn't win by a lot, but he did win. This would have an impact on the House. Your group was changing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Cherberg, the Democrat, won for Lieutenant Governor. Lud Kramer was re-elected as Secretary of State. Treasurer went to Democrat O'Brien. The auditor also to Democrat Graham. Public Lands, also a Democrat, Bert Cole. And Insurance Commissioner went to Karl Herrmann, also a Democrat. Then, of course, the Superintendent of Public Instruction is nonpartisan: Louis Bruno. So you had only two statewide elected officials who are Republican. Was that something that the Party would be concerned about, or was this more of an individual kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Party was concerned probably only from the standpoint of numbers. We've only got two out of nine, or two out of seven, or whatever. But I don't think there was any real concerted effort to determine why it happened that way or what we needed to do to change it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the people like Cherberg and Bert Cole had been in there a long time, so they were like institutions. Just "beyond," unless you had a real star to go against them. Did the Party actively recruit people for these

offices, or was this more of an individual choice where the person says, “I’m ready to run for this?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the Party didn’t do a great deal in recruiting, particularly for statewide offices.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have had discussions with Slade Gorton about him making the run for the Attorney General?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think he just made up his own mind and went at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If he hadn’t won he was still out of office, wasn’t he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So one way or another, you knew.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was gone. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Obviously, it would have some kind of impact on your organizing for the House. So you would have to fall back and reconfigure in some way? How did your group go about figuring out who would replace Slade Gorton?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Stu was kind of a self-starter and he had a lot of support. He was a person who I knew I could work with, so I didn’t have any problem with that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he have any competition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t believe that there was anybody else who was coming forward.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your Republican group in the House did quite well. You gained a seat. You now had fifty-six to forty-three, so you had a good solid majority. You also gained two seats in the Senate, which was more of an uphill battle, I

gather. The Senate was an area where the Republican Party had not been strong for a long time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That’s right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there were twenty-two Republicans to twenty-seven Democrats. The Democrats still had a pretty healthy majority, but you were gaining on them. You might be giving them a little notice. This, as it turned out, was a high point. The next election drops down a bit, but you didn’t know that yet. So, things were looking pretty good. In some of the election articles, there was the thought that this year you might even get the Senate. Did that seem like a real possibility to you? With some good candidates?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had good candidates, and I think that the number of Republican seats that we might lose diminished, and the number of Democrat seats that we might pick up increased. Not a great deal, but at least it was encouraging.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did move forward a bit there. The *Argus* newspaper did note that you lost a couple of, they considered them star players on your team, Joe McGavick and Dr. Humiston. He was from Pierce County. They saw that as real loss of talent from your caucus. They also noted that Mary Ellen McCaffree, who was a pretty important person in your caucus, had a very narrow election, and that that did not look good. They wrote in their article that it “sent signals of caution through the whole Legislature.” Some of these narrower victories. Did you feel that way? You got big numbers, but you were a little fragile?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think I was more concerned about Mary Ellen McCaffree than either McGavick or Humiston. They were good people, but they certainly weren’t heavyweights by any means.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She was, though.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes! And it would have been a great loss.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She's a real player.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then she headed up the Revenue Committee which is always a pain, and it takes somebody pretty strong and knowledgeable, and she was certainly that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. And, of course, that's your big issue, tax reform. Did she have a narrow victory because of the nature of her district, or because she was so involved in tax issues? Did you have any sense of that? Was it any kind of signal? You know how there's always supposed to be signals that portend future issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I certainly didn't feel anything. I think that both of those factors may have played a part. Being out front on any kind of a tax issue is not a plus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe she just had a very good challenger that year. Her district was a swing district, I believe, so it would probably always be a little bit tight.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But somehow people were looking at this as some kind of omen. Or at least the press was. You note that your own election numbers were going down a bit. It's true, they were.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think probably if I had run the next time I would have been defeated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I noticed in the voter's pamphlet that your message to your district—which is something I imagine every voter reads—only talked about you as the Speaker. That you're a

good Speaker. That you're fair. That you're this and that. Who writes these messages? Do you have a say in what gets in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why did you choose to only characterize yourself as the Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In my area it's kind of your position, so far as the area is concerned—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that your constituents were proud of the fact that you were the Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think it meant something to them. I know the first session that I ran, on the first campaign I ran, I played up my community activity because then people recognize—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who you were.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And, of course, once you get into the Legislature, then you have a record that you have to kind of run on. Since I had both educators and labor people against me, I kind of shied away from those areas.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. When I read this, what I thought about was Tom Foley, that the final campaign against him that was successful charged him with being preoccupied with being the Speaker and not being a good representative. Not representing his district but sort of getting above people. I don't know why that hit me because I never thought of you that way, and the state level Speakership is different, of course, from Congress. Would that have anything to do with your diminishing numbers? Could it play both ways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose. But you know, the longer you're in, you pick up different groups who have an issue that they're unhappy about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were getting more grumbling in the background?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And so the longer you're there the more these groups fall into the opposition camp.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can it work conversely that the longer you're there the more people say, "He got us that thing that we wanted?" Or, "He came to our meeting and we were really impressed with him."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it probably works both ways. See, I had two major groups, education and labor, that were out after me and they got a lot of people involved. I sometimes got a little frustrated with educators. My degree was in education.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just thinking of all the different things you'd done for education.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I was chairman of the Board of Trustees at Western.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were on that big committee in '61.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But they have short memories.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they a group that no matter how much you did for them, it was always, "What are you going to do for me now?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** "Next!" And I think that the thrust was always: "we need more money." And I was pretty fiscally conservative. Their position was, "Look, if you don't go along with what we want so far as salary increases, why you're on our list."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you've got to be all there or you're against them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's just about the way of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a pretty tough litmus test.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if your district was changing a bit? You've got a Democrat senator now which you hadn't always had. Although both you and Duane Berentson got re-elected.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were getting to be a little less agriculture and commercial, and more—we had the two refineries come in and the logging had dropped off some. And the same with the fishing industry. So there was some change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More industrial?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were getting at this point in time quite a lot of people who were working at Boeing and commuting from Mount Vernon.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Down to, say, Everett?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And even before the Everett plant opened, there were some people who were driving to Seattle to work at Boeing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's quite a little drive.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It sure is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Mount Vernon is so pretty, I can see why you'd want to live there. Mount Baker in the background. That would be quite a little hike though.

You did get re-elected, so we don't have to worry about that just yet. In the Senate, it was a little harder struggle. The newspapers credited Senator Greive with running some pretty able campaigns and keeping a grip on Senate races.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. He did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He defeated some candidates that surprised people, but you did have some gain there. So you've still got the governorship and you've got the House, but as it turns out, the Senate in Democratic hands was a bit of a graveyard for a lot of your programs. He's a hard bargainer, Senator Greive.

After the campaign, did the caucus get together and plan what you're going to do this session? Did Dan Evans come in and say, "Well, here's my program. This is what I want to do?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just don't think that we ever had a postmortem and a planning session as such. We got together informally, but I don't think, or at least, I never did call a meeting of the leadership and say, "Let's sit down and figure out what we're going to do."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But how would, say, Stu Bledsoe become the majority leader? What would be the mechanism for him moving up into that spot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We'd have an organizational caucus that would elect the leadership.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody was challenging you, I gather? You're definitely going to be the next Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not this time. No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then Tom Copeland would be the Speaker Pro Tem and that's assumed. And then Stewart Bledsoe, the majority leader. The caucus chair was Norwood Cunningham.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was a good legislator. Pretty quiet and was well liked by everyone, and I think he had good relationships with members across the aisle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of qualities make a good caucus chairman?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You just have to be a reasonable sort of a person and be able to handle a meeting. Then you're a part of the leadership team so you need to be able to have some give and take.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it be the kind of person who has the talent of bringing people in and getting them to feel like they belong? Building team players?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That certainly helps. But I don't think he was quite outgoing enough to really be effective.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why would he be chosen and not somebody else then? Was it just kind of his turn? He kind of had moved up the ladder?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was a person who had been there for a while and was beginning to show signs of being able to handle something like this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Earning his stripes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The majority leader had two assistants, Irv Newhouse and Jonathan Whetzel. Were they rising stars?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Irv, of course, was always well regarded.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was considered very brilliant, yes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Whetzel, I think the King County people were kind of pushing him along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had quite a geographic spread there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had Hal Wolf as the Republican whip, and Gladys Kirk, the lone woman, as the Republican caucus secretary. She was a senior member. She'd been there for quite a while. So, this group all together, did you represent different talents and capabilities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a good group to work with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you fairly united?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems important. If you don't have people kind of all over the map wanting different things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. These were good people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would these all be considered Evans Republicans?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would say that probably was the main factor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he was kind of the lodestone, the driving force in your Party? The idea man?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just to get a little picture of the other side, the minority floor leader was John O'Brien, certainly a veteran. They're calling him an organization leader. I'm not clear what that was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They wanted to change the name.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was Robert Charette, and their caucus chair was Bill Chatalas. They had a lot of different assistants: assistant minority floor leader, Gary Grant; assistant minority floor leader, again, Richard King. Another one, Mark

Litchman. Three. That seems like quite a few. They had two assistant whips, Ted Bottiger and Daniel Marsh. And their secretary was Avery Garrett. No women on their side. You had at least one. That's quite a lineup. Several of these people would be jockeying for position in the near future.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And you know that's one of the reasons that they keep adding positions is to take care of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Give them a shot at leadership? Some role?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They've got nine and you've got eight.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty close, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're a little bit top heavy. Were any of these people not so easy for you to work with? Did you have to negotiate and maneuver with the other side? Some people are highly partisan and some people—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Charette and Chatalas and Bottiger and Garrett were all pretty easy to work with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about John O'Brien?

**Mr. Eldridge:** John was beginning to mellow at this point, and I really didn't have a lot of contact with him. We worked pretty much with Charette on the leadership level.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was John O'Brien still watching you as Speaker? I noticed him jumping up and telling you the rules every once in awhile. Challenging your procedures.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. That was his role.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was kind of the “Speaker hawk,” watching your every move. Criticizing you. Were you feeling more confident as Speaker? You had one term under your belt. Were you ready to go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. After the first meeting of the ’67 session then I was ready to go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is kind of a hard question: Did you feel that you would be there much longer?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn’t look ahead more than just one step at a time, and I had never envisioned myself as being the Speaker at any time, and there I was. I just felt that, well, I’ll do the best that I can and we’ll see what happens.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess it’s not until much later in this term that you start to think about doing something else. So you’re wholeheartedly in there as Speaker?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Governor Evans’ big thing that he wanted to do this session was tax reform. Pretty much every newspaper article agreed that tax reform was the critical issue. There were lots of comments by Stewart Bledsoe and different people agreeing—

**Mr. Eldridge:** But none of these people went out and got a consensus from the public.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of a missing piece?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. It was pretty obvious, historically, that the people in the state of Washington are just not going to vote for any more taxes. If you leave it up to them—and you have to—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Constitutionally, yes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So you have to put it to the people. That was the only reason I got involved was that I believed, well, the people have got to be for this or you might as well forget it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Give it a good test. There was some notion that you came quite close in ’67 and that in ’69 you were going to get this. There was also a mention of failure of school levies kind of pushing this along. In this ’68 election, did schools levies fail in several districts?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think Seattle was mentioned. Did that add to the pressure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it just gave the proponents another little item to push, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Stewart Bledsoe called it a crisis of magnitude. And he said, “Facing up to it would be like looking down the barrel of a cannon,” and that everything you did that year in the Legislature was going to depend on tax reform because everything was, of course, tied to revenue and spending—appropriations. He thought the only way to go, though, was with a Constitutional lid on how much the tax could be, and that he thought that your efforts in ’67 were what he called “too exclusively Republican.” He wanted a more bipartisan approach.

When you bring in a new leader like Stewart Bledsoe, is that an opportunity to get a fresh start with some of the reaching-across-the-aisle efforts? You had to have that two-thirds vote to get it out of there, so you had to have Democrats. I was thinking that perhaps Slade Gorton had been well known as a partisan fighter with redistricting, and with various issues, and I was wondering if Stewart Bledsoe was a new chance to build relationships?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that Stu probably had a better relationship with the Democrats.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe Slade had burned a few bridges along the way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. A lot of people didn't like Slade.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's very brilliant. Some people are uncomfortable around really smart people. He would be a little intimidating

**Mr. Eldridge:** He's an intellectual.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Stu Bledsoe more easy-going?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was down to earth. He always had cowboy terms.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. He talks about getting everybody into the cattle ring and—He's got some nice metaphors—all folksy farming metaphors. Would he have been a good leader at this point in time because he had that ability to put people more at their ease and bring people into a fresh conversation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think so. And you know, it worked just the reverse when he ran for Congress. He kept telling the same cowboy stories and using the same phrases time after time, and people in the district just got tired of it. I think that, as much as anything, led to his defeat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some things can play well at a certain level, but when you take it to the next level, it doesn't quite work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think, quite frankly, he would have made a good congressman. He was no dummy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, no. So he was the right person for this new position?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. I can't think of anyone else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We'll open our discussion of the session, then. The first thing that happened, of course, was a big fight over the rules.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As usual.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As usual. The Democrats were jumping up and protesting. Their big issues were, again, the committee of the whole and the way you wanted to move bills through committees. They were going to fight you on that one. There was a lot of wrangling considering that you've already had this fight the year before. Was that *pro forma* or was that real fighting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the Democrats just kind of like to talk. They like issues to wrangle about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Beat you up with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And a lot of our people just didn't even pay any attention to it. They just wanted to get on with the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you had the votes, so of course you had your way. They remonstrate, they fight you, but in the end you are the majority. One interesting thing was that people became quite concerned with the tape recording of the sessions. Now, was this a fairly new practice?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How was it done? A big group of people like that...

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can see the machines. The tapes were the big reels of tape.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People were very concerned about would they be able to hear the tapes? They wanted to know what was going to be on the tapes, what was going to happen to the tapes. Whether it would be open in the sense that they could get transcripts or be able to listen to them.

Did that go away as an issue? Did people get used to the tape recorder?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. I don't recall any big brouhaha about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It came up a couple of different times, that's why it kind of caught my eye. There was still a suspicion who was going to own these tapes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had my own thoughts about the tapes and I don't know—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think it was a handy thing to do? It is a record keeping technique.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it served a purpose. But there's always a question about who has access and can you doctor them up?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I hadn't thought of that. I was thinking more along the lines of how powerful was this tape recorder? Could it pick up side conversations and things that people don't realize could be on the tape?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or just the formal proceedings, you know, where people know they're being taped.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I don't know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would be interesting to go back and hear them. I would think there'd be a certain amount of cacophony, a lot of noise, if that seemed to be an issue.

Then, of course, next after that discussion, there's the election of the Speaker, the speeches. The election of the Speaker pro tem. The Chief Clerk election, Malcolm McBeath. The House unanimously elected Sid Snyder, a Democrat, as your Assistant Chief Clerk. Was that still part of the bipartisan

agreement? Or was he just a towering talent and you'd have him whatever way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We instituted that Assistant Chief Clerk position in the '67 session. And we actually needed Sid because he knew exactly how the procedures ought to fit in. And of course, Dutch had been there, but it had been four years ahead of Sid's... So, even though I had suggested Dutch, I was a little apprehensive.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a big job. It's like running a complicated business.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, it is. Very much so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And a lot of pressure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But then when we suggested that Sid be elected Assistant Chief Clerk, I had in my mind that then the next session, or the session when the Democrats took the majority, that they would in turn let us select the Assistant Chief Clerk. But they don't play that way. So that went out the window.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then to round up the numbers your Sergeant-at-Arms was Gene Prince who, of course, became a fixture there, too.

One of the things that was fairly new was the use of computers. You had gotten to the point where they were playing a bigger role. A news article called it "Push button age comes to Legislature." You could look up things with greater speed and accuracy than ever before. You could call up all kinds of things and track information. This wasn't just a kind of toy. Did this change your process? Did this actually make a difference in how you did your work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes. It was certainly a boon to staff people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, yes. The tracking of bills and whatnot was so much easier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And gathering information. It was quite a move.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it hard for members to get used to this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of them, including me. I never have felt comfortable with computers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As long as you have good staff people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As long as they know how to do it, that's the big thing. Some people think that with the advent of computers—and I don't know if it would show up right away—that it sped up so many things that you actually could look at more legislation. It didn't reduce the legislation, it actually facilitated more. Was there any sign of that in these early years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I presume there was a little increase in the productivity, but I didn't see any dramatic changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We've already talked about how on the second day of the session, your visitors came from Japan. That was a nice way to start your year. But now we might as well jump into that session's major issues. Tax reform, as we said, was the big package. Mary Ellen McCaffree took the lead on that legislation. There were many—I didn't count them all—resolutions and bills and pieces of this and that that covered the whole range of tax issues. There were just myriad ways of attacking the tax issues. Many of them fell by the wayside right away. They got introduced and you never heard about them again.

But the really big bill seemed to be House Bill 582. That took quite a lot of shepherding to get through the House. Representative McCaffree seemed to be hard at work there. It was a complex bill, of course, with a lot of amendments.

A lot of effort on a lot of people's parts. Do you remember much about the work of how she got that bill through?

**Mr. Eldridge:** She did a lot of one-on-one discussion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pulling members aside and explaining it to them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that bill become a bit of a Christmas tree with tweaking it here and there to bring in each group of members to give them what they needed to help them vote for it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was some of that, but I don't think it was a major project in that regard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they try to keep it fairly clean and straightforward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But there were some changes proposed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of the amendments do pass as it went through the process. The basic package was the flat rate income tax. There was talk of reduction of property tax assessment ratio from fifty percent to twenty-five percent, and a corporate income tax. I don't recall that from before, the corporate income tax part. Was that a new strategy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A new wrinkle? Was that a way to relieve some pressure somewhere else, or was that instead of, say, a B&O tax? How would that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I just don't recall any discussion or any effort made on that one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Always, of course, there's this balancing act. If you bring in this income tax—either flat rate or graduated, however flavor you like your income tax—there was the notion that you had to do something, reduce or get rid of the B&O tax. You had to do something with the sales tax. And there were all kinds of variations there. Eliminating it or putting a cap on it. Deducting at least food and medicine from the income tax. Lots of different variations there.

The income tax itself had variations in the flat or graduated kind or statutory or whether there'd be a limit put on it within the constitutional amendment. There were so many floating pieces here, how do you finally settle on your package? What you think the public can bear? What's the best message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Mary Ellen probably put together a group from her committee that hammered out what they felt could pass the Legislature first and then be acceptable to the voters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there—harking back to Stu Bledsoe's criticism that the '67 package had been too Republican, as he put it—was there some movement this year in '69 to give the Democrats some pieces that they needed to get them on board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this reconfigured a little? You were still talking about the flat income tax, which was one of their sticking points. So you were not going overboard.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You have to crawl before you can walk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Mary Ellen McCaffree also one of those skilled people who could go across the aisle and find ways to bring some Democrats over? Did she have that kind of influence?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As I recall she did quite a lot of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Last time around, the school people were supporters of tax reform, notably Buster Brouillet. Did you still have those people helping you and bringing you along?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think we lost any of the Democrat supporters in the '69 session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The trick was to get a few more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How about your own members? How united were they? Some peeled off last time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were pretty good, but we lost a few.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What were your caucus meetings like? Would you have to get in there and really give pep talks? Did Mary Ellen McCaffree get up and explain it all one more time? Was she persuasive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know that she appeared before the caucus and talked about the changes and so on. She was pretty good and I think that we wound up with a good solid percentage of the caucus supporting it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** House Bill 582 finally passed the House. And then in the House Journal there appeared quite a few statements where people were saying, "Well, I voted for it, but..." And the main gist of those statements from Republicans was: let the people decide. And that seemed to be the piece that perhaps pushed it over the edge and got people to say, "Okay, I'll vote for this."

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And that certainly was my position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It helped. In the end you got sixty-three people to vote for it. Thirty-five didn't vote for it and one person was absent. So it received a Constitutional majority and passed. It was a fairly near thing, but you did manage to do it.

And then at the same time Mary Ellen McCaffree was also carrying the banner for House Joint Resolution 42, which amended the Constitution relating to taxation and that's the piece that had to go through. She pushed these measures simultaneously. When it was voted on and it's done, you gave her a standing ovation. Was that unusual?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. But you know this was a real tough issue and she handled it very well and I think everyone appreciated the job that she did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be quite a moment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty spontaneous, so it was good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can imagine a sort of sweetness in that moment. That her colleagues would acknowledge her hard work. That seemed really nice.

However, the bill had to go to the Senate. Not quite so easy. Who carried the battle in the Senate for your Party, do you know? Which Republican senators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know whether Frank Atwood did it...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He'd probably be a natural, yes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy. I was so glad to get it out of the House that I didn't want to hear anymore about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you ran smack into Senator Greive who was not too giving, shall we

say, in this department. He was aligned with labor, and labor was adamant that they want a graduated tax.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were not going to let that one go. It bogged down pretty severely. The Democrats were not totally united on this, but it was still precarious. And they all had their different takes on it, which didn't help the issue.

A lot of your efforts were going for naught in the Democrat-controlled Senate. Labor wanted some kind of an initiative on the bill, more than it would just go to a vote of the people. There was a provision for the people to come back in, I think it was 1975, and vote again to see if they wanted to change it from a flat rate to a graduated income tax. That was the big sticking point in the Senate. Would that have been a high risk thing to let them have it? If you believed that it would be voted down anyway?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It probably wasn't such a high risk except that so many Republicans just didn't trust the Democrats in carrying out something like that which was sort of iffy. From a practical standpoint, I think yes, the voters would turn it down regardless of whether it was flat or graduated or whatever. As long as it had "income tax" in the title, it was dead.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were having a bit of trouble holding your caucus together to go even as far as a flat tax. Was this just the breaking point where you would have started to lose your own caucus behind you if you had agreed to this measure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that there would have been some drop-off because we had people in our caucus who were just really putting aside their personal convictions in order to go along with the caucus. I think if you tinkered with it very much it would have gone right down the chute.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Start unraveling. It was doom and gloom when the Senate was really pushing that, but you countered with this statement reported in the Press that, “Tax reform is what we came here to do. We won’t go to the showers on the first curve ball.” So you’re still in there fighting. Were you part of the actual negotiations with the Senate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would have been, say, Mary Ellen McCaffree and Bill Kiskaddon and people who were actually on the bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And those who were really knowledgeable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess you’d want to put your best people forward on such a complex issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. That’s very correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then the article from the *P.I.* went on to say that Senator Greive had this curve ball coming at you, that he wanted to pass what he was calling “a clean twenty-five percent amendment.” It would have cut the property tax ceiling in half from what you had planned. He said it was very popular with farmers and business people—which was part of your support base, of course—and that he was hoping to kind of push that in your teeth, so to speak.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. This was just a delaying tactic. He was trying to kill the bill and doing anything he could think of to throw it out there and put up a roadblock.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he, in that sense, successful? He slowed it down tremendously. He doesn’t actually kill it, but—

**Mr. Eldridge:** He wounded it!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another piece, that this article alludes to, that complicated the issue was that right in the middle of the hot part of this debate, Ward Bowden passed away. He was the Secretary of the Senate and had been there a long time, since 1957. I gather he died suddenly of a heart attack and everything stopped when that happened to have time to mark his passing. Did that kind of event change the debate? Give you time for reflection?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It certainly slowed the proceedings down to a crawl. But I don’t think that it did anything drastic to the procedures or on the bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A solemn moment, of course, whenever that happens. You’re like a family in there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was well regarded and it was really a great loss to the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** His passing started a chain reaction of changes because then Sid Snyder, who was your Assistant Chief Clerk, moved over to the Senate to take over his position. And then he was replaced by Don Wilson. So in the middle of a very intense session you had this shuffling going on. Would that cause problems or were all these people experienced enough that they could pick up the reins?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was plenty of experience there and I don’t think that the shift interfered with the procedures. I think things moved along pretty much as normal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have been a part of appointing Don Wilson as the Assistant Chief Clerk? Was he someone known to you? He had been an employee there doing something else.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that was pretty much a caucus decision. As I recall there wasn’t much discussion and there was no great opposition to that appointment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This struggle over the income tax went on. You had a very long session—to the end of March and then the very next day you started the first extraordinary session and then you picked up again later, with another session. You were there for a long time—one hundred and twenty days or so.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a long session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The first *Sine Die* on March 13, a lot of bills were stuck. They had failed, basically. Apparently, according to various news articles, the Senate spent their last hours of that session not really taking care of anything. They fiddled around with some sort of housekeeping type bills and they just let a lot of bills die. Was that their chief strategy for halting the progress of the House?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was a major factor, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The *Seattle Times* called it shameful. They thought it a waste of resources and the people's time. Wasn't that a common tactic though, that one house would play against the other when they're split like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It happens quite frequently.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can it go both ways? I recall some other sessions where the Senate thought that they were turning out a lot of great bills and they were all dying in the House.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Eventually, though, you prevailed in the special session, I believe. House Joint Resolution 42 which was sponsored by Representatives Mary Ellen McCaffree and Bill Kiskaddon was pushed through and it went to a vote of the people. The voter's pamphlet from 1970 contained the wording. The actual resolution was sponsored by Robert Ridder, a state senator, Jonathan Whetzel and Walter B.

Williams. The official title was "Revising revenue limitations: Shall the state constitution be amended to reduce the maximum allowable rate of taxation against property"—there's the package—"to 1% of true and fair value in the absence of authorized excess levies, and to permit the Legislature to tax income at a single rate without regard to this limitation or"—and here's the initiative amendment—"after 1975 at a graduated rate if the voters in that year or thereafter approve the removal of the single rate limitation." So it seems like the Senate Democrats did prevail in getting the language that they insisted upon. Was that the compromise finally struck, where you just couldn't—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Couldn't move without it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, with all the discussion, this strikes me as having more than one topic in it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The sponsors against this position were Perry Woodall, Bill May, Jim Bender of the King County Labor Council, which is interesting since labor got the things they wanted. I couldn't tell quite what was going on there. At any rate, of course, we all know it didn't pass.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was just another defeat.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel a little bit like Don Quixote? Tilting at the income tax windmill, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was pretty frustrating. But the ultimate result was what we had anticipated. I think ultimately that's going to be the position. There may be another try at it and they may get it on the ballot, but it's not going to go any place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Each defeat seems to seal the fate of the next try.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because people bring up exactly what you said, whereas people have turned this down before, they're not going to pass it. It comes so loaded with failure that there's no such thing as a fresh discussion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a fall-back plan? A lot of your program was tied to this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the only real strong proponent was the governor. Because I don't think that, by and large, the Republicans in either the House or the Senate were overly enthusiastic about this. Although they all felt that it wouldn't prevail.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you've kind of put all your eggs in this basket and then it doesn't pass, you've still got a lot of fiscal problems. Did you have any sense of, "Okay, let this go through and then what?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think probably most legislators were thinking in terms of raising the sales tax.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That is what happened.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's there and a lot of people feel strongly that the sales tax hits everybody and that it's easy to collect because the state doesn't have to do it. The retailers do. It's just kind of an easy way out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a retailer, did you think that was an okay solution?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I wasn't overly enthusiastic, but the reality of the situation is that it's going to happen and we just have to make the best of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is there a threshold beyond which, say if the sales tax crept up and up and up, people would stop buying things—where it would start to hit the retailers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that could happen, although it hasn't and it's gotten up there pretty high.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We were not there yet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about all these little sin taxes and different taxes like car tabs and different things? Is that a good way to raise revenue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they really have an effect of the attitude of whoever is purchasing the service or the goods.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** An adverse impact?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was finally that revolt. What about user fees like they're putting in parks now where people have to pay either at the entrance or get a pass to go to a park?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think more and more there's support for users fees. That those who use the facility or the service should pay for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about those really big state services like schools? How far can we go with this concept?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, we have private schools that charge and I don't think that it's hurt them any.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They've had to draw from a different population.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's play with this idea. Would people take their schools more seriously if they had to pay for them out of pocket directly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think a lot of them would.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's one thing private schools do have is that they draw from parents who self-select to pay and then want their money's worth. I wonder what would happen to public schools if there was some kind of fee?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the real pressure on the public school system will come about through the expansion of private schools and then I think the possibility of parents being able to have a choice as to where they want their children to be educated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like the voucher system or charter schools?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that's something that's going to recur and at some point the Legislature's going to accept that and it will happen. Dave Quall, who is a legislator from Mount Vernon, and a school teacher and coach, has been at the forefront of the charter school proposal. And I think that's going to happen. I don't know if it will be this session, but I think that will happen. I know just in that area he has been so well regarded as a teacher and coach, that I think it helps the proposition immensely.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Gives it some credibility?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be a big change. Another idea that sometimes people throw around when they want to get around the tax issue, say, toll roads and toll bridges and things of that kind, where again the users have to pay some kind of fee to use the facility. Roads are not free. People complain a lot about ferries, but—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was going to say that's probably the best example of a user fee is the pay on the ferry, even though it's considered a part of the highway system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It's a bit of a disconnect there that one part of the highway system has a fee attached to it—a fairly steep one, and increasingly so—whereas the rest of the roads are supposedly free. Of course, they're not.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You pay for it in your gasoline tax. But you know in the '53 session, we had a bill to establish toll roads. As I recall it passed, but then President Eisenhower led the charge to set up the federal highway system and they threw a lot of money into the states that went along with the billboard requirements and all the other window dressing so it took the pressure off the toll road system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think it's time to try that idea again?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just see all kinds of problems in administering a toll road system. I just visualize from, say, the Canadian border to the Mexican border just on that one corridor, I-5, how are you really going to set it up? You're going to have to have segments for so much and the total system for so much. And then how you get on and pay and how do you get off. I just see all kinds of problems. In the East they have toll roads and they've been there a long time, so I think they got in early enough so that they could iron out some of those problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They just have certain segments of their roads as toll roads, right? And they're, of course, the busy segments. Where people want to go that way, it's worth their while to pay whatever the charge is? I wonder if something like that would work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's one of the elements that could certainly be addressed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certain sort of choke-hold places where you need to go that way, so you'll pay. There's some advantage to it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But let's just take an example of going through Seattle. How many people would then go around Lake Washington?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They'd have to put tolls on both ends. You'd just be shifting your problem over to Bellevue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** So I don't know. It's a difficult one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It's just a headache in these sessions trying to sort out the tax issues and what are you going to do. And, of course, the governor was really holding your feet to the fire and saying this was something you absolutely had to have, and calling special sessions and making you do it. He had the vision.

You do, of course, do it, and then it failed. So session after session, the legislators will have to figure out what to do next. This was your last go-round with it at any rate. You're a free man!

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I think really that was the crowning blow.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It was such an effort. So long and drawn out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But really there wasn't a lot of promotion or support among the public.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So maybe that's where you fell down? You were so exhausted by your legislative effort that you forgot you had to win over the next group of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because I don't think the governor—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you go about doing that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Newspaper editorials? Forums?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose. Television was becoming a big factor in promotion and I presume you'd need to do a lot of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this went on the ballot but there was no organized campaign to address it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just don't recall any extended effort to promote it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's sort of surprising considering it's this really important piece. Those are some sophisticated campaigners there, generally speaking. I wonder if everyone was too exhausted or they thought it would win on its merits?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that a lot of them said, "Well, this is a dead duck so we're not going to worry about it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were people a little worried about tying their name to it too closely? Say, sitting legislators might say, "Okay we passed it, now I'm handing off this hot potato."

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a lot of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any kind of group at all that the governor had to back this? Tax advisory council or those sorts of things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there was any organized support.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, maybe it was never really given a fair shot. There's a thought. Perhaps if it had been really talked up and the public brought into the discussion, I wonder what would have happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We'll never know. That's interesting.

It was far from the only fight of that session. You were also fighting with labor about a big unemployment compensation bill that the Republicans wanted. I guess they'd been tinkering with this for years and deadlocking with the Democratic Senate and with labor. The rates hadn't been raised for, I think I read somewhere, at least a decade. So they were getting pretty out of line with the economy. The Senate was holding the budget hostage because they wanted their provisions. There was a lot of rhetoric. The House refused to back down. You're both at loggerheads on this one. It's pretty messy.

This dragged on through the special sessions. *A.P.I.* article printed in May said, "The House version of the highly technical unemployment bill includes several factors that labor abhors such as comparable quarters." Do you happen to recall what that meant?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's the contributions and how they balance with the benefits paid. In trying to balance the comparable quarter factor, was something labor didn't like because they didn't want to compare it with anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that the part paid by the employee or the employer or both? Maybe we should review how this works. On your check, doesn't the employer take off your employee contribution, but also match that to some degree?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the proportions? Was that one of the things under dispute here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think that it's changed over the years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be one of the things that you'd be arguing about? Who should pay how much?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because the payments to unemployed workers kept going on and on and on and the cost, of course, kept going up, but the contributions didn't keep pace, actually.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So where would the money come from to make up the difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Either from the employee or the employer or both.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But would you, if the contributions weren't keeping pace, would the money have to come out of, say, the general fund to make up the difference? Or was this one of those things where it was a closed system? Only the contributions put in could come back out as benefits?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the fund was limited so far as contributions were concerned from either the employee or the employer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So we weren't talking tax dollars here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Okay. But it sounds like the system was getting pretty strained.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then the issue of seasonal workers. I guess that would be like farm workers and people like that? And don't some industries have a lot more turnover and people coming into the workforce, coming out of it, back and forth, and others are more stable? So the stable ones, were they somewhat—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Subsidizing?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. The unstable ones?

**Mr. Eldridge:** To some extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there some kind of resentment there that “Why should we pay when we don’t have these issues?” Perhaps some industries should pay more, or things like that? Was that part of the discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was certainly an issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The House bill wanted to raise the maximum weekly benefit from forty-two dollars to sixty-eight. None of those sound like really huge numbers for a family to live on. A worker would have to earn fourteen-thousand dollars a year to qualify for it. But the Senate was holding out for a different package, although the Republicans claimed that under their package the workers would actually get more money in their pockets, but it would be figured differently.

So right to the end you were fighting over this and other things. The session got pretty convoluted because you were fighting over the income tax and fighting over this and different things are being held hostage by different sides as bargaining chips, I guess.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that happen a lot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wouldn’t say it happened a lot, but it happens enough to make it a significant maneuver. It’s usually on an important larger issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At least there’s some substance. You could somewhat excuse it because it’s one of the ways to get what you need. At least we aren’t talking about “small potatoes” bills.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This, I think, is something the public would have difficulty understanding. That

important bills would be bargaining chips, this for that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But, you see, the smaller bills would be influenced by maybe the sponsor who might be approached and say, “We’ll go ahead and pass your bill, but we need your vote on this.” That, of course, occurred.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that a problem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t know. I think it’s just a fact of political life.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Well, into the mix of all these really hot-button issues, was also Dan Evans again trying for his executive reorganization bills. Those were sort of perennials, too. He still wanted his Department of Transportation. But the really big thing he was pushing for was what he was calling a Department of Environmental Quality, which we’ll talk about more when we talk about the 1970 session. But that was a discussion that’s heating up through these years.

He also wanted to bring together a whole list of smaller institutions to create what’s now become the Department of Social and Health Services. One of the sticking points there was that many legislators didn’t want to include vocational rehabilitation in that large agency. What was important about that issue? Do you remember?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there were those in the educational field who wanted to have more control over that, and they considered it more of an educational problem than a health problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or a social issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Or a social issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I haven’t heard much about vocational rehabilitation. Is that retraining people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So these would really involve the vocational/technical schools?

**Mr. Eldridge:** By and large.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did some people see this as a sort of—what do I want to say? Not a welfare measure, but a way to get people off welfare? I'm not clear how this fits in here.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That would be the ultimate. But I think there were those who felt that if you put it in with all these other agencies it would just get swallowed up and kind of go away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they're defending this program, making sure that it has some integrity?

Evans also wanted a Department of Manpower and Industry, but this did not pass. I was wondering if discussion of that kind of agency would get tangled up in the unemployment insurance fight and some of the other struggles? Was this just too much to bite off in one session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's the crux. That it just—the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was pretty bitter fighting over what—had it formed—that agency, would do. So maybe there were just too many issues on the plate there. He did manage to get two things in his reorganization plan. He got a Department of Community Affairs and Development and also the Office of Program Planning and Fiscal Management. Were those new agencies just more palatable, more obvious as solutions to different issues? Or involved less turf? I'm not quite sure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. This was part of the governor's plan, but I think that a lot of legislators felt that it would maybe take away some of his power and control over the fiscal matters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These are executive agencies, though. He would appoint the directors, but would it make it a little bit one step removed from the actual governor's office because they're a separate agency? Was that the thinking?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that they felt he would have less control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are they interested in keeping the executive a little bit less powerful to balance the power of the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was some concern over that. And, you know, it kind of evolved over the years. When I first went to the Legislature—even prior to that—the governor had the director of the budget and he would hold hearings with agencies and then develop the governor's budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was practically just "he." It was practically just one person.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's just hard now to imagine.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because when I was on the board of trustees at Western, we'd come down and Ernie Brabrook was the budget director out of the governor's office and he'd relay, run us over the hurdles and through the hoops. And I really didn't see anything wrong with that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somebody has to be responsible for this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It all has to go to the Legislature anyway, and it always seemed to me that it was an easier procedure. It put a lot of control in one person, but if you had a good, qualified director and over the years he'd get to know the various agencies and I think could do a good objective job in putting the budget together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the government just getting too big?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think this was true. Government was growing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's got to have more of a structure? Did it make sense to include planning with the budget people? Have a little bit more information there, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Because so many of the ideas that people have and the plans that they project, it all has an effect on the budget. You need to have some kind of a balance there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you put the planners in with the bean counters and you have kind of a reality check?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you ultimately have chaos, but it looks good on paper.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a very long title for an agency. It's now been shortened to the Office of Financial Management.

Was Dan Evans frustrated? How was he doing with so many of his ideas stalled?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was kind of shaking his head and wondering, "Now why don't they do something with this?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's kind of a man of action. It must have been difficult for him to be patient and push this through year after year and get the big "no" year after year. He doesn't ever get the Department of Transportation, does he? It must have been a severe check on his ideas.

I think 1969 is one of the liveliest years we've talked about. You've got more hot items coming up. You had the wine bill, which was a big issue in the previous session as well. Was it a little more straightforward in the '69 session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was still a fair amount of activity and publicity attached to it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the press—you know, anything that has to do with liquor always attracts a lot of attention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There were still fairly lavish lobbying practices swirling around that bill, according to some articles about it. They called it "the gravy train." There must have been a lot of money involved in passing this bill for somebody.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I didn't ever see any and I was never approached. That's really the first time I met Sid Abrams. Of course, Tom Owens, who was involved, was one of the more successful lobbyists. And he and Slade were pretty good friends.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This go-round was successful. The previous session, as we discussed, had been a little wild on this bill, but this time it went through quite easily. Seventy votes to twenty-three. Six abstentions. And you swung your support behind it this time. Last time you were the deciding "no" vote.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. Yes. I think the elitists in the Puget Sound area probably made the difference. They sold the proposition on the basis of improving the quality of wine and perhaps pushing the local wine industry to do a better job. And it proved to be right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That's what happened. Not immediately, but now Washington has a fabulous wine industry, well respected. The fortified wines are—

**Mr. Eldridge:** They're almost a thing of the past.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You can still get them, but they're not the industry signature product by any means.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know what role this bill ultimately played in the success of the industry, but it's become a very important part of our agriculture, especially in the eastern part of the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's increased the quality of the availability of California wines and imports.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And now we have a lot of micro breweries. If people became more sophisticated in wine tasting, did that spill over into the beer industry where people started to look at beer and want something a little different there also?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Micro breweries are a fairly recent development. And there are sure a bunch of them now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's quite a thriving business.

Well, continuing with our hot-button issues, the abortion issue was a very big discussion during this session. There were several bills, all slightly different, I gather. House Bill 312, introduced by Chatalas, Bledsoe, Charette, Sprague, North, Scott, Beck and Wojahn, died almost immediately. It was referred to committee and never came out again. And then there was a Senate bill that never made it over to the House, Senate Bill 286. But then, by the special session, there was a whole new spate of bills that members tried again. Many of the same people. Did it just take a lot of talking behind the scenes before members were willing to look at this? It's interesting to see the initial bills die and then during the special session new bills with pretty much the same language came back. Do you remember what was going on there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well the pro-abortion forces are pretty strong and they did a lot of lobbying and I'd say it was kind of a one-on-one effort.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though it's jumping ahead to the 1970 session I thought we might as well just talk through this issue because it took over part of that session. These bills all died and then you came back in 1970 with new ones. House Bill 116 was thrown in the hopper with pretty much the same sponsors. There was fierce opposition though. What I think most people in the state don't know is that the main supporters of abortion rights in Washington State were Republicans and the main people against it were Democrats. Which, of course, is the reverse of what people think now. Can you account for that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, except that I find that the supporters are pretty much the same people that support the arts. You know, they were all over the place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I had never connected those two. Are they highly urbanized people, is that it, a little more highly educated perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think so, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Interesting. I wanted to go through this chiefly as a discussion of your role as Speaker, how you became embroiled in the negotiations and machinations of passing this bill because there was a lot of floor action.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, well, I would have just as soon it would have gone away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think that you get that choice! You voted for it each time. Amendments that were designed to kill it or limit it, you voted against them. You were with it all the way, so what was your own opinion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I wasn't really enthused about it but when I really sat down and just went through it I figured well, it was probably the right position to take.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did someone sit down with you and kind of persuade you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this the kind of thing that you would talk over with your wife or just come to on your own?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think I made the decision on my own, but I think in my own district the “again’ers” were probably in the majority.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this was kind of stepping out on a limb for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little bit, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The people against it were not organized at this point though, were they?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to any extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not like what we think of now.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, that’s right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was not a litmus test vote as we now see it. Was there any indication that it would become such a thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well yes, I think just the way the sides lined up you could see something like this coming.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there very much public discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I don’t recall any hearings, you know, or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They did have some groups come down and observe you from the galleries.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did delegations come and speak or was it pretty much an inside thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t recall any mass movement in either direction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Washington was one of the earliest states to pass an abortion law, so perhaps you’re just ahead of your time and you were going to get in under the radar screen before people really mobilized about this issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think that’s a pretty good explanation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that’s how all this happened. You did have some very determined supporters of it; did they just persist?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, they worked hard and they had a lot of people, particularly around the Puget Sound area that were supportive of the legislation. There were a lot of them that came to Olympia and would contact individual legislators and talk to them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was some kind of campaign.

The bill went to committee, came out, and then Mr. Charette moved that the rules be suspended and the bill be placed on the second reading calendar and he spoke to the motion. Representative O’Brien objected, he thought Charette was making a speech instead of just getting it on the calendar. You ruled in favor of O’Brien, actually. You said, “I think your point is well taken, the motion is to suspend the rules. Mr. Charette, I think you should try to confine your remarks to the reasons why the rules should be suspended.” So he tried to do that, and then there was another point of order, and then you ruled again and it kind of went on and on like this. You’re really on your feet with this one. Mr. Charette apparently went on a little bit too long again and Mr. O’Brien again was on his feet saying

that he should confine his remarks, and so you rule. I wanted to give some of the flavor of the debate because it also showed what kind of a Speaker you were. So you say, “Mr. Charette, I know Mr. O’Brien is a reasonable man. I’m sure you perhaps could be reasonable when he is reasonable, if not when I am reasonable.” Do you remember saying that? “Would you kindly confine your remarks to the motion for suspension of the rules?” You have a kind of a wit there. So Mr. Charette grumbled a bit and then he complied. And then it’s sent back to Rules at that point; it doesn’t make it onto the second reading calendar. So they did kind of move it out and gained some time. Then it came out of Rules again a few days later and Representative Hurley, who’s one of the most vocal representatives against abortion, tried her best to tack a lot of amendments onto the bill. And it’s interesting because at one point she was asked, “You’ve got a lot of amendments here. Which ones do you really favor?” Some were quite strict and some not quite as strict and I guess it was the norm to start with the most strict and work your way back, but she does it the other way around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, you, ordinarily, in order to let the amendments be heard, if you take the toughest one it may wipe all the others out if you adopt it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Rather than inching your way forward you just go for the jugular, so to speak? Mr. Newhouse asked her that question, “Why are you doing it backwards?” And she said she didn’t have an opportunity to get her amendments in order because it came up faster than she thought, but she said, “Let’s not consider the one that is more stringent because I’m sure all of you would vote against it. Let’s consider this one.” You know, a less strict one. She seems to be acknowledging which way the wind was blowing and she wanted to at least put some limitations on it; it sounds like she’s acknowledging she was not going to get to block this entirely.

One of the issues that came up was the issue of residency. They wanted to make sure that a woman had lived in the state of Washington for a certain amount of time and that kind of went up and down depending on who’s trying to amend. What was that about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, the extreme would be that Washington would become an abortion mill and you’d get people coming in from all over the country just because they could have an abortion without any problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that was a little too much?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, from the standpoint of the opposition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also a big discussion about whose choice it was, the doctor, the woman, or the woman with her husband if she had one? The people not in favor of abortion wanted to put a lot of responsibility on the doctors. And it would not be the woman’s choice, the decision would come from the doctor to the woman and it would be in cases of medical emergency. Not the woman going to the doctor to request it but the other way around. That changed the intent of the law which was to give women a choice. So that was a pretty hard fought one. What about the husband issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, there was some support for that but I don’t think that it was real strong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it just too difficult?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, everybody had a failure story, or you know having to deal with the marriage situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Whose marriages are breaking up, that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the husband issue was just too complicated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was probably the fact.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the bedrock philosophy, though, that the choice should come from the woman?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, among the proponents.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, certainly not the opponents. Among these tactics they're trying to send it back to Rules, they were trying to table it, trying to amend it, trying to do all these things. Were these just ways to kill it, or were they sincere?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that, by and large, it was a move to kill the bill. And you know this was one very evident instance where the Catholic Church really flexed its muscle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, actually when you look at the list of-

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, the opponents.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's who they are.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And many of them were Democrats because that's their background, their ethnic identity. Almost all the votes were electric roll call votes or recorded votes in some way. And there was also the Call of the House several times. There was a real clamped-down feeling about this debate: get everybody in the room, make them stay in the room, and make them record their vote every inch of the way. Was that to create a record that could be used in campaigning as became the case later or was this just a way to force people to vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think both to some extent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this used in campaigns later, this issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I don't recall that it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've heard some anecdotes that it was in some instances, but I don't know how widespread that was. Getting back to the progress of the bill, all kinds of amendments—various kinds—are proposed that mostly lose. And again you voted with the proponents each time but the numbers were very lopsided. This was going to pass.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It looks like it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Finally, Mr. Bledsoe moved that the rules be suspended and the second reading considered the third and that it be placed on final passage. And then Representative Perry appeared at the bar of the House—what does that mean? Did they come up and talk to you, is that what that means?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it could. It means that people, if they're out in the wings, come into the area between the rostrum and the first row of seats there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And what's the significance of that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it means that they have something important to offer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're going to negotiate with you, or who are they talking to when they're up there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, ordinarily they'll be addressing the body.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they get up and make a speech?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, they could present information.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there are more debates and then Mr. Grant called for an electric roll call and that's granted. And then it didn't go on to final passage, just yet; it got put off. I don't know what happened to it; it didn't go anywhere, I don't understand that part. The motion to advance it to third reading failed and then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then you just go on to the next order of business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, in fact you adjourn, maybe the debate exhausted everyone, I don't know. Did you do that because it was sort of decided that people aren't really ready for this final vote, was that the drift here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, or you just want to get rid of it for that point of time and move onto something else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it give both sides a chance to rework their arguments and call on a few more people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would do that, it's just a delaying tactic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was surprised because you'd gotten quite close and the votes were going your direction and all of a sudden it just sort of fizzled out and that's it. So it was kind of mysterious. It's brought up again later, of course; both sides got a chance to speak for or against, then more questions, but then it's put on final passage that time. Was something behind the scenes happening where people came to you and said, "Okay, we're ready now."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, you see when the motion to advance failed, then it automatically went back to the Rules Committee and then it has to be put on third reading.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that a way to kill a bill, shove it back into Rules?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, if you've counted the votes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall that discussion in Rules, bringing it out again? Did somebody pull it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think there was just recognition that there were probably enough votes on the floor to pass it and there wasn't any real benefit to stalling it further.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So everybody's mind was made up at this point and no more discussion was going to make any difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's pretty much the conclusion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, it came out on January 24<sup>th</sup>, sixty people voted for it, including yourself, and thirty-six voted against it, and three didn't vote. And then it was sent over to the Senate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Senate, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where it didn't appear to go anywhere. So you've gone through a huge discussion, it went to the Senate and didn't come back. But there was a Senate bill, which was pretty much the same bill for content, sponsored by senators Pritchard, Bailey and Holman that ground its way through the Senate with much the same kind of tactics, same kind of drop-down drag-out fight, same kind of people for and against it. Again Republicans were for it for the most part—though not all; it's not a party line vote but it's really Republicans that were pushing it. It went through and came over to the House. This was the bill that eventually passed.

The same people in the House, Margaret Hurley and Gary Grant, opposed it, same tactics, same delaying, same amendments, same efforts. The amendments were defeated. I understand

that there was a push not to fool around with amendments anymore because then it would have to go back to the Senate and then it would probably fail, given the timing. But there was a sense of “up or down, vote for it.” Do you recall that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, but I would agree that that would be the feeling and the procedure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, they certainly did try; the opponents definitely tried to defeat it with amendments, stall it, send it back. But by February 3<sup>rd</sup> that effort had either been squashed or ran out of steam or whatever and it was put on final passage. But then that vote failed and it was sent back to Rules. It came out again—I mean, were you getting a little tired of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, it had a long arduous trip.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Quite a knock-down drag-out. But it came back out February 4<sup>th</sup>, the next day, quite quickly, really. Call of the House again, again recorded votes, again efforts to block it, but this time it was put on final passage and this time you voted. And it passed sixty-four to thirty-one with four not voting, and again, of course, you supported it. This time that’s it, and it’s sent back to the Senate, and everybody signed it right away. It did involve a referendum—maybe that’s the favorite method now, for the income tax, for this measure, to deal with really tough issues was to let the people decide. Was that a piece that made this easier because it wasn’t the final say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think for a lot of members it was an easy way out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was really controversial. It did pass the vote, unlike the income tax. Washington was one of the very earliest states that had this law, so this one actually squeaked through after a lot of effort.

In the midst of this debate, and all the other debates, an interesting thing happened that session. On February 27<sup>th</sup> a group of Black Panthers came to the Capitol from Seattle. There are so many descriptions of this event. The word “invade” was used, that they “invaded the Capitol.” There’s everything from “they were armed to the teeth and very threatening” to they just came and had a meeting. What do you think is the true description of what happened that day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, they were somewhat intimidating.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many were there, a handful?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I don’t know, twenty maybe.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Twenty, well that’s more than a handful.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The House, we kept operating pretty much business as usual.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did somebody come in and whisper in your ear that you had this little issue going on, or did you know about it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, they were on the Capitol steps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they really brandishing their guns?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I don’t know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There’s a photograph, they’re holding their guns, whether they’re loaded or not was the other issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I don’t recall ever personally seeing that. But anyway, on the Senate side, I think the Lieutenant Governor panicked and he just shut everything down over there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he send everyone home, or lock the doors?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I think they just locked the doors.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand the governor was out of the state at this point, or at least out of Olympia.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that also some of his chief aides were not there who may have stepped in and done something different; that's a piece of the story that the chain of command was a little confused.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But, you know, I just considered them another group that came to the Capitol to either just put on a show or perhaps have something important that they wanted to say about legislation. But I don't recall if there was any specific issue that they were talking about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They eventually met with Martin Durkan and they did have some things that they wanted for the Central District in Seattle, some programs and some funding for different things that they were trying to do there. Did you just view them as citizens with the right to come to the Capitol—perhaps not armed—but otherwise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I didn't see any problem with them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it such a big splash because, well, the civil rights movement had been going on for years but this Black Panther movement was a new development of the movement and a lot less peaceful looking. Were people afraid of them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, as I mentioned at the outset, I think that as far as the members were concerned there were some who felt intimidated by these people and I think there were those who suggested that the State Patrol ought to be called in and they ought to be removed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the decision making that day, did people consult with you? Did you have any role in deciding how to handle this? What should and shouldn't happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just felt that we should continue on with our normal routine, and that's what we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So because the governor wasn't there, the next person in line was the Lieutenant Governor and he took a different, less calm, view of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it didn't reach down into the House? Nobody came over and said, "Well, we've got this situation, what do you want to do?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't recall ever having any conversation with anyone.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are several bills that almost immediately were pushed through on gun control and unrest on campuses and in the streets and giving the governor extra emergency powers for riotous situations and things of that nature. What did you think of that kind of reaction? Do you think that was a necessary thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think a little paranoia set in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These were hot times. You had burning cities—the whole nation was a little inflamed. But for you, it seemed a little over the top?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I just had the feeling that if you leave it alone it will go away of its own accord.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about actually giving these groups of people the things that they were asking for or in some cases demanding? Would that have helped? There were some real issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always felt that they ought to go through channels, and let their issue take its normal course and if there was support for it, fine. If not, why that should end it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The channels that did exist, were they responsive to these sorts of issues, or was that what the problem was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any specific issues that were involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was something to do with employment for youth. Getting the kids off the streets. Breakfast programs for needy kids in schools. That sort of grassroots activity. I'm not sure how much this could be addressed through the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's another thing, is to how much control do you actually have and how far can you go without having a full consideration and ultimately a vote on whatever the issue happened to be?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there real concern that there would be race riots in Seattle or Tacoma as there were in other cities? Was there that feeling that you were reaching some kind of breaking point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't aware of any great thrust in that direction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There had been some rather large antiwar demonstrations in Seattle, blocking

the freeway and that sort of thing. There had been some fire bombing and other incidents.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they seem within the realm of, I wouldn't want to call it the norm, but something that could be handled in the normal way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think the passage in the year before, the session before, of the open housing act was helpful in starting to take care of some of these issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That had been led by Sam Smith for many years in the House. Do you recall much of that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't. I know that Sam was out in front on some of these social issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering if with the passage of open housing and some other—there were a couple other antidiscrimination bills that are going through then—whether you felt that the Legislature was addressing some of the inequities and some of the problems. That you weren't just ignoring it, you were in your own way dealing with it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was a considerable amount of interest and support for some of these proposals.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was one of those days at the Capitol that kind of sticks in everybody's memory.

More youth-issue votes: You were dealing with the push that year to lower the voting age to eighteen years from twenty-one. There

was a bill and various resolutions. Did you think that was a good idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it would give young adults more opportunity to become involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that bring them into the system? They could reform from the inside rather than on the streets? That they could become part of the political system?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that's a good approach.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were several measures that were going to straighten out all of the years of majority, when that was supposed to be set, and get it all on a consistent basis.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think a part of it is too, was the ability for younger students to work in agriculture or whatever else, because there was kind of a trend away from letting kids work in the summertime.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because of exploitation or what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They always used to say, well, it's hazardous for them to be around farm machinery or working long hours in the field because of the daylight saving time. They had all kinds of reasons why kids couldn't work, which I think is a tragedy. I think a lot of our problems today are because kids aren't busy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're not engaged. They're not part of the system? Although kids, when you look at statistics for accidents, kids, new workers, have way more accidents than anybody else. There's the feeling that they're reckless or just they don't have the judgment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Lack of training, I think, has a lot to do with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also the sense that if you can draft somebody at age eighteen they ought to be able to vote.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand Mary Ellen McCaffree was quite a leader for the eighteen-year-old vote and had groups of kids come down and participate. Would they actually lobby people or just observe?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some of them were pretty active making contacts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did she have a group that was trained and knew how to do all these things? That she was kind of taking them under her wing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how active she was directly, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She alludes to it in her memoirs as something she was extremely proud of and very excited to be helping these kids.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know she was certainly well versed on the situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounds like you had a lot of gallery action this year. You had women watching you for the abortion issue. You had a lot of teenagers down there watching you on this one and a few other groups showing their interest. There were a large number of Constitutional issues with the income tax. You tried to push through the gateway amendment again, and then there are all these Constitutional amendments for the eighteen-year-old vote. A lot of them failed or were blocked one way or the other. Were you too ambitious and trying to change too many things in a short period of time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as the eighteen-year-old, I think that there was always a fear that

someplace in the machinery you'd have a proposition to allow eighteen-year-olds to purchase liquor, for instance. If you're going to do all these other things, they why not allow them to drink?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What do you think of that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was not too enthused about that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, even though it seemed a little irrational in the straight just-numbers sense, to have all different ages for different privileges, it still had some sense—

**Mr. Eldridge:** And then, of course, the other factor that entered into this was, okay, then we'll raise the drivers license age to eighteen instead of sixteen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would clip people from the other direction?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. There were just a lot of things that were tangled up in this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe some gradations in this are sensible. Not everything should be the same age. That's interesting.

This was a long session. You had a lot of things going on. That's the year that, I believe, you voted on the Kingdome. Robert Ridder from the Seattle area introduced a bill that would require that the voters of King County vote on a stadium site. Some people wanted it in the south end of Seattle and some wanted it more in Seattle Center, I guess, which would have been a very different development. What role did the Legislature play in what seems to be a King County issue? Why would the Legislature have to weigh in on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the feeling was that someplace along the line the state was going to

be asked to participate financially and they ought to have some hand in the preliminaries.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which way did you think it should go? What were you being asked to decide? The site or just that it should go to a vote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the issue that Ridder brought up was primarily the site location. I really didn't have any idea of what would be the best or what the local feeling was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they try to tell you? Did they have presentations and ideas that they brought forward?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know where that bill was referred to, but that's where they'd have discussions about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So whatever the committee, say, State Government or whoever it would be, the State and Local Government Committee, you'd go with whatever their recommendations were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. The biggest thing that you do, naturally, every session, is pass a budget. The leader in your House was Robert Goldsworthy who took a very different approach, I must say, to presenting the budget. He was actually quite a standup comedian. Did that make it more palatable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that he was able to slide it right by everybody and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Everybody's so busy chuckling they don't even look at the numbers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were gaveling him down every once in awhile and saying, “Stick to your subject there.”

**Mr. Eldridge:** He got a little carried away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He certainly did. He was having a lot of fun. It seemed like he had been working night and day on this and maybe at this point he was a little giddy, I don’t know. He had a lot of jokes. He opened his presentation: “Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen of the House. A few days ago we had a minister here who during the morning prayer raised his eyes and said, ‘Well, here we go again.’ I would say the same thing, only he was talking to different ears than I’m talking to here alright. But I still have that feeling of ‘here we go again.’ And I’m talking to a mean bunch of cats,” referring to you members, “especially on my side of the aisle that make me a little reluctant to stand here and go through this budget one more time.”

It was May 10<sup>th</sup>. Obviously, this had been a very long slog, right to the end. He said: “We’re standing here feeling something like the man who spent five-hundred dollars to be cured of halitosis just to find out that no one liked him anyway.” He kind of went on in that vein with all these jokes and asides. Then he actually broke into poetry which, at that point, you were gaveling him, but were you enjoying yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had to have some comic relief here. His poem was actually quite heart-wrenching.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t remember the poem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe we ought to put this into the record. You were kind of like the straight man in the comedy team here. You were gaveling him and you said, “I wonder if you would confine your remarks to the report of the free conference

committee?” He said, “This, Mr. Speaker, is about the free conference committee, and it expresses better than I can how we feel.” Then you say, “Then set it to music!” So you’re having fun, too. Then he said, “Okay, this is how we feel about this, the three of us.” This was a sort of take-off from a poem by Robert Browning:

*“Fear death? –to feel the fog in my throat,  
The mist in my face,  
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote.  
I’m nearing the place,  
The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
The post of the foe; (now here’s where it gets  
to you people)  
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible  
form, (that’s you)  
Yet the strong man must go: (speaking of us  
again)  
For the journey is done and the summit  
attained, (that’s the free conference report)  
And the barriers fall,  
Though a battle’s to fight ere the guerdon be  
gained,  
The reward of it all (fifty votes, Mr. Speaker)  
(back to the three of us again)  
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
The best and the last!  
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes,  
and forebore,  
And bade me creep past.  
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my  
peers,  
The heroes of old, (like us)  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life’s  
arrears  
Of pain, darkness and cold. (that’s you people  
again.)  
For sudden the worst turns the best to the  
brave,  
The black minute’s at end,  
And the elements’ rage, the fiend-voices that  
rave,  
Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
Shall change, shall become first a peace out  
of pain.*

And he closed with a quip: “And that, gentlemen, is the peace out of pain when I see fifty green lights up there on the board—I hope you go along.” He urged everybody to vote for the budget.

Representative Goldsworthy really had quite a style. This has got to be a unique way of presenting the budget. Of course, not everyone was laughing. Mr. O’Brien immediately called him to task. But it passed, right then and there. You did adopt it. Maybe you were all sick of it or you just couldn’t handle any more poetry, I don’t know. That’s quite an interesting technique for getting something through.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he do this kind of thing often?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not in exactly that form, but he was quite a humorist. He wove that sort of thing in on whatever he was dealing with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he have everybody buffaloed by the time he was done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everybody’s so confused they’d just go along!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Probably sitting there thinking, “What is he talking about?” Well, it passed. He’s out of there. You got to go home within a day or so.

Just before you went home, and after this song and dance, there was a rather curious ceremony orchestrated by the Speaker Pro Tem, Tom Copeland, that caught my eye. You had been renovating the Capitol Building and refurbishing it and—I’m not sure if this was Tom Copeland’s idea, or where it came from—but he took all the member chairs—and I’m not sure if there was anything else included, but certainly the chairs—and created a ceremony with Governor Dan Evans and as many of the former Speakers

as he could round up and he gave them each a memento of the House. He gave them the historic chairs.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And he actually had little brass plates made that went on the back of the chairs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** About their years of service. Did you get one?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Still have it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was really fun, but was there no sense that these chairs actually belonged to the people of the State?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’m sure that may have gone through somebody’s mind, but no one said anything about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It’s a wonderful gift, but it’s sort of odd when you think about it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. But you know all the committee rooms had these huge roll top desks and those they sold. I bought one and I can’t remember what it was, but it wasn’t inexpensive.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. I’m sure. Those were beautiful pieces of furniture.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They’re great. Terrible color, but I bought one of those and they’re really great because you could make a big mess and then just close it up and you’re all—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, it’s like drawing a blanket over it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was quite a list of the Speakers that he managed to get to come to this ceremony.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems like there were quite a few.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see: John Sylvester who had been Speaker in 1939, so he reaches pretty far back.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was the youngest Speaker ever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Herbert Hamblen from 1947.

**Mr. Eldridge:** From Spokane.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Charlie Hodde from '49 and '51. He missed a few. I'm not sure if they're deceased or what that issue was. Then Mort Frayn from '53. Then, of course, John O'Brien—he presided four different sessions there. William Day from '63. Mr. Schaefer from '65 and then yourself. And then, also, they gave one to Dan Evans, I think, to include him in this ceremony. It was fairly elaborate. You gave a speech. Governor Evans spoke. Everybody got to say something.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was kind of nice.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a chance for you to thank your staff, your lawyers and your aides. To be honored is kind of a nice thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Tom Copeland and John O'Brien collaborated on all of this remodeling and refurbishing and I'm sure that John was involved in this project, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can see how it would mean a lot to somebody to have that kind of memento.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The only two missing that go way back were Ed Riley and George Yantis. I'm not sure if they were unavailable or just not there.

So, finally, after all these other events, you appointed the interim committees. You were on the Legislative Council again, of course, as chair. The House Space Allocation Committee, also chair of that. And then again the World's Fair legislative committee with Bleuchel, Ceccarelli and the senators who were on that committee for the Osaka Fair.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This would be your last time on the Legislative Council. I don't know if you were aware of it at that point, that you wouldn't be coming back. Do you recall that last Legislative Council? The kinds of issues you dealt with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the Space Allocation Committee? Were you still refashioning the offices or reorganizing legislative space at this point, or was that kind of coming to an end?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was sort of a continuing thing. And here again, Tom Copeland was actually the person who was directly involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a lot of jockeying around, I imagine, for advantageous space? Did people come to you and hope for better rooms or more things like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. It just seemed to me that Tom and John sort of decided what was going to happen and that's the way it was. I don't recall anybody being overly excited about it. It really hadn't been too far back that legislators didn't have offices.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. Nothing. You had your desks.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd seen a huge change in your day.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you approve of that change? Not everyone did. Did you see the utility of everyone having an office and more staff and telephones?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think my reaction at the time was, "We're moving pretty fast on this." It was quite a traumatic change in the way things were going to operate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it change relationships? There was some notion that people saw each other less and talked less. It was harder to meet.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. When everybody operated on the floor, if you had a question you could just walk a few paces and find out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Everybody was right there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But, on the other hand, you were pretty susceptible to a lot of outside influence and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The same fishbowl effect means you're also endlessly available. People can just walk up to you. You can't get away.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've seen photographs of people working back when they just had their desks, and their desks were piled with paper and books and correspondence.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. On the floor, all around, and under the desk.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just the sheer management issue of what do you do with all that paper? How did members manage that stuff?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was difficult. You see, you had behind you, the front of the desk and it had shelves in there. There were shelves there and you could put quite a lot of stuff in there. Then, most everybody had a pile on either side of their chair. And, of course, the desk was piled high with things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I would hate to think if there was ever an emergency how you'd get out of there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You also would have attended the National Legislative Leaders Conference again as Speaker. Do you recall what the national issues were at this time? Were other legislatures also going through similar changes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much. It was a period of time when there was a lot going on and I think legislative groups, by and large, were beginning to flex their muscles and beginning to take a greater part in what was going on in the states.

## CHAPTER 15

### THE ENVIRONMENTAL SESSION: 1970

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On March 28th of 1970, Dwight Eisenhower died. I just wanted you to comment on that, if that felt like the end of an era?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that some of the bloom was off the rose from a political standpoint. I didn't feel any animosity towards him, but I felt that he certainly didn't get out in front as far as the Republican Party was concerned. I think he was a relatively good president, but I don't think he really understood the politics of it. Consequently, I wasn't as emotionally involved in his death as a lot of people were. He was certainly widely respected and I think every community had a school named after him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He seemed to be fairly elderly by then. Certainly the Eisenhower years were more than a decade old.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was fairly old at the time he was elected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had had a few health scares during his presidency.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course, during his military career, to attain the rank that he had and the responsibility, he had to be reasonably old just to have the experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was around for awhile, yes. But you said that other people felt it more deeply. Were there expressions of grief throughout the nation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I think so. But it wasn't as widespread as you would imagine. I certainly didn't exhibit any question or animosity or anything like that toward him or make any comments about his death or anything like that. I certainly respected the office, but I was just a little disappointed that he wasn't perhaps a little more political than he was. I don't know, maybe in the long run, that was better.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's what some people liked him for. But, yes, he was a little bit distant from the Party, and never really took hold of the organization as he might have done.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we expected him, as a leader, to get out and lead.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess he saw it differently. Did you feel that President Nixon was a better leader in that sense, for your Party? At least in 1970?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he was viewed as a strong person and he certainly was a political animal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's an understatement! He'd been in office for a couple of years by this time, and was putting his stamp on things. One of President Nixon's policies that he promoted was what he called the New Federalism, his thought was to return programs to the states. Federalism, I guess, in the old sense of the word, not the federal government as it had come to be under Lyndon Johnson. But his idea was more to return powers and duties to the states. How did that work for you? Was that a more Republican idea you were in favor of?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I certainly was supportive of anything that would get control back to the local level. I always figured the closer you are to the people who are most affected, then the better your government's going to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So did his program work well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was reasonably successful. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was some grumbling about returning responsibilities without returning funds.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's always—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The money went to Washington, D.C., stuck there, and not all of it came back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was some unhappiness with that. Earlier, one of the things that Governor Evans was most concerned about was the growing federal power in taking over more and more responsibilities. Did this represent a shift back? Did you feel it on a state level—could you see the difference? There were real changes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that once I got involved in the state legislative scene there was the same problem. The Legislature would pass measures and require cities and counties and whatever to do certain things, but just left them hanging there. Didn't provide the financing necessary to do these things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All those unfunded mandates.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I certainly recognized that and was concerned about it. Really, there's no easy answer. It just is a never-ending problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Getting the right balance. Sometimes the state or even the federal government can see the big picture where the locals can't.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it can go the other way, too, where they can't see what the locals are trying to do and are just heavy-handed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are just no easy answers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The session that we want to talk about now was not a regular session, but the special session of 1970, which has a particular place in the state's history. It was a very intense session—only thirty-two days, but a lot happened.

But before that session opened, there was an important meeting that Dan Evans called at Crystal Mountain. Through discussions that he had with Jim Dolliver, his chief of staff, and with other people—and also guided by his own philosophy—Evans was very interested in the emerging environmental issues of the day. It had been a growing concern for several years, but there was a newly emerging idea that they should have an agency that would take care of all these different issues to do with the environment.

The governor called together a group of people in the fall of 1969, some from the newly formed Washington Environmental Council. As an organized group, it was easy to identify them as partners in this emerging movement, and then he chose some legislators and agency heads who had something to do with water issues. You went to that meeting, didn't you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was the one that I attended.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There only was one that I know of. It was held up in some kind of lodge or cabin or something? I'm not exactly sure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall we stayed in either cabins or condos. Some of the members had ski facilities up there; I know I was in a cabin that was either leased or owned by Walt Williams and I don't know who else. But at least he was there. It was his last session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who else was there, which other legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know that Jim Dolliver was there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand they were all Republicans, no Democrats.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true, although I didn't specifically make a mental note of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's the way Jim Dolliver remembered it. I'm kind of working off of his account of this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He would be the most reliable one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He doesn't list who was there, though. Would they have been Party leaders, or would they have been a kind of a sprinkling of people who maybe Dan Evans felt were interested?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Who supported his program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would, say, Stu Bledsoe have been there? He was a rising person in the Party.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I think Joel Pritchard and Mary Ellen McCaffree, I think they were involved. It was a pretty informal gathering.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I gather. It sounded like a great way for people to relax and be together, but yet do some really important brainstorming.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The one thing that I remember, and it doesn't have anything to do with the business at hand, but I remember after one day of meetings and it was fairly late into the evening and Dan and Nancy and my wife and I and I can't remember who else, but there were maybe two other couples, and we wound up in a hot tub with snow piled on all around us on all sides. But it was nice and warm and we visited and rehashed what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can see why you remember that. That'd be pretty wonderful.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, after all the kind of cold that was around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It must have been an early snowfall that year. As I understand it—and you can certainly add some details of this—you all met in one room with a blackboard and Dan had you call out, or whatever was the process, ideas of things you thought ought to be looked at. Would they be just issues or actual, not exactly bills, but ways to solve problems?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was more a philosophical approach.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there presentations of some of the problems by the Environmental Council people? Or just everybody came with some ideas?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there were any structured presentations as I recall.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm just trying to imagine. Would you say, "Well, I'm really worried about those pulp mills on the Sound pumping all their effluent into the water?" Things like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There would be some of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or, “I’m really worried about all the car exhaust,” or “We don’t want to be another Los Angeles.” Would that be the kind of discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those were the kinds of issues that would be thrown out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then would you take them and kind of group them together? “These all deal with water, these deal with garbage.” Do you remember how that worked?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t remember how it was organized and how it finally came out. I have an idea that the environmentalists sat down and wrote up the program and the report and Dan looked it over and probably signed off on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Many of them were highly trained specialists. They’d been thinking about this a lot. Would there have been a meeting somewhere in the middle between the utopian ideal of a completely clean environment and the political reality of how you get to that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’m sure that was an issue. Of course, I think Jim Dolliver was probably the best mediator or person to kind of sort things out and lay out a middle ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I gather that, in the end, it was boiled down to six or so things that really could be achieved, not everything, and that there was an agreement made that of course there was more to do but those other more difficult things would be left until later, and that you would focus on these six or so legislative—I guess they would be bills, almost, maybe not in bill language at that point, but what came to be bills—to do very concrete things and that everything else would be off the table until you got those things. Just so that you could actually achieve something.

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, that was the way things were organized. Quite frankly, I didn’t pay as much attention to environmental issues as I should have.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a pretty new idea.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But we were just beginning to break ground and those who were involved and who were promoting a good many of these things had done their homework and they were pretty articulate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Philosophically, how did you fit in all this? What did you think of all this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I best recall, I kind of had a “let’s slow down and take a wait and see” look at these things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you want more time to study the issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because it was a pretty new area, I just didn’t feel that we could make some of these decisions without having more information and more input.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a whole new area of government regulation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And you’re hitting a lot of people who have never been hit before, and there was a lot of groundwork that had to be laid if you were going to be successful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that the situation was getting dire, though, say, water pollution in Puget Sound or different places? Were convincing arguments made that this was pretty urgent?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Metro had worked on Lake Washington and been very successful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly that had been a dying lake, which was maybe the object lesson for the state—that you can kill a major body of water if you’re not too careful.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that kind of the shining example, of turning a bad situation around through better government?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t remember that it was thrown up there as “this is what can happen if we don’t do something.” But it certainly was evident that there was a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that earlier several studies, some pretty in-depth studies, had been made about the impact of the pulp industry on Puget Sound for the fisheries, for the oyster growers, different groups of people trying to use the water. Was that the kind of information you were familiar with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn’t really all that familiar with it, while we had some of those problems in my district. And there was certainly some concern and beginning to be a lot of talk about these problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it the kind of thing that was obvious to the naked eye? To the lay person? Or did you have to be somewhat of a specialist? Lake Washington, I understand, you couldn’t swim in because you got all itchy and red. That’s the kind of thing an ordinary person can understand, but what about some of these other things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** With the pulp mills, I think the most obvious thing was the smell.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pretty distinctive.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you looked a little further, and “what’s causing it?”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It’s pretty hard to ignore. It would be hard to think that it’s completely benign. It’s pretty hefty.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But there didn’t seem to be a lot of concern about the physical hazards.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you mean like the health hazards?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The health hazards.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the air pollution like, say, in Seattle? Of course, California was getting pretty blue, but was there a sense that Washington was going to have the same kinds of issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They did have some plants along the waterfront that were causing some problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering how much the public would be in tune with this, or you were perhaps a little ahead of the public?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think members of the Legislature were beginning to be more involved and were beginning to get more input from all these various groups and from the industry groups and you could see it coming.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When Dan Evans called the special session, it was quite pointedly “the environmental session,” and he went to great lengths to say that this was extremely urgent, that it couldn’t wait until 1971, the regular session. But there was also a hint in some of the literature that part of the urgency was there was not yet an organized opposition to environmental issues. That it was so new that there were just proponents and no opponents. Do you think that had any validity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was pretty obvious, on the surface at least, that that’s what was happening, but I’m sure that the industry people

were having their conversations about this push to clean up the air, the water and what effect it would have on their particular industry.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So perhaps you were trying to get the jump on that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, certainly, that the governor was aware of what ought to be done strategically. He had gotten to the point where he was a pretty good salesman. There are those who thought he was probably moving too fast, but, you know, on an issue like this you'd better do it while it's do-able and not wait.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was half way through his second term and no one at that point had ever had a third term. I was wondering if he was feeling a certain kind of personal pressure. If he was going to do this big thing that seemed to matter a great deal to him, if he had to do it before he became maybe a lame duck or whatever happens to governors at the end of their second term.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that he certainly recognized that he needed to move.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There does seem to be a sort of window for these things, and then if you don't grab the opportunity, it's gone. Maybe this was one of those windows.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was curious, though, when I read in Dolliver's account that only Republicans were invited. I would have thought that it would be more of a bipartisan effort. But the way he says it—and you can see if this makes sense to you—was that the House was Republican, and so they brought in your party members to sell it to you, so you would do the House piece. And there was an indication that the Washington Environmental Council people would take care of the Senate? Then, of course, you had Dan

Evans as governor so you would have all three pieces. Does that make sense to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's a strategy that was certainly out there. I think that they probably wanted to get one house of the Legislature pretty solid and move in that direction and then hope that there'd be enough momentum to pull us through. And then, of course, the party situation would have a bearing, too, on how far you could go in either house.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were key Democrats who were pretty tuned into this. Martin Durkan was certainly one of them. I don't know if meetings were held with any of those senators, or how that worked. There's not much mention of those people until later.

The other piece I was wondering about is, whenever people talk about Dan Evans and his environmental views, they always start with the fact that he was a Boy Scout and a mountaineer and a great camper, a hiker, a mountain climber. Could the same be said of you? That you had that sort of predisposition to care about these things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I do have, but I don't think my feelings and views were as evident as with Dan.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe the other piece is a view of what government was supposed to be doing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always had a great regard for the land and I spent a good deal of time hiking and camping. Because of my father's health, we didn't do much of that except when I was real small. But I can remember loading up the Model T Ford with the luggage racks on the fenders and you'd put all your stuff in there and then climb in and take off. We'd go up the upper Skagit River and camp. In later years as I got into the Boy Scouts, that was sort of my outlet as far as outdoor activities were concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounds like you carried on those activities into adulthood. You still skied, and you did all those outdoors things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it would have some resonance for you? You would have some of the same concerns?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I don't think I was as concerned as he was and as many of the environmental people were. They were in almost a panic about these things. I don't know, I guess maybe I just figured, "Look, we've got so much of it, there's room for everybody, and we don't have to be setting aside thousands of acres."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just occurred to me, you came from a less populated part of the state; I wonder if people in Seattle felt the pressure differently? Because their slice of wilderness that they could get to easily was maybe feeling a little bit more pressured than the part that you would be more familiar with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That might be a different kind of perspective. I'm just guessing, just throwing that out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Sure, it was so convenient for us. We could practically walk out our back door and hike for half an hour and be in the virgin timber.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That might not be so easily done in some other parts of the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That might make a difference. I don't know. At any rate, there was this big meeting, you came out of it with quite a plan and

apparently everyone signed on to it because that is exactly what you did. Dan Evans called that special session and that was the big focus. When you came down off Crystal Mountain, did you have groups in your own district that would be interested in this work, or was it not really a district issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think that it was. We certainly had people in the district who were interested in the environment though.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Here's a difficult question. The environmental movement is now almost wholly associated with the Democratic Party for whatever reason. I certainly get the strong impression that was not true in the 1970s. That it was a fairly nonpartisan or even a Republican issue. What happened to that lead?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was so new. But I think the Democrats were smart enough to know that here was an area that was untapped and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A whole new movement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And by joining them they could certainly benefit politically, and that's what they did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because, strangely, now in retrospect or hindsight, just like the abortion law that was pushed by Republicans and now I think people would not know that, and just like all these environmental bills and issues, this was again a Republican initiative, and I think now thirty, forty years later, people no longer see this connection.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You know, this is one of the failings of Republicans. They don't take advantage of situations and they kind of let things slide by and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And let the Democrats capture the issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They're smarter in a lot of respects than Republicans. They know when to take advantage of things, and they can position things so that they can take advantage of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it just a different view of what government is? Democrats are more apt to think everything should be a government program?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there's some of that, but on the other hand, I think that it's just a matter of—it's almost like a game. If you can out maneuver the other side, why do it. Run with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, something happened. But at this stage it was definitely a Republican program.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But only because of Dan Evans. I've said it, I think, a number of times during our interviews that there were many of us who didn't agree with him one hundred percent, but we had such a great deal of respect for him that we'd go along. I think that's true, and I think that's one of the things that he can chalk up as a success because he was able to motivate people and to bring them in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a curious question where your Party would have been without him. Who your leaders would have been and what directions you would have taken. He certainly pulled you off into whole new areas that may never have been touched otherwise.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's very true. I don't know what would have happened. Because at this point the ultra-conservative groups were going off in one direction, and then you had the more liberal—like the Rockefeller types—going in another direction. While Dan was inclined to side more with that group, he was pretty much a moderate and he was flexible enough to know how far he could go and who he could count on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of stretching going on there. Both ways. The moderates with the more liberal. Yet, I don't feel that there's—and I want you to correct me—was there much tension in the party over this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's just a kind of stretching?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a movement. It was happening, and I guess the old saying 'to get along, go along.'

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're going! This was a busy session. Just the last thing before we actually talk about the session—you broke your arm just before this session, as we talked about earlier, and I wanted to keep that picture of you wearing that heavy cast in mind as we discuss the work of the session.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a picture on the front page of the local paper up there that they took while I was still in the hospital. I had this big cast on. Then there were a number of pictures taken during the session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Speaker has such a central role. You meet everybody. You are out front.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was in a lot of pictures. But I lived through it!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's something that doesn't shadow the session, but it's definitely a factor. Did it make you more tired?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was usually pretty tired by the end of the day.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I would think that it would do something to your stamina. This was only thirty-two days, this session but it was much more intense than usual.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a short session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In fact, you seem to go into that session with an agreement that it was going to be a month. How did you come to that agreement? Everyone had to agree if that's the case.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that Dan and Jim Dolliver kind of plotted the thing out and said, "Well, I think we can do it in thirty days."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The original idea was that you were going to do it in twenty-one, and then there was an amendment. Stu Bledsoe, for one, said that twenty-one was just a little too fast, and he asked for thirty and got it. In fact, it was thirty-two days.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And he was going to be riding herd on all this, so he wanted to be a little bit flexible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, yes. Twenty-one is pretty rapid. So right away you had to set up your cutoff dates and really put everybody's nose to the grindstone. Had everyone pretty much bought into this strategy, or were the Democrats—not necessarily going to sabotage you—but were they on board with this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that there was a pretty general agreement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Governor Evans, in his introduction to the special session, called it a sort of a test for annual sessions. His way of putting it was that you were going to meet for a month and push through all this legislation and you were going to be a model citizen-legislator effort because it was going to be so short that it wasn't going to disrupt your normal lives. Was that window dressing, or did you feel that was really the case?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was a pretty good analysis. I think most people felt pretty comfortable with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So legislators were okay coming back? You'd had your sixty-day regular session, a sixty-day special session, and now here you were back again in January.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a lot of grumbling about having to come back, but I think after things kind of settled down we recognized that it was do-able and "let's get at it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You sure do. Dan Evans, of course, came in and gave his pitch and he had quite a list. Most of them being environmental issues. But there were several—many other things—on his list. Quite a few leftovers from the year before. The reorganization at DOT and DSHS and those things. And some other things. We'll move through them in our discussion.

But one of the early things that happened that may have colored the session a bit, was that Dan Evans nominated you for an appointment to the Liquor Control Board. It was at the beginning of that session, and as the appointment became known, some people said that that set off a power struggle within the Republican caucus. Did it feel that way for you? It didn't matter to you at that point, but what was that like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't aware of any. I knew that Tom Copeland would be temporarily the Speaker as Speaker Pro Tem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would have been the natural progression.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I knew that he would be interested in becoming Speaker. Tom Swayze was also...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Stewart Bledsoe was said to be a little bit in competition. Also, Irv Newhouse

was coming into a position of power. Were there other names put forward as people who would be also interested in being Speaker? Did that impede your caucus work in any way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because it wasn't a formal discussion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There wasn't any active elbowing going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, I really wasn't aware of who the players were going to be. I guess once I left and they decided that they were going to elect someone for the remainder of my term, I didn't even realize that Tom Swayze was a possibility.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a fairly new member.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering if there were splits within your caucus that this sort of contest would bring to the surface?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I'll tell you, we got along really well. I just can't say enough about that group of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this would be just more personal ambition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not really that the Party had these different groups?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Okay. Quite frankly, the view that you were split was a Democratic story and I wanted to see if that really reflected your feeling about what was going on.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the problem with the Democrats was they had actually experienced so many splits in their Party that they just figured that that's the way it worked. But, I can't say what happened during the caucus sessions when the issue came up and they took a vote on who was going to be Speaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, the outgoing Speaker does in no way tip his hand, does he? You have nothing to do with who comes after you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You just go on to your new assignment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Fade into the woodwork. But, that's why you have a Speaker Pro Tem, is to immediately fill in, but it doesn't guarantee that's the way it's going to work out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No, it doesn't. Certainly not on the Democratic side either. All those Speaker Pro Tems didn't necessarily just step into it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it cause any kind of splash when the appointment was made public? Were people surprised?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. There were a few—I may have mentioned earlier that I got a call from Ralph Davis who was the president and CEO of Puget Power, and he said, "How come you took that appointment to the Liquor Board?" I said, "Well, it seemed like a good idea." And he said, "I had you all lined up to go on the Utilities and Transportation Commission," which was a surprise to me. No one had ever said anything about that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were planning your life, and not even taking you into consideration?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And looking back, that might have been a better choice.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You couldn't have guessed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. No. And when I got the call—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's no easy ride, either.

**Mr. Eldridge:** When I got the call from Dan, I considered, one, it was a nine-year term which was a pretty good deal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You wouldn't have to run for re-election.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And the other thing was that it was a business with retail outlets and that had been my background and I thought that should be worth something. So I didn't have any problem making a decision.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It felt like a good fit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you have any sense of why you got this appointment?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Adele Ferguson, I don't know just how she put it, but in effect said, because I had supported the governor and had "carried water to the elephants," that he rewarded me. But, I don't know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were other people concerned that your election margin was getting a little narrow? Was that something that only you would be worried about, or was that something that other people would take into consideration?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know whether anybody ever analyzed the votes over the last number of elections or not. No one ever said anything to me about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of your consideration?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I may have had it in my mind, but it wasn't really. Although once it was all over and we had another election, then I recognized that, boy, I'd have been in real trouble. You know, the longer you stay in, the more groups you're going to have opposing you for some reason or another. And it was just about my turn in the barrel.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a sense of relief or sadness or new opportunity? How did you feel?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think I had any remorse about leaving the Legislature at that point in time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel you had done what you set out to do? You didn't actually have a plan, but did you feel like you had a good record or accomplished certain things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought that we had done a pretty good job over the years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You may have been ready for a change yourself? Sub-consciously, even?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I knew both Jack Hood and Leroy Hittle who were on the board, and felt that I could fit in and work with them without any problem. Liquor has always been a volatile issue in the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Dan Evans had made it a big campaign issue when he was first elected as governor against Governor Rosellini. Did he feel that you were a pretty safe, solid appointment? He wouldn't have any scandals on his watch?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was surprising that when I was sworn in we just happened to be standing side by side and he said, "Now, I don't want to see

your name in the papers.” And it wasn’t but just a few weeks later that we were indicted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. We’ll get into that story in just a minute. But at this point, you don’t know any of this is to going to come down the pike. But did the appointment color how you felt about this last intense session?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were fully there? You were engaged and not yet looking ahead?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. This kind of came as a surprise. I was kind of looking forward to getting into this new challenge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We talked a little bit about why Evans called the special session, the urgency of it. There was this need for looking at water issues. In 1965, he’d asked for a department of water resources which finally passed in ’67. And then this call for a new environmental umbrella agency was the next push.

There’d been a big study completed in ’67 about the pulp mill issue in Puget Sound. When all of that happened, there was evidence that real harm was taking place with the effluent, but nothing really came of it action-wise. There was also another issue that I’d like you to explain a little bit. The state of California had the idea that they could perhaps siphon up a lot of the water from Washington and use it down there. Part of the issue of studying water issues in Washington State was to make sure this didn’t happen. Do you remember much about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only that it was of concern.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How much water did they want?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, of course, they’re draining off a lot from the Colorado River, and so they figured that they could extend the pipeline a little farther north.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you talking about the Columbia?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s, of course, the major river in Washington and you’re kind of using that water yourselves. What would have happened to all the dams and the fish?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends on where they tapped into it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that frowned upon in Washington State, or was there some thought about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn’t an issue that was widespread in this state. There were people who were using water and were involved in irrigation districts and so on who, I think, had more concern than others. And I presume that the power people probably were concerned. But a lot of people envisioned that, “Look, we just use all this water, and then when it gets down towards the mouth, we let them take it from there.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder what that would have done to the area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was one of the questions that was never answered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Now the Colorado River is almost wiped out. You can hardly find the river for all the uses it’s put to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t know how many dams we have on the Columbia. But they’re all generating power, and what one dam uses up here, the water is released and comes down and is used by the next one. Irrigation is pretty much the same thing. They draw it off up here, either groundwater or underground water, and it comes back in down below and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's quite a system. Drawing down too much of that water, I think would throw off that balance.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And you get into climate control, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The whole shoreline would be impacted. It's a system. If you tinker with one part of it you're going to do something to the rest of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You're going to affect the rest of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think we fully understand how all that works. So, was that something that was talked about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't talked about very much because everybody just shook their head and said, "No way."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was water pollution, air pollution and what was loosely called the solid waste issue. That involved garbage—litter and a whole new idea of recycling. Was that something that the government was just beginning to get into at this time? The notion of promoting recycling?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that it was a great issue for discussion. It was just building.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's almost like a new word, like ecology itself. Often we see in this period of 1970, when people say "ecology," they immediately gave the dictionary definition because it was such a new concept that people didn't know what the word stood for. I don't know if recycling was the same way. One thing that was not part of the program was the discussion about hazardous waste. That didn't come until later. Quite a bit later. Now it is so integral to the whole ecology mission.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Well, we just hadn't gotten into that. The whole nuclear thing—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting to remind ourselves that that was not part of the conversation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's where it started, and then we got into chemicals and all these other things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know what year it was—what was that river in Ohio that started on fire because it had so many chemicals in it? That's the kind of thing. And the Love Canal issue. Those things break a little later but definitely that catches a person's attention. But Washington wasn't any where near that state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you wouldn't want to get there. Now, do you remember the discussions in the Legislature about passing these bills, about the level of understanding and how that went? You were highly successful.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I don't think there was a lot of discussion. I think that was the one area where the Legislature moved into a lot of these areas without really knowing too much about them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a little astonishing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it is. And here again, I think it was the fact that the rank-and-file members had a lot of faith in the people who were dealing directly with these issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you yourself take any leadership role in getting these bills passed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just without knowing any of the details, just supporting the Governor and his program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Procedurally, then, shall we say? Who led this through the maze? There were a lot of bills, of course. The big bill, Senate Bill 1, to create the Department of what was then called Pollution Control.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I'd say that probably Jonathan Whetzel was one of the prime movers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somewhere in the middle of this bill discussion the name was changed to Department of Ecology. And the story that I've heard is that Martin Durkan cared deeply about calling it that and was given that prerogative to help bring him on board. Does that ring any bells for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No it doesn't, although it doesn't surprise me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It doesn't really matter, I suppose, what it's called.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, as long as it gets the job done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There were bills, other environmental bills, led by House members Smythe, Bluechel, North, Brown, Evans, Farr, Hoggins, Mahaffey, Mentor, Murray, Scott and Whetzel—again Representative Whetzel. House Bill 48: "An act relating to the environment and its preservation, authorizing inventory of certain rivers and related adjacent lands, providing for the conservation and management thereof." House bill 49: "An act relating to the location of thermal power plants," that was one of the issues, similar group of people, a very long list of sponsors. House Bill 51: Zimmerman, Hoggins, Murray, Amen, Bluechel, a long list again, also Whetzel. Again by executive request, "An act relating to water pollution," amending a whole bunch of statutes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think Al Bluechel and Jonathan Whetzel were probably two of the key players there, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** House Bill 52, another executive request, again relating to water pollution. The big creation of the Department of Ecology was a Senate bill, but the rest of them, or many of them came from the House. And they just pound through; there's not, like you say, a huge amount of discussion. The only one that sticks, doesn't go, is the bill to do with regulating the shorelines. Now what happened there? You've got all these other pretty difficult issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I don't know. It seems like that was a tideland situation where in the state a lot of the tidelands were privately owned. And then the state had control of a lot of the other tidelands, and there were established rules and regulations of what you could and what you couldn't do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be like bulkheads and things like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then it had to do with oyster lands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right back to territorial days that was a big thing. Wasn't there something about some court case to do with Lake Chelan, the land around Lake Chelan, so this was fresh as well as salt water shorelines. That some property owners there had issues with this, and also around Lake Ozette—apparently there were some private property owners that weren't too keen on this new form of regulation. And that some legislators who had those places in their districts peeled off and voted against the bill; you couldn't quite go that far.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that part of the issue, but I'm sure that it had to do with regulations and control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just too many people involved to come to a decision?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think those people who were opposed for various reasons, you put them all together and it represented quite a block.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You went so far as to have a House Resolution that asked for a study of the issue by the Legislative Council. So you kind of put it off to one side, you don't get rid of it or anything but you study it more, which did something because within a year this passed. So I don't know if more people were brought on board or you reconfigured what you were going to do there or what, but it passed in 1971, just not with the other bills that sailed through this session.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the whole thing kind of hinged on property rights.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can imagine. Another thing that called for more study was the concern about oil spills. All kinds of tankers were entering the Puget Sound—had one happened yet? Or had perhaps there been some small spills with some kind of warning that this was an issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think that they recognized with the new refineries in the Puget Sound area, that it was real concern and the traffic of large tankers down through the Straights really could cause some problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, there are some rough currents in there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The potential is fairly great. I was just wondering if there had been any oil spills.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, it seemed like there was an oil spill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Department of Ecology was set up, a regulatory agency, then you created the Pollution Control Hearings Board which regulated the regulators in a way. But did that help people set up this new body of regulators in that there would be some other body to go to for appeals? That it wasn't a one-stop deal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think that had some effect but I'm not sure that it was a determining factor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that unusual or would it be modeled on... you've got the Department of Revenue and then a Tax Appeal Commission, but would that be a model for this where you have a regulatory agency and then you have some other body that people can go to on appeal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think in this period of time there were a number of those set up, Industrial Insurance Appeals Board, well I can't think but it seems like there were a whole handful of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, these things go in tandem, every time you have this regulating group, you've got to have an appeals board of some sort?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, and I think that more and more of public was demanding some sort of an oversight in these regulatory rules and regulations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did pass, also, the surface mining act to regulate strip mining—mostly gravel mines, not—sometimes when you say strip mining, people think of coal. But they seemed to be more concerned with gravel pits and that sort of thing and restoring areas: erosion and waste running off and just the general mess that they cause and that the land had to be restored in some sense.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then there was the siting of nuclear facilities, and I guess this was a new thing,

taking into consideration the environmental impact. Say, if you wanted to build a nuclear power plant, you couldn't just put it anywhere; people had to think about the safety issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** What effect it was going to have on the area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you said that they weren't yet thinking about the nuclear waste issue, just the siting of the actual plant?

And then there was the creation of the Washington State Agency for Outdoor Recreation. That's not quite an ecological issue but it's part of the taking care of the environment and rising awareness. I understand that they helped create a system of trails, different kinds, to separate the hiking trails from the ones where people go with the motorcycles.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And the horse people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Off-road vehicles, oh and the horses, yes, you wouldn't want to mix all of those populations. So this was a new activity, then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you remember much about that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, except that there was kind of a stand-off between these groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did someone have it all and others were trying to keep them at bay?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, the motorized vehicles were, I think, the most controversial.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They had the biggest impact.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, but the hikers and the horse people pretty much worked out their own problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, I suppose they could coexist a little easier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a new trend, off-road vehicles and, I guess what I want to call dirt bikes. But was that a new recreational field developing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was trying to think when snow-mobiles started to come into the picture, I suppose about now.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably the same time, there were a few around but it wasn't as wide spread.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be part of this group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that it developed into that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On quite a different note but still an environmental impact, around this time the federal government wanted to ship containers of nerve gases from Okinawa in Japan through Washington State to a facility, I believe, in Oregon where they were going to either store them or decommission them or whatever one does with them. That caused quite an uproar; do you remember that discussion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know that there was some talk about that and a lot of opposition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a House resolution against it. I understand that it stayed alive on the national level as well, where Senator Henry Jackson got involved and managed to persuade President Nixon that shipping these gases through the Port of Seattle was not a good idea, because apparently Seattle had experienced several

bombings and demonstrations against the Vietnam War and he considered that area just too volatile. And he was able to persuade the President that that was not the way to go. So that calmed down a lot of people.

That kind of takes kind of a lot of the environmental type issues of that session. One of the other big issues that you had to deal with was unemployment compensation that had been left over from the previous session. You were, principally, I guess, fighting with the Senate version. The Senate Democrats had an expanded version and then it came to the House, it was a fairly bi-partisan response. You had people from both sides of the aisle not jumping on the Senate band wagon. A substitute bill was written, there were a lot of amendments, a lot of floor action, and I gather a lot of behind-the-scenes discussion. And then in the end you passed an unemployment insurance bill, Senate Bill 8, much amended. And at the end of the discussion, Tom Copeland got up and under the guise of a personal privilege motion and said, "On behalf of the House, I want to congratulate the four major persons that helped put this unemployment compensation bill together. The time they devoted to it was far more than we have ever asked a group of legislators to do. They have done this at the sacrifice of their own legislative duties, I think. Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Charette, Mr. Morrison, and the Speaker deserve our real thanks." So, what did you do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, we met day after day after day, this group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You four?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, plus senators and the governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would labor people have been involved in this discussion and business groups?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, at the outset we set some ground rules that we weren't, as members of this

group, to go out after we convened and talk to either labor or management people. And the Republicans on the committee adhered right to that, the Democrats would go out of the meeting and—bam—they'd meet with Joe Davis and tell them exactly what had transpired and whether he approved of it or disapproved of it and then the next time we met they'd do just what Joe wanted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They'd get their marching orders?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you deal with that? It sounds frustrating.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, we just kept our eye on the target. And the governor, of course, was directly involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that unusual?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, yes, I think it was, on this scale.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He wanted, as he said, to lift the whole discussion out of what he calls "a political morass." All his statements about this issue sound frustrated, trying to be more statesmen-like, trying to lift it up out of this very stuck position that apparently this whole discussion had been in for a while.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But unfortunately our friends in the business community were really unhappy because they felt that the Republicans in this group had sold them down the river.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it have been better if you had not kept your pledge and done like the Democrats and gone to your group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it would have helped.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And at least allowed them to feel listened to?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it would have put some backbone in the Republican group to stand up to these positions that were pretty liberal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So why did you keep your half of the bargain?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, as I look back I wonder that myself.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it because you were trying to have a different kind of discussion so you had to keep your word on that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I think that we were trying to play by the rules that had been set up and I think the governor kind of folded on us, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He went a little bit too far the other way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So what was the compromise you reached?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know that the level of payments got more substantial, something like from forty-two dollars to seventy dollars.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite an issue, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the formula for where that money came from changed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I think that cost business quite a little more in contributions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did business get anything out of this deal? It's pretty hard to strike a bargain when there's only one side.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I can't think of anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you just so eager to get an agreement that you gave them what they wanted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that this was the last big issue for the session and everybody was snarly and wanted to get the thing closed out and go home.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, it's near the end. What skills did you bring to the table to help with these negotiations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I don't think that I brought anything in this situation. Sid Morrison was probably our key person from the Republican House side, and then, of course, the governor was sort of the chairman although there weren't any official designations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you help just keep it moving along, keep the conversation going?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I didn't do as much as I should have as I look back.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you pretty upset by this, did you have a hard time staying on board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, yes. I was concerned because I had always been fairly close to the business organizations and being in business myself I knew the impact would be considerable, particularly on small businesses. And I just felt that we should have had the opportunity to discuss the items with the business side of the coin and that really didn't happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that part of your role there was to represent that community?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I divorced myself from that. I just felt that we were here to try to work out a

program that was going to be fair and they pushed hard for labor's position but we weren't speaking for business at all, we were just kind of there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you trying to be like the honest brokers or something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I suppose you can say that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did this leave a bad taste in your mouth when it finally went through?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, yes. I wasn't really too happy with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People called this a huge accomplishment, but it's hard to measure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think what they're talking about there is the fact that something was done even if it was wrong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that later you could tinker with it, and change it, and improve it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I hadn't thought in those terms, but I think that it was changed later.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this one of those things where you figured a half loaf is better than nothing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I'd say I probably figured that a half loaf was too much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In this case. Well, it's interesting because you came back later, when you were out of the Legislature and worked on these issues so we'll have to pick this thread up later in your career to see what you did with this issue.

Was part of the urgency, the push for this the beginning of the Boeing bust? You had a surge in unemployment—did that add some weight to what you were doing here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I'm sure. You know, a lot of our problems today I can attribute to the anti-business climate in this state. And there's been a lot said, you know, and it's gone around and around and around but I think that has a considerable effect on keeping business here or attracting new business. I think that we've just gone too far with all of our regulations at all levels. It's not just at the state level, it's the county and the local communities that have piled on all of these requirements.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This would be a piece of that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Boeing bust is a little bit hard to date. To back up a bit, they were awarded the federal contract for the supersonic transport plane, which was going to be this fabulous new kind of airplane, about December, 1966. They had a new design for the wing and beat out the competition and got the contract. But soon after that they started to have technical difficulties and experienced a lot of cost overruns and delays. Things were not going too smoothly. Finally, in December of 1970, the US Senate canceled the contract—I don't know if that was a sudden, unexpected action or if people could see this coming. At any rate, we experienced a huge blow to the Boeing Company which then rippled back into the community.

Boeing was already, by attrition, reducing its workforce. By July of '69, they revealed that they had let go or not filled or one way or another had let twelve-thousand of their employee slots disappear. That's quite a few people. So, they were slowing down and then, of course, pulling the plug on the SST, thousands of people lost their jobs. Within less than a year, the unemployment rate jumped to ten percent. The national rate was 4.5%. It rose as high as 13.8%. In a fairly small period of time the impact was pretty severe and it took years for the Puget Sound area economy to recover from that blow.

There was a House resolution calling for the Congress and president to help the state, to rethink, I guess, their "policy," or give the state some help, some money. I'm not really clear what you were asking for. Did the state think it couldn't do much about this? Why did they just turn to the federal people? Was it just too late for the state to deal with it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were many people who felt that way. I think the feeling was that it was a situation that was larger than just something the state could tackle. There was a lot of talk about the business climate generally, and I think in the state there was always a feeling that all they had to do was to call Magnuson and Jackson on the phone and everything would be taken care of. I'll tell you, we had relied on Senators Jackson and Magnuson for so many years to bail us out and go to the federals, and on the big one they failed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Often that had been the case.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They certainly knew which rocks to look under and if there was money to be had, they could usually get a chunk of it for the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What could they have done, or should they have done? What was the state wishing would happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that there was anything that you could put your finger on. But the fact that Congress stepped in and canceled the SST project in the state, I think had a big effect.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they do it sort of precipitously with no warning? They were tracking the problems, but there was no thought in Congress, as to what would happen back home?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall of any public talk of the consequences.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could they have turned around and found Boeing another contract to maybe soften the blow a bit? I don't know what else was in the pipeline.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't either, and it just seemed to me that Boeing over the years had been pretty successful, and it just cut them right off on this project because they may have had a few little glitches in the road.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was pretty severe.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it catch the state unaware? You had this huge problem all of a sudden, or could you see this coming?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I certainly couldn't, and I don't know, it seems to me that Boeing didn't have too much of a warning, or at least there's no indication that they had any idea that this was going to happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the federal government help you in any way when you suddenly had an overwhelming unemployment load—and probably the need for social services that must have skyrocketed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any great hue and cry or any attempt to at least look at the problem and what can we do in the state to take up some of the slack?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you, as a caucus or as a Legislature, read about this and talk about it, or did you have any kind of discussion about what you could do or how to absorb this adverse event?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any general discussion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it like a dark shadow over what you were trying to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There certainly wasn't as much said as there is now with our economic problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did the government not play such a role then in economic matters?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I doubt there was as much emphasis placed on it as there is today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's interesting because in this time period you do all these really progressive, exciting proactive things. At the same time when the history books talk about this era, it's "doom and gloom" and the end of life as we know it. It's quite a contradiction. Was the state's economy dangerously dependant on military contracts at this stage?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was to the extent that Boeing was pretty much a military supplier. Their commercial division was not any great shakes and I don't think they were too competitive in the commercial market. But they gradually got into that more fully and I think it was strengthened and they picked up and have since done a good job in supplying commercial aircraft.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It just strikes me, when you were talking about Senators Jackson and Magnuson, was the heavy military presence in Washington State directly related to their ability to bring home the bacon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Both of them were pretty much military oriented, and I think they both felt that military installations in the state were a great thing, and economically meant a great deal to the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly that whole circle in the Seattle, Bremerton, McChord Air Force

Base, Fort Lewis, there's a whole swath of them right there. As well as in Spokane. I'm wondering now if that actually weakened the economy here so that when you had something like the Boeing bust, it really hit hard. Maybe we'd have been better served to diversify our economy a little bit more.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure if that were possible, but once you get into something it's pretty hard to back off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it worked well for many years.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it looked good for the future, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Although it does kind of go up and down. There's no local control over the economy at all. I guess that's the sort of shadow side of those money horses. They're not always there and you can't do anything about it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have no control over it. No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As a state representative, would you feel more or less helpless to address this issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There really wasn't too much that you could do at the state level. Like so many things, when they're going right you just don't pay too much attention to, well, what if?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had held some conferences. I remember when you were on the Legislative Council there were some discussion about "let's get some other kinds of businesses in here."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There has always been a lot of talk about diversification, but you just can't snap your fingers and have it done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. It really took a whole new industry that didn't even exist then to evolve, electronics and the computer industry.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And then we're such a strong union state that there seemed to be all these roadblocks and requirements that sometimes are pretty hard to meet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Gradually, the state did climb out of this hole, but it took years. I think you got some federal help, but maybe too little, too late. It just had to work itself out. So was that like a shadow over those last years for you, the economy was weak and it's perhaps a little harder to be creative in those times?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you know you didn't hear a lot of gloom and doom talk or wringing of hands. I think most people felt that the state could work itself out of this particular problem and it looked as though there was going to be some federal assistance and so it wasn't a matter as though the whole industry or the whole state economy was going to disappear.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Boeing was a bit of a boom and bust company all along, wasn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They had their ups and downs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Bringing thousands of people in and then letting them go. They still do that, although the latest trend seems to be more final. You can't really picture them bringing hundreds back.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that era is over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Back to the usual cares of the session, then. We talked earlier about the creation of the Department of Ecology, but you created an even larger agency that session which was the Department of Social and Health Services. What did you think of this development of large umbrella type agencies? Did that seem more efficient?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At that time I felt that made sense. But now that we've had some experience, I'm not so sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there resistance to it? Or were people excited by this idea?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was certainly some opposition from the employees who were involved in the various agencies that were going to be consolidated. In the Legislature I don't know that there was a lot of opposition. It wasn't particularly visible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was something people were willing to try?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why was DSHS then so different from the Department of Transportation? Why did it make sense to bring together these agencies—and there were quite a few of them—but not the Department of Transportation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the department, as far as their administration and management, were probably more influential with legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Than Transportation was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Transportation was more than the departments involved in the DSHS consolidation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it because there's so much money wrapped up in highways? Everybody's got them, or wants them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's that. And then, of course, from a lobbying standpoint, you not only had the department, but you also had the major contractors who rely on the construction contracts and so on. So it's a pretty powerful lobby that you're dealing with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And would they be against it just because they don't like change or for some other reasons? Why would a Department of Transportation be threatening to them? They'd still be building highways.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think the average citizen always seems to have in the back of his mind that big is not always better. Personally, I was more in favor of the proposal for a Department of Transportation than I was for the Department of Social and Health Services. I knew that DSHS and the agencies that were involved really needed some attention because they—particularly the Department of Welfare as it was originally known—I think got to be way out of hand and that was so visible at the local level that people, I think, were really beginning to get up in arms about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It couldn't be reformed as was, it had to be rebuilt, from the ground up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's why I say that I think if I had to do it again I would not be really in favor of the consolidation. And they have split off some of the agencies—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Department of Health, the Department of Corrections?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even, I believe, Veterans Affairs used to be part of it and was carved back out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. I know in Mount Vernon where they had a fairly large office there, and the talk on the street was that the people who work for the Department of Welfare were down in the restaurants and cafés drinking coffee and visiting, and it was so visible that I think a lot of the average citizens said, "What are these people doing?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the idea that it would be reformed as well as brought together for better coordination? That other new things would happen at the same time, and that the whole structure, not just what they actually did in the offices, would change at the same time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think reorganization was certainly a factor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it the tool to create a new entity as well as just rework how it was organized?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. At least that my impression.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did Dan Evans have a different approach how the institutions should be organized as compared to Governor Rosellini? Did he want to do new things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. It seemed to me that he always gave department heads pretty much a free rein. He may have had some suggestions that he would make to the agencies. But that department got so big and so unwieldy that it was just a real problem as to how to get a handle on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know that Governor Rosellini did great work in bringing the institutions back up to accreditation and reforming some almost medieval conditions. But I've read that Dan Evans thought that it was actually better to return people more to their communities and that the large institutions had maybe seen their day. That institutional care was not the most modern treatment. That community-based services were better.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement. I think the trend was beginning to evolve where a lot of these things should be handled at the local level.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you need something like DSHS to accomplish that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so. I suppose that just from a mechanical standpoint it would probably be easier, at least on paper, but it all comes down to what kind of people you have. What kind of supervisors and what kind of people out on the line?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know how many worked there, but it must have been a large number. I'm not sure how any organizational chart captures all that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's kind of difficult. The reorganization bill passed and the agency was created that year and embarked on its work of refashioning itself. By then you were out of the Legislature, but I imagine it took several years to accomplish the full reorganization.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't follow it too closely, but I'm sure that with the magnitude of that reorganization that it would take a lot of massaging and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Meetings. Meetings. I picture a lot of meetings!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would take a real effort. But that's one of the big turning points in that government reorganization effort. In trying to solve social problems, you created different agencies and different models for how to do that.

Another thing you looked at in this very intense and short session was the passage of a bill to enable local governments to raise revenue on their own a little more effectively. That seemed like a quintessential Republican initiative—keeping things on the local level if possible and giving them the means to support their programs.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that had a lot of support around the state from city and county administrators, because so many times the Legislature will pass a bill requiring local entities to do certain things but don't give them the financial means to carry them out. Or, provide enough money to do it for a biennium and then walk away from it and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the rule's still there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And so the local entity would have to figure out how they were going to carry the program on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's again discussion about lowering the voting age and the age of majority. I think that actually was accomplished a couple of years after this.

Another issue that percolated for awhile before it was accomplished was introduced that session. Reverend McKinney from Seattle came down and gave a talk to the Legislature about Martin Luther King, Jr. He spoke on his work and accomplishments and called for a state holiday commemorating his birth date. I believe that was the first time that idea was expressed to the Legislature. Do you remember him coming and speaking? Did you as Speaker have anything to do with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As I recall, Sam Smith was probably the starter on that. Reverend McKinney was quite an influential person, particularly in the Seattle area. He was fairly outspoken on issues.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a moving presentation? Do you remember it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember he was there, but I don't really remember too much about the content of his remarks. But I'm sure that they were very forceful and very well thought out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that was a good idea? It was a fairly new idea.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Without being termed a racist, I just didn't think that we ought to be proliferating holidays. How are you going to handle the school schedule? How are you going to handle state employees? Is this going to be another day off with pay? There are a lot of things that are involved. And I just didn't feel that we needed another statewide holiday. But the federal government took care of that, so—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know how people really celebrate that day. It's commemorated officially and events are held in different communities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to me it has just become an opportunity for protestors to get together and for whatever the cause, get out and rally. I'm sure that in the black communities it's a very important event and that's, I think, very worthwhile. That has some merit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess he was not actually asking you to do anything on the spot, he was just there making the presentation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Planting the seed. I didn't realize that almost immediately people were calling for that. King had died the previous year, and there was a chance for people to remember him and talk about his deeds. His impact on the country.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then you switched gears almost immediately, as often happened. There was a delegation from Nebraska who had come to study your data processing system. Everybody welcomed them and they said a few words and you say a few kind words to them, and then off they go. Your whole day appeared to be like that as Speaker—what's the next thing? Do you remember much about them coming?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We frequently had delegations of people from out of state coming in to look at something or another and meet with department heads.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Washington State at this stage, 1970, still a leader in data processing for other states?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they were still right up there with the leaders.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For people from Nebraska to come all the way out here rather than somewhere a little closer, I wondered if Washington had kept its lead in how they used computers.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we've always been in the forefront of the electronic age.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Again, talking about the variety that you dealt with: a little later in that session there was a Resolution Thirty-one, signed by a whole slew of legislators, talking about the Boston Patriots and wanting to bring them to Washington. Steal the team, basically. They were trying to get a stadium and there were a lot of other issues.

You make your own remark on this. I want you to tell me what was going on behind the scenes. You claim the Speaker's privilege, and you say, "Mr. O'Brien, I hope that you recognize how lenient I was this morning in allowing this resolution to even be considered. I hope this will forestall any more letters to me from you and your group. We've had a policy that resolutions shall be brought to the desk twenty-four hours in advance of being introduced. We've tried to keep resolutions down to one a day. I have taken down all those barriers, and I just hope you appreciate how kind I am this morning." Were you getting inundated with letters and calls about The Patriots? What did they want you to do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** This group was interested in trying to promote a local organization that would raise money and make an offer and try to get a team here in the state. But it was all kind of tied into getting a new stadium.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this be the Kingdome? Why would they be funneling all this to you? What power does the Speaker have to make or break this particular plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** None. Except that if they don't think their local legislator can help them much, then they'll go to the top just to get their views known.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All of this pressure was just to get this resolution read?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was the beginning. That was just a foot in the door.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is to kind of get them established? How important are these resolutions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that they're really all that effective. It just gives somebody a chance to blow off a little steam and maybe get a little press in their district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They don't make anything happen, do they? They're just a speech, more or less? A record?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's about it, yes. I don't think they have a great deal of effect.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** After you get one printed, does anything happen, or it's just a statement of a wish?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The group or individual that's behind it may go from there and expand their efforts. But as far as the Legislature as a body, I don't think that there's been much effort to support resolutions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess I don't quite understand them. Do you vote on them, or they're just a record? What happens with a resolution?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily, they're directed to someone or somebody. Could be to the Congress or the president or to the governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This one was to be forwarded to the president and members of the Board of Regents of the University of Washington, and Mr. B. Sullivan of the Boston Patriots, the team owner, presumably. Would this, I would hate to say, put the "fear of God" into these people, or is this some kind of window dressing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's just to try to get an acknowledgment to them that this is what we'd like to see in the state of Washington.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And this august body, the House of Representatives, is behind this. But you seem to be trying to put the brakes on these particular statements.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think a lot of it was that I was just trying to dig John O'Brien a little.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just a little! He returned the sally. He says, "Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment you on your tolerance this morning. I know that you had passed to another order of business, but I think you are a big man and you see the largeness of the resolution and the importance and magnitude of it." So he sounded almost like he's laughing at himself as well. And then you dig back a little at him. Did you have that kind of semi-jocular relationship with him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But it wasn't planned on either one of our parts. It just kind of happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Several times during this session you gave little progress reports because you're trying to move things along. You had quite

a stiff deadline here, and you kept commending the representatives for their hard work and their diligence. Was that kind of like a little pep talk?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also a reminder—“Let’s keep moving along here?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I guess I’m inclined to get a little impatient with things not moving as they should.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel this resolution was a waste of time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, except that I recognized that it’s just part of the system and you’ve got to deal with it, but let’s do it and get it over with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was just interesting seeing you in action. This was a session where we can really see the Speaker in yourself, pushing and moving things along and reminding people that you have a deadline and keeping it going.

Just one more thing that I wanted to ask you about for this session—it’s actually another resolution by several of the women members—House Resolution 56 brought forward by Representatives Hurley, Wojahn, McCormick, Kirk, North, McCaffree and Lynch. A real mixture from both sides of the aisle. They were asking that the State Arts Commission make a study about the governor’s mansion. And the way this was written, it sounds like they favored a brand new building, tearing down the old mansion and starting fresh with a new design, a new house. I knew that some people had talked about this, but I didn’t realize it was an actual resolution. They wanted a report to the next session for the best location for the governor’s mansion, the possibility of constructing a new one, the design of the mansion including an architectural style and other matters, calling upon the Arts Commission to spearhead this new move. I gather

this was before Nancy Evans really got her campaign to renovate the old mansion together. Was this the spur that made her campaign take off?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it certainly had some influence on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had there been much talk about tearing down the old mansion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t think among legislators it was discussed very much. I tell you, I think that the artsy people always ran up a red flag, and there were a lot of legislators that once you mentioned the arts community, why they’d just kind of shake their heads and say, that isn’t going to go anyplace.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was curious why these were all women. Were they supposedly more interested in that sort of thing than male legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably. And that’s a pretty substantial group there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly. I was wondering whose idea it was, and if it was one of these women legislators’ idea or if someone approached them and thought it would be nice?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really don’t know. It could be almost any one of those individually, but I’m not sure just who was out in front on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly some of these legislators were quite close to Governor Evans and I wondered if he had any feelings one way or the other about the mansion, or if that idea came later that perhaps they ought to save it and fix it up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just don’t have any inclination as to how that all fell together. I always kind of looked at things from the fiscal standpoint and it

seemed to me that the location was good and as a facility it seemed to be adequate. I think my gut feeling was, yes, we ought to keep it and do whatever's necessary to modernize it and bring it up to a good standard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was said to be in quite a state of disrepair and needed a lot of work. Maybe somebody penciled it out and thought it would be easier to build a new one—that it was a bit of a draw.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Almost with any project you have to look at whether it's better to tear a structure down and start over, or whether to renovate and rebuild and rejuvenate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Should the governor's mansion be saved as an historic building, or does that not play in any of the calculations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't have any, and didn't then either, have any strong feeling about it. In a lot of states the governor's mansion is far removed from the center of government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose not many governors live right on the grounds. Though it's quite handy when they do, I imagine.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, there've been a lot of changes in transportation and the convenience of the workplace. I presume in the beginning that was a consideration, because the governor could actually just walk right across the driveway and almost virtually into his office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Isn't there a tunnel that goes from the Governor's mansion into the Legislative Building somehow? Or maybe that's a legend, I don't know.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. But I know it's very convenient for him to just go out the side door of the mansion and down the steps and right across—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like a mailman. Neither snow, nor sleet, can keep him from his job. Although I wonder if he felt like he was always at work? If you live right practically in your office, it's always with you. Although it's very handy for receptions and things of that kind.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. And it's a great building for that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So after you had some big legislative happening you could just all move over there to the mansion and have your event?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were lots of receptions there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Breakfasts, I imagine, with your meetings and things without too much running around. Pretty handy.

We could probably go on and on talking about the Legislature, but this really was your last session. You accomplished an enormous amount of work in this session. A good way to end your career. Maybe now is the time to talk about your feelings about retiring from the Legislature and just what the whole experience meant to you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was quite surprised when I got the word of my appointment to the Liquor Board, and the governor actually had wanted me to start immediately after we adjourned and I just felt I couldn't possibly do that with my business and my family and taking on a new responsibility. So I asked him if I could have thirty days after the session before I actually started.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even that is not very long considering all what you had to do.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was quite a chore.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Before we actually dive into your appointment I would like you to reflect a little bit about your accomplishments in the Legislature. How you felt about that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I felt good about my tenure in the Legislature and I always felt that I had started out at a good time being in the majority and then going through the terms of being in the minority and in some sessions being *really* in the minority. And then seeing the tide change and gradually building back up to a majority and then I served as caucus chairman prior to being elected Speaker. So I think that I had the chance to grow with the system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see. You came in with Langlie and went out with Evans. That's a lot of change.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The big change was between Langlie and Rosellini.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. The whole postwar rethinking of what government should do and how it was going to do it. These years see some of the biggest changes that there were.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's very true. A lot of things happened. And I think the makeup of the Legislature changed considerably during those years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you characterize that? Not just individuals, but types of individuals?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was fairly conservative under Langlie during that period, although there are a lot of liberals and moderates in the Republican side of the political spectrum. And then Governor Rosellini, I think, became more conservative as he got into his term. Then of course, when Dan Evans was elected governor he was pretty much a moderate-to-liberal and a lot of his requests for legislation reflected that. I think, by and large, at least the House was fairly balanced. Then in later years it began to turn more conservative again and then—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it kind of—people had been brought along pretty quickly and then there's a bit of a reaction?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was some of that, but I think it started with the John Birch Society that brought a lot of new people in, and while they made kind of a big splash there weren't a lot of them who stayed on and it gradually just faded out. But then you had the advent of quote, the Christian right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that already appearing here, or was that later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's later, but you could begin to see the trend a little bit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the Goldwater people were the early precursors of that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or at least that's how people look at it now. I don't know how they looked at it then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He was looked at as a pretty ultra-conservative. But he had a lot of support from the business community because he was a business person himself.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he didn't bring in the Christian part, did he? I don't recall him couching things in religious terms particularly.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not particularly. And I don't think that he brought those people in around him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I remember the discussion about Dick Christensen who ran for governor in the primary against Dan Evans the first time. He was definitely reaching out to those people. Perhaps that's one of the first articulations of that point of view.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think probably that's right in this state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I associate that development more with the early eighties with the Reagan years. Of the coming together of the conservative voters with the religious viewpoint, with the political. The more evangelical part of the church.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you see that coming though?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the religious factor was beginning to become more evident, and the people who supported that philosophy were becoming more outspoken.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even as early as 1970?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did you think of that trend?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't see it as a threat. I just figured it was one of those things that would become a part of the system and hopefully those people could be just interwoven into the structure of, particularly, the Parties.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Without necessarily transforming the Parties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I just thought they could be integrated and become a part and have their say, and some of the things that they supported could probably be adopted and worked into Party platforms and general operational procedures.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think it worked that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. It was a struggle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are they like any new group in politics? Finding their voice? Finding their legs? Where they come on pretty strong and then afterwards kind of moderate their views a bit and fit in a little bit more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose it's like a new generation. Or I suppose even when the Dan Evans Republicans came in they may have ruffled a few feathers or came on a little strong. I don't know if it's quite the equivalent.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But the appearance is, I think, pretty much the same.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd been in the Legislature since the early fifties. Were you now the "old guard" and the next generation was coming along pushing on you? You had been part of the reforming group and the vanguard and now were you the thing to push against?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably. Although I think that's fair to say because those of us who came in early and stayed for any length of time probably questioned and were concerned about the next group coming along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it always a bit that way? Their clothes are a little funny or their haircuts aren't quite like yours. And you were probably that way when you first came in, for the group who had been there and been the warriors and then there were you young upstarts coming in.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But that's one of the good things about the system is that you do have that turnover and you have new ideas coming along. And new people and retirements and deaths always have quite an influence on a body like the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it all about who is there and how they interact?

**Mr. Eldridge:** So much depends on the individual players.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Remember, when you first went, you were going to look after the issues of small businessmen and put that voice into the mix that your father, for one, had thought was missing. Did you feel that you had done that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I don't think there were any major changes, but I think just the awareness was more evident. And I think that there were a number of us who were small business people in the Legislature in those early days, and I think that we were successful in slowing down a lot of things. I think that we were reasonably successful.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you were going to go to your next adventure, did you feel fairly good and satisfied about what your tenure had been?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the Legislature over that period of time had done a reasonably good job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you surprise yourself by how high you had risen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, it was so gradual that I really didn't look at the trajectory with any degree of certainty as to how it happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's nice to go out at the top though.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There's a certain amount of satisfaction. And, you know, my first couple of years in the Legislature if anyone had said you're someday going to be Speaker, I would have thought they were ready for the loony bin.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's something to be said for longevity and just being there and taking the jobs and moving up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a great experience, and I have always said it's unfortunate that every person in the state couldn't serve a term in the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Obviously, it changed your life. But what do you think you learned? What would be—if you were going to go and speak to a group of people and say “as a legislator this is what I learned?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** The key word is compromise. And just as a personal experience it's a great one. Just being involved in state government and working with really a great bunch of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. All the people you met and had a chance to know.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Legislators take an awful lot of guff, but, by and large, they're all good people, and I think they're all conscientious and in most instances objective and are trying to do the best that they know how for the state and for their constituency, particularly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there some darker lessons?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think from my standpoint, I hate to say it, but I think there were a number of occasions where to get along, you went along. It's unfortunate that it sometimes comes down to that. As I look back now on some of the major decisions that I made, I wish I could go back and do it over again. You think you have all of the information you need to make decisions, but you never do. And things change so fast that it's almost impossible to make those decisions with any degree of reliability.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there particular things that you were proud of, though, that you'd like to remember and be remembered for?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that I had the ability as caucus chairman to be a good leader and mediator. I think I was fair as a Speaker.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is there any legislation, or things of that nature, that had your name on them that you would like to mention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because I made it a point not to have my name on a lot of things. I didn't feel that success was on the number of bills you introduced or even the number that you got passed. I think that if you considered yourself as part of a team, and that everything was a cooperative effort to do the best job possible, then that would be the goal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I have some quotes about you as Speaker that I wanted to read. This was actually said on the occasion of your appointment to the Liquor Control Board, and various people in the Senate, the approving body, made speeches about you.

This is one by Senator Durkan who in these years was not in the House with you, but he seemed to know a great deal about you. He noted that you had been a member of the Legislature for eighteen years. And then he said, "He has been a tough competitor. He has been a good Speaker. There are many of us who have differed with him over the years on his philosophy, but not on the manner in which he has gone about enforcing it. He has always at least listened. He has not responded many times, but that is the philosophy and that is the manner in which the Legislature operates sometimes." Do you know what he meant by that? That you would listen, but then you would just take your own counsel and walk away and do what you were going to do anyway?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. He's pretty forthright.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "Being Speaker of the House of Representatives is not an easy job. It is

probably the hardest position that a man can occupy in the halls of the Legislature. He has to be somewhat of a dictator." Did you agree with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you have to, to some extent. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "He has to be a father. He has to be a persuader. He has to be a philosopher, and at the same time he has to be the leader of his Party." That's a lot of hats.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you look at it this way, too, somewhat?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that kind of outlines the job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then he says, "I would be the first to admit that Don Eldridge has been a good Speaker for the Republican Party. I would be the first to admit that Don Eldridge has been a tough competitor for the Republican Party, but so be it."

So his compliments to you are somewhat partisan, but he was acknowledging that you were a leader. It's interesting that he twice calls you a tough competitor.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think that's because he's so tough.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was fairly competitive himself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that's what he's looking for there. So these are the kinds of things that people said about your Speakership. The comment that you always at least listened, and also that you were fair, has also been said again and again in different remarks.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I hope that that's what I would have referred to. I did want to be fair, and I did want to listen. Even though I didn't agree with people I wanted to at least let them get their thoughts out on the table.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Several times in the Journals there are remarks from you as Speaker to the effect: "All right, I'll give you a chance. Give your talk and let's move along."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And you can do that. As long as you've got the votes, why they can talk all they want to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you did gavel them into position. You didn't let them go on and on.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. But you know what they say: "When you're in the minority, talk. When you're in the majority, vote."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At least you gave them the chance to talk. You weren't completely cutting them off at the knees.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The reporter for the *Tacoma News Tribune* had a piece about me and he went on at some length to talk about my being fair. Did you have the Journal discussion about my appointment? Now, I can't recall. Were there any objections?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not that appear in the Journal. Maybe behind closed doors or somewhere else. But the message from the governor appointing you came February 6 and he asked for the Senate confirmation. And then it was referred to the Committee on Liquor Control. Senator Harry Lewis got up—and maybe you can explain this to me—on a point of personal privilege, and said: "I would just like to speak very briefly, Mr. President. I had hoped that this appointment by the governor could have been handled quickly on the floor because Don Eldridge is Speaker of

the House of Representatives. I do, however, respect the wishes of the majority who have the control over this confirmation, and their wishes to assign it to committee, and hope that we will see speedy action on it." Could it have been possible not to send it to committee? To just confirm you immediately?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. You can do that. You'd have to suspend the rules.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But had they chosen to, this would have been possible, but they chose to put you through the ropes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to be interviewed or go before them in any way? Did you have to write a resume?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had Senator Greive and a couple of his henchmen call on me, and he indicated that he was going to be able to control whether I was appointed or not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was probably the case.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And there were a few things that he thought maybe he'd want to talk to me about after I was appointed, if I was appointed. I just told him, "Just vote me up or vote me down, but don't leave me hanging there."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he want to trade votes or something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "If you do something for me, I'll do this for you?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He didn't spell it out as to what he really wanted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He didn't mention any particular thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any sense of what he was talking about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I really didn't. Because he's all over the lot.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that strike you as not terribly right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was kind of a veiled threat. But I really didn't pay attention too much to that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it unheard of for the Senate to turn down a governor's appointment for no particular reason? Could they do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, surely. They could do that. But I don't recall specifically of any instance where someone was turned down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this a distinct possibility, though?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I felt fairly confident that the Senate would approve my appointment. But you never know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they have to give a reason if they turned you down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not officially, but I'm sure that the press would want to know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder how they could explain such a thing. Would they have anything against you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You never know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true. However, four days later the committee reported back that you should be confirmed. Signed by Senators Walgren, who's the chair, Andersen, Connor, Henry, Herr, Holman, Knoblauch, Twigg and Woodall. And then it went to Rules and then the very next stage it came out of Rules and they affirmed that you should be appointed. And then Senator Durkan was the one who moved that the Senate consider your appointment. Various people, including Senator Durkan, got up and spoke in your favor, starting with Senator Atwood calling for your confirmation. Senator Harry Lewis, of course, was very supportive of you and was very hospitable, inviting you to move to Thurston County, his district, and saying that you would be a great asset to the community.

And then Senator Bailey said something somewhat curious, and this is where I think, perhaps, the Senator Greive story might fit in. He said, "I rise to support the confirmation of Don Eldridge, and I would like to make a comment from the majority caucus." He was caucus chair. He said, "There have been stories floating around here for several days and several weeks that we were dealing with Bingo, if you want, and taxes, and trying to trade this off for the Eldridge nomination. But anybody that picked up that bit of information did not really wait to find a reliable source to get it. They printed what they saw fit." I'm assuming he's talking about the press. "And they printed a bunch of trash. The majority caucus has never dealt with this nomination in any other way than to consider Don Eldridge individually, and as a good Speaker of the House, and a good member of the Legislature." Would Senator Bailey have been unaware of your meeting with Senator Greive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He could have been. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was a bit exercised about this because it doesn't look good. It sounds like there's been a lot of talk about using this appointment for gain on some other issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Trading purposes. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He sounds a little disgusted with that idea, or he was disowning it at any rate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever have any contact with any of these people, with the senators, other than that one meeting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, there was an interesting incident. The appointment had gone to Gordon Walgren's committee, and Harry Lewis went to Walgren and said, "Let's get the Eldridge appointment out and get it out of here." And Walgren said to Senator Lewis, "The appointment is in my desk drawer. If you can get it, out we'll act on it." So Harry trotted into Walgren's office and the drawer was locked. So he took an envelope opener and jimmied the lock, and when he pulled the envelope out it got caught and it tore the envelope and it kind of crumpled the whole thing. So this occurred, of course, before I knew anything about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was Walgren being facetious? And Harry Lewis really took him up on it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But it didn't end there. So Harry Lewis got the crumpled up envelope and paper and he got a big envelope from the supply deal and he put it in it. And then he emptied about four ashtrays of cigarette butts and everything in there, sealed it up and put 'To Speaker Eldridge. This is what the Senate thinks of your appointment,' and shipped it over to me in the House. He and Walgren were having a great time with this. They thought that was really funny.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they were just teasing you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. So, anyway, I dug the papers out of there and dumped the rest of it. And then, as you indicated there, it came out of the committee and passed the Senate. And you know I really didn't understand and I didn't recognize what was in there with all this junk. It was a real mess.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they just liked to poke at you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine this is not the usual practice.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But Harry Lewis was always kind of a jokester.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So coming from him, you kind of knew what this was all about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why was he so anxious about this? Or is he just having fun?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Both. I think he was a little concerned that maybe there'd be some static on the floor when the referral from the committee came out, and he just wanted to get an answer and not have it drag on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had the Democratic Senate been difficult about Evans' appointments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not particularly that I know of. I don't recall that there were any problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there something about you that was inflaming people? It just seems a little odd.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think if there was anything, it might be that there were some members of the Legislature who were kind of 'liquor oriented.' They were involved with taverns, and Class H licensees, and distillers and wineries, and whatever. You know. And I think they may have been a little apprehensive as how I would treat those groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're not exactly a teetotaler yourself. Was there something in your perspective that worried them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, I've always been active in the Boy Scouts and they may have kind of equated that to being anti alcohol.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Didn't you tell me that you also didn't want alcohol in the Speaker's office? Which may or may not have been an innovation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't have any alcohol in the Speaker's office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder if that was some signal, I don't know.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It might have been.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Obviously, Governor Evans was going to appoint a Republican. Somebody who would look at Liquor Control Board issues the way he wanted them to. Or at least somewhat along his lines. So, it might as well be you as someone else. I would think that they'd all be pretty similar kinds of people that he would appoint.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that's right. And the ironic thing is that when I was sworn in, Dan leaned over to me and he said, "I don't want to see your name in the paper after today." And then of course we were indicted just a few days after that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. At any rate, you were finally appointed. Just for the record, Senator Lowell Peterson spoke for you. And Senator Walgren, Senator Ryder, Senator Atwood, Senator Mardesich. It's really quite a little love-fest there. Again, Senator Mardesich went so far as to say, "I hesitate to say anything for fear of tarnishing the angelic image that we have created."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you present during all this, I imagine?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think that I was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You just got to hear about it afterwards? Your ears maybe were burning in the other House? Senator Mardesich went on to say, "I would support this if for no other reason because I would hate to break that record by having him with three consecutive terms as Speaker." In a way, the Democrats got to depose a Speaker—a sitting Republican Speaker—with this appointment and they might not have gotten rid of you any other way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that I had any real enemies over there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. It's all very affectionate. They did finally confirm you.

Just to finish this story, at the very end of session, *Sine Die*, traditionally, a committee from the House goes over to the Senate to announce that you're wrapping it up. You got to be part of that committee and you took that opportunity to thank them for approving your appointment. You say, "Congratulations to you for your discerning discrimination in the recent action that you took." Your appointment came to you on the very last day. There had been some talk that this might get put over until 1971. What would have happened to that position? It would have been vacant?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The outgoing commissioner would have had to stay on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall just when that term was up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was kind of a near thing. This is the last day of the session, and finally they gave it to you. That's one of the very last things they did.

**Mr. Eldridge:** If the Senate or any one member had made up their mind that they wanted to stop this or just squash it, it would have been very easy for them to do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you have been appointed and served unconfirmed and then be confirmed later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, during the '47 session when the Republicans had control, I had been appointed by Langlie to the Board of Trustees of Western. Wallgren had already appointed someone, but there wasn't a session at the time that person was appointed and so he was never confirmed. So Langlie appointed me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he withdraw that appointment? Does the next governor have that power?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was already in the hands of the Senate. So the first, I think, year, maybe year and a half, the other fellow and I both attended board meetings and we got along fine and there was no problem. But anyway, when I got to the session the Senate turned down his appointment and then considered mine and passed it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So then he stopped coming to meetings, presumably?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What a very awkward position.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, it was. But it worked out alright. But here again, it was just the individuals involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And just being patient with the circumstances?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pretty odd. So you could have been in the same situation again, except on the receiving end of it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's curious. You got the appointment, but let's look at what you had to do. You had to sell your business, right? You made the decision that you would move to Olympia?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I looked at a couple of houses and then finally determined that I probably didn't want to buy a place down here. Joe Mentor, who was in the Legislature from Bremerton, had purchased a small house on, I think it was Twentieth. He had renovated it somewhat and had been renting it and the renters moved out. He asked me if I would be interested, and I said, "Sure." And so I rented the little place from him and lived there for, I don't know, maybe a year.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you come by yourself at first?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had one child who was still in high school, who was a senior. Was that a bit of an awkward time to move?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a little hard. And I tell you, it was really difficult for my first wife. She had Jon, in particular, who was still in school. And then she worked with my mother in the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She must have carried the load of the business while you were down here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Actually my mother did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But your wife played a role there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it was a pretty disruptive appointment in a sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a lot of discussions about picking up sticks, or how did that work for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't a lot of discussion. Harriett had worked in the store off and on just helping out, and so she was somewhat acquainted with the business and the routine and all. And then both of my daughters had worked in the store.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel you had to sell your business? It would just be too much for your mother alone?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You know, it's just difficult to do things long distance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd been proving that over the years, I imagine.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just was most difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was trying to think what would be the alternative? I suppose hiring a manager and struggling along that way, or—I'm just not sure what your choices were.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You really don't have too many. And in a small business people really want to see the owner. Vendors and customers and business people on the main street, they just expect to see the owner of the business and deal directly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this hard for you? It's a real change of life for you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it was difficult. And I'd try to get home every weekend and spend time in the store, and then there was always a certain amount of things at home that needed attention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As Speaker, I imagine that got more and more difficult. You wouldn't necessarily be free to go home on the weekends.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. There were a lot of times where there'd be meetings or appointments with people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you getting tired? This was a lot to carry.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know I sure would today if I was, but, no, I didn't really feel tired or pressured.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were in the prime of your life?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a good time to be doing something like this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had this appointment not come along, would you have happily gone back to Mount Vernon and reintegrated into the community and business activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Rotary Club? Would that have been the probable outcome? You were worried about being re-elected, either imminently or sooner or later.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just had that feeling during those years that the opposition was building up and that it would be difficult to be re-elected.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I notice in the next election both Duane Berentson and your replacement whose name was James Constanti were very narrowly elected. They both made it but it wasn't by any great numbers. So your district appeared to be kind of split.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's changed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They continued to be elected. The district stayed Republican for a few more sessions, but then it turned Democratic.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And I don't know how close those numbers were afterwards.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they were fairly close right along.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Especially for someone like Duane Berentson who'd been there for a while. I was surprised to see how narrow his election was. That was just by a few hundred votes.

Did you stay involved in the district? In politics?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you retired, that was it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was it. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about other Party chores? Did you speak? Did you help in campaigns or help your successors?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little on the fringe, but I wasn't directly involved too much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would your name still carry a certain cachet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was still floated around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever think of going back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I've missed Skagit County all along over the years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Actually, I meant to the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I have never considered getting back into it. After I left the Liquor Board, I ran for county commissioner here in Thurston County and was defeated. And of course, that put the final nail in the coffin. I haven't considered any sort of involvement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was enough. When the appointment first came out, did you feel a certain amount of consternation or were you ready for the next thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was ready and I felt that it was a good position to be in. I felt that I had something to offer the board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a nine-year appointment. That, in itself, is a good thing, I imagine, if you're trying to plan your life. To make a big move like that, nine years would be important.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was one of the pluses.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A pretty decent salary, I guess?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In those days it was. It's considerably less than what it is today.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, well, yes. I think it was twenty-thousand dollars or something like that. Which, given the dollars, I'm not sure what that kind of living that is. Did you take an economic hit to do this job? To sell your business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** When you're the sole proprietor it's pretty hard to figure out exactly—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What your income is?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if this was a sacrifice for you, or a good thing or no difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was probably pretty much equal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For one thing, wouldn't you get a better pension? As a small businessman, there's no pension.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. No pension. You just have your own. Whatever you can put together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be part of the attraction?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was good, and before my appointment, you retired at two percent of your top two years. And then Bill Gissberg and Augie Mardesich got a bill through the Senate which increased that to three percent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's still not a big number. You were not well paid as a legislator.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I remember Bill Gissberg. He saw me after I'd been appointed, and he said, "Boy! I really took care of you this last session."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Legislators were sort of abysmally paid, so two or three percent of what

amounted to a very low salary would not really take care of much.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wasn't your legislative salary. It would be any state employment. So it would be two percent of my Liquor Board salary. The top two years at the time I retired.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, I see. So he did help you a little. Inadvertently.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did sell your business, right? And eventually got everybody down here, or did your son stay up there, finish the school year, and then go off to college?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that would be not as disruptive.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. He went to WSU. I had two sons and a daughter who graduated over there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A strong family tradition.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

## CHAPTER 16

### ON THE LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD

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**Ms. Kilgannon:** Besides Dan Evans whispering that he didn't want to see your name in the paper, did he have any other instructions for you as a new member of the Liquor Control Board? Did you have any conversations with him about what the job would be like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. None at all. I don't recall, I may have had some discussion with Jim Dolliver, but I don't recall specifically any particular areas that we discussed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine he knew you pretty well. You would bring who you were to that job. That's, I guess, what he would be looking for? With your appointment, I believe the entire three-person commission became Evans appointees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were like the last building block in this transition to his own commission. You replaced Garland Sponburgh. Did you have any preliminary discussions with him or with your fellow appointees, Jack Hood and Leroy Hittle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did get together with Sponburgh before I actually went to work and he was quite helpful. Although he was like the old-school operator.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would that mean in this case?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much in the Rosellini mold.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's so much talk about what that means, so I want you to spell it out, if you could.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think by just giving you an example: when Dan replaced Rosellini and he moved into the mansion, one day a truck drove up and a fellow came up to the door and he said, "I've got your March or April load of liquor," and Dan said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Well, we always deliver a load of liquor to the mansion every quarter," or whatever it was. And Dan said, "Well, you can check that off your list because I don't want it." So that ended that.

But when Langlie was first elected, Wallgren had been there and he had a full bar going in the basement and Langlie got rid of all the liquor and all of the accoutrements and put in milkshake machines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. He had a different reputation. He was kind of a 'cold water' man, wasn't he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Sponburgh had been a commander in the Coast Guard and he rode on that designation for years. He always wanted to be referred to as Commander Sponburgh. Apparently, when Leroy Hittle came on the board—Al Thompson had been on, and he was a Langlie appointee—Sponburgh sent a memo to all the staff people and said, "I want you to welcome our new board member, Leroy Hittle." And he said, "Just so everybody will know, please refer to me as Commander Sponburgh and Mr. Thompson as Senator Thompson." And he said, "Leroy Hittle, just call him Mr. Hittle."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A little bit of a pecking order there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Leroy used to get a kick out of telling that story. But I tell you, Jack Hood and I many times would sit down and we'd say, "Boy, you know Leroy is a pain in the ass, but I'm sure glad he's here." He probably knew more about that state budget than the chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because he'd been a reporter covering that beat for so long?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He read that thing cover to cover and he knew it. Then when his wife was seriously ill and passed away, he married Joan who had been married to the president of Alaska Airlines. Joan was a real pistol. Jack and I used to say, "Boy, you know she's the best thing that ever happened to us."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would she organize parties and things for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. She was kind of the country club type and they had quite a number of social affairs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So she brought the whole level of your society up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you commissioners become quite close? Be like an extended family for each other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I'll tell you, going through all this court situation and the trial and everything, we became very close because we had a lot of sessions together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were under siege together. One thing about Garland Sponburgh—it was stated in a newspaper article that he needed only one more year for a state pension, and that there were rumors that you would appoint him

as executive secretary or something like that to the board. Did that happen, or did he have to go find something else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I know there was some talk about that, but it was kind of dismissed outright. The board had never had an executive secretary or an administrative assistant or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It'd be a little awkward. You covered those functions yourselves, didn't you? You were not just policy setters, but also administrators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We were fulltime board members. We divided up the responsibilities three ways and Jack had the administrative end, personnel and accounting. Leroy had licensing, enforcement, and I can't remember, maybe one other. And I had the merchandising end: the stores and agencies. And then, for the last five or six years of my term, I had the warehousing responsibility. The chairman had always had that in the past.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Jack was the chairman?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand the governor appointed the chair. That the commissioners didn't decide that themselves.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that occasionally people were brought back into line by losing or gaining the chairmanship. That the governor had the power to make that change.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I remember that Joel Pritchard came to me after my appointment was sent to the governor and he said to me, "Now, you be sure and tell Dan that you want to be the

chairman if you're appointed." And I said, "Oh, I couldn't do that." And he said, "Well, you just tell him that you want to be the chairman. I think that that would work."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why did he want you to be the chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he maybe had wind of some of the problems with the board, and he felt that maybe I might put a stopper on it someplace along the line.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you didn't feel that you could jump in at the top?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was one of the things. And you know, Jack had been in the Legislature and I had known him and worked with him somewhat. He was from Ferndale. I just didn't want to be the one to get him dumped.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wouldn't make it very easy to work with him, I would think. He'd still be there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that would have been a problem, but I just didn't think it was a good situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think he was a capable chair?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he did a good job. He was not real forceful. He was a banker when he was in the Legislature and then he was appointed to the board. It was a family bank in Ferndale, and I think his temperament was just a little bit different.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have seen yourself as being more forceful? More assertive?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I probably wouldn't have been at the outset, but I think I would have

worked into that. Looking back, I think maybe if I had been appointed chairman, I could have averted some of the problems we had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One thing I wanted to ask you. There are just three people on this commission. Was that too small? Aren't most commissions bigger than that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You see, the three colleges all started out with three-member boards and then they were increased to five. I'm not sure but what maybe they aren't seven now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When I was reading about this position, there'd been a long history of governors trying to get their own appointees in there, and how you could tip the whole commission with one appointment. You could get somebody to side with your one appointee and then there'd be an odd man out. I was thinking about the dynamics of only three commissioners. That seemed fairly unstable in that sense. Granted, nine years are long appointments, but anytime there was even one new person appointed, it could change the complexion of the commission.

**Mr. Eldridge:** To some extent. But I don't know, I think a three-member working board is all right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What if you're not getting along, though? There's nowhere to hide.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Then you choose sides and one person would be the pivotal vote, you might say. But I still think a three-member board is not bad. And when you consider that so many agencies are headed by just one person, boy, you don't have any difference of opinion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who were you accountable to?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The governor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could he remove you? Wouldn't you have to do something criminal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would have to be for cause, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've got terms longer than his.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There had been various times in the past with this commission that things had happened. It had a pretty rocky history.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So I was wondering if that was a built-in structural problem or just the nature of what you were doing there? Is liquor itself inherently problematic?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a volatile issue, no question about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In 1964, when Dan Evans was running for governor for the first time, and one of the issues was Rosellini's handling of the Liquor Control Board, Evans leaned towards privatization of the business, but then seemed to back away from that notion when he became governor himself. Did you have a sense, by the time of your appointment, how he felt about that issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think he recognized that the system as it was set up was probably pretty good. Because, you know, the name of the agency is "Liquor Control Board," and he felt that control was a key element. And while it is a revenue producing agency, I think that he felt that it ought to be under state control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was part of the argument—actually both for and against

privatization. The pro privatization people thought that somehow if it was returned to private enterprise that—let's see if I can get this straight—you would lose the revenue. The state got revenue two ways, right? From the markup of the liquor and also from the sales tax? I think the argument went that if it was privatized there would be more competition and the prices would go down, and therefore you would sell more liquor and the sales tax would pick up what was lost in the revenue. But there was a lot of uneasiness about that argument because people didn't really want everyone drinking more.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it had a lot of problems inherent in it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a contradictory situation because if you're going to sell more, then your control problems are going to be increasing. I started out thinking that it ought to be privatized, but as I got into it and worked with it and saw how the system operated, I became more and more convinced that the state ought to control liquor and be responsible for the sale.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the issues in the early days, the post-Prohibition era, with the Liquor Control Board was quality. They had come out of an era of "moonshine liquor" which could be fairly poisonous. So one piece of this seemed to be that if it was a government regulated industry, at least you'd know what you were getting in that bottle and it wasn't going to kill you. Whereas the free enterprise approach to liquor occasionally led to some pretty vile stuff. Did you keep track of that aspect of the control part?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All of the items that we had on the shelf, when they were originally introduced, were tested at the University of Washington. Wines and all the liquors.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had some kind of stamp of approval that this was the “genuine article” or some kind of certification? With no additives or strange ingredients?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We did have a seal on each bottle that indicated that it was genuine. Of course, the suppliers knew that we were really looking down at their operation and the quality and so on and their advertising. We screened all the advertising and everything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you go so far as to inspect the distilleries? They wouldn’t exactly be local. You get whiskey, for instance, from Scotland or whatever. Would you have some notion of the whole process?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We did go to distilleries and wineries in the country.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All over the country? Did you go down to California and look at the wineries?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I went down once with Sid Abrams who represented Gallo and then became the representative for the wine industry. But it wasn’t a structured type situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this is a whole new field for you to learn?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was very interesting and I enjoyed it. And we modernized all of our liquor stores during this period. Then we had the agency system, which are those outlets in the smaller communities where we’d appoint an agency manager. And then he would provide his own space and if he needed help he would hire his own clerks, and so it became kind of a privatized situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somewhere in between.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was for small-volume areas. I remember when I first got on the board

I determined that I was going to visit every outlet in the state. I remember going into a location, Mossyrock on Highway 12. I found the business on the main street and the liquor outlet was in a, quote, men’s clothing store. I walked in and worked my way through the stacks of working clothes hanging from the ceiling: hip boots and tin pants, and bib overalls, heavy jackets, heavy work shoes and socks, and at the back of the store there was a section of shelving that had bottles of liquor on them and that was the extent of the liquor agency.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was logging country, I guess. Sounds like an old-fashioned general store.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was. I peered through the bottles and in the back area of the store was the owner propped up in a chair and his feet were on a couple of packing boxes and he was sound asleep. I walked around the shelving and kind of rustled a little bit and he came to and acknowledged that I was there, and I introduced myself and told him that I was a new member of the Liquor Control Board, and he said, “Jesus Christ, you’re the first goddamned member I’ve ever seen of the Liquor Board.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the flesh!

**Mr. Eldridge:** In the flesh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, I guess nobody else had made that vow. So was that just to get acquainted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I did make the rounds throughout the state and visited every one of our stores and our agencies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many would that be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose a total of 175.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's no better way to learn the field other than get out there in it. How many would be of the kind of back room operation you've just described?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose there were close to one hundred of those agencies. And I'll tell you, there were some unusual outlets.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that work well? Did you think that was okay to have these little arrangements?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It worked fine because the state, from a financial standpoint, couldn't afford to put a full-blown store in Mossyrock.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. It's kind of a small place. So would he just carry the items that his particular community might request and not have to carry a full line?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much. You'd have the brands that statewide were the most popular and you'd carry those. Then there would be some areas where, due to the ethnic makeup of the community, why you might have some special brands that those people would be using. And then he could always get—if anybody moved into the community and they drank Old Gumshoe or whatever—he could always get it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just whatever the local people wanted? So whatever was popular and sold in the community over the years tended to be what was kept?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then they could special order things? Like if you were going to have a wedding or special event?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure. He could always get whatever we had stocked and then it would come in his next shipment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems a sensible way to serve the community. Would the smaller places have some issues of control? Bookkeeping, things like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had to use the same system and make the same reports that a full store would. They were subject to the scrutiny of the auditing division and the enforcement and licensing. They handled banquet permits and that sort of thing. And then they would, if there was a restaurant that had a Class H license where they could serve liquor by the drink, they would place their order with the local agency. They were about as close to being a privatized state agency as you can get.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems like quite a gray area in between a state agency and a private store.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The managers of the agencies were all political appointees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even in Mossyrock, would the shelves of liquor change hands as different administrations came and went?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They could, yes. That was one of the issues when I got on the board. I think we had one vacancy, so I went to the state Party and said, "Now, we have this vacancy, do you have any recommendations?" Well, they recommended someone and we appointed them and they weren't worth a darn. They were terrible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't check up on this person yourselves?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There really isn't any way without going through a lot of red tape and all. But in any event, I said, "That's the last time we'll do that. We'll have people apply and we'll take the best person regardless of what their party affiliation is." And I think it worked out reasonably well

because the person who's appointed has quite a responsibility. One, he has to provide his own location, his own storefront, and has to put in whatever shelving is necessary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it standardized?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Somewhat. The stores and agency division of the Liquor Board would have a kind of plot plan of the types of liquor that would be available in that agency, and then if they were going to build shelving, they could use that as kind of a guideline as to what they'd need. Of course, in the really small places, out of the way, they didn't have too many brands that they were concerned about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have accountability issues with all these little, tiny facilities? Did you train them? Did you watch over them pretty carefully?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had training sessions and quite a lot of meetings. There were objections from a lot of those people that they didn't want to go to meetings.

But shortly after I arrived on the board, we hired a new manager for the stores and agency divisions, and he'd been in retailing and had been in a large pharmacy in Alaska. It was kind of interesting, because prior to the time he was appointed to the board, he had moved down to the Seattle area and had shipped all his household goods and among the household goods were a couple of boxes of liquor. And, of course, an individual can't be shipping liquor back and forth or anything like that. So he was cited and then when we let it be known that we were going to be hiring a new person—he applied and boy, we looked over all of his qualifications and he looked pretty good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you know about this citation at that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did, just at that point. Now, Leroy Hittle had apparently known about it. I'm not sure that Jack Hood ever did until we actually got to the point of hiring somebody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a more serious charge than, say, a parking ticket? Where in the scale of things that you're not supposed to do does it lie?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We do have people who occasionally will want to send a bottle to a friend in Kansas, and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's not okay? Even as a gift?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Even as a gift.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder how many people even know that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not too many. It's just part of the overall where someone would be sending a case of say, bourbon, to Oregon or something like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that because of the possible difference in sales taxes, or something like that? I'm not clear where that fault lies.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have people licensed to handle liquor, and if you get outside of that sphere then there are quite a number of things that kick in. It's a pretty volatile commodity and almost all states have similar laws on the books.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you hired this man anyway?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We hired him and he was very good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any kind of scandal attached to that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Okay. But he probably never did it again.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, no. As a matter of fact, he kind of went the other direction. He was pretty strong for following the book and he did have a lot of ideas that we put into effect. He modernized a lot of our state stores and we encouraged the agencies to upgrade their facilities. We did a lot of training.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This seems like a period of great modernization of the system.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he worked out pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Actually, I want to go into some of that in greater detail, but first I want to actually get you situated. We talked a little bit about the governor appointing you and what the governor's instructions to you were, which turned out to be very little.

Governor Evans was in an interesting position. He had used Liquor Control Board issues in some of his campaign statements during his first gubernatorial election against then Governor Rosellini. So I'm guessing that Liquor Control Board issues would be something he would be pretty sensitive about on his watch. Did he intimate that? Or was that just a given?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was pretty much a given.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you'd be aware of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the things that he wanted to do, and I imagine did do pretty quickly, was distance his administration from distillery representatives who had been pretty thoroughly mixed up in politics. They weren't exactly, I guess, patronage employees, but their political

connection was very close. Issues of payoffs—it was all in there together—who was appointed as a representative? Who they worked with? It's not the cleanest looking situation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were certainly some questionable procedures. The distillers or wineries pretty much had control over who actually represented them. But a board member, of course, could go to the representative of the distiller—and I'm not talking about the local person, but somebody from the home office—and say, "We understand that you're going to have a new person covering the state of Washington and calling on the board." And they'd say, "We have John Jones who has been an upstanding, good citizen and we think that he'd probably make a good representative for you." Well, there was no direct request, but it's—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A pretty heavy suggestion?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And that was one of the things that when I got on the board we just did away with that procedure. Now, on the other hand, if they appointed someone who was causing us problems, then we'd go to them and say, "Look, this guy is giving your company a bad name and he's doing things that really aren't according to procedure, and if you don't do something, we will."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What sort of thing could happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** For instance, a representative of a distiller can't call directly on restaurants, hotels, wherever they handle liquor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They have to go through you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Keep the channels straight.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As far as doing any kind of promotion or anything like that, they had to come to the board and get approval. And we had an advertising department that screened all the advertisements simply to be sure that they were not stepping over the line, and I think it worked pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that sort of thing occur very often, or was that just very seldom would you have to deal with that kind of issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was not a frequent situation, although I think in the past it had been pretty rampant.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's a matter of retraining people to come up to the new standards? If things had been very lax, then just getting the word out and making sure people realized that that culture had changed? That you're going to do it differently.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I had an incident. I hadn't been on the board too long and my daughter, Jean, and I went out to dinner together in Seattle where she was living. They couldn't take us in the dining room so we were seated in the lounge area, and there was a long bar there. I looked up and here was a liquor representative at the bar talking to the bartender—talking about his brand and one thing and another. So I just told the waiter, "Here, take this card up and put it on the bar face-down in front of that gentleman." So he did, and I saw the guy lift it up and turn it over and boy! his face just went red. He turned around and he spotted me and he immediately came right over and shook hands and all this and that. And he said, "Oh, boy, I know that I'm not supposed to be talking to the bartender, but we were talking about baseball or football," or something.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And kind of slid into it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I said, "Well, you'd better watch it because—"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "We're everywhere."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I said, "You know you're treading on thin ice." I may have even said, "It's a good thing Leroy Hittle wasn't sitting where I am, or you'd have been right out on the street."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "I'll give you a chance this time, but no more?" I'm sure he looked over his shoulder a lot afterwards.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't have really many serious problems. But we did have a lot of problems with our employees, particularly in the warehouse.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you came on the board, you were in the midst of some theft issues and pilfering, and, actually, a much bigger scale of activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, it wasn't just our own employees in the warehouse, but if we'd get a shipment of Scotch in from Scotland and it came in by boat, the longshoremen were very clever about opening a case of liquor and pulling out two or three bottles from the middle of the case and maybe putting a rock or a brick or whatever to make up the weight difference. Then they'd seal it back up. We were losing quite a bit that way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you prove that? You'd have to have somebody right on the spot to see that. But you suspected it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We eventually put some of our inspection division people right on the docks. But we had in the warehouse—we suspected that some of our employees were not only stealing liquor but were drinking on the job. So we put in cameras, and sure enough, here was this little group. They had opened up a case of canned

cocktails and they were passing them around and sitting there behind—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't know about the cameras?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We didn't say anything about there were going to be security cameras. So here was kind of the ringleader, and we looked at the film, and then we decided that maybe we ought to call this fellow in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was pretty clear which one was the actual leader?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We called him in and sat him down, Jack Hood and Leroy and myself, and we said, "Joe, we've got a little movie here we'd like to have you look at." So here it was on the screen and here he was just as big as life right there, and he says, "Is that me?" "Yes, Joe. It is." He said, "Well, I'll be damned." And so I don't think we'd be worried if he'd done anything else, but I think we suspended him for a period of time, and it didn't happen again.

The other thing that happened is that somebody would take a case of what was usually high-priced liquor and take a knife and cut the corner of the box on the bottom. Just cut it off so there was a little hole there, and then while one fellow would hold that case, another one with a hammer would hit the side and break the bottle, usually a half gallon, and it would run down. It would be just like a funnel, and then they'd put it into mason jars or whatever and then they'd strain it to get any glass particles out of there. There was quite a little of that, but we put a stop to that. It takes a little doing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess the temptation is just too great for some people. They're dealing with this commodity that—

**Mr. Eldridge:** And it's reasonably expensive. Then, in the stores, each store had a little spot

where, when they'd get their order in they'd find maybe the tax seal was loose or off, or broken, or that the cap wasn't screwed all the way down tight. They'd put those aside, and then when the district supervisor came around he'd check those and put them in his car and bring them back to the warehouse. About once a month they'd take all these that had come in and put new tax strips on them and be sure that the caps were down tight. But in some of the stores we had employees who would just break the seal and unscrew the cap and pour maybe a couple or three ounces out of there into another container and then put the cap back on, and then put that with the others that needed to be resealed and put new tax strips on them. So there was some of that going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you'd go to reseat the bottles, would you be able to tell they weren't quite full?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then they would be useless, I imagine. You wouldn't be able to resell such a thing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would you do with it? Throw it away?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Pour it down the toilet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's an interesting solution. Before you got this appointment, were you aware of all the hot issues? You'd been in retail, but had much more innocuous kinds of items. Did you know that this sort of thing went on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't because I hadn't been very close to anybody either working for the state in the business or an individual licensee like a restaurant owner or something like that. I wasn't aware of some of these things that were going on until I got actually on the ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So when you got there, did the other commissioners kind of bring you into the picture or how did you learn all the different tricks that were going on and what you'd have to deal with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The word gets around, you know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We didn't finish the story about the distillery representatives. Evans, in '65 when he came in as governor, wanted to change that operation. He wanted all the distillery representatives to be more open about who they were, if they contributed to political issues, to disclose their earnings to the board. He wanted to make those jobs off-limits with the legislators, employees, other legislatures, or members and employees of the Liquor Control Board itself. To just kind of bring the whole thing up into the open and above board. Was he successful in changing that, or was that still an issue when you came on the Board five years later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't aware that that was kind of an agenda that he had put on the table. I had some general feelings about how you run a business above board and I didn't really need somebody to tell me that there were some things that needed to be changed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The political Parties themselves objected to this reform because, of course, it was very valuable patronage.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it sounds like it didn't happen perhaps immediately "cold turkey," but within that period he was able to effect that change and that you played a role also in changing that practice.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the board did, actually, because at no time did the governor call us together and say, 'Now look, this looks bad and we need to put a stop to it.'

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe his policy of affecting this was to appoint people who would of their own accord make these changes.

As we look through all the different things the Liquor Control Board got involved with in these years, the thing that really stands out is how you're in the middle. You needed those political skills and connections. You needed to know how the Legislature operated and their way of thinking. You needed the retail side of things and those skills, too. You're in a very odd place, working for a public agency that shades into the private sector. Run for the public, but to protect the public at the same time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really was. I think I might just explain how we operated. When I came to the board, the three of us decided that we'd divide the responsibilities into three sections.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this new?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Without knowing precisely how the thing operated, I think the chairman in the past was probably a more dominant person than after that.

Jack Hood, who was the chairman, had the responsibility of the administrative functions, the accounting, and at the outset, the warehousing program. And then Leroy Hittle had the licensing department, the enforcement department, and then I had in general terms, the merchandising, which was the stores and the agencies.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that include advertising?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Leroy had the advertising in his area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that would be part of enforcement? The regulation part?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So to divide the agency, he was the regulator/enforcer and you were the promoter?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're not exactly working at cross purposes, but you have very different pieces of the process.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. Yes. It used to be when I first came on the board that every application for a license, the file would come in from the licensing department with their recommendation. If there were any problems, then that file would go to Leroy and he'd go through it with a fine-toothed comb and then he would sign off on it. Then it would go to Jack and he'd go through it and he'd sign off, and then it would come to me. So there were three board members who looked over every application that came in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of volume would you be dealing with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sometimes Leroy would have a stack on his desk of maybe ten or twelve files.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And each file would have many sheets of information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They'd have the initial application. They'd have letters of approval or disapproval from the city council or mayor or county commissioner if he was in a rural area. Perhaps the superintendent of the school district if it were a restaurant that was adjacent to the high school or something like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So these were restaurants as well as stores? Or was that a different system all together? These are places where you buy liquor by the drink?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everybody's licensed in one way or another. You'd have a grocery store which is beer and wine by the individual container, or a case, or whatever the pack happens to be. Then you have a tavern which has beer and wine, but

by the glass. And then you have the grocery stores with beer and wine, and those are primarily either by the package or by the bottle, a case of wine. And then the Class H which is liquor by the drink. That would be your restaurants—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Cocktails and that kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And those take a different license.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of detail. Was that efficient to have it go through three of you, one at a time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We eventually just said, "Leroy, you look this over. You've got the divisions that are going to be involved in checking it. Just tell us whether we should approve it or disapprove it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But, say, if there was some kind of borderline one and he wasn't sure, then he would bring you into the decision?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But most of them, I imagine, would be fairly routine?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that would free you up to do some other duties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. When I first went on the board, in a lot of instances, we'd physically go out to the location and look at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's all over the state.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you, as a matter of efficiency, group them? Like save up a bunch of

eastern Washington ones and then go over there on kind of a tour? Or would you do them as they came in, back and forth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Any number of times you'd have three or four fairly in a fairly close area. But you see, the other thing was with Class H licenses, you had a requirement that you had to serve food.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. It had to be a certain percentage of how you made your money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you be checking restaurants' books to see the balance sheet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Our enforcement people would do that. We'd go in just to see if they were actually offering food service.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you announce yourselves, or would you just go in and have dinner and see how it went?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Either way. There used to be a little restaurant on the corner here of Capitol Boulevard, and the street that is in front of the General Administration Building, where that little children's museum is. "The Marigold," I think it was called way back. But anyway, when I got on the board, Nanci and I decided we'd just stop in there for dinner. I guess maybe we'd been to a function and we decided to go in and get something to eat. So we went in and sat down and the waiter came up and said, "Could I help you?" And we said, "Yes, we'd like to get a sandwich." "Well, the kitchen's closed, we don't serve after nine o'clock," or eight o'clock, or whatever it happened to be. And I said, "Is the manager here?" "Yes." And I said, "Give him the card." So he trotted off and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh my, the infamous card!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And boy, in about two seconds, the manager came roaring out of the back room and he said, "You know, I think we could probably take care of you on this." So, I said, "Fine."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Probably made it himself.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I wouldn't be surprised. So anyway, we had our sandwich and a cup of coffee and left. I figured that was it. We didn't have to worry about that place anymore.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they were still serving drinks but no food?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then we had another regulation that taverns had to be closed off from the public, but Class H premises had to be open so you could see in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the rationale?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One was to sort of shield the public from drinking, and the other is to make sure you can see them drinking. It's a little odd.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. We got rid of that in a hurry. And then there was another one that women couldn't sit at the bar.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. That has more to do with prostitution than drinking, I believe. A lot of liquor regulations shade into other things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They do. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Public morality is all tied in with how you get your drink. There used to be a regulation, I'm not sure when it stopped and started, but you couldn't carry a drink around. You had to sit down.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Somebody could bring you a drink but you couldn't, say, have a friend at the next table, pick up your drink and go and sit there. Somebody had to carry it. I'm not sure what the reason behind that one was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know what the rationale originally was on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've heard of some of these rules and regulations. Were the bars still such that if you were a single man you drank in a certain part of the bar, and if you were with your wife or a date or whatever, you sat in another part of the bar? That those populations were not mixed? And certainly no single women would be in where single men were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, as I recall, that's probably true, but I wasn't involved at that time as to specifically what the regulations said. I think I can recall where you did have actually two sections, one for couples and one for single men.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Let's look at the board responsibilities. You members had a lot of hats, even though you divided your chores up a little bit differently. You were suppliers. You bought from wholesalers and from the distilleries and wineries. You were a distributing company. You made sure your products got all over the state and that all the mistakes or whatever came back to you, so you were involved in distribution both ways, I guess.

You regulated all this operation, on every level from wholesale down to the drink, the glass. You're an employer of hundreds of state employees, and you also had these relationships with private companies, grocery stores and whatnot. So you've got that piece. You ran an ad agency. And then the usual administrative things for any enterprise, the accounting and—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And then of course we dealt with transportation companies because it

all had to go from our warehouse out to the licensees and to the state stores.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's really quite a large operation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We've talked a little bit about you came into the Liquor Control Board and you didn't actually know the business. It was a new field for you. There were several organizations that you joined. You became a member of the national Alcohol Beverage Control Association. What was that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The members are states that actually run the business in that state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As Washington does.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then you have the open states, which are like Montana.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How do they do it? It's just sold in the stores like any other commodity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And like California, they buy directly from a distiller or from a distributor and then the state controls the enforcement. I don't know, I think maybe they control the price to the consumer or the markup. I think there is some control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's not totally free enterprise. There's some kind of line there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many states work like Washington?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we had, I would say, around twenty.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, less than half. You would go to what, conventions or some annual meetings or some kind of thing, where you would talk about all the different issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be a place to learn the field?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And it was really a good place to interact with other board members. The association had a woman heading it up who was a professional. They had a staff with an attorney and a couple of other people who were involved in disseminating information to the member states.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of information? Would it be information on the actual liquor industry, or information on new kinds of regulations or new kinds of promotions or advertising or styles of merchandising, or all of the above?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could be renovation of stores, promotions, what kind of service you got from vendors.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So a real trade association.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's pretty much what it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where was Washington in the scale of national issues? Were we ahead or behind, progressive or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that Washington was always considered a pretty progressive state and well regarded by other states. We had people coming from other states to look at our operation, particularly our warehouse was one of the most modern material handling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had one big warehouse in south Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why just one? It's quite a big state. How did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It worked fine because you really had control over your inventory, and you were dealing with fewer transportation people, and Seattle is a pretty easy place to get into either by air or automobile.

We did have meetings by areas around the state. We had district supervisors in the merchandising department and they'd get all of their store managers and agency managers together at a central location in the district and then we'd come in—our accountant, our enforcement people, and merchandising people would come in—and they'd talk to them about problems and go over things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And share new ideas?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd be present, but would you also give talks about different issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'd usually have a little spot on every program in every area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you introduce people and kind of keep the meeting moving? Chair the meeting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The district supervisor would be that. There was a lot of what I guess you'd call free time where we could meet one-on-one with people from around the area in that district. Those were, I thought, very good meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall any ideas that you gleaned that you were able to bring back to Washington from those sorts of meetings? Where somebody else was doing something and you thought, "Yes, let's try that?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know there were a number of things. It seems to me that most people were trying to get information from us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes when you're the leader it actually sharpens your vision and makes you articulate your ideas. Did it help you think more clearly about what you were already doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it always helps to be able to have a good conversation with people who at least know what you're talking about and can kind of put the pieces together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes the teaching role is as much a learning situation for the teacher.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You bet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It looks like you were on the board of directors for that national association from 1973 to—I imagine you go off this board when you stop working for the Liquor Control Board.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were also on what's called a "New Products and Procedures Committee," I gather, of the same organization from 1976 on. So that's a slightly different focus. That's the retailing focus of the operation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be the promotional fancy bottles and special things for Christmas or specialty items, novelty items?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those areas we left pretty much to the division head and the district supervisors. And then at these meetings at the state level, we'd let the local manager have a say in what they thought they could handle as far as promotional items were concerned and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Other retailers go to trade shows where it must just be a cornucopia of things to look at that they might want to feature in their stores. Did you have a similar experience?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. There wasn't a trade show type presentation. For a lot of the new things the factory representative would come into the state and sit down with the board and probably the purchasing agent and so on. As a matter of fact, that's one of the areas where we got into trouble.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about how the stores were organized? You went through a phase of bringing in a new kind of lighting, a new kind of cash register, new shelving.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And signage.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The whole way the stores looked changed in these years. Was that part of your department?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I'll tell you, it was one thing when you get into an agency that has as many people. You have good people who are heading divisions and they can usually come in with a program and lay it out and all you really have to do is make the decision, "Do we go with it or not?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And again you're wearing those two hats. You're both promoting alcohol sales and regulating it and somehow keeping a lid on it so that there's not too much of it. It's that double role that's so interesting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a balancing act.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was reading in one of your reports from the Board about lighting. Lighting had a dual function. Almost everything you did had a dual function, where you're supposed to make the stores bright to prevent theft. And it

had a sort of moral quality attached to it. “There’s nothing shady going on in there.” It’s kind of like the windows so people could look in. And also for merchandising so people can see the products better.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s correct.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it’s both that discouraging of buying liquor and encouraging it at the same time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, I think the focus primarily was one of moderation. The agency is the Liquor Control Board so control is certainly one of the major responsibilities.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And “control” two meanings, also. There was the quantity that was sold and who it was sold to, under what conditions. But also there was the quality of the product, like we talked about earlier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And you see, the new items that came in, we always had samples that went to the University of Washington for testing. And they would report on every new item.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I read in one of your reports that there was a question about whether or not the ingredients should be listed on the label on the bottle, like you do for food items: this box contains *X* amount of corn syrup or whatever. But that was somehow too controversial and too difficult and expensive, and it was dropped as an idea, at least at that time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t know that it’s ever been instituted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You might be giving away trade secrets there, exactly what or how certain things are made, I suppose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s true from a vendor’s standpoint.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I hadn’t thought of that issue before. But then I was thinking about now when you buy wine, it lists the sulphite content. A lot of people are allergic to sulphite, so that’s a health issue. And I wondered if that was something you talked about or had anything to do with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Here again, we pretty much left it up to the professionals.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was surprised, though, how much hands-on work you did as commissioners.

**Mr. Eldridge:** On our Board, it was a full time job. In a lot of states, the Board maybe meets once a month, or infrequently, and it’s just a final judgment on proposals from the divisions within the agency.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you were right down there in the trenches.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. We were a working Board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Over the years your Board had been scrutinized heavily, shall we say, and one of the issues was, should you have an administrator? And I don’t know if that meant to lift the Board into that situation that you just described where you’re the just the policy setters, but you don’t have your hands right in the business. What did you think of that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think if you’d asked me that question before I got on the Board, I might have said, “That’s a pretty good idea.” To have one person responsible. But after having been there, at least with the three Board members that we had, I thought that it was a good system and worked very well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the nine-year terms? That was supposed to protect you from political pressures, I gather. That your terms

would be longer than the governors who appointed you, and you were supposed to be there for a certain amount of time so that you could somehow be a little bit separate from certain pressures. Did it really work that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, generally speaking, it did. Now I'm sure that if you had a strong governor who wanted to go in a little different direction, then he could appoint people to the Board who would take that and run with it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But what about the situation where he comes in and people are already into their terms and there's nobody to appoint? He's stuck with a Board which doesn't reflect his point of view. He can't fire them, can he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They can be removed for cause like any other appointee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would have to be a real cause, not just a political change of view?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And it's pretty hard to find cause, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, I guess, depending on your point of view where you sit, this was a strength or a problem.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that what an administrator would do would give the governor a tremendous amount of power, because then he's only reporting or having dialogue with one person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wouldn't the administrator report to the Board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It just depends on how it's set up. I always envisioned that if you had an administrator, there wouldn't be a Board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm trying to think if there are other government agencies run that way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Social and Health Services.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. Then you'd be like the secretary of the agency?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of the Board. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd be an agency rather than a commission? Are there other agencies run like the Liquor Control Board? How's Gambling run? Isn't that an agency director?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That is a director.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They have a board, too, don't they?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's pretty much advisory.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A different role, then. Is any other government agency— what about State Parks?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was just thinking about Parks. But here again, you have a director.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the commissioners, don't they appoint the director?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure on Parks.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is a whole new thought. Governor Evans was trying to create the Department of Transportation. He had just created Ecology and DSHS when you came on the Board. Was he looking at the Liquor Control Board in the same way? Thinking of changing its structure? Or did he pretty much leave you alone to do your job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't ever recall getting any kind of word from the governor that "Here's an application that we want to approve or disapprove," or "Here's a new product that I think we ought to buy and distribute through our outlets."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or even a more abstract: “I wish you’d clean up that certain area. That’s politically bad for me,” kind of situation. “Could you look into it?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just completely hands-off?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s interesting. Did you feel that the commission was really quite independent? Once you were there, you were free and just did your job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I felt that it was a pretty efficient, effective operation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We talked a little bit about Dan Evans’ ambivalence and changing opinion about the privatization issue. Did you also go through a change like that where you thought perhaps it could be privatized, but once you were there you realized it was good the way it was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. At the outset I thought, “Well, I think if this were in the private sector you’d probably do a better job,” but I’m not so sure. Having been in the private sector, there are a lot of pulling and tugging there and a lot of outside influences.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There’s a lot of crossover between what you’re doing in private business, but there’s some real differences, too. We talked about this double hat that you wore. There was also the issue of the role of the Liquor Control Board in generating revenue for the state. It’s a fairly sizeable amount.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But, you know, I don’t think that ever was an issue. I don’t ever recall even just casually talking to the other two members, either individually or both together, about how can we increase sales to get more revenue?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But just keeping it as a state agency rather than privatizing it would generate the revenue that it did. And changing that, wouldn’t the state lose money?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s contested, of course.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I think it’s a pretty good system and I think that it does what it’s supposed to do. I think that the agency controls the sale and consumption of liquor, and I think that it provides a pretty good income from the taxes and the profits on the product.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wasn’t it one of the bigger money-makers as agencies go?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We don’t have too many that provide revenue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. This is before the lottery was created. Your annual reports mentioned this aspect several times. I hadn’t thought about, but the report said that all the citizens of the state were considered to be stockholders in this enterprise, and that even if they weren’t customers, they benefited from this business, I guess you’d call it, because the tax dollars came back to benefit communities. That split of fifty percent to the state, forty percent to cities and ten percent to counties really spread that money around to all levels of government. So that’s a pretty tangible benefit. Is that a good way of looking at this? To think of people as stockholders in this enterprise?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think just in broad terms that’s probably a fair statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It put it in kind of a different light. You also, at several points, talked about that it was a regular state agency and you had state workers there whose jobs needed to be

protected. And that they did good work and deserved their jobs, and the system shouldn't be handed over to the private sector and all those people thrown out of work. Was that a new insight for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because I don't think that that's something you have to be concerned about until somebody actually says, "Look, we're going to privatize the agency."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Your area was merchandising. You had that as a background, but you're kind of coming in a period of pretty rapid change in the whole liquor industry. One of your predecessors, Robert Hagist—I don't know if he was the first—but he was quite a spokesman for what he called modern marketing and merchandising methods. I think it was 1961, they started to bring in self-service stores, rather than the set-up where you'd go in and it was almost like a pharmacy situation, where you'd write out your order and give it to the person and they'd bring it to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But there would be no liquor displayed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be displayed, one bottle of whatever you had in stock.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But that's not what you would buy. You'd have to get it from someone. They'd have to bring it to you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. They'd have it in the back room in the warehouse part of the store.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's quite a culture shift to go from that situation to almost like a supermarket where you have a cart and you just go around the shelves and just pull off what items you wanted.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact we got to the point where we had carts in the stores.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Were you thinking, "How can we make this easier for people?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** This was one of the things that Lowell Hanson brought to the Board was that convenience of being able to go in and decide what you wanted and get the bottle from the shelf or just take it to the counter and pay for it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a whole new era, for instance, of wine buying. Not very many people know exactly what they want until they go in and start looking at the labels and remembering that, "Oh, yes, I had that once before," or however people make their choices. It would be a lot easier if you could look at the bottles.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And that was one of the things that we tried to work into the mindset of the employees that they have a little better understanding and knowledge of what they were selling.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they could make recommendations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We encouraged them to do reading and to talk to people and make some judgments and be able to advise.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if somebody came in and said, "I'm going to have this dinner party, what do you recommend? I'm going to serve this or that," and they'd say, "This would compliment your meal."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And of course we laid down the law: "When you talk to people you don't talk about brands, you talk about the particular product, generally."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So a red wine, a Chardonnay or this or that, instead of this particular winery?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. And then the person made their own selection.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And then the other thing we did, you know shelf position is very important to the vendor. The eye level is the best and we got to the point where the items we put at eye level were those that were the ones that we had the biggest volume on. Now, we had a lot of vendors who'd say, "Of course I don't sell many of mine because they're on the bottom or they're too high to reach on the top shelf." They'd say, "How do we get any kind of volume if we can't get exposure?" And there's some validity to that. But, here again, we were looking at the convenience to the customer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not necessarily the vendor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. We don't want customers crawling along on their hands and knees on the floor to look at the bottom shelves for something that they buy every week, when it should be right there where they can see it and put it in their cart and leave.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the privacy issue? It feels more private to choose your own liquor and put it in your cart rather than have to tell someone else what you want to buy and have them kind of look you over.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that a piece of this changing culture?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think somewhat. And even if there are two customers standing side by side and one of them takes his bottle, or he has to give somebody a slip and then the person next to him knows exactly what they're doing and maybe you don't want them to know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Liquor still had all kinds of issues attached to it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It sure does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps it feels more normal to just put something in your shopping cart than to go through an ordering process.

**Mr. Eldridge:** People are used to doing that when they buy groceries, so it's just a natural evolution into doing it with liquor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder if the other method—I still think of it as like a pharmacy approach where the substance really is controlled and you have to make sure there's no mistake so you wouldn't want people just taking things off the shelves. But, of course, alcohol in prohibition days, the only way you could get it was as a medicine. It had to be prescribed by your doctor, and I wonder if that's almost a holdover of that way of thinking that, "Here's your allotment and take it by the tablespoonful."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Here's your prescription!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not by the tumbler-full. It's a psychological difference that maybe, if it was time, that some of the vestiges of the prohibition days began to fade away.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of changes that modernized, and I think liberalized, the sale and use of alcohol.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you, as you were going through this, have little epiphanies where you'd say, "Why are we doing it this way? Let's move along and do it a new way now. Why are we regulating this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were always pretty good arguments for easing up on the regulations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly the 1960s and early seventies was a period of pretty graphic social change. People are just not willing to be as regulated in their personal areas as they perhaps had been patient with before.

So, let's see, the stores changed design. You changed the lighting. You changed the location in many instances. Different kinds of parking regulations. Visibility issues. The self-service mode. There was even a move to sell liquor in new places like gas stations. How much discussion would you have for something like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not too much because as far as the Board was concerned, that was just not an issue.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it tie drinking and driving a little too closely together?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You started to serve liquor in bowling alleys and in the Kingdome and various places like that. That was an expansion of where people were allowed to drink in the state. What about allowing beer sales and such things at sporting events?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And while there are some problems, I think most of the venues where they have sporting events and they sell beer, I think they've controlled it pretty well. The sports facilities were licensed to serve beer at their food counters, and then we expanded it to permit vendors to sell beer in the stands.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To help wash down the peanuts and popcorn?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Although the vendors were just able to sell beer and we had a regular training program so that they would fill the cups and then pass them down after they were paid for.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wouldn't it be difficult to check I.D. and things like that in that sort of setting? How would you control that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The vendors were pretty well trained to eyeball people and where the cup was going to end up. If it looked like it was going into the hands of a minor, then they'd just call a security person and they'd go down and check them out and either have them removed from the seat, or if they were okay, then they'd just let them go ahead and drink their beer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have problems controlling rowdiness once you got beer in a place like the Kingdome?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Didn't seem to have. Once in awhile you'll get a group of fans who get out of control, but I think the venues, whether it's the University of Washington or the Kingdome, their security people are right there and they just pull people out of their seats and take them out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And people around them would probably agree if they were getting obnoxious.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And you couldn't bring in beer from the outside. So, some control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But just short years ago, that would have been unheard of. That's quite a revolution. When you were thinking about doing this, did you run through the scenarios and sort through all the pieces?

**Mr. Eldridge:** All the possibilities of what could happen. I think that it was a pretty good operation and everybody cooperated and that was the key to it. If you prepare for that sort of thing and you train the people, then it'll work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be different companies, different breweries, or would it all be one brand of beer? That would be quite a lucrative contract.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that the Kingdome management had control of that and I think they put it out for bid.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you didn't have to deal with that part, just the regulation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It had to be a licensed person or company.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would be quite a coup to get that, I would think.

To continue this discussion of expansion, the Liquor Control Board participated in Expo '74 in Spokane. You decided people could have alcohol in parks, in those kinds of settings. One of the things that seemed to be pushing some of this was this is the era of large rock festivals and those sorts of gatherings—a new phenomenon.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were impossible to police, so was it easier to ease the regulations than have them flouted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. You know, if everything's out in the open, it's pretty easy to control it, but if people are bringing them in under their coat or in a shopping bag or whatever, it's pretty hard to observe very much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have big discussions among yourselves as to where the line was here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Almost everything would have two sides.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a lot of tension in deciding this is okay, this is not okay.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We got some criticism on some decisions that we made.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Probably both ways, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you know, I guess we had as much criticism over licensing—licensing a restaurant maybe that was close to a residential area or close to a high school. Those were the kinds of things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People did not like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Well, there were some who lived there and wanted the convenience of being able to walk down the street to get a six-pack of beer or a bottle of wine, or whatever it might be. But there were others who just didn't want the chance of it being too convenient for minors.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That's a whole other issue. Or having rowdy people in their neighborhoods?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Particularly in the metropolitan areas.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe if you're making both sides a little unhappy, you know you've got it right!

**Mr. Eldridge:** Must be something going right if everybody's unhappy!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Isn't that what legislation is like? You've got a good background for that. On quite a different note, you allowed agents to begin carrying guns. Why would they do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had had some problem with disruptions in licensed premises where our people would go in with the police and handle the situation. And then our store people, the managers at least, were always subject to holdups, robberies and so on. But you know, I don't believe that under this initial decision that we included Liquor Board retail people. I think it was just enforcement people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't really describe it. This was just something I read in a newspaper

article that caught my eye. It seemed like quite a change.

There was a murder, or an attempted murder, rather, of one of your enforcement officers around this time. Some Pierce County tavern operator who was being investigated for racketeering hired a hit man, allegedly, and shot down one of your men. That'd be quite a disastrous thing. Do you remember that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't remember that particular incident. But it certainly could happen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On occasion you were dealing with some pretty rough people. That was fairly close to the end of your time of service.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be much—I don't know about Mafia—but organized crime that you'd have to bump up against?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was always that inference that somebody was masterminding these things, but I think any incident that we had was just a self-motivated individual.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose the tavern world and some of these more low-end entertainment places would be shading into the criminal elements. You'd have to figure out where the line was there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little bit. The thing that we had to watch for was any one person getting control of a wide number of licenses. We really didn't have too much of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would happen? They would have some kind of monopoly or what would that mean?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They'd control a lot of people. Bartenders, waitresses and so on. If they had a number of outlets, it would just increase the possibility of a wider range of activity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So somebody would be building a little kingdom in some corner?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the other issues you had to deal with in the late seventies was Indian tribes challenging state authority to regulate liquor sales on their reservations, I guess in a similar way to cigarette sales. They began operating stores for their own people and the liquor sold there could not be taxed by the state. But people from off the reservation would come in, as they do sometimes with cigarette sales, and try to buy the liquor untaxed and take it off the reservation. How would you go about regulating that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That would be pretty much through the Indian hierarchy. Their own regulatory agency. Then our people, of course, would go in and check and might even try to make purchases.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To try to test the system?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. Just to see if it was a problem with the Indian employees of the particular outlet or whether it was just somebody off the street trying to get tax-free liquor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What could you do? Would you have any jurisdiction there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it would depend on what the attorneys for both the state and the tribes set up in their contracts as to how far they could go.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't really know how it works. I know every once in awhile you hear about cigarettes and cars being stopped coming off the reservations. I guess they would be charged with tax evasion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** More changes. You began to loosen up the hours of operation. You extended them a little bit on both ends. A little earlier in the day, a little later at night. And that starts to crowd into Sunday, and that was always a hard issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I notice that there's some discussion about Sunday service now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Saturday night creeps into Sunday morning at midnight but you started to ease up a little in that area and open up things a little bit more. The "Blue Laws" which were the kind of stern morality regulations of a much earlier era had been repealed in 1966. But there were still all kinds of fuzzy, grey areas where you had to have this discussion all over again. Was there any way to involve the public in these discussions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, gosh. I wouldn't want to be a part of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You can't win?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. You open it up to the public, and I'll tell you you've got nothing but chaos.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did get a fair amount of criticism in these years for not bringing in the public. I was just wondering how—I guess you could have focus groups like they do now, but I'm not sure how that would work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose that today if some of these things came up, you'd have to have a public hearing in every area of the state and call in the public.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could you take a poll, do a survey or something? You'd have to do something. But you're pushing up against the era of open government here. In the early seventies, you were just on the cusp. You didn't feel that the public had any role here? That you commissioners, you three, were like the "wise men" of the state and you could decide these pretty tricky social issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure "wise men" is the proper term.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm teasing you a little.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that we became the mediators. All this information came in and then we'd have to sort it out and take the recommendations of people who we trusted, or from organizations that we thought were responsible, and then make the decision based on that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had some input, then. What sorts of groups would these be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You have the restaurant association and you have the tavern association and the Washington wine growers. And then you've got the PTAs and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So those are all the promoters and now there were the people on the other side that want to kind of hold the line?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In the old days you had the WCTU, and now you've got some religious groups that are quite active in opposition.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they have organized ways of presenting their views to you? Did they write you letters?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. We'd get letters and also requests to meet with the Board, and we'd set a time and they'd come in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wouldn't exactly be a hearing, but they wouldn't be shut out either?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's not like you've got a big wall around you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You got charged with everything in the newspapers so it was pretty hard to tell where you were with this issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were several parts to what you were working on. One of them was the age of majority that was under discussion in these years—you'd seen that in the Legislature where the age of voting and other privileges was a hot topic. Was that something that you got involved in on the Liquor Control Board, or was that something that the Legislature would decide and then you would regulate?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's the way it would actually work. Although we would have an opinion on that. And I think the three of us were pretty well set that it ought to remain at twenty-one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about colleges? Did you have any regulation of fraternities and different groups that probably pushed that regulation a little hard?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Our local inspectors pretty much kept an eye on those things. And then if a fraternity was going to have a dance or a party or whatever, they'd go to the liquor store and fill out a request for a banquet permit. Then the inspectors would actually go to the affair and see if the terms were carried out. I think there were some occasions where the Board sent reprimands to whatever organization it happened to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's one of those soft edges where people are going to be pushing on the regulations.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. Now, today, many of the fraternities and sororities advertise that they're alcohol-free, which is fine. But it's pretty difficult to control.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Definitely. What role did the Board play in highway safety issues? Drunken driving and that sort of things? Were you somehow responsible for the tail-end after people had that drink? Did you play any role in awareness campaigns?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Prevention campaigns. Our licensing people would attend conventions of the tavern owners or the Class H licensees—restaurants where they serve liquor. And there were always warnings when our inspectors would make the rounds and visually see if there were any violations. If they were serving under-age people or serving people who'd had too much to drink.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's sort of a judgment call, isn't it? You're supposed to stop serving somebody if they're inebriated, but I'm not sure how you figure out that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a little bit of a problem. Now, they do have a portable device that some of the licensees use.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Had breathalyzers invented yet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It was just a judgment call.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it wasn't too scientific, in other words. Would you have posters up about drinking and driving? Were you responsible for those kinds of things? Now there are little warning stickers about not drinking while pregnant, and about drinking and driving, and fetal alcohol syndrome.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that the Board itself had that sort of responsibility. We didn't have anything like that for general distribution. I think they may have something now. "Pick a designated driver." Most of those come from liquor manufacturers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That's fairly recent. There was, beginning in the 1940s or so, a growing awareness that alcoholism was actually a disease—a medical problem—not just a moral problem. Was there much talk about that in your work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not that I recall. I don't know whether the Department of Health got into that or not, but as far as I recall we didn't have any kind of a program in that area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was thinking about, again, the analogy with gambling. How, now that we have a state lottery that the state both promotes gambling and also has that concern that gambling is another kind of addiction, and there's some responsibility there. I don't know if the Liquor Control Board also saw it both ways, or how you dealt with it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know, and I'm sorry I can't tell you exactly what part the agency played in warnings about alcohol consumption. I know we always discussed the problem, but I don't think we ever considered what we could do about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know if those connections were really solid yet. "Mothers Against Drunk Driving" and all those campaigns that we are familiar with now, they're from a later era.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't have all the pieces in place. There was Alcoholics Anonymous, but there's that feeling that people who are alcoholics are bums on the street.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That they "brought it on themselves."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was still not that sort of widespread idea that it could happen to anyone.

In all the different things that you did, it does seem like people are looking over your shoulder. I don't know if it was a growing volume of comments or what—but for some reason the Liquor Control Board was often, probably more often than you liked, in the spotlight.

We touched a little bit about the issue of hearings. You were under increasing pressure from the Legislature and the public and certainly the Press to open up your processes. In the very first years of the 1970s, your board meetings were just you three and whomever you invited, but they were not formally open to the public, were they?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I don't recall that we ever refused anyone who came and said, "We'd like to sit in on the board meeting," or there might be something on the agenda that they were interested in. I don't recall ever refusing to let them come in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But it might not be widely known?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you hold hearings at all on any subjects whatever? Or was that something that came later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm just trying to think. I believe that in the matter of applications I think the licensing division—it seems to me that they held formal hearings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if some restaurant in a neighborhood was making an application, the community members could come? The church people, the PTA people like you said?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Seems to me that in that area there were open hearings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's not hard and fast—completely closed and then you're pried open. You have a bit of a mixture there.

The other piece that's under a lot of scrutiny in these years was your rule-making authority. I was never able to determine how much authority you really had, because in some records the Board says, "We don't have the authority there." In others, you were opening up Sunday hours a little bit. You were changing a lot of your regulations, and a lot of those things seem to be in-house. But then there was some kind of line beyond which you said you didn't have authority, but how did you work that out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's an area where the attorney general that was assigned to the Board would make a determination how the WAC affected this or the statute, or how far we could go in rule-making regulations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were some areas of your work, say, the merchandising area where you're bringing in the new retail look, was there no law covering that so you were allowed to be pretty creative there, but in other areas it was much more laid down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. I don't recall there ever being anything that restricted the Board as far as physical properties and what we could and couldn't do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a curious mixture of micro-management and openness to the laws, or that's how it appears from the outside. The Legislature gets right into the nitty-gritty on occasion, and at other times they throw it back at you and say, "You're the Board. You figure this out." It seemed very uneven.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. I think those things that are the intent of the Legislature, the Board probably tries to act on those immediately and to carry out the will of the Legislature. Some of the fine-tuning of general areas is left pretty much to the Board. And there again, we relied on our employees in the particular area that we're

discussing, the attorney general, and the various groups that are affected by what it is we were contemplating.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about your relationship with the Legislature? Did you go before their hearings when they were discussing liquor issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Fairly frequently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** During a session there would be a number of bills before the Legislature that the Board would testify either for or against.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you, if you had some new area or something that you wanted to change, would you take it to the Legislature yourselves and make an agency request, "Could you change this regulation," if it was something that was in a WAC?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can't specifically think of an issue, but I know there were some where, in effect, the Board instituted the first step.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you build relationships with certain legislators, let's say the ones on that committee, or that oversaw your operation? Would your former role as a member help you there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, there's nothing so past as a past member of the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But at least you were not going in cold. You knew their processes, you knew some of the people. I was wondering if that was an asset or not?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it was, particularly. But you see, Jack was a former member of the Legislature and, of course, Leroy who was with the Associated Press, he knew more about the process probably than most legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wouldn't that be one of your strengths as members, that you would be familiar with at least how it worked?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Legislature, of course, sets the taxes on alcohol and those sorts of things. Often, you as the Board members, would be criticized for that and a lot of your statements are, "Well, you know, that's the Legislature. We just implement the law; we don't make it."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But there's so much confusion about where that line is. What's the law you implement and what are the regulations you actually come up with yourselves?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If somebody thinks that's a problem, to try to fix it would be so complicated and so time consuming and so questionable that I just don't think anybody wants to open it up and get at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And so even though it's not a perfect system, you kind of rub along together? One area that was troubling to some before you even came on the Board, was whether or not the Board could address the issue of racial discrimination by some of its customers. As early as 1968, groups started to complain to the Liquor Control Board that private clubs that were licensed by the Board for their liquor license were practicing discrimination, basically, for the most part, race discrimination. They wanted the Liquor Control Board to deny licenses to groups like the Elks and Moose clubs and others that had restricted membership clauses in their bylaws. I can understand the Liquor Control Board felt caught in the middle. The Board, at this stage, didn't feel that you had enough rule-making authority to deny licenses because, I gather, your rules didn't even address that issue. Could you comment on that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. The function of the Board was to license establishments that sold liquor either by the bottle or by the drink. There was nothing that spoke to the matter of discrimination. And there were black businesses that were licensed, and of course your fraternal organizations and country clubs and all of those facilities were licensed. They all had to follow the regulations as to the sale of liquor and the control of their premises. The Board at that time felt that it was not in their jurisdiction to be involved in discrimination matters.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if this is an extension of the notion that the Liquor Control Board was supposed to care about the morality of the public? By the late 1960s, early seventies, racial discrimination had become a moral and ethical issue in society. If you were concerned about the morality of clients and keeping men and women patrons apart and that sort of thing, there were quite a few of your regulations that had something to do with the behavior of people who are drinking. But this was a whole new extension, or interpretation on what you were supposed to be regulating there. I can see how people are trying to make that logical leap, but it is quite a different thing, it seems.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. There are a number of issues that the Board was easing into and taking care of one way or another, and we just kind of felt that when the time was right this issue would probably evolve and also be taken care of.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People seemed outraged that these clubs got special discounts. Maybe it had to do with handling bulk orders. I'm not really sure why they did, but there was some kind of special irritation at that fact that you were giving these clubs a break and yet they were not open to the entire public. There was a sort of disconnect there in some people's minds.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You could see where there might be a question.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this something you hoped the Legislature would move on? Would that be the more appropriate place?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That certainly would be the ultimate solution—would be for the Legislature to say, “You shall do this and this and this.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s where you derive your powers, right? From legislation—statutes?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The WAC pretty much covers the whole spectrum of liquor activities in the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was one of the issues percolating in the background that got mixed up with a whole lot of other issues. I think we have pretty much “set the stage” for our discussion of the most controversial issue that you dealt with during your time of the Board, that of the “sample issue.” One last question before we turn to that conversation: this jockeying back and forth with the Legislature, another consideration was the political motivation on the part of some of the legislators—where they were either advancing certain causes or blaming the Board or playing politics, basically. How much would you be on the receiving end of that sort of thing? I was particularly interested in the Democratic/Republican dynamic. Dan Evans had hit Governor Rosellini pretty hard with his liquor issues, and I was wondering if there was any fallout on his Board from the Democrats?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, we probably, as a Board, got more support from the Democrats with our problem than with most of the Republicans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s really interesting. Liquor was one of those volatile issues that can be a bit of a football on occasion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that that situation could have really been a tremendous problem that

actually, I think, worked out reasonably well for the Board members, personally.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, good. Now, let’s explore the samples issue that complicated your days of service on the Board almost from the beginning. It’s a complex issue so we will try to step through it a piece at a time. We’ve touched on it here and there but I wanted to discuss it in some depth.

It had been a practice for several administrations that samples of liquor that came to the Liquor Control Board from different representatives would be sent to the governor’s mansion and used for entertainment purposes. Would that be like a courtesy? I’m not quite clear how that came about.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’m not either. I’m not sure how it started and how it evolved, but I think it got to the point where maybe it was overworked, and that was one of the things that both Governor Langlie and Governor Evans, if not put a complete stop to it, slowed it down considerably.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of course, Governor Langlie was a teetotaler and had his milkshake bar instead of former Governor Wallgren’s very active liquor bar. But Governor Evans—he was a “straight arrow”—but he wasn’t quite that straight-laced, and he did have liquor in the mansion. But you told me that he put a stop to the practice of sample delivery early in his administration. It’s probably one of the easier pieces of the sample issue to understand, but an important part of the story.

Another part was that in your stores, especially with your new way of doing things, you only had so many shelf spaces as you’ve told me, and you handled about twelve-hundred items. But there were always new items or items that distilleries and wineries are pushing forward or promoting in some new way. And there were even new products like “light whiskey” that were more or less invented at this point. There’s a pretty fierce competition for those slots on those

shelves. One of the ways, I gather, that the representatives advanced their products was that they wanted you, the members, to have samples. That was a very accepted practice as everybody did that for a long time.

But with that came charges of favoritism, that the selection of what went on the shelves wasn't scientific, for instance. That it wasn't based on business principles. It was hard to tell what it was based on. Can you comment on that slice of the whole sample issue? How those decisions were made?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think I mentioned earlier that the shelf space, the prime location which is at eye level, were, by and large, allocated to the best selling, fastest moving items in the inventory. And that sometimes it might seem unfair that a new product would be relegated to the bottom shelf or maybe the top shelf where it was a little difficult for people to see it. But that was a policy established by the Board and carried out by the supervisors in the Stores and Agency Division.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How much pressure were you subjected to for some decisions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. Once in awhile we'd have a vendor say, "Hey, how about getting my line up on the middle section?" We'd just reiterate that that position is for our faster moving items.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So at least you had a policy to point to. You had some defense there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. As far as the samples are concerned, the law specifically states that the Board shall receive samples for the purpose of negotiating a sale. That's in the law.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a very odd law once you think about it. Because it looks, on the surface, questionable. If it's the same item over and over, why do you need samples? Or was this just for new things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** This would be primarily for new things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That included new labels, a new style of bottle, not just new formulas for what's inside the bottle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So how did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That, of course, from my standpoint, would be questionable. But I think because Governor Langlie and Governor Evans both cut off any delivery of merchandise to the mansion, that that pretty much took care of that kind of a situation where you had existing listings being considered samples.

But, if we had a new product, the manufacturer would, for instance, send a case into the purchasing agent and he would send *X* number of bottles to the University of Washington. He would probably send one bottle each to the three Board members, and perhaps three or four other staff people—the financial officer or the enforcement chief or the head of the licensing division.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And what were you supposed to do with them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Actually taste them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Isn't taste subjective?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if you like it or don't like it, then what?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You might have your friends or neighbors try it. And particularly on new items, particularly in wines, it doesn't take very long to either put it in a good or a bad category.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, say it's a bad wine, would you still sell it but maybe the price would be less?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or you would just say, "No, we're not going to carry this."

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. We'd just not act on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you give yourself any kind of training in how to taste wine, for instance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Jack had always been a pretty good judge of wines. And I think Leroy and his wife had a pretty good idea of what was good. I was a neophyte, but I did join the Enology Society and went to their meetings, and they had tastings and they also had how to handle wines, how to determine on taste tests and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you did go about educating yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wasn't just a man off the street, "I like this or I don't like this." That seemed very arbitrary. And that's where I think you got into the trouble because it was hard to tell how your decisions were made, because it seemed so personal. But it sounds like you did go to some lengths to not make it just your personal opinion.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The other place where you do get into a little bit of trouble is that it looked a little loose. You gave drinks to your friends to see what their opinions were. From one perspective that seems perfectly sensible and the obvious thing to do. But from a different perspective, when they start to really come down

like a ton of bricks on the Board about this, it does look a little unregulated. I know that had been the practice for a long time for the Board members to do that. Why was it suddenly frowned upon?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think people envisioned the Board having case after case of liquor that they were giving to their friends or neighbors or whatever. And I think that basically the situation was as the law indicated. These were provided and you could look at the labels and do the taste test. And what we did—Jack Hood was our expert in Scotches and Leroy in Gins and Vodkas. And I was in Bourbon and Brandies. We had a regular form that we used with the name and a judgment on the label and so on. And then we'd sit down and have a listing session and we'd go over these forms and there'd be lots of times that we wouldn't agree on an item.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would knock an item off your list?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could be a bad taste. It could be that it was a garish label.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That had the wrong kind of message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was more cosmetic, I guess.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I really want to understand this. Would you do this taste test in the office?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or that would be an evening kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And we'd do it individually. We wouldn't sit around a table and have ten or twelve different Scotches and try each one out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think by the tenth or twelfth one you'd like it no matter what! A somewhat delicate question—when you'd take a bottle home, did you get to keep it, or would you drink one drink and then dump it? How much liquor are we talking about here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In a year's time we didn't have very many items. When the state got big into the wine industry and we began getting more higher-class wines—California and a lot of imports—then the number of new items would increase considerably. But once in awhile we'd get a company that none of us had ever heard of that was trying to get into the Bourbon business, and so they'd want to get their product listed. Very seldom would we take on a new Bourbon or a new Scotch or Vodka or Brandy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering how often new products would come on board. The scale of this is difficult to understand.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think that in a month's time we might get maybe two companies that would submit samples.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Press had this quite blown up. You're almost pictured as sloshing in liquor.

**Mr. Eldridge:** A truck backing up to your house—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a little bit difficult to picture what they're talking about. And this was in the era just after the passage of the wine bill that we discussed earlier, when you were still in the Legislature. A shift in what people were choosing to drink. Moving into wines and away from hard liquors.

Did you have to redesign your stores to accommodate these changing tastes? Give more room to wine and less to some other things? Did it lead to jockeying of how many different kinds of bottles are going to be on those shelves, and what they were going to be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a little reorganization that had to be done, and in some instances we put island-type shelving in the store to accommodate the extra. In the case of wine where people were buying by the case, we'd have stacks of cases of a new item in the middle of the store. I noticed yesterday I was in the liquor store in Tumwater and they now have a discount for case lots, and they can be all of one brand or they could be an assorted brand so that if a customer wants variety, why he can get that and then get a ten percent discount.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Build your wine cellar in a day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** For you, when you first started with this sampling issue, other than, say, the governor's mansion deliveries, it seemed normal, fine, a good way of dealing with the choosing of brands and the regulation of your product? That seemed like a sensible way of dealing with it? Or did you have questions in your own mind that there was something going on that might have more than one interpretation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't question it at the time. It just seemed like a natural way to do business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it have parallels with your own kind of business, or other businesses you were familiar with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. In our business, every once in awhile, we would have a salesman come in and put down whatever he was selling and say, "Here, try this and if it looks like it'll sell, why give me a call and we'll make up an order for you." And so to me it was just kind of a natural phenomenon of marketing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, it all seems like the normal course of business, but what happened next was anything but. You joined the Liquor Control Board

in 1970, and within not too many months you were really in hot water. On September 30, 1971, the three members of the Liquor Control Board, including yourself, plus a former member, Garland Sponburgh were indicted with charges of—it sounds pretty serious—grand larceny and fraudulent appropriation of liquor. You were also charged, you three members—although not Garland Sponburgh—with using your positions to obtain special privileges which were free samples of liquor. This is a pretty serious indictment. Do you recall what the possible penalties for this were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't. But I'm sure they would be substantial.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think I read somewhere it was something like a possible ten-year jail sentence. Certainly a fine. It sounded quite serious.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And you know, it really caught us by surprise because there'd never been any question about it prior to this time. It was really difficult for us to understand how this could happen since the statute is pretty clear on the matter of samples to the Board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We should explain fully what these samples are all about.

**Mr. Eldridge:** If a company had an item that they wanted the Board to list and put on the shelves in the stores and agencies, they would submit a request and also send samples for testing. As a regular matter, the Board would send a number of bottles, and I can't recall just how many it was, and whether it was different for different items. But in any event, those went to the University of Washington for lab testing. And then the Board members had a number of bottles which they would ask friends or family to try, and we had a regular form that they could fill out that would indicate how the packaging was, or what

they thought of the label, the color quality and also the taste and smell. All of those things would go into a taste test.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This had been a practice from the beginning, I gather? That from the 1930s, when the Steele Act which set up the state system of regulating alcohol sales was passed, this was the way the Board would operate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As far as I know, it was a historical procedure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seems very important to note that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you question it at all yourself? Did you think this was untoward in any way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't give it a second thought. I figured this was just a procedure that was part of the operation. And, of course, the thing that really floored us when we asked the attorney general assigned to us from the Attorney General's office about the procedure, and he assured us that there was no problem. That the statute was very clear and that we weren't doing anything illegal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was when you got indicted, or before?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't have any reason to question it before, but as soon as we were indicted and hauled before the Grand Jury, then we began to question what this was all about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The indictment came down on September 30. How long did you have to prepare your defense? What did you do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We immediately sought out legal counsel and met with that person on numerous occasions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have documents that would help? A statute that would help support your case?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The WAC, of course, has everything in written form and that was certainly available to us and to our defense attorney.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had this issue ever come up before at all?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to my knowledge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So administration after administration had been doing this. There had certainly been liquor scandals, but never this? Never on the issue of samples?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Totally out of the blue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a new approach.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the newspaper accounts indicate that Robert Graham, the State Auditor, had something to do with the instigation of this case. That he was questioning the practice on a lost revenue basis, I guess you'd say. It was not clear to me his exact relationship to the case. Whether they were separate but became related, or if he actually pushed this and brought this indictment down?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know how active he was directly. Ironically, I think that the Attorney General's office was probably as much behind it as anyone. The fact that one of their own assistant AGs was assigned to the Board and had been consulted about the validity of the sample program, and assured the Board that there was

no problem and that no laws were being broken. We relied on that information.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were certainly being tried in the Press. But what was it like to go before this Grand Jury? Maybe you could explain a little bit about what a Grand Jury is.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a group of citizens who have been called together to, in effect, preliminarily hear a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To decide if there is a court case, or grounds for a court case? Is that the idea? Is it like an investigation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they have quite a lot of power and quite a broad authority. But I can't tell you precisely, step by step, what. I just know that we got the summons to appear before the Grand Jury, and I went in there thinking that the problem was going to be about our leasing of properties for liquor stores. It happened that the supervisor of our Stores and Agencies, his wife was a real estate agent for a prominent real estate firm in Seattle, and we had questioned the propriety of that. And the Liquor Board employee said, "She doesn't deal with commercial properties. She's strictly a residential agent." That could or could not be appropriate, but in any event, the Board had questioned that and I thought, "Well, that's probably what the Grand Jury was looking into."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you got the indictment it wasn't clear what the charge was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. They just said appear at such-and-such a time at such-and-such a place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there you are. You search your soul. What have you done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just a real shocker to us. We had no idea. We talked a little bit about it

and the three of us pretty much agreed that it was probably going to be about the leasing situation. Then we got into the Grand Jury meeting and found that it was something entirely different, that we had no inkling of what was going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You wouldn't really be prepared. You would be dumbfounded, I guess. So they read out the charges and then you three, did you have a lawyer at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you already have James Andersen as your lawyer, or did he come a little bit later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We just consulted with him, and he wasn't directly involved, but he recommended the attorney that we did use.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He wasn't actually your attorney? Because he's quoted constantly in the newspaper accounts as your attorney.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He wasn't officially. But because he knew all three of us and had served in the Legislature with me, he was the first that we contacted.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In fact, he had just retired from the State Senate and gone back to his law practice.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Private practice. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they charged you with this grand larceny. Then what happened? Did you have to answer that immediately right there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That first meeting was just kind of general and then they set appointments to take depositions from the three of us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Together, or separately?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Separately.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a chance to talk to each other to make sure you all told the same things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We did. We got together on a number of occasions, just to kind of compare notes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a strategy for how you were going to answer this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not particularly. No. Each of us, individually, told our story as we perceived it and it just came out pretty much the same.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm curious why they charged you three current members plus Garland Sponburgh and no others. If this had been a practice that had been going on for a long time, how did they choose you four? I was wondering if former members were just not alive or around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that some of them had passed on. There weren't really too many former members of the Board around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe that's how it happened. The charges, as they were detailed in the newspapers, talked about large scale embezzlement of liquor supplies. Forgeries of signatures of distillery representatives. And then they talked about a bonded locker in the warehouse that had about three-thousand bottles of liquor in it. That doesn't sound like a locker. That sounds pretty big. So what were they getting at with these charges?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, there wasn't a large area. It was a storage area that was locked and did contain the liquor that was shipped in for the Board for sample testing. It was put in that locker and the purchasing agent pretty much had control over that area and he allocated the samples out.

He shipped to the University those that were to be tested and then he delivered to each of the Board members the new items that they were to handle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it really be on that scale of thousands of bottles?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, I don't recall ever seeing the interior of this storage area. It was pretty much out in the center of the warehouse, actually a free-standing building within the warehouse, and kept under lock and key.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine you would have had some inventory control over this locker. There'd be records of bottles going in and out and where they went.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The purchasing agent for the Board had control of that area, and I'm sure that he had a record.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The way some of the newspaper stories are written have blown this up as if there's just liquor floating around, nobody knows where it is or what it is. That seemed not likely to me. I just wondered what that was really all about?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. Of course, when you get to the media, they're—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, it makes for headlines. Quite a story. There were various explanations for this practice. And of course, the Press had interpretations that were perhaps somewhat inflated.

One of the phenomena that you were dealing with was, in your last years at the Legislature, the wine bill had passed which created a new situation for the Liquor Control Board. All kinds of new wines and products came into the state after that. And wine drinking itself had expanded quite a bit in those years, so

perhaps you were getting a lot of wine that would be new to your shelves and would need this testing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall, major selections of wine were not handled in this manner. It seemed to me that we just took those as legitimate items and that they were items that we should be displaying on our shelves in our outlets.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But they didn't go through the sampling?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We didn't go through the sampling process on those.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That was somehow tied in here the way it was written up, but I couldn't tell. It seemed to be some explanation for some of the volume.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was primarily new items that were pretty much unknown to us in this state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Okay. So, you gave your depositions, and do you recall your way of answering the charge?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I explained how the Board members handled the sample situation and explained to them that we sort of divided up the areas of what the product was and which Board member would consider those items. Jack Hood was in charge of the Scotch brands. I had the Bourbon area and then Leroy had what we termed the "white goods," Vodkas, Gins, Tequila. That sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It makes sense, I guess, because you would be comparing one product to another. So, if you were familiar with what else you were selling, that would work pretty well.

I don't really know what the process is, of being deposed. You go in and you give your statement and they just take it? Do they indicate to you what's going to happen next?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The attorney representing the state, I guess, asks questions and they have a court reporter and they take questions and answers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are there any witnesses?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were somewhat alone when you did this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Each person, each of the Board members, testified individually.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the Grand Jury members were just sitting there listening to this? Were you worried? What did it feel like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I figured that we hadn't done anything out of line and that this was just a drill that they had to go through.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At some stage did you change your feeling about this? They were really going after you in the Press. What's that like to deal with that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You always have some apprehension and some concern about where this is going to lead, but I was never really worried about the outcome. I don't think the other two members were especially concerned either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to use your own money to defend yourself? To hire lawyers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We did, but then eventually the Legislature bailed us out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But this was in 1971, and this case went on for years. So you retained some kind of legal help, but this was out of your own pocket. Why was this not a Board function? You were charged as Board members.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But not as a Board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a distinction?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Individual members. I think we figured it was somewhere between sixteen- and twenty-thousand dollars apiece. It was fairly hefty, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not a small thing. One of the first things that happened was that your lawyer—and again, the spokesperson was Jim Andersen—tried to argue for a change of venue. You were being tried in Seattle, I believe.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He brought in several hundred of pages of newspaper clippings that said the Seattle Press had tainted the jury pool with this wall-to-wall coverage, and that that was not a fair place for you to be tried. However, that tactic didn't work. And that is where the trial was held.

It kind of grinds on for quite a while, and several things happened. One of them, in 1972—the following year—is that a group filed an initiative, Initiative 126, that was all about privatizing liquor sales. Taking it out of the government's hands and returning it to private business. But the wording of that initiative strongly indicated that the reason this should happen was because the Board was corrupt—because of this case. What was your reaction to this campaign?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We just figured it was a media promoted sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had a quote in the *Olympian* saying something pretty much like that. That you thought that a lot of this is something to do with selling newspapers. It said, "Eldridge guessed that newspaper operators were behind the move"—the initiative—"in an effort to make more advertising revenue." Because I guess the Liquor Control Board was keeping a lid on the advertising of liquor—that the newspapers would have an interest in removing that control?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You weren't being facetious? You really thought that perhaps that was part of what was going on there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I thought it was certainly an element.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The initiative statement in support of I-261 was that it would bring an end to "state abuse of the monopolistic liquor system." It would lower liquor prices. It would benefit the state economy. And then, philosophically, that the state should not be in the retail business. It was supported by or sponsored by John Stender, who was a state senator, Dave Ceccarelli, a state representative, and Warren McPherson and Robert B. Gould, who were co-chairs of the "Citizens Against Liquor Monopoly," or CALM, their acronym. And they went on—McPherson and Gould—to sponsor other, very similar sounding initiatives in the years following. Were you surprised that members of the Legislature would be in support of this? Was this a new thought or a continuing theme?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are certain members of the Legislature for a period of years who were interested in seeing the state get out of the business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In fact, we still have that issue. People are still talking about that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** On the other side, the statements against, were also supported by legislators: Bob Greive, Irv Newhouse, Jack Rogers and then a whole slew of advisory committee members of various kinds, including a judge and a police chief. Several judges, in fact. Their reasons to oppose I-261 were that it would

increase taxes and boost liquor prices. The opposite argument. Their statement said, "It gives away your millions to private interest." So, money that the state could collect would go to private business instead. It would increase drinking problems. So they were focusing on the control issue. And that state selection was better and had better prices than grocery stores. Would this be the side that the Liquor Control Board would identify with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. We were pretty generally opposed to privatization at this point in time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certain statements you made over time fall into this category of saying, "The state does do a better job. The state does keep the prices lower. It would not work the way the proponents of this initiative suggest." Could you take up a position, you Board members, on something like this, on an initiative like this? Or did you have to just stay quiet?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We did stay quiet. I don't know that there's any law that says you shouldn't have an opinion. I suspect that since it was directed at the Board and its operation that we certainly would be justified in taking a stand.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or at least explaining how the Liquor Control Board operated. Do you recall being involved in this in any way, or did you just kind of sit this one out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we just kept our heads down pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think that might have helped or not helped your cause? Or it was just inappropriate for you to speak up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just think that we could have been criticized if we had gone either way. It's a no-win situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just stay out of it. Well, at any rate, it failed—634,973 people voted for it, but 779,568 voted against it. So you dodged that bullet.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a feeling which way it would go? Did you feel confident that people would not go this route?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the three of us felt that it would fail because it seemed to me at that point the citizens were still interested in the control of liquor. We had felt all along that if you take the Board out of that situation that things would deteriorate pretty fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So liquor would be a commodity like any other. Freely advertised, freely sold, freely disseminated throughout society.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would be quite a social change. Even in the ferment of the early 1970s, I guess people weren't ready for that.

But there were a series of initiatives over the years, the next few years. Nineteen seventy-four had another one, then people were discussing the drinking age and trying to lower it. They wanted to sell liquor in grocery stores. They wanted to change how the Liquor Control Board operated, to restrict it. Again, they wanted to privatize it in 1976. They want to lower your taxes, lower the drinking age again.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I think there was a Sunday sales mentioned in there someplace, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. And then in 1979, another initiative aimed at privatizing it again. None of these pass, of course, and several of them, many of them, don't even get signatures. They are just floated. They're just out there.

But there's this constant buzzing—I'm not quite sure what to call it—questioning your role, questioning how you operated, questioning the whole concept of state control. Did that make your job harder, or do you just sort of ignore it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think you just tune it out because we understood what the law says and what the mission should be, and that was where we were putting our efforts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you counter this in any way with—I don't want to call it publicity—but public education campaigns to help the public understand the role of the Board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't any specific organized attempt to do that, but certainly if we were asked questions then that would be the theme of our answers, pretty much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know what it felt like. Were you a little under siege? You had this indictment hanging over your head and you had people, including legislators, questioning your work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You always are a little apprehensive about an attack like that. But we felt we were doing the right thing and what else can you say?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you talk amongst yourselves and kind of support each other and help each other have this clarity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We, of course, discussed the situation a number of times, pretty much informally. There was no structured conversation in opposition or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You seem to have a very calm temperament. Did the other Board members take it as calmly as you seemed to have done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people would get excited about this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I would say that the other two were a little more concerned and expressed themselves a little stronger than I did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Garland Sponburgh? Was he somewhat off on his own?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was pretty much out of it, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Although he's charged as well. I was just wondering if he ever met with any of you and talked over how you were all doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We didn't have any meetings like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** At least you three had each other. He's somewhat out there in the cold.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. He was all by himself.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems a much lonelier position.

During this time though, you were busy. You were doing your duties and running things. You also up and moved your offices. You got new quarters in the Capitol Plaza Building and moved out of the GA Building. Was that a big move? Did you need more space, get better facilities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was. You see, the Department of Agriculture had some office space in the GA Building, and they were expanding and they needed more room. I guess the head of the Department of GA at the time looked at things and decided that maybe we should move out. They were building that new building and it looked as though it would be a good location. It was convenient and they had adequate parking and so we were able to have a little say in the layout of the office.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this an upgrade for you? Did you get nicer offices?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They weren't any nicer, I don't believe, but they were new, and as I say, it was a good location.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even at the best of times moving an office is—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, it's a pain.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, it's a pain. An onerous activity and you've still got to carry on, so that that seems challenging.

The early seventies, we also had the energy crisis. I read that you did take some measures to help ease the energy use—turn down the thermostat or something. Do you recall what measures the Board adopted?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We did have a program particularly in the state stores, and then we encouraged the agency managers to do whatever they could to reduce consumption.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that an economy measure? You were paying the bills on all those facilities.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It turned out to be an economy measure. I think we saved some money and you know, you can't turn the lights down too low in a facility like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. Your lights had more than functional meaning. They had a lot of other issues involved there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Security. Yes. But I think it worked out reasonably well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was also an indication in the reports that you revolutionized some of the other things you were doing. You began to use computers for tracking inventory and various

things. And you even brought in new cash registers and new equipment, and you were modernizing the office at the same time you were doing these other things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's correct. Yes. And Jim Hoing who was our comptroller, and Lowell Hanson who was our Stores and Agencies supervisor, I think had more to do with that than anybody else in the agency.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be a policy that the Board members would indicate that you wanted the agency to go in those directions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it came from those division heads saying that, "You know, we really are going to need to modernize the system," and the Board would take action and say, "Okay. Do it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have study sessions or some kind of presentations to help you understand the different options? Which ones would work best for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And our warehouse supervisor kept us updated on handling machinery and all that sort of thing. We had one of the most modern merchandise handling warehouses in the country. We had people from all over coming in to look at it and go over the operation with our supervisor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there's some pride in what you're doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That offsets some of the gloom of the newspaper accounts!

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nevertheless, this indictment case was proceeding through the channels. In

June of 1973, there was an important phase. The superior court judge, Ward Roney, finally dismissed the county Grand Jury. He said—I don't know if they continued to investigate it all this time, or exactly how this worked—but he said the charges were too vague. That they hadn't defined what they were talking about very well. That there were several technical difficulties with the case. You were tried in the wrong county. That you should have been tried in Thurston County, not King County. And this sounds like a real technicality, that the number of signing judges on the forms did not represent a proper quorum, and therefore it should never have taken place in the first place, is what I understood that to be. So there's one load off your neck.

**Mr. Eldridge:** When you get into the technicalities of the judicial system, I tell you, you need to have a Philadelphia lawyer advising you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All the way! Apparently, you members were not present in court when this was handed down. Just your lawyers were there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not that decision.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's not over, though. He sealed the records of the proceedings of the Grand Jury and said that was the end of it. But, unfortunately, it was not considered the end of it by some other people.

The prosecutor's office, in the person of Christopher Bayley at this point, wanted to appeal to the Supreme Court. He finally decided that was not the route to go, but what he does press for is a release of those proceedings. He does not want them sealed, he wants them public, because as he says, "The public has a right to know how state officials are conducting business, and that if the Grand Jury evidence was made public, it might lead to new charges and your eventual removal from office." How did this phase feel to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess we considered it kind of a bump in the road. Chris Bayley was considered an opportunist along with Attorney General Slade Gorton. As I say, we just didn't really figure he had much influence with anybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the motivation for doing this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think he had aspirations politically, but he just couldn't get anywhere.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's definitely a thorn in your side.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is not a small thing if all this comes out again and is reopened and possibly new charges brought. There's an important distinction. These were criminal charges. The prosecutor's office wants to bring civil charges. Could you tell me the difference? What did it mean to you? Are they tried differently?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know about the technical operation. A charge is a charge is a charge, and how you get from A to B, I'm not sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I didn't know if you got a little legal education as you were going along with this particular case.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I probably got more than I wanted, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe you didn't want to remember it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, Christopher Bayley was working for whom in this case? He's a King County prosecutor, isn't he?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But yet they've already said that this is the wrong county. So what role does he have to play here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He's the head prosecutor, and if the charge was filed in King County, then he would be representing the county. I really don't know how he gets into it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just don't understand what it has to do with King County at all.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It shouldn't. It's a state matter.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And state matters are always tried in Thurston County because that's where the government is located, I thought.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right. I think the judge was probably correct in his assessment of the situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In concert, or somehow at the same time, in October of about 1973, Attorney General Slade Gorton was also calling for the opening of the evidence—the opening of this record. He also noted that his office had the right to bring civil charges against the Board members. The criminal charges, as we said, were dismissed, but you still have this other avenue open. So he was still kind of hanging something over your heads here. Jim Andersen again is quoted in the paper as saying, "This case is over." But Gorton and various prosecutors in his shop were not so sure that this case was closed; in the very least they wanted the governor and other parties to have this evidence so that the governor would have the wherewithal, should he so choose, to remove you from office. I gather that once you've been appointed to the Liquor Control Board and confirmed by the Senate, you can only be removed with cause, as they say. And this would represent "cause." Another deputy prosecutor, Mr. Clark, made several statements about opening

up this evidence. He said, "It's in the interest of a truly open society that none of this should be private." This is about the time of Watergate. Was there a relationship in any sense here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose if I said anything I'd be accused of saying that there was a conspiracy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of the whole "open society" concept, by their proponents?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's certainly the liberal approach to most anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand Slade Gorton was one of the very early believers that President Nixon should be impeached. I don't know if there's any kind of general principle to be drawn here. Whether there was suspicion cast over all kinds of people who worked for the government, or if there's no relationship whatever. But the social climate right at this time was real dicey.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And I think that that was all just part of the times and the philosophy. And of course, I think the media played a big part in this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's part of where this is playing out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Coming from.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the media, of course. There was a general willingness on the part of the Press and the public to believe that people in government were capable of corruption and dark deeds. And there's a sort of undercurrent in the comments about all this. That you're hiding something. Like President Nixon. There's this sort of feeling of—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Distrust.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it feel that way? Did you feel attacked in that way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It just seemed to me that it was sort of a trend and there was a group, not an organized group, but just a mass of people who had that feeling that anybody in government is a crook.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Of course, all these were government prosecuting attorneys.

Similarly—although for very different reasons—in 1972 Initiative-276, that created the Public Disclosure Commission passed. That's a kind of a watershed event in state politics. It's an opening up to public scrutiny of campaign issues and money and the connection between the two. This plays into some of this. If you're on the side of the angels, you have a completely open operation, open to the Press, open to the public. There's no such thing as a closed file or tape recording or anything private.

Did the Board respond to these veiled and not so veiled charges of being somewhat closed or secretive? Did you start to change your internal agency culture?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there were some changes made. The specific Board meetings had pretty much been available to the public and we had lots of people come in on various issues and present their position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they open in the sense that they were posted, publicized, or just that people having to do with a specific issue would know to come?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was available. I don't recall that we sent out a notice with an agenda and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What is the definition of a public meeting in this sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. I don't know that that was ever defined.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The door is open. People can come in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're being put through it in the Press, somewhat in the public. The Legislature was also training its eyes on you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Stirring around. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're not out of the mix. All through these years different senators and representatives called for investigations, held hearings, questioned your practices, bringing you before them in hearings. In 1971, Senator Gordon Herr called for a special investigative committee. Martin Durkan, that year, wanted hearings. He wanted the Appropriations Committee to look at some of these issues.

Thomas Swayze, as the Speaker in '71, called for investigations, but his statement was a little softer and more supportive of the Liquor Control Board. Some of his statements hint that some of these other things are politically motivated and perhaps he wanted to set up a hearing or an investigation that would give the other side or be more supportive of the Board.

These things came up in the Press, but did these groups have hearings? Did you go before them and discuss your practices? I just wondered how often the Board would come before the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Only on budget hearings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So some of these are grandstanding? They don't really call for all these investigations, or they call for them but they don't actually set up all these committees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't ever recall a committee setting up hearings and calling witnesses and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I tried to find traces of actual hearings, and I couldn't find any, so I wondered what happened. So this is just kind of grumbling?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. There are legislators who just like to hear their own voice and, of course, they try to get as much Press as possible. And they're getting it because it's a sensitive area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They want to look like they're taking care of it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Press picks up on anything that pertains to liquor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I kept coming across these calls for hearings and investigations, but I couldn't make much substance out of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think any of them developed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting.

Later, in 1973, this continued to kind of roll along, Judge Roney reversed himself and said that the evidence from the Grand Jury hearing could be made public. Jim Andersen again was quoted in the paper as saying that the trial itself was illegal because it had all these technical difficulties. And that the prosecutor's case would just be this one-sided version, and that it wouldn't be a true picture of what had happened there. That it would be quite a violation of what had happened. He says that Slade Gorton and the different prosecutors didn't have a case that they could really try in the courts, so therefore, in his words, "They're moving the trial into the streets," the public arena.

He also said that you had already changed your sampling process in September of '71. That you are doing things differently, and that this issue was moot. Did you change how you processed new items? Did you decide the better part of discretion was not to continue these practices?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As I recall, we cut way back. And then, of course, we were at a point where there just weren't too many offerings that

we needed to mull over and make a decision as to whether or not we would sell it or not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the situation was resolving itself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it was. These things eventually work themselves out, but I think at this point it was really cooling down.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why were they keeping it alive, then? Why doesn't it just go away?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a few people out there who were interested in keeping it stirred up just for their own benefit and purpose.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What could they gain other than publicity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this to "look tough?" To look like they're hard on crime and no favoritism, that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose. I don't know for a fact, but I would presume that that was the reason behind a lot of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. The Auditor still made noises on occasion about this issue. He maintained that you were still doing this sampling, and he continued to push on this issue of this locker, as he calls it, and your accounting practices with these bottles. He was still troubled by this. Was he just out of date, or was the record keeping not keeping up with your practices? Did he have something particular in mind that he wanted you to do and you were not doing it? I'm not clear about his charges.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We weren't clear either.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. Was he also making political hay here, possibly?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think possibly. I don't know of anything specifically that I could point to, but I just think that it was one of those issues that sometimes people jump on board just because they think it's a good place to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It certainly stirred up a hornet's nest.

Right in the midst of all of this, Governor Evans reappointed Mr. Hittle to the Board again for another term. It was a kind of statement of support and confidence in his abilities. The governor was not making very many statements, but this seems as if his actions were speaking loudly, that he would reappoint someone under this cloud. Did he contact you in any way during all of this uproar?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He stayed pretty clear of this? He could have taken an easier road and started with some fresh appointments.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But he didn't do that. And he does occasionally get into the newspaper defending you against Chris Bayley.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was really put out with Chris Bayley.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He sounded pretty annoyed. In a June, 1973 article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* it said: "Governor Dan Evans and King County Prosecutor, Christopher T. Bayley, traded barbs yesterday over a court order Bayley obtained to disclose Grand Jury evidence against members of the State Liquor Control Board." And then it went on to describe how Chris Bayley had been a supporter of Evans, and how they were all Republicans together and how this was a bit of a split. And then it quoted the Governor as saying: "It sort of appears to me now that the

intent by the prosecutor is to say essentially, I lost my case, couldn't find any conviction, and since I can't try it in the court, I'm asking for it to be tried in the streets," which is a sort of echo of what Jim Andersen was saying. So he's pretty up-to-date on that. Not really vocal in the Press, but when he is, he's squarely on your side.

Again, about that time, the Legislature was getting involved. House Bill 928, sponsored by Representatives Thompson, Pardini and Gaspard, was called the Omnibus Liquor Control Board bill. They want to rewrite your statutes and straighten out the court orders, I guess. This bill actually calls for a restriction of the authority of the Board and redefines what you do. And it passed, but Governor Evans vetoed that bill. He said it went too far in tying your hands. Do you remember this bill from this session? Would this be the kind of thing the Board would take a position on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not particularly. We'd kind of follow it, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have a legislative liaison person that would be tracking this sort of thing and keeping you up on what was going on there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The assistant AG, over the years, has pretty much been the contact person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that person would have kind of a double role?

**Mr. Eldridge:** But in this situation where he gave us bum advice or something, I'm not sure that—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was your trust level a little shaken there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And yet, of course, he turns out to be right, so you've got to stick with this guy.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Again, there's this legislative committee that wants to investigate you. Evans vetoed the bill and then Representative Charette got involved. He wanted the House Rules Committee to have a five-member select committee to investigate the discretionary powers of the Board and other executive agencies, but they were mostly focusing on you.

He said—this is a quote in the newspaper—"There is too much discretion, especially with the Liquor Control Board. The House Majority Leader said he had no other specific agencies in mind, but that he would deal with the whole range of executive operations. Liquor Control Board members, quote, talked the Governor into vetoing the bill, after the House, at their suggestion, removed a section which they said would make it acceptable." You are quoted in this article as saying, 'That's not true', commented member Don Eldridge. 'We made no recommendations one way or another. Granted, there were some items we questioned, but we have no problems with the thing.' Do you remember that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember there was some discussion about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have talked to the Governor about this veto of this bill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We might have, but I don't recall that any of us did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he fairly capable of figuring this out for himself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He's pretty smart.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's charging you with doing this, but you're saying, "No, we don't need to do this." So you're just, again, kind of laying low and hoping for the best here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And during all this I was hoping Bob Charette would come to his senses. He and I had, over the years, been good friends. And while he was on the other side of the aisle, I always felt that we had a good relationship. I wouldn't fault him for taking a stand if it was right, but I don't know what put the burr under his saddle on this one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You seem to be a political football. Everybody's running with you. Does it get personal on any level? These are people you know and have worked with for years.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. No one ever really attacked me directly as a person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But like you say, this is somebody you know. Were you able to separate it out that way, and think, "Well, he's got his reasons but I don't know what they are?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And in a number of instances. But with Slade Gorton, I just could never figure out why he would go after me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever particularly speak with him about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I won't. I'd get mad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that feel personal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I thought it was opportunistic.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were just a handy foil?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that Slade was after anything he could get as long as it helped him up the ladder.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But if there's not anything to this charge, how can that help him by pushing it? Was it just one of those things that's easily misunderstood and therefore—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Gets lost in the confusion.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** —fodder for the mill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know, because Slade is probably one of the smartest men who ever came down the road, and I can't believe he didn't know what he was doing. And if it was a chance he was taking, he knew it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you ever in the same room with him during all this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I try to imagine either a social situation or an official situation where he was present.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite frankly, I avoided him as much as possible.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Pretty socially awkward.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Because I just didn't want to get into a shouting match with him. Now Jack and Leroy, they were outspoken. Both of them just went wild.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There were some pretty choice quotes on occasion. You tended to play it a little calmer. It's one of those political mysteries of that era.

As we said earlier, during all these events, it's not like the Liquor Control Board is sitting on its hands. There were other things going on. The issue that had been first raised in 1967 of discriminatory private clubs was still alive. Later in this time, it went back to the Legislature and they got involved. There were several different bills that tried to address it. Some really didn't get very far.

There was a club in Federal Way, an Elks Club, that was denied a license on a technicality, not the principle, of discriminatory membership

practices. And then some other clubs were also called into question. You were still claiming that you had no jurisdiction over that particular behavior. The chair of the Seattle Human Rights Commission got involved, Philip Hayasaka and spoke out on this issue. It seemed to be heating up again. I don't know if it ever really went away, but it was back on the front page.

Dan Evans had an executive request bill, Senate Bill 138, introduced by Senators Fleming, Scott, Gissberg, Francis, Whetzel and Washington, stating that no liquor license shall be issued to any club which discriminated on the basis of race, creed, color or national origin. There were hearings. Finally, the Legislature was going to give you some ammunition. Would this be something that the Board would welcome to clarify this issue? Then you didn't have to worry so much about this, of having the authority or not if this bill was to pass.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a fair statement. That we would certainly have some guidance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Jack Hood, who you've said was fairly outspoken, had quite a quote here. He appears to be applauding this move by the Legislature. He said, "It is difficult for me as a human being and an individual to administer liquor laws which subsidize bigotry." He was fairly outspoken there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But Leroy Hittle and you were not quite as willing to state your views. You more or less maintained that the case—there was a court case involving this—should go through the courts and that then you should see where you all stand. It's just a different take on a delicate issue.

This bill doesn't actually pass in 1972 when it was proposed. And some of the coverage of it said that part of the confusion was waiting for this court case to be decided and that

this bill was premature. Jim Andersen, interestingly enough, was a member of the committee where the bill died. So the Legislature seemed a little ambivalent. They proposed this bill, some of them, but they also let it die.

Senator Mardesich then sponsored Senate Floor Resolution Twenty-four, requesting an interim committee to undertake a study of the possibilities and problems involved in enacting new liquor control legislation. And this is somewhat veiled language possibly addressing these issues. It's a little bit hard to tell. This was adopted, however. This is a very difficult issue to track what happens. Do you remember? Do you eventually get legislation that helps you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't remember this issue as it got down towards the end.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall ever eventually denying liquor licenses on this account?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It seems to me that we did. But I don't know or can't remember specifically any licenses, but I just think that we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The other side of the coin could be that the clubs took that authority that you may or may not have had more seriously and changed their discriminatory ways. Did any of that happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was enough pressure that some of them did change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was an era of great social change. So perhaps it was going to evolve with a little help with the carrot and stick approach. Do you recall, does the agency itself change internally? Did you adopt affirmative action policies or anything along those lines?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that we specifically got into that area. We had a number of store managers who were black, and we had some Hispanics.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were doing that without having a formal policy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In these years, the union representation for your employees changed from the Teamsters to a different union, the Washington State Employees Union. Did that make a difference in employee relations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't think it really did. The Teamsters were, of course, involved primarily in the warehousing operation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this just a trend to bring anybody who worked for the state under one union?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have employee issues? Lowell Hanson, of whom you've spoken, seemed to be a bit of a lightning rod, at least for a while. There was at least one hearing where he was charged with harassment. But in fact, the charges sounded like what you were talking about. He came in and he brought in a lot of modernization and changed a lot of the work processes. I don't know why they would be characterized as harassment. Maybe he wasn't the most subtle person.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just as kind of an example, when he came in, the local store manager—and I think this was kind of a general practice—had hired somebody to come in and wash the windows. And Lowell said, "That's something that the employees ought to be doing." And that was kind of a shock to some of them.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't do windows?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And he always used to tell them, he said, "Now if any of you have a problem

with that, just go and talk to Mr. Eldridge, because he's been washing windows in his store for as long as he can remember," which was true. And that kind of ended it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if you can do it, they can do it, too. Is that the message?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was his thought. "It's not a demeaning situation; it's just part of the job."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Normal upkeep.

There was a hearing held by the Senate Ways and Means Committee about several morale issues. Senator Stortini really took this and ran with it, although he was not a member of that committee, which Senator Frank Atwood took exception to, but other people thought was fine. That his was the appropriate committee and he did have rights to come before that committee and bring in all these issues and air these complaints. Again, do you as Board members go before this committee and participate in this give-and-take?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that we did. There were some hearings that the Board would be represented. Ordinarily, Leroy would present our testimony if we were at a hearing on any legislation or the budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This issue appeared to die down after this hearing and nothing in particular seemed to come of it. Again, I'm getting these from Press reports so it's difficult for me to tell: then what? You seem to be saying that the Board was able to defend its actions and its choices and these things were resolved.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As far as I can remember, we didn't have very many instances where our decisions as far as internal management was concerned had ever occurred.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's hard to determine where the line is for what's yours to decide and what's the Legislature's. That seems to be the area where all the tension was as to what your authority is, what your responsibilities are, and where the Legislature steps in and where it really leaves it to you. This might be the theme underlying all these different issues.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, I always felt that the Legislature's responsibility was in establishing general policy, but the carrying out of that policy was up to each individual agency.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems reasonable. Deciding where that line is.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's a lot of overlap, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the other issues you're dealing with at this time, the early seventies, was periodically you raised the prices for alcohol. Partly because wholesale prices from the distilleries and your sources raised their prices, so you passed that on. The Press says that Washington has the highest prices for alcohol. Sometimes they say "in the nation," sometimes they say in the region. Did you have remarkably higher prices than Oregon and Idaho and California?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some higher.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They maintained that this created a bootlegging situation where people would go across state lines and buy cheaper alcohol and bring it into the state, and the state lost revenue this way. I have no sense of scale here—do you know how many people would be involved in this sort of thing? Was that a real problem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's interesting. We knew that there were people who were bringing in liquor from, primarily, Nevada, because it's considerably lower there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a far ways to go.

**Mr. Eldridge:** So I decided—we were getting all these rumors and one thing and another—I said, "I'm just going, during Thanksgiving vacation, to go down there."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You weren't down there for another reason? You just went down there to check on this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I got in my car and I drove down there and I parked for probably ten hours a day at the major liquor stores in Nevada and I just checked the license plates of drivers who came in and bought liquor and got in their car and drove off.

One of the interesting things—there was an older couple that pulled in there and they were in, I think it was just a coupe, but it was a big one like a Buick or Oldsmobile or something. Anyway, they came out of that store with one of the attendants and they just loaded that thing—the trunk, the back seat. And then the woman—he even went in for the last case and put it on her lap. Then they drove off and they could hardly get out of the parking lot. But it was amazing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Washington license plates?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, at least anecdotal evidence that this is a problem. Why did you decide to do this personally? There wasn't anyone else you could send? You just wanted to do a little on-the-ground research?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. And then I figured I'd come back to the Board and we could decide how we would attack this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a 1973 article about this where the Board discussed this and they tell a little bit about your trip down to Nevada. But you all say, "What can we do about it? We don't

have the authority to check people's cars. How are we going to stop this?" So you're a little bit stuck there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were. That's very true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever evolve a way to address this issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We, I think ultimately, we took the license plate numbers and we researched a name and address and then we wrote a letter and just said that we observed that you were illegally bringing out-of-state liquor into the state of Washington and don't do it again. While it didn't cover a large number of incidents, I think the word kind of got around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you get a little publicity, perhaps? And the kind of sense that you're paying attention and watching?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the growth of wineries down in California? You know how you can go down through the Sonoma Valley and buy cases of wine and presumably bring it back home. And there's a whole tourist industry that's grown up around this. This is a trip that many people take and enjoy. But I gather that's tax evasion. Is there a way to address that? If those wineries are selling to Washington residents, is there a way to address it right there at the winery? Although I'm puzzled how a California institution could collect Washington State taxes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know of any way. And even if that were possible, it would be a nightmare trying to do the paperwork on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, yes. I'm sure it would not be looked upon with great excitement by them, because it would dampen their business. It would not be what they would be interested in.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I guess out of the total picture, it doesn't amount to all that much, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd have to be doing it quite frequently. Would your real interest in this bootlegging issue be clubs and places with greater volume rather than an individual buying a case of wine in California?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It's primarily individuals. I don't think that an organization would want to take the chance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's too easy to catch somebody on that scale? So it's just something that every once in awhile you would have to make a noise about to remind people that, "By the way, you shouldn't be doing this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Part of your issue, besides not being able to check cars, was you noted that there was no state seal on bottles that would prove where they came from. Would that be something that you would institute?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We used to put on a strip across the cap: "Washington State." But that got to be a real headache because every time a store would get a load from our warehouse then one of the clerks would have to take every bottle out and put the strip on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So perhaps you're going to gain a little in revenue and spend it all in staff time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not very efficient. There was some political pressure that the way to address this was to lower prices. What did the Board think of that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were always interested in getting a lower price if we could. But you know it's a pretty expensive item to handle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But why was Nevada cheaper, or some of these other places—were they non controlled states?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was the start with that. And then they're pretty close to the major distribution centers and of course, with wine they're fairly close to the wine country.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So was this fuel for the privatization folks?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was another element that played into it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly Senator Day, who was occasionally a sponsor of initiatives to privatize the Liquor Control Board, again wanted to head a subcommittee on liquor pricing. Whether he actually did or not, but he got in the Press saying he wanted to. He's one of your critics on this account.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that that ever happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You're doing your job. You're checking license plates, but meanwhile the sample case was still in the courts. By June of 1973, the judge ordered disclosure of the Grand Jury evidence and prosecutors brought a civil suit for the loss of revenue to the state that the sample bottles represented.

They did, however, give you time. They delayed the release of the evidence so that you could appeal that ruling. The judge talked about literally thousands of dollars that were lost to the state: "This expenditure of time and money"—I guess, time and money also including these court cases—"belongs to the citizens of King County. It's their property. This evidence is a matter of

record. As I say, it belongs to the public, good, bad or indifferent."

Jim Andersen again disputed this and fought with other prosecutors over the decision and was pretty feisty on your account. This was in June. By August, a couple of months later, the Supreme Court ruled that the evidence should not be made public. So you're finally getting somewhere with this. But it could be released to a small circle, the governor, the attorney general, and the Thurston County prosecutor, which seemed to leave the door open for prosecution.

You were still going through trial on the streets, trial in the Press and trial in the Legislature, in the sense that the following session in 1975 there were more calls for study of the Liquor Control Board. More calls for an overhaul of your operations.

In 1976, Slade Gorton initiated an action to recover the lost revenue which he determined was \$73,884.35, a very exact number. Auditor Graham joined him in demanding this money, saying that it was state property wrongly made private by the Liquor Control Board members. You maintained that it was your private property in the sense that it was your right to use the samples as you saw fit. The insurance commissioner got into the play. I don't really understand his role in this. He goaded Slade Gorton for failing to recover the money.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Everybody wants to get into the act.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** 1978, two years later, it was still going. It's brought to suit in the Thurston County Court. You finally, at least, were in the right court. During this time Slade Gorton said in the newspaper accounts, "We'll be trying for an out-of-court settlement." Was he approaching the Board directly or intermediaries?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall any contact.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In an article published later, Leroy Hittle said about this out-of-court settlement idea, “As long as we would pay some money, in effect admitting we were guilty,” then he would make it go away. And that you countered and said, “Okay, bring it to trial then. Let’s get this over with. Let’s finish this.” That’s 1978. You’ve been doing this since 1971. It’s got to be taking a toll on you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The following year you were—by this time—not on the commission, we should note. In May, the civil case was brought to the Supreme Court and dismissed. They maintained, as you did in the beginning, that the Liquor Control Board acted upon the advice of the assistant Attorney General and therefore you were not liable for the disputed handling of the samples because you were following the law as you were told it was. Justice Hugh Rosellini wrote the majority opinion. He said there was no demonstrated harm to the state or the public, and that was that. 1980: a very long time.

Then there were several very forthright statements in the Press from various members of the Board—not you—but Leroy Hittle. He says, “It can now be told that the Attorney General knew from the beginning that he had no grounds for court action.” Did you always feel that way? Not only that there weren’t, but that he knew there weren’t?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we all, in the back of our minds, figured that he knew what he was doing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Leroy Hittle went on to say, “For reasons known only to himself, he filed an action that impugned the reputations and integrity of members of the Liquor Control Board and cost them thousands of dollars.” And the number used in the newspaper accounts was over fifty-thousand dollars, between you three. Of your own money to defend themselves. And he’s pretty outraged.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. He got excited about that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel impugned? Did you feel that this was something generally believed about you, that you were corrupt?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn’t feel that I was corrupt, but I felt that my motives had been impugned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. And definitely you were out-of-pocket. There’s some mention of countersuing for slander and defamation. I gather you never did.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There’s a somewhat happy ending. The biennial budget of 1981-83, even though it’s a very bad budget year—the state was in a deep financial crisis—did contain reimbursement funds for your legal costs. The state did come around in the end and at least it was in the budget. Were you given this money back? Were you reimbursed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, good. So, at that point, are you fully vindicated and cleared? Not to mention reimbursed.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We thought we were. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the last step in this long drawn-out story?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We figured at this point that it was all history.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you just quietly get issued checks, or was there any kind of apology or any kind of statement?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think it was: “the check’s in the mail.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be at least a good thing. Was this something you could just shrug off as one of the prices of public service, or does it go a little deeper than that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had always figured that I personally had not done anything wrong and that it was going to turn out alright. Of course I guess I'm kind of laid back anyway and didn't get too excited about the whole thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You must have a great confidence in the system, then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that we have a good system and while it may not work one-hundred percent of the time, it certainly is better than the alternatives.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm still guessing this is was a great relief to you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To have this shadow removed from your name and your bank account.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was nice to have it over.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It was a long one—very long. Your entire period of service with the Board was overshadowed by this case. There was always a new wrinkle.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It kept going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's like a bad penny. It was just not going away.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Like the Energizer bunny.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, finally you're off, you're doing other things. Your term is over and finally your name was cleared. How much did this case interfere or shadow the work of the commission? How much of a distraction was it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it was great as it might appear or it could have been. I think that the Board operated "business as usual" and I think the staff people didn't let it interfere with their work. I think they probably had some discussions around the coffee pot or the water cooler or whatever, but I don't think that the operation of the agency was jeopardized at all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's certainly not the only attack but it's the most personal and serious that you suffered in these years. In the end, was the authority of the Board maintained?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were able to still rule and regulate with moral authority and you had that standing to prevail?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As far as I'm concerned, it all rests with the integrity of the individuals involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which is what they were calling into question. I was just wondering how that impacted you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just kind of felt, "Well, you've made the run and it didn't work out the way you wanted it to, now let's get on with business."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's nice to be vindicated in the end.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And never, even at the end when it all turned out, did you have a conversation with Governor Evans about this issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not directly. I think maybe if we met we might kind of joke about it a little, but we didn't have any lengthy discussion about why and where and how.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe it was just too messy. Something nobody wanted to talk about.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And of course with his statements towards the end, we felt that he was with us all the way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you were his appointees.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. All three of us were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And he did reappoint Leroy Hittle, which was a vote of confidence of a sort. Of course, he was out of office when you finished your term, so there wouldn't have been a chance to formally thank you for your service, I suppose. I don't know if that actually happens. When someone finishes a term like that is there any kind recognition?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just a period of my life that I really wouldn't want to go through again.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet you did a lot of work and you probably learned all kinds of new things and had experiences and good relationships with other people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the Board accomplished a great deal for the agency during that period of time. I think there were a lot of things that happened that were very successful and very meaningful to the agency.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These are really watershed years for the agency. You changed the culture of liquor sales quite a bit during these years.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was roughly a decade of service. If you look at how the agency had operated previous to this time, certainly a lot that happened there on all fronts. Quite a transformation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's certainly true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel you were able to bring your retail experience here and really make a difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right. I'm very satisfied with my term on the Board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Despite everything. In one of the Board reports, there was a mention about the balance between customer satisfaction and control. There was a tension there to move the agency toward one or the other and sometimes both.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was like walking on eggs. You had to maintain a balance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Over the years—nine years—you didn't always have the same people on the Board. In 1976, Jack Hood retired and his place was taken by L. H. Peterson, who was made the chair.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Leroy Hittle was reappointed by Evans. He was still on the Board. And then Kaz Watanabe was appointed by Dixy Lee Ray to replace me. And when I got to the end of my term, I was all packed ready to move out, and I got a letter from Governor Ray asking if I'd stay on. At that time it was still a nine-year term and it was certainly one of the most sought after appointments, and I guess she was just inundated with people who wanted the appointment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So she needed a little more time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** So she just decided that she'd leave me alone for a while.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that alright with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was at the time, but within, I think, about three months I sent her a letter and said, “I’ll be out of here the first of whatever the next month was.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You’d had enough?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was hard. Being with people that you don’t know and you haven’t worked with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, if you don’t know for how long—weeks? She could get rid of you at any point.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right. It was not a good situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You did overlap for awhile with Mr. Peterson. Did policies change any way with the new governor? Did she have a different notion of the Board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think she and the chairman pretty much sat down and decided what they wanted to do, and then he’d do it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What kind of changes did he want to make?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Since he had a labor background, as I recall there were some changes in our relationship with the unions. And I think that in the matter of licensing things were maybe a little more liberal than under Evans.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though you’d gone through this period of rapid change, it’s just going to keep changing. If he was fairly close to Governor Ray, did he work well with you two Evans appointees?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We got along reasonably well. He brought his secretary from the labor union with him and she was his secretary on the

Board. And she was more liberal than he was. Every once in awhile we’d have a little tussle with her.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So even though you two had been there longer, you started to play second fiddle when he came in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think as far as the local Board was concerned, but both Jack and Leroy became president of the NABCA [National Alcohol Beverage Control Association], the national organization, and were probably a little better advantaged due to that affiliation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You went to those meetings, too. But you weren’t in the hierarchy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I was kind of working my way up, though. I was on the board of the organization.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let’s see: Member, National Alcoholic Beverage Control Association. Member, Board of Directors, from ’72 to ’79. A member of the Federal Affairs and Legislative Committee from ’70 to ’79 it looks like. And then a member of the New Products and Procedures Committee from ’76 to ’79. And then a member of the Joint Committee of the States from ’76 to ’79. That’s quite a few committees.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would there be quite a bit of travel involved with these? Would you meet once a year or more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The committees would meet maybe a couple of times a year. Once at the national convention and then once at another time and place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When Mr. Peterson came on—you got to stay involved these things—but did he get involved in all these things, too? Was he interested in this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that he was appointed to a committee or two. I'm just trying to think how that shook out. He was always pretty active and always trying to learn.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a lot to know.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering, you had been through, obviously, a great deal with your other fellow Board members with the indictment and all of the court business and up and down. When Jack Hood retired, your tight little brotherhood was somewhat dispersed. Was it hard to accept a new person on the Board after all that effort and turmoil?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Because we'd be concerned with different things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe it was a relief?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Leroy and I kept pretty close contact.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are there any more things you want to say about being on the Board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a good experience and the staff people were excellent. Real professional, and we had a good working relationship with the staff people. And then the store managers and their people were all usually excited about changes and a lot of them had suggestions to offer. There were always some good ones that we could put into effect. The representatives of the distilleries and the wineries and so on were, by and large, a pretty professional group. We always were able to work out problems and they called

on the Board occasionally and we'd sit down and talk about new products and problems we might have with shipments and that sort of thing. Advertising. I think that the agency was well run and had good people involved at all levels.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a really big business.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine you learned a lot. A big opportunity.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You went all over the state. A whole new line of business.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had been involved in a small business, and this was a little different, entirely. But a lot of the principles are the same whether you have ten employees or one-hundred and fifty.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's interesting. It was a big nine years and then a little bit more. Almost four months or so more.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then you had to reinvent yourself. You had to think of something new to do. Did you ever go back to visit, or when you were gone, you were really gone?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't go back, but I would see Kaz occasionally at other activities and I thought he was going to be a good member.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess you didn't completely leave though, because the following year or so you did some lobbying work for the Liquor Board. There was a staff person who had done legislative liaison work and who had changed positions or wasn't available for that, and so they turned to you. Someone called you up, I gather,

and asked if you would do this for a session. Would it have been Mr. Peterson or somebody like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was Jack Hood who actually made the contact. Leroy, because of his tremendous knowledge of the legislative process, and the fact that he probably knew the state budget better than any legislator actually appeared before legislative committees and testified on behalf of the Board. I went along with him a few times just to kind of sit in the audience and if he needed any help, why I was available.

But I really didn't do any direct lobbying. I did contact individual members of the Legislature on a few issues, but nothing really spectacular.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it more a case of keeping track of what legislation out there was going to impact the agency and reporting back?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was pretty much a defensive type operation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then maybe having a word or two here and there to either slow something down or speed it up, whichever the case may be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were given an office and secretarial support. Were you back in the same building that you had been in with the Board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was an article that mentioned your duties were "obtaining legislative sponsors for agency legislation. Reviewing and analyzing bills that may impact the agency. Representing the Board at legislative hearings. Submitting regular reports on activities." Were there any big issues that year, do you recall?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't recall anything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was it like to be back, even in the wings, watching some of the struggles going on? A deep recession was making things quite difficult. That was a pretty tough legislative year.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I always figured that I was lucky to be out of there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any dealings with Speaker Polk?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Having been a Speaker yourself, I wondered if there was any kind of fellow feeling there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't have much contact with him. In those years after I left the Legislature, there were a number of times that former Speakers would get together socially. Just have dinner together or something like that. Other than that, I didn't have really any contact with Bill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would it be people like Charlie Hodde, as far back as that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Charlie, yes, was there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Mort Frayn, was he still around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We did have, I know, one session that Mort Frayn and Jack Sylvester.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And John O'Brien, of course.

**Mr. Eldridge:** John O'Brien. I don't know that Bob Schaefer ever attended.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about Speaker Day?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Bill Day was ordinarily there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be interesting. You should have some good stories to swap. Who would organize dinners like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know Jack Sylvester—as a matter of fact I ran across the invitation from Jack Sylvester and he had one of those get-togethers at his home in Seattle. I think he lived on Capitol Hill.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine you'd share a kind of special bond.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And there was a lot of relating of incidents, and we'd find out a lot of things just kind of repeated themselves. The players were different but the incidents were pretty much the same.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'll bet you had a good time. Swapping stories and giving the inside scoop on how certain things had happened.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Here, recently, there hasn't been anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That would be fun. You should host one.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A lot of people are still around. It would be quite a group.

## CHAPTER 17

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### ELDER STATESMAN

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think you just did this lobbying for the Liquor Control Board for one session, and then they found somebody else?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These years, you were also doing several other things. In 1980, you got involved in Duane Berentson's campaign for the governorship. Your old District mate.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Governor Dixy Lee Ray was at the end of her first term when Duane Berentson filed against John Spellman and four other Republicans in the primary. It was quite a big race. Did he talk to you about this campaign before he filed? When did you learn he wanted to do this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Actually, my involvement came through Linda Woodruff Matson. She was really involved in this campaign and I attended quite a number of meetings and I suppose it was at the outset more of a policy type group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was Duane's chief message or the points that he wanted to make in his campaign?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was interested, of course, in transportation. He was fairly conservative fiscally, and then coming from a district that had lots of agricultural problems and he had fishing and the timber industry. So all those things he sort of wrapped into his campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was something of a power in the House. He became co-Speaker during the tied session of 1979.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are all kinds of photographs of him and John Bagnariol with their odd looking two-handled gavel. So he had a fairly good career in the Legislature, had risen to the top, but what do you think it was that brought him to think of running for governor?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I think that you've indicated that he had a successful career, and I think this was just another step up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of the Republicans running, none stood head and shoulders above the others, so perhaps it was a good year to give it a try. Did he work to differentiate himself from these other Republicans? Did he have a special thing that he wanted to say or do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think he was pretty general in his approach. And I think that when it came right down to push or shove he didn't get the votes from the business community that he should have had. Those went to Spellman.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was John Spellman as King County Executive just better placed because he came from a larger base?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that the fact that he was from King County made a lot of difference. That's where the votes are.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were there debates and that sort of thing? How did he campaign with so many people running like that from one Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that Duane in his campaign was not particularly aimed at the primary. I think you have to run pretty strong in the primary in order to win in the general, even if you get the primary nomination, because people always look to the final count.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's definitely an indicator.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I was really surprised that he didn't get the nomination. In spite of everything else, I just thought that because he was an excellent candidate and the fact that he knew so many people around the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he come and ask you to be involved, or did you approach him and offer?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As I say, Linda pretty much made the contact with me and invited me to come to their policy sessions and so I was involved there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have advice for him? Did you have a sense of how his campaign should be run?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that because we had campaigned together and our campaigns were always pretty much a cooperative issue, we sort of ran as a team and it worked pretty effectively.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this is a natural for you to come back in and help out? Did you get involved statewide or did you pick an area that you really concentrated on, say Thurston County? I know some people have their committees countywide.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I was pretty much involved in just the general overall campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you help with fundraising or any of those chores?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I probably made a few calls in regard to contributions, but I wasn't directly involved in the fundraising.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What other kinds of things would you do? Would you set up meetings? Organize door bell campaigns or yard signs, that sort of thing? Or stick more on the policy level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was pretty much what I was involved in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you recall much about his policies? You said his message was fairly general, but were there things that you helped him craft that conveyed what kind of person he was, what kind of governor he could be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not directly. When our policy group would get together, I could certainly relate to them things that we had done in our campaign, even though it was just district wide. A lot of those things would apply regardless of how large or small the campaign was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What other people were on that committee? Would they be from different parts of the state? Did he have some kind of structure that would take care of different areas, like east and west, and that sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall the basic committee was pretty much drawn from the lobbyist group. Jerry Harper and Ron Gjerde from Weyerhaeuser, and "Duke" Schaub from the contractors, were all interested in Duane's campaign.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the things I read is that—I didn't know if it was a motivator for him—he was upset about how the state was being run under Dixy Lee Ray. He thought that some of

her appointments were not of the best and that her way of relating to the Legislature was disastrous. Would that have been part of his message, that he would do a better job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that, really, the underlying push was relative to his ability to work with people and his judgment in perhaps making appointments and establishing policy for agencies and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was very experienced. He'd been there for along time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When he talked about making better appointments than the former governor, did you have any idea if he won, whether or not he would have wanted you in his administration in any way?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Never came up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have wanted to do something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think probably I would have been interested. I don't know where or how, but we always worked well together and I'm sure he knew he could count on me and that I would fit in with whatever assignment I had. But we never did discuss it in that regard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I want to be careful to not suggest that you would work on his campaign for such an end, but I was wondering if it was something that would have interested you? That, had he won, would this have been something natural that would have fallen into place?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That had never really occurred to me to give it much thought. I was interested in his campaign because I thought he was an excellent person and well qualified. I was just happy to have a little part in it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it a heartbreaker night, the primary election he did not win? That John Spellman pulled ahead of him and took the lead?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course I was disappointed. But I don't know, I've always kind of had the feeling that Duane was sort of relieved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wasn't the worst thing that ever happened to him, that he didn't win?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Considering how many Republicans were in the field, he did very well. And considering that Spellman came from the largest city and county, he made a very respectable showing.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He did. He made a good showing. And, as I say, I think if the business community had even partially got behind him, that he'd have been in good shape. But you never know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's one of those things. The road not taken?

You also worked for a bit with Puget Power in the early 1980s.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There again, that was pretty much just a monitoring situation. Regulatory type things. Of course they had two lobbyists on their staff, and I met with them and I always had to assure them that I wasn't out after their jobs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have a function that was just yours?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not really. I was kind of a floater.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you happen to do this? I think you mentioned to me that you were friends with the CEO. Was that the connection?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ralph Davis, who was the present CEO, and I were good friends from way back. He was active in the Bellingham Jaycees and I was in Mount Vernon. And then he was with the state Attorney General's office when I came down in '53. Then Puget took him on as their secretary, and then he gradually was selected as the CEO.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Moved up the ladder?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He had inquired whether I'd be interested in just kind of riding herd on legislation, and I said, "Sure." There, again, I didn't have any responsibility to testify or actually speak for the company.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you write reports and just track things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was just primarily to keep an eye on legislation and maybe pass on information or questions from members and that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Even though you're not haunting the halls all the time, you still had to register as a lobbyist for these activities. This was after the creation of the Public Disclosure Commission. What sorts of things would you have to do as a lobbyist to comply with the new regulations, besides get your picture taken and put in the directory?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's about it, because the two paid lobbyist staff people for Puget would actually be doing the mechanics of the lobbying, and they would of course make the reports and so on. As I recall, I didn't get involved in any of that paperwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You didn't have to disclose your income and go through a lot of records? So it wasn't that onerous?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And this was kind of the beginning of that and it was pretty loose at the outset.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you hang around in Ulcer Gulch, the hallway area up there between the two Houses? Were you one of those people on the couches?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I really wasn't involved in that. Once I got into these two interim groups, business groups, that we can talk about, we met frequently and then those people from each of the individual industry groups would, of course, be in the Legislative Building and in Ulcer Gulch and be attending hearings and committee meetings and all that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But not you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I attended a lot of those meetings but I wasn't actively engaged in lobbying.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were kind of one step removed from the intense lobbying activity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was just kind of a go-between between legislators and their own lobbyists and their leadership in the various areas.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you were still meeting with legislators on some level? You'd been a legislator for a long time. How did it feel to be on the other side of the desk?

**Mr. Eldridge:** At that level that we were operating on, there really wasn't any great change. I felt comfortable being with legislators or with the organization people, industry people, and it was on a pretty informal basis. We had a good relationship.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would that be a strength you'd bring to these groups? You would, I imagine, know what legislators need, how they like their information delivered, how to relate to them, what the process is like.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was some of that. Most of those people had been at it a long time and they pretty much know what the mechanics would be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would many of the people that you served with still be around? Would you be a familiar figure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** In many instances, but it didn't take too many years to have that fall off rapidly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There was a new group in leadership. Is there a way to compare your days in the Legislature with how it was in the early eighties? Many people think that those were watershed years. Especially the '81 session and with the recession and budget deficits, it was pretty tough, and some people think it was quite different from your time period.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think every session is different. So much depends on the makeup of the Legislature, the individual members. What kind of a mix you have and what kind of backgrounds they come from. Who they represent and what their temperament is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These were the Reagan years—a Republican resurgence. By 1981, they had a majority in both Houses and the governorship. Did that make your work easier as a lobbyist? Was that a group that it more prone to business points of view and easier for you to work with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think you had a stronger block of people who would pretty much move as a block. It didn't seem as though we had so many individual legislators going off on their own.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand Jeannette Hayner as Senate leader kept her caucus pretty tight. I don't know if Speaker Polk also kept the House Republicans united.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I didn't know Bill Polk that well, didn't have much contact with him, and hadn't really known him prior to his Speakership. But I think he was a pretty strong individual and I have an idea that he basically had control of his caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was certainly feuding with Governor Spellman. The 1981 session was fairly contentious. They had a two special sessions and a lot of wrangling to get where they needed to go. Partly because there was a recession and it's never easy when there's no money.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did the session look like from your vantage point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't an outward indication, really, that there were problems. I think they kept everything pretty close, in-house.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounds like you were not too deeply engaged in these pursuits. Were you a little at loose ends then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I was. But after I did this session, in 1983 I happened to be visiting with Linda Woodruff Matson and we got to talking about some of the business-oriented things that were going on, and she actually put together two groups of business-oriented associations. We did the first project on unemployment compensation. Then the second was on industrial insurance.

It started out as a discussion group and then there was some legislation that was going to make some major changes in unemployment comp and industrial insurance. We had a regular program that we put together and I made a number of trips around the state talking to business groups, chambers of commerce and some political groups—just talking about the general subject of unemployment comp first and then we were able to put together a report about the concerns of the business community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think you described them as a coalition of small businesses, small to medium-sized businesses—all kinds of businesses. Was this under the umbrella of the Association of Washington Business or a different group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were involved but they were just one of many groups. We had the manufacturing types and the retail and wholesale distribution groups. The beer and wine associations. Pretty much all kinds.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's really quite a spread.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And we even had some labor types. The electrical union. I'm trying to think who some of the other people were who were involved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think your booklet says anything about who's in the group, except there was an executive committee. You had a representative from the Charles Watts Company, Jerry Harper of Weyerhaeuser, Basil Badley of the American Insurance Association, Linda Woodruff of Associated Grocers, someone from Crown Zellerbach, G.S. "Duke" Schaub from Associated General Contractors. That's a mixture.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Most of these are fairly large companies. Would this have included the Washington Roundtable?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, they weren't involved. But we had people from Weyerhaeuser and Paccar and Boeing, and there were people from the Association of Washington Business and also from the Independent Business Association. They were a pretty broad-based group—a good group. Linda kind of spearheaded the effort.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And this was to do with figuring out some unemployment insurance issues that were

coming to the fore, I gather? Your job, as you described it, was coordinating all this activity, which sounds like a lot of meetings. Did you write newsletters and reports and things like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. We did have a lot of meetings.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who would provide the direction? Would your executive committee lay out a policy and then you would implement it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We'd get together and it would be kind of a brainstorming type session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was it that got all this activity going in '83? Was there just a feeling that you needed this or some issue that was brewing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The Legislature had finally dealt with this in the special session of 1980, I guess.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did she already have this in mind when you got together? Did she see you as a person who could take hold of this and then she recruited you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We just happened to meet. As a matter of fact, I think it was at Lakefair. We were wandering around and bumped into each other and got to talking. We put together a slide presentation and my major responsibility was meeting with Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs and anybody that would listen.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Drumming up interest?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this before the actual group formed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was after we had started.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you began with a pretty strong group and then reached out to further interest people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go all over the state doing this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was quite a dog and pony show.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sounds like it. Were you able to enlist people from all over the state: business groups and people who would be concerned about—in this case—unemployment insurance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All kinds of different employers. Would they sign on with your group or they would just be aware of it or... I'm not really clear.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a pretty loose operation, really. But it was to get the word out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would these people then be instructed to call their legislator, for instance? Something like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. And maybe set up a local group that could come to Olympia or write letters or make telephone calls. That sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you define the problem and the solution? I'm assuming that you came out with a statement that "this is what you can do."

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It came pretty much out of that group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was the actual issue that was driving this? The Legislature had been looking at unemployment insurance, and then did

they come up with solutions that you didn't particularly endorse?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were pretty much Democrat/labor oriented.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you wanted the pendulum to swing the other way a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And the Republicans in the Senate had Walt Williams working on this. The Democrats had Bob Greive. And the House Republicans had Sid Morrison and let's see, the Democrats—I can't remember.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a big bill. Senate Bill 3085 came out of the Commerce and Labor Committee that year sponsored by Senators McDermott, Vognild, Moore, Wojahn, Shinpoch, Talmadge, Hughes and McManus, and that touched on unemployment compensation. I don't know if this was the bill that you would have been working on or this would have been the thing that you were reacting to. It was passed in '83 and that was the year that you were active with this. There were several smaller bills, but this seemed to be the big one that year. It had a partial veto by Governor Spellman, but the bill was pushed through. Most of the other bills introduced for unemployment insurance that year didn't pass.

The Press reports about unemployment insurance in 1983 focused on the bankruptcy of the fund. They said it was just bleeding red ink. That the reserves were dropping rapidly. Of course, there was high unemployment with the recession; there were predictions that the fund would be bankrupt shortly if something wasn't done. Would that be the kind of thing you'd be weighing in on? Or something more fundamental?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Of course, the big issue was the amount of benefits and the duration of the benefits.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It adds up pretty fast.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think it was too liberal? That people could collect for too long, get too much, and that it was going to hurt business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was a pretty general position.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Employment Security Department wanted increases in employer taxes to save the fund. Or some of the other ideas were that the base salary from which the tax is paid could be raised. Or that employers with a history of worker layoffs would be required to pay more. Would those be the things that your group would be contesting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Some of the things, we figured, just took too big a step at this time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These businesses that have seasonal layoffs and quite a bit of turnover, would those be things like forestry and agriculture? Some of the industries that relied more on migrant labor and that sort of thing? Would that be part of this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And, of course, the building trades—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, yes. That's kind of seasonal. I noticed at least two forestry companies that served on your Board of Directors.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, if there was this push to have them pay even more because they have this seasonal nature, would that be one of the things that would concern them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That'd be a red flag.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. What were you able to do? Were you able to take care of any of these issues? Did your strategy of arousing the state business leaders make a difference here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You know, I can't recall exactly what the outcome was as far as concrete legislation or changes in the regulations or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Several of the bills—there were four or five—are introduced, go into committee, and are never heard from again. And I recall that you said one of your legislative skills was in killing bills. So I wondered if you had had any accomplishment there? If you couldn't necessarily do everything you wanted, could you at least stop some of the bills that you didn't want?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I did. But, of course, not being in the Legislature, it means that you lose some of the means of slowing down or stopping, whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, yes. I wondered if, behind the scenes, you were able to meet with certain legislators and put the brakes on things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was some use of that means that did slow things down some. And, of course, we had a lot of people from all these different groups that had their friends in the Legislature that they could talk to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was your job more public outreach to get all these groups to participate, or did you have a double role of reaching out and then also paying attention to the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think my prime function was to get more people involved and aware of what the program was and what needed to be done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Almost a teaching situation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. It looks like you were involved with that in 1983 and then the following year, in '84—when actually the state started to come out of its recession a little bit more, so maybe you've got a little bit more to work with here. You worked on a similar kind of task force, also organized by Linda Woodruff Matson. For the industrial insurance issue.

You were director of the Committee for Workers Compensation Reform. Again, this fund was in a deficit situation. There were increases in the rates. The rate of compensation to workers was increasing. One of the things that interested me in your literature was business groups seemed to be saying that the industrial insurance regulators weren't as interested in preventing accidents as they should have been, and you wanted that agency—you seemed to be saying this—to not just regulate businesses and fine them or take their money, but to prevent accidents and to go into businesses and teach them how to be more safety conscious.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And use the money that businesses have to pay to be proactive rather than reactive, I guess, it would be.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That pretty well outlines it. And we followed kind of the same procedure. We went around the state and promoted the program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you were really asking for a different kind of service from the agency? A different relationship?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, yes. We wanted the funds that the agency got to be directed more towards prevention than cure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And punishment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you fanned out. Did you meet with pretty much the same groups of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the things that the group did was they wrote and worked on an initiative to the Legislature, Initiative 91. The short version was: "Shall the state administered workers industrial insurance compensation system be modified and employers be granted the option of privately insuring?" Filed by you on August 9, 1985. "Privately insuring" is a slightly different issue from all these safety concerns that you had. How does this compare to the three-way insurance campaign that had been pushed through the seventies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's the basic concept, but it broadened it and made it more available. You have the state system. You have a private system. And then you have self insurance.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What's self insurance if it's not private?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is, but it isn't a fund. Each individual business, if you're large enough—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like the Weyerhaeuser?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. They handle their own claims and so on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the state doesn't have a monopoly on industrial insurance?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It didn't at that time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The state did. But employers did have some choices?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The large companies could self insure, and there were a few that did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the other ones were pretty much—

**Mr. Eldridge:** You had one choice, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you think that if there were more choices that—not only would there be more choices—but the state would do a better job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was kind of a pushing—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Carrot and stick kind of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. You'd think that with all the money the state had, we ought to do a better job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you able to make some headway here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We certainly had a lot of support and I, quite frankly, don't remember the exact legislation that was ultimately introduced.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you organize the initiative campaign? Was that part of your role?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You filed it. Then what happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The member organizations pretty much did their thing with their people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So then you would, say, mail out all the big initiative forms and they were supposed to take them to their communities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As it turned out, no signature petitions were presented for check-in, so something—or nothing—happened there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It broke down. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did people feel that an initiative was perhaps not the tool that they favored, or even just filing it was notification enough? How should we interpret this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the breakdown came with the individual members who just didn't pick up the ball and work the initiative.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a big effort.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So maybe people were worked up about this issue, but either didn't have the confidence you could pull it off or they were too busy, or one thing or another.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite frankly, business groups always seem to fall down when it comes to hitting the streets for any kind of a proposition. I think that they just didn't get fired up enough to really go out and get this job done.

And of course the big companies that were self insuring, they probably felt, well, "This is probably the best we can do and we've got it and let's not mess around with it."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So maybe where the really big manpower was, would be exactly the places that wouldn't need this and the smaller groups would be just too busy doing business, perhaps.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And, of course, that's one of the problems with small business. Those people are just trying to keep their head above water. They don't have many employees and they've got all this paperwork and bureaucracy that they have to put up with, and they just are inclined to throw up their hands and say, "It's just too much."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would a small business owner think getting involved in politics was divisive and perhaps lose some customers? Or they'd just as soon stay away from it and avoid any kind of publicity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there were a lot that felt that way. Now, I didn't as a small business person, and it didn't bear out. I don't think that because I was a white Republican Protestant legislator that I lost a lot of votes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not in your day. No.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure there was a lot of uneasiness with a lot of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to do fundraising or anything of that nature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Pretty much on a volunteer basis. When we went to these meetings, we always had contribution cans and envelopes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of these are fairly deep pockets. But an initiative effort takes money. You've got to print the forms and it takes some funding, so I was wondering where the money came from.

In the literature that you gave me it said that these reforms you were trying to bring in were opposed by unions. They were fearful of change. They knew the system that they had and they didn't necessarily want to see anybody do anything with it, even though they may not have been as well served as under some other system.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And of course, the labor people always had the ability to kind of push contributions up and make it easier to be getting in and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Open the door a little more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And they didn't feel that they were in a position to either oppose or promote a major change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were more incremental, perhaps, in their approach?

You filed this initiative. What do you think of the use of initiatives for effecting legislative change, just as a general policy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, by and large, it's a reasonable approach. I think that the public should have the ability, if the Legislature or an agency doesn't react to things that the public ought to have the ability to something about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some other method?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why do you think you went the initiative route for this issue rather than just work the Legislature and, as you did for the unemployment insurance, try to rouse the public in the different parts of the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** This came after the unemployment comp deal and we felt that that wasn't really successful and maybe we should go to the next step.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a new method. You hadn't tried this before. I don't know if you were successful or slowed down changes that might have been coming, or if you were able to make an impact there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was kind of out of it after we got to this point. The initiative signature gathering wasn't what you'd call successful. I think that it may have had some effect just because it was out there and it brought to the attention of a lot of people there was a problem and there should be something done about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Heightened public awareness?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These are really huge issues. This isn't a one-shot deal.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But for you at the end of the effort, I don't know how you figured out when the start and end of your commitment was, but did you feel like you had done your part and it was time to move along and put the mantle on someone else, perhaps?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you signed on to work on these issues, were you given some kind of time line and then you knew your commitment was over, or did you decide that for yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We just kind of mutually talked over the program and if it looked like we were at the end of a situation, why I just faded back into the woodwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did somebody else pick up the job, or was it a "disappearing task force?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it just—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Wasn't an ongoing thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever do any other lobbying?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that was pretty much it. Did you enjoy that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I enjoyed the part about spreading the gospel to various organizations and groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it remind you of your Jaycee days?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Kind of. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It almost seemed to me that you came full circle. It seemed like earlier, when

you first started, you were running around the state giving talks. Here you were doing it again. Did you know some of the people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Almost every place I'd go, there'd be someone who I'd known either through the Legislature or the Jaycees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you maintain your connection with the Jaycees through all those years, or did you kind of stop doing that for awhile?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was invited, of course, to a lot of functions around the state. And as long as there were still some people of my age group involved, why I was able to keep in touch that way.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this also be part of bringing in a new generation of business leaders? Would you be trying to make contact with them?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not particularly, but it certainly was a side benefit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It sounded like quite a large effort. A lot of travel, a lot of planning, lots of meetings.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But you know, there were a lot of great people who were involved, and just the association with them meant a lot to me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The people you meet is always what makes something fun and worthwhile. Did you do that for months or a whole year?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'd say it was probably a year.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that's a good length of time. Did you know when you stopped or phased yourself out that that was the end of that kind of activity for you, or did you think that from time to time you would do things like this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't give it a lot of thought, but it crossed my mind that there was a possibility I could be doing something similar.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You certainly made a lot of connections. Got your name out there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I didn't pursue that possibility.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you stay active? Did you ever work on other campaigns for other people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. The campaign that I did work, before I was elected myself, I first worked on Walter Williams' dad's campaign for U.S. Senate. And then I did some work for Jack Westland. And, of course, we ran at the same time, so I was pretty busy with my own campaign, but was able to give him some help.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Then, of course, all of your own elections. And then the one for Duane Berentson. But did this bring campaign work to a close for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you continue to go to Republican conventions or anything of that nature, or did you pretty much drop out of Party politics at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I presided a couple of times as chairman of the Thurston County Republican convention.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In this era? The eighties?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And, of course, prior to this, I was a delegate to the national Republican convention in '68, for Nixon. And then I presided at a couple of Republican state conventions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** To preside in the Thurston County G.O.P. convention, how involved were you in local politics?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. I was a precinct officer and that really is about it. I kind of tapered off.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You probably know a lot of people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite a few.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was it that led you to run for the Thurston County Commission in '83?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I don't know. I must have had a dumb pill for breakfast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's alright. What were the big issues in the early eighties in Thurston County?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The growth thing was just beginning to move along, and the environmental programs.

I remember they killed me. I went out to Evergreen for a candidate's forum, and somebody got up and asked me what I thought about the nuclear weapons control program. And I said, "I'm against any kind of war whether it's with bow and arrows or nuclear bombs." And the news report—of course the *Olympian* reporters are all pretty liberal—and they reported this, and then they said, "But he really didn't answer the question."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just to be fair: a Thurston County commissioner doesn't actually have anything to do with nuclear weapons policies.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That was the whole point.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, did you feel like that was not a serious question?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was a planted question.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those were certainly the big years for the Nuclear Weapons Freeze campaign. Is that what they were trying to promote?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's what they were talking about.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That wasn't your issue, but what point of view did you want to bring to the commission?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was not opposed to all of these controls and environmental programs and all that, but I did feel that they were moving too fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this getting into the growth management era?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I thought then as I think now, that there were too many regulations and it was too hard to do business in Thurston County.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think it was harder in Thurston County than other counties? Is Thurston County even more regulated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. By far. Yes. And then I kind of pushed the proposition that the South County really hadn't had much representation in the commission. And I spent quite a little time down there and did really well. I had a lot of support down in that area.

And, you know, the other thing that was of course unusual was that I was running against another Eldridge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. That sort of complicated things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But even the members of the Rotary Club in Olympia—I'd have members come up to me and say, "Boy! I think I voted for Les and not you." They just couldn't—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you saw who you were running against, was that kind of a head-slapper?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. It was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's very unusual to have someone with the same name. Did you, on your yard signs, emphasize "Don" to be sure you got the name out there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who worked on your campaign with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Woody Anderson was very helpful. And I had a young guy who just kind of came out of the hinterlands and wound up as my campaign chairman, and he really wasn't too good. But he wanted to do it and I didn't really look any further than that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What did he do that wasn't that helpful? Just not that organized?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He really didn't understand how things worked.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's definitely an art and science to campaigning.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy. There sure is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you do the traditional door-belling, yard signs, endorsements?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Mailings. Everything.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Fund raisers. What sorts of things would you do in this type of campaign? A county's a different category from a legislative district. Was it easier to campaign on the county level than for a district?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The district would be a larger area. And of course I was used to going into places in Skagit County where I knew people and had been there. Down here—you see, I hadn't been in Thurston County all that long.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. And a chunk of it you'd spent on the Liquor Control Board which is not county oriented.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And I wasn't involved in too many organizations or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Les Eldridge is a fairly big presence here in Thurston County. He has done quite a few things, so it's no disgrace at all to lose to him. Did it bother you? Or is this one of those things where you thought, "Oh, well?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Not really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that maybe you'd try again after you'd maybe built up your base of support a little more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't. I figured I'd taken a run at it, and of course, Nanci always says, "You never should have done it in the first place!"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it give you a chance to get to know your community more and meet people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's always something that comes out of a campaign.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It wasn't an entire failure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. I remember when you first were going to run for the Legislature, and you wanted to follow your dad's dictum, that there weren't enough business people in the Legislature. Did you feel that way about the commission as well, or has your view of politics shifted over the years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A little, but I think it was just the circumstance. The commission here, Woody Anderson, of course, was a business person. He was just ahead of me and then decided not to run.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. But talked you into running?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I don't recall that anybody really talked me into it. I just—I guess I just kind of had it in my blood.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think once you've been involved in something like this it would be hard to walk away completely. Especially if you're still involved on some level in the Party.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, I'll tell you, in this county it's pretty hard for a Republican because you've got the state employees, the municipal employees, the teachers, the WEA, and then the labor unions. There aren't too many people left.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think the South County part is more Republican, but that's not where the population is.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That's right. Yes. You have to cover a lot of ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you run countywide? It's not by district, it's the whole county?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The nomination is. The primary is by district and then you run countywide.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you could specialize in part of the county? Would that be your power base, and then you'd have to run countywide?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. Was yours more in South County because you're in Tumwater?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, that would be a big leap, wouldn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I would like to have served in the county commission. All the time I was in the Legislature I regretted that I hadn't been on a city council or the county commission before I went into the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's quite a different set of issues, I suppose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are, but there's a lot of similarity.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's an overlap. So, let's see, that would be growth management, roads, justice issues, police, the sheriff, that sort of thing. What other kinds of things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You've got dikes and drainage.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, yes. Right where you started. Especially in the South County. They've got some real drainage issues there. There would be all kinds of environmental rules, I would guess.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And there was still enough timber oriented activity that you still had the safety issues on logging equipment and fire suppression and all that sort of thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it would be kind of a microcosm. You'd get your fingers in all kinds of things. Really get to know your area.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But on a smaller level. You could probably really effect change there. You could make a real contribution. Would that be part of the attraction?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, there are just three commissioners. What do you think of that, is that too small or a good number? Just like on the Liquor Control Board—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think with three people it's a good situation for everybody concerned. And even if you have a split commission, if you have one minority it's not all that bad.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They still listen to you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And I think with a group like that, and they meet quite frequently and they're involved in a lot of different things, they work together pretty well. I think that's a pretty good system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you continue to follow what the commission was doing and pay attention to issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not a great deal. I, of course, would read accounts of some of the major things that they were involved in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you go to meetings or hearings? That sort of thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sometimes there are other ways to have your voice be heard. Well, that was a little adventure you had.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the same year, you also served on the Redistricting Commission. One of the rules for being on the redistricting commission is that you could not be a lobbyist. So, at this point, were your other activities wrapped up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was not a lobbyist. I was, I guess, more of a coordinator to bring all these groups together and go over the problems and then put together a presentation that we could use around the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In doing that work, did you keep up your contacts with the Republican Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not directly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if you were looked on as some kind of an elder statesman type that people called on for these special Party chores?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, I was more involved. I presided at a couple of county conventions and also was chairman of the state Republican convention a couple of times. So I was there, but I wasn't involved as a state committeeman or anything like that. And as a matter of fact, once I left the Legislature, I left it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** None of this hanging around in the halls business like sometimes happens?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just didn't believe in that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But somehow your name rises up as appointee for the commission. After the census in 1980 the Legislature passed a redistricting plan like they were supposed to do. I guess it went through pretty easily. The Republicans had the majority in the House. In the Senate the Democrats had a majority of one—until Peter von Reichbauer switched sides of the aisle. And there was a Republican governor. For whatever reason, it didn't seem to be as difficult to accomplish as in previous years.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There didn't seem to be much controversy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But the congressional portion didn't go quite as smoothly and Governor Spellman vetoed that part of it. Then in 1982 there was another plan, but it was challenged by a group from Everett who didn't like the congressional district that they had been assigned.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They'd been moved into the First District.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, although in the actual wording of their protest, it was more that they called it "excessive deviation" in district populations.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Even after the figures and the districts were realigned, the Everett area was still out of whack.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just too big a chunk to swallow? Everett's really grown, hasn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When was the home port idea initiated? Was that about then or a little later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That came along later.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So then they're going to have even more population, but they're already pretty big.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That whole western part of Snohomish County really grew. You had Boeing coming along about then.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the character of that area be quite different from Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because Everett was still kind of considered a mill town and it was—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Less cosmopolitan, that's for sure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Southern Snohomish County became sort of a bedroom community for Seattle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder if that was the rationale: thinking that all those people were driving into Seattle to work, so they sort of had Seattle interests.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That may have been the rationale in the '81 session when they worked on this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It didn't fly though with the Everett folks.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, it didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was challenged and the court agreed, and they charged the Legislature to come up with a new redistricting plan for the congressional districts by April 10, 1983. They gave them only ninety days, which in redistricting history, is awfully fast. Was there an election coming up? Is that why they gave them such a short period of time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I presume, although I just don't recall the background of how it got there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm just surmising. I look at that and I think, wasn't there an election in '84? The legislators didn't want to touch this. They'd done well with the other piece and I guess maybe this was just too much. It was a time of recession and they had their hands full figuring out the budget.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of factors that just kind of pushed it aside.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't want to do this, so they thought up the idea of having a temporary redistricting commission. At the same time period—I haven't got the time exactly lined up—but this was when the legislation established the 1991 redistricting commission. Your commission was going to be a temporary one, but the other one is going to operate every ten years, so it's not temporary, even if it is intermittent. Maybe that was where the idea of having a commission do the redistricting rather than the Legislature arose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was kind of a stop-gap.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you paying attention at all to these developments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I have no idea why or how I was chosen. I don't ever recall anybody coming to me and saying, "Would you like to do this, or would you do it?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They just appointed you without talking to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't ever recall any conversation, although I'm sure there must have been some. The fact that I was from the Second Congressional District I think had some bearing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you supposed to already understand the crucial issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think whoever made the decision felt that I probably had some knowledge of the problems in that area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think they just got together in a room and were throwing out some names and they said, "Don Eldridge, he's from up there?" It sounds like you were still visible. You were still doing things. You were active, but not engaged in the Legislature at that time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Anyway, you were appointed. Someone, was it Gary Nelson? Did he come to you? He's identified as being the appointer. Senators appointed some people and House members appointed people, and he was the House minority leader at the time, and you're the Republican appointee from the House.

Did you know the other commissioners? Did you know Ron Dunlap?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Ron had been in the House and Pete Francis I knew.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had been a member of the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In the Senate. And James Gillespie, I didn't know him. He's from Spokane.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had he been a legislator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't believe so. He was a pretty good head.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So all of these people were pretty adept at this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was really a pretty good group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any sense of—if you don't know how you yourself were chosen—do you have any sense of how these people were chosen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Just by the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Random names. Did anyone allude to any particular qualifications?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's more a matter of disqualifications. When you look at the law, it lines up: you can't be a legislator, you can't be a lobbyist, you can't be actively working on somebody's campaign and a couple of other things. So I guess you were none of those.

**Mr. Eldridge:** None of the above!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was curious about the geographic representation: three West-siders and one East-sider.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It worked out fairly well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think there was an effort to get people from different parts of the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there probably was. I was actually from the northwest corner of the state, and Pete and Ron were from King County. But Ron was pretty much from that east side of the lake and there were a couple of areas that were problems, one at the north end and one at the south end that I think they wanted to address and have someone who was from that area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certain areas of the state are always problematical, aren't they? The eastside and the whole suburban ring around Seattle seemed to be real difficult. And Snohomish County. Can you think of some other areas that are hot spots?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a problem in the Camas area. I think that was kind of a slop-over from the Vancouver area because it was growing fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So when you shift this one boundary it bunches up against the next.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you know what was wrong with the Congressional districts? There was Everett, but did the congressmen themselves have a problem? Did they come to you and say, "This is no good. It's going to bump me out of my district," or "I'm not going to be re-elected." I know that several congressmen came and testified before your commission.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In the Second District we had Al Swift. He was from Everett and they had quite a strong local group that attended a number of the meetings and they testified.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There always seemed to be somebody there from Everett.

Before you began your deliberations did the Party people come to you and say, "This is our goal. This is what we want here," or were you left alone to figure out what you wanted yourselves?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were pretty much on our own. I don't know about the other members. Ralph Mackey was one of the leaders of the Everett group and I had known him through not only the Republican Party activities, but also he had been real active in the Boy Scouts in Snohomish County and I had run into him a number of times at meetings. So I knew him and then Connie Niva was another one who had been active in the Republican Party and she was one of the Everett group that appeared. Then Bob Overstreet, I had known him through the Legislature. He had appeared on a number of issues having to do with water rights or something like that, so he was also from Snohomish County.

But to get back to your question as to whether I had been contacted by either Party people or congressional people, I just don't recall any kind of input from those groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think once you actually started your deliberations there were pretty strict rules about who you talked to and who met with whom. You were under the Open Meetings Act. So you'd have to be careful about whom you met with, but I imagine that—implicitly—you would understand what was wanted by the Party, so to speak, what the goals of redistricting were—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember having a number of conversations with Pete Francis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who was of course a Democrat.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that ultimately we probably agreed as to what needed to be done and then we did it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was anyone's seat at stake in these deliberations? If you decided one way or the other where the lines went, would somebody lose their congressional seat?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there were any boundary changes that would have eliminated anybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the stakes were not that high?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I could be wrong, but I'm just trying to think. I guess the first redistricting effort by the Legislature after the '80 census, that's when they must have moved Everett into the First District.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's the impression I get.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just don't recall any big fuss about that at the time, but I'm certain there must have been some people who were really concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Enough to go to the courts.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that would have eliminated Al Swift. I'm not quite sure what his residence was. He may not have been right in Everett. There's always somebody who's going to be affected by these shifts. Of course that was the big one, moving Everett out and then, of course, they ultimately moved it back into the Second District.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which must have bumped the line somewhere else. So, Everett was the most difficult area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just moving the other areas a little bit, whereas Everett, that was a bigger piece?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A bigger block. And the difference in the population figures was greater in that First and Second District making that shift.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder why they made that move? It's so easily challenged if the numbers are way up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And while the numbers were greater in that area than any of the other areas that had problems, it really wasn't that great a percentage. It was the greatest, but it still—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's all relative?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. But you had to crunch them down even more.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's getting stricter and stricter how you count. It used to be wildly out of whack and now it's getting much more precise. When you had to redraw the lines, did it end up bumping all the lines all over the place, or were there some areas in the state that were pretty much set and then you just work from that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some districts that really weren't a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you try to keep the lines on the crest of the mountains, and not have them slide over the Cascades? Something like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was a consideration and of course that was one of the guidelines set up that you didn't want to split districts that you couldn't get from one part to another, and there needed to be bridges or ferries or highways or something so that it was contiguous.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Imagine campaigning if you can't get across your district because of the mountains or one thing or another. You must have had a little bit of experience with that yourself with the San Juan Islands tucked into your district.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a little difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was, of course, a bipartisan committee. Did you just look at population figures in communities of interest or do you also look at how people vote and try to create some kind of balance there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If there was any of that it was done on a kind of one-to-one basis. I don't ever remember sitting down with a committee and saying, "Well, we've got to shift this a little bit here to give us a balance Democrat-Republican. But I'm sure it was on everybody's mind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know in the legislative districts you can shift them around and you can make districts Republican dominated or Democratic oriented, or you can shift them a little bit this way and make a swing district. There was some pretty fierce counting up of noses about which way it was going to go back in the old days. But a congressional district is pretty big. It's not street by street, it was whole areas of the country.

**Mr. Eldridge:** County by county.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do areas have a character in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some do. But I don't think that it had a lot of bearing on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think, just philosophically, that is healthier for politics, to have lots of swing districts where people really have to fight it out or to have pretty solid districts where legislators feel more secure, say, and then can maybe take the more risky votes because they're not always looking over their shoulder to the next election?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I presume in reality that's the way it is. I think safer districts as long as they're balanced between districts, not within districts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know there have been lots of articles written on this issue and there are lots of points of view on that. Some people really favor swing districts. They think it makes politicians work harder. Other people think it's terrible, that it means that nobody will ever stick their neck out and take a hard vote.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. The district I was in, I guess over the years was a swing district. I suspect that if I had continued on, it might not have been the next session or the next election, but maybe the one after that that they would have knocked me off. And you know that's what happens when the longer you're in, the more votes you have to take and there's always somebody that'll put a group together to say, "Well, look, he supported that or he opposed it," and then they'll go out to get you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is there anything you can do about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I'm not sure that if there were a concerted effort it would get very far if you could do anything about it. Because there are still a lot of people out there that say, "I don't go by the Party, I go by the individual." Party affiliation doesn't mean anything. I've often times thought that's wrong. There were periods of time when there was no Party loyalty at all, and I think that's a bad situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it fragment so much that each representative has no allegiance to anything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Goes off on his own, yes. And that's what I see as our problem with the current-day legislators, is that they are one issue people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But meanwhile they have to vote on a wide range of issues. I wonder how they line themselves up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The people who are in now and who are kind of looking at these situations say,

"Well, they're all over the lot and they don't have any loyalty to anybody other than the one issue that they're interested in."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The group that got them in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It must make leadership very difficult.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, districts change because populations move around and jobs come and go with Boeing having its booms and busts and whatnot. Industries change. I imagine districts can change their character depending on changing economics.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. You know, that Second District with the Everett situation, that went from a blue-collar district with the timber industry, the mills and the logging and so on, to a high-tech Boeing oriented area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Quite a different group of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a different type of person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think the same would be true down in Vancouver. That's a real high-tech area now with a huge bulge in population that was never there before.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And also the whole suburban phenomena has changed Seattle so much, I think, where once you had Republican members from Seattle and now you don't.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's get back to the commission. How did you go about choosing your chairperson? You had a couple of people put forward, it looks like from the records. They were both University of Washington professors of one kind or another. Did they come and make presentations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We interviewed them and chose Rieke.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was impressive about him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was, from my memory standpoint, he was fairly soft spoken but firm, and had a good understanding of the problem, and had apparently done quite a little mediation so he knew how to give and take.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had some skill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he was, I think, the front runner from the outset.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he set a tone of compromise and conciliation and civility, say, by his personal qualities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I notice at the end of all your work one of your last decisions or pronouncements is that you named the commission the Rieke Commission. Is that because you wanted to honor his work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, I don't think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it just a convention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just because he was pretty much, you might say, the leader of the group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Though a non-voting member. So his skill would be getting people to work together or what would he do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course the key person was Schweitzer who was actually the geographer, the cartographer, who actually drew the maps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And—for the first time—you're using computers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But he and Rieke worked very well together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You met quite often at SeaTac, in some meeting room up there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine that's for the convenience of your Spokane person flying in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would people come and give presentations to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had both written and oral presentations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you describe a typical hearing? That's what it would be called, a hearing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Rieke would set the agenda. I recall at one point Al Swift had some commitments, I don't know whether they were in Washington, D.C. or in the District, or whatever, but he asked if he could be on first on the agenda. And Rieke brought that to the attention of the committee and we agreed to accommodate him, so he made his presentation and then passed out hard copies of the testimony.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When Congressman Swift presented, what would he tell you, the nature of

his district or what he wanted? What exactly would a person tell you? What the difficulties were with the present lines?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They'd usually start out with: the way this is, we've got problems, and then he'd outline what those problems were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He'd say, "Over in this corner here, there's this kind of...?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was more general than that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And would they say, "I wish you'd put the line here."

**Mr. Eldridge:** In many instances they'd have a map saying this is the way we think it ought to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they just draw their area? What about the rest of the state? Every line would jostle every other line.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of them would be concerned primarily just with their own little area of the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And your job is to put it together.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. To figure out if we do this what's going to happen all the way around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. I know that there was a sort of magic number that you were supposed to reach that was mathematically arrived at, I suppose. So would they draw districts that had that number or would their districts have some problems in them, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd have that, but there were a number of proposals and all of them came fairly close to the ideal population figure, but shifting different areas, different census tracts. Of course that was another problem. That we shifted from precinct designation to the census tract.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which aren't the same thing at all, are they?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have overlays or something? How would you physically know what you were dealing with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were maps and copies of maps floating around and it was a hodgepodge. It's just a good thing that it wasn't any more serious than it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many congressional seats are there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had eight, I think.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Imagine doing statewide redistricting for the Legislature. I just don't know how they could do it. You at least had smaller numbers of districts.

You would have your meetings then, and there would be the four of you. You're at some kind of table, I assume and then people come up and give their presentations and the chairperson is sitting up there. Then there are some staff people. Would they all present and then you'd go somewhere and study the maps, or how did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They might not even appear at the same meeting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you wouldn't necessarily start with all the information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would go piece by piece. Would you do it regionally at least? Have all the people from the Everett area give their spiels, or would that trickle in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Ordinarily, you'd have groups of people who would testify.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All the interested parties from one area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And that was one of the things that Rieke laid down, was that everybody was going to be heard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have some strange kind of presentations? Some people who were a little wacky?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall. I think everybody was pretty objective and straight forward and sincere.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certain issues attract people. Was this well publicized? How did people know to come?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The staff notified interest groups that had at the outset indicated that they wanted to be included.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All the congressional offices—

**Mr. Eldridge:** The political parties and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like the different jurisdictions within the city of Everett or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they covered the ground pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you feel you were successful? That people did feel that they were heard and that their issues were considered, because that's a part of keeping people happy too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. And while there probably could have been an expansion of the groups that came in to testify, because I'm sure

there were groups out there that weren't heard. Not because we closed the door on them, but just because they didn't get into the mix.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think it would have made a difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the end it has to come down to somewhere, the lines. In your deliberations, the areas are supposed to be contiguous, which means the lines are supposed to be somewhat straight, not zig-zaggy all over the place, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're supposed to follow natural boundaries like rivers or mountain chains or whatever. What were some of the other criteria?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I just mentioned briefly earlier, the matter of how do you get from one part of the district to another.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. Roads.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Bridges and ferries and whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All the links. What about economic groups? Would you have—I'm not sure how this would work. Parts of the state would be more farming and rural. Other parts—wouldn't they all be kind of a mixture though? Everett includes both pretty sizeable towns and even cities, plus the outlying area which would be pretty rural? How do you figure out if that makes a community?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that that was a major factor because I think if you look at every congressional district in the state you're going to find a mix. It may be it wouldn't be equally balanced but you'd have both rural and urban.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the rural areas be economically somehow related to the Metropolitan areas? Is that where people come in and do their shopping or that kind of thing? Would you be thinking about how do people really live here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think community of interest would be—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you define that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's sort of a natural phenomenon that it isn't too difficult to figure out community of interest.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a great sounding phrase, but I'm just wondering in practice how it actually came down to you're in this community or you're in—I'm drawing the line and you're actually in this community. How would you do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** For instance, I can't speak with any great authority on a congressional district, but for instance, in my legislative district you had Mount Vernon as probably the commercial center of the district, and yet the people of the San Juan Islands gravitated more to Anacortes because that was the ferry landing and you had to go through there. There were some of us who felt that eventually Island County ought to be in that district because Whidbey Island pretty much gravitates toward Mount Vernon. And Camano Island, more towards Everett.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just the way things line up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And so, I suppose, sometime somebody is going to suggest that Camano Island be in the Everett legislative district and Whidbey Island be in the Fortieth or the Mount Vernon legislative district. But then, you see, you've split a county and that's not particularly good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So county commissioners would be not in any kind of relationship to legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. There are a lot of factors on those legislative districts that are pretty tough.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's almost paralyzing to think about.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just as an aside, when we had legislative redistricting in '57, the League of Women Voters got an initiative and then the next session the Legislature threw it out and started over again. That was when Bob Greive came into his own.

But, you see, we kind of lucked out. We were one of the legislative districts that had three seats, and Jim Ovenell just came to Ralph Rickdall and me and said, "You know, I'm just not going to run again, so why don't we let them eliminate one seat without any fuss and we'll zip through this and not have any problems," and that's what happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was no pain there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It worked out fine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They must have been very happy to have one problem solved at least without knocking out a sitting legislator.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But I'll tell you, that Bob Greive was a genius in that situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He must have been able to hold so much detail in his mind.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, you get Greive and Gorton in the same room with all their maps, and I'll tell you it was a circus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those were two good minds.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy! I'll say. You can say that both of them had it all up here, and I think either one of them could tell you how many blocks you'd have to move the line in order to swing it from a Republican to a Democrat district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it was right down to that, too, wasn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just a pencil thickness there on the map.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was pretty fierce, I know. I wondered if the '80s redistricting was more, I don't know if it was amicable, but it was certainly less fierce, partly because people were exhausted from the earlier battles and never wanted to go back to that street by street thing again. As if you had all had it with the wrangling.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It almost came to the point where it was "put something in front of us and we'll sign it!"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** "Who cares? Just don't make me do it." It was all consuming when it was happening, that's for sure. So you were not looking at things in that kind of detail at all I am assuming?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that the members of the commission were pretty responsible in looking at the big picture and not trying to disrupt everything and everybody, but adhere to the criterion that were set up and try to fit everything in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you were partisan in the sense that you were representing your party. Did you have areas where you could not agree? Where it did mean somebody coming out ahead in a way that was difficult for the other party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure that the disagreements were primarily of a partisan political

nature. I think they were more maybe rural/urban or different interests rather than partisan political.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm interested in how you actually did it. You got all this data, you've got all these maps, and you've got this geographer, who, if you read the minutes carefully, you commissioners go off and have lunch and he has to sit there through lunch and pound away on his keyboard. I was wondering if you brought him a sandwich or something?

Did you and your Republican colleague, Ron Dunlap, go off and figure out stuff or did you all four keep talking together? Did it ever split up that way where you had party strategies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I probably had more discussions with Pete Francis than I did with Ron Dunlap.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you two former legislators the more experienced ones in the group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know about that, but we seemed to be pretty compatible and we could sit down and discuss things without getting mad or waving our arms around or trying to maneuver.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was more of a personality issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you both look at redistricting with the same perspective?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we both wanted to carry out the mandate from the courts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the other members not quite as solid, shall we say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We really didn't choose up sides or anything like that; it's just that that's sort of the way it evolved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The chairperson could not vote. Was that ever a problem? Did you ever deadlock? Did you ever wish somebody could come along and tilt it one way or the other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I think that there really weren't a lot of disagreements. I think we relied quite heavily on the professional experts. If they said, "You've got to move so many people out of this district and you've got to adjust this line," and they would give good, reliable reasons, that seemed to be good enough for everybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they have a map and say, "How about drawing it here?" and draw a line for you and say, "And this makes X number of people, and then over here, this will fork this way." Would you just kind of look at things like that, and say okay? Or "No, I don't want that bump over there." How would you physically say "this line" or "that line?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I think everybody had their opportunity to make comments and to make suggestions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it presuppose that you knew a great deal about the geography and population of the state? That you were experienced with the different interest groups?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can recall that on occasion we'd be looking at an area and one of the other committee members from say, Spokane or Seattle, would say, "Don, that's in your area. What do you think about this," or "what can you add?" So I don't think anyone was trying to mastermind the whole thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then, say, the person from Spokane would be expected to have a handle on that area, and you would perhaps defer a little bit to their views from their end of the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. I think that's a safe statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It all sounds so civilized. I have read about how redistricting happened in the past and it certainly wasn't like that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the legislative redistricting probably caused more fire works than congressional lines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are more people involved, more seats affected. Was the chairperson completely impartial? He was just interested in process, or did he have an idea of how redistricting should work himself? Did he come in neutral?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think that he was pretty objective and pretty neutral.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It comes down to definition: communities of interest or whatever. I can see how there might be areas where he might say, "Well, no, I think this particular criteria is more important," or not. I don't know.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He may have been a master at steering the group, but if so, I think it was virtually impossible to detect, which makes him a good chair.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the end, were you able to please most people? Were there groups that felt unsatisfied?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn't hear a lot of grumbling. I'm sure that every group kind of shook their heads and said, "Well, I wish they'd done it this way."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The armchair redistricters are probably legion. But it wasn't challenged in any way, was it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once we signed off on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had some really late nights. There was one where there's a notation that

something was said or done at 4:00 a.m. Is that because you just kept at it until you resolved certain things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall on this particular project any early morning sessions, but I'm sure there probably were some and I just have an idea that a lot of the extended time was due to letting everybody have a chance to say something. If we had twenty-five people who wanted to testify and we got to midnight and there were still five of them, we'd keep going.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, if you were close to some kind of decision on some line? It still takes time even though you used a computer, to crunch the numbers. For that poor geographer guy—it sounds like he never slept—to be able to show you, okay, here is what this means.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess I was picturing that you might just be hanging out and drinking coffee and waiting a while for certain things to jell.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some times that happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you always meet at SeaTac, or did you meet in different places around the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall we had all of our meetings there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a lounge area? What kind of facilities did you have?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was in an office building. I think the state had leased space there so that it was available.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you'd have like a hearing space. Would you have a place where you could

go to relax a bit while you were waiting for the numbers? Did you have to sit in those chairs at the table the whole time, or what would you do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there was any kind of a lounge area, but there may have been other office space that—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You could leave and go to a restaurant, I suppose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Around there I suppose everything is twenty-four hours a day. I'm just trying to picture exactly what this service entailed. Fairly intense, while you were doing it, by the sound of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm imagining while you're doing this you're not doing much else. You're just really thinking redistricting. Is that true?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it took up a lot of the thinking capacity of everybody. But, you know, as I look back, I think it went pretty smooth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't have any big conflicts over decisions that were made and everybody was pretty responsible and objective and trying to do the job that we were assigned to do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have been unprecedented.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the members were pretty dedicated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were paid, weren't you? A per diem?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A per diem and mileage, something like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think you were lavishly paid. How did you feel doing this work? Was this something you just saw as an honor or a way to serve?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was interested and I thought that it was a plus to be kind of on the inside of what was going on in the area of redistricting. I didn't really consider it an honor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A duty?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a labor of love.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You are, it's fair to say, a fairly political person. You've been pretty deeply involved for a long time in politics. Did you have a feeling of wanting to take care of how this was done? That this would be a good process in that you could maybe improve on how it had been done in the past?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that was kind of—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you going to be a model redistricter?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I never felt that. I just figured that reasonable people can come together and do a reasonable job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this just be a very interesting intellectual problem to solve? Would that be part of the challenge? This would be that you could learn a lot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, yes, there's some of that, and then I think just the mechanics of putting the thing together is an interesting process.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you like jigsaw puzzles?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As a matter of fact, I do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It strikes me that this is kind of like a big puzzle. When you were doing it, did you occasionally reflect back on how redistricting had happened in Senator Greive's era and Slade Gorton?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a whole new ballgame?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just a different situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were pretty strict rules on who could talk to whom. Caucus people could not talk to the staff people and all that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why was it laid out like that? Just to keep it completely above board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that they didn't want any partisan political influence. I think probably that was an area where Rieke was pretty strong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of setting this tone?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that it did set the tone, but I'm not sure that it was actually plotted out that way, but that was the ultimate result.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a real departure from the old days when everybody got in there and had a hand in drawing the lines. So, about the only time that people could have input would be at these hearings and then that would be completely open and public and on the record?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then there'd be no other lines of communication, is what I've been reading in the meeting minutes. Did you have enough staff? Did you have an adequate budget? I noticed that there was a proposed number for the commission and then the actual appropriation appeared to be quite a bit less than that. Did you feel like you had enough resources to do the job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. They may have been working overtime, but I think that the staff did a commendable job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that you had enough time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. You know, you can stretch a project like this out forever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true. Maybe it's better if you only have a short time. Really, you had a very short amount of time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that put the pressure on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that it resulted in the expedient process. Get in and get out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It keeps the concentration focused. And information? You felt that you had clear and reliable information to make the decisions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The information, which way did it flow? You had the geographer. Did he give you information and then you made policy decisions, or did you say, "These are our policy objectives, what information supports this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think at the outset that was the thrust, and then as we got more and more into

the thing, it became a little more technical and it kind of turned around in the other direction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You started out with some general principles of how you wanted things to look and then he would sketch out the lines and numbers and you would gradually meet somewhere in the middle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's pretty much the way it operated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What if you had not had computer support for this? How do you imagine it would have gone had you been back in the pencil and paper days?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would have been six months.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So technology really makes a huge difference here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I think this is one area where a computer can really speed things up and probably be a lot more accurate than past efforts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you kind of a computer *aficionado*?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Never have been and never will be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it kind of marvelous? Your geographer would hit the keyboard and these maps and calculations would come up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I wasn't impressed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were probably pretty happy not to be doing it on an adding machine?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. And the fact that they could go overnight and come back the next day with this whole thing revised. That, of course, was the marvel of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As long as you weren't the one having to actually do it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that the legislators previously did a lot of the actual drawing and coloring. They had staff people, but they were right in there too, by the sounds of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Actually drawing the lines. So this was a little more one step removed in the sense that you're not actually having to get out the paper yourself.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because it was under the open meetings law, did that make it easier or harder to come to decisions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it was any more difficult than if we'd been off in a room that was locked.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you actually deliberate in front of people, or just hear testimony in front of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There'd be some general discussion among the members of the committee. But basically I think most of the people who attended were either testifying themselves or were interested in the testimony.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Under the Open Meetings Act, are you allowed to have what I think are called executive sessions where you just talk to each other? At some point can you just talk to each other or do you always have to be in front of everybody?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact I think that the copies of minutes here indicate that the

chairman called for an executive session and then called the meeting back to order as an open meeting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So then you would go somewhere and figure out something and then come back with the decision?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Either that or we'd clear the room.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The audience would leave, not you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just depending.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the press stayed with you pretty much through the whole thing. Did they cover this pretty fairly? Did they understand it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't a lot of press. I think it would have required a lot of study on the part of the reporters and I'm not sure they would want to get into it that much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they just come for the highlights? Just to keep up a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When they did write about it, did they do a very good job? Did they understand it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the issues that I found really interesting was how to count the military personnel. Can you explain what the problem was there? Is it because they're so transitory?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And because they're not actually from the state half the time? They come in from everywhere.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that most of them probably voted in their home state by absentee ballot. So I'm not sure how much influence military votes would have. But just from the numbers of military, for instance in Pierce County, could be quite a difference.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it fluctuate? Do you have big groups come in and then they're trained and then they go somewhere else? Is it because the numbers are always changing and the people are always moving around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's a lot of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or Bremerton where they're in the ship or they're on land or they're back and forth? Swell the numbers and then they go down all at once?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure there's a lot of fluctuation in military populations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems to be one of the problems, just trying to count them. I don't know if you had a formula in the end, or what you did there. What was the difference between a "transient person" and a "non-resident person?" Is that, say, a person from Texas who's going to vote absentee in Texas, but they're stationed in Washington? I'm not clear about that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. It was a muddle. We finally just decided that we'd consider the two terms the same.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I certainly got tangled up in it. It came up several times and it was almost indistinguishable. But the commission finally did come to some kind of decision.

Then there was an odd little thing where there was a boat counted or not counted in a district and I couldn't figure out if that was a houseboat or why it made such a difference? There were some funny little things that you had to deal with.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the houseboats on Lake Union, there was some discussion as to which direction they—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where did they disembark?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering how many people could that possibly be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wouldn't be too many in the overall picture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had your different issues and then you came up with different plans. One of them was the Morrill plan. Was that named for the geographer from the earlier days of redistricting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. From the University of Washington.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I couldn't quite make out where he fit in this. Is this a plan that he came up with on his own or is this his old plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think when they referred to it they were referring to the plan that he put together prior to this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Back in the 1970s. And then Commissioner Gillespie came up with a plan and so did Commissioner Francis. And I think you did, too, for that matter.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I may have made some comments about somebody else's plan and had some changes involved, but I don't think I ever came up with a map and said, "Here it is." No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a period there where it was pretty fluid. There were several plans and you were favoring one or the other, I guess. Then eventually you settled on the final

plan. There were some comments that you were trying to arrive at what you would call perfect numbers, which simply means that the districts would be—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Zero deviation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, close to very much the same numbers. Was that possible?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to get to zero, but I tell you, they're pretty close.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if you aim for perfect you're going to get a lot closer than if you aim for some deviation? In the end, you finally came down to one plan. What was your process then and what happened? You gave it to the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It went back to the Legislature and they had to approve it and then it went to the Governor for signature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any kind of hitch in the process anywhere after that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as I can remember, it sailed right through.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The courts, the people who had brought the suit for Everett, they were happy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know if they were happy, but they accepted it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happens to the court case then? It's over and it's resolved?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it just went away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This plan lasts for not quite a decade because in 1991 the state has to start all over again with the next census. As far as you know, how did this work out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as I know, it did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody lost their seat? Everybody carried on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it had any effect on the makeup of the delegation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that would be considered success, wouldn't it? You didn't go in trying to unseat anybody?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, we didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel when it was all done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A sigh of relief!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you meet at all afterwards? Or you were just feeling you were done and you went home?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who was it who would take it to the Legislature? Would the commissioners come before the Legislature and give it to them? How, physically, does that happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that Rieke, probably with the staff people, put the thing together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And made some kind of presentation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably distributed it to all the members in the House and the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you commissioners didn't then come to the Legislature and make any kind of presentation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall of ever even going to the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did anyone come and thank you for your service?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that anybody did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When it's over, it's over, then? Do you maintain an interest in redistricting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to the point of doing anything about it!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Once was enough?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel about the redistricting that just occurred? Did you have a sort of fellow feeling for them as they went through their deliberations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They apparently had no problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They might have had some because they didn't make the deadline.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let's see now, they did the legislative redistricting but they still had the congressional. Or did they get rid of it too?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think they did them both at the same time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, but I mean I think that they must have had two separate plans, one for legislative and one for congressional

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd think that the congressional redistricting would be easier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do congressional lines follow legislative lines in any way? Is that one of the lines you take into consideration?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, because otherwise you'd get into splitting counties. Legislative lines split counties considerably.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if there was a relationship where if you've got the congressional lines lined up you'd at least have those as starter lines for the legislative districts, or the other way around. At least some of those lines would be the very same ones, I would hope.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You wouldn't have totally different lines. You wouldn't have to keep coming up with brand new lines.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But in order to meet the population requirement—there's almost no way you can avoid having a shift in lines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see. You were on this temporary commission and then the first time that the law creating the commission came into play would be 1991. Yours was a sort of expedient commission just to take care of the congressional lines. Did you pay attention in 1991 to what was going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By then you were off doing other things? I was just wondering if commissioners who came after your group ever talked to you or studied your records to see how you did it, because you were pretty successful. You came in on time and you did redistrict.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know about the other members, but I didn't have any of the current people that were involved contact me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wasn't that much later. I was just wondering if maybe they studied your records to better understand what procedures you had used and perhaps adopt some of your methods. I guess I was just hoping that somebody would learn from each redistricting how to do this so you wouldn't have to start fresh each time with inventing a methodology.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Unless you have a permanent staff it's pretty difficult to do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In your mind, does it come down to the actual people, the commissioners, the chair, the staff people? The chemistry that they have? So that can't be replicated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's pretty hard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose each decade there are slightly different issues. The population—

**Mr. Eldridge:** The population shifts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which would bring in a whole new—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Set of circumstances.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it would be a whole new group of congressmen by then. I don't know if the congressmen who you were dealing with were still in office in the nineties. Maybe some of them but not the whole delegation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably Norm Dicks would be the only one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's been there for a long time. I notice he came before your commission. Did he have a particular need?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There was a shift in the Bremerton area. I can't remember just what it was, but I remember there was a problem there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These ships going in and out or something? Is there anything else you'd like to say about redistricting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Just to wish the future commissioners good luck!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Any pieces of wisdom? What made your redistricting experience successful?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think one of the key factors was the fact that we had a good group and we got along real well. I just think that the political implications were very minimal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that unusual?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it probably is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Other redistricting attempts were highly political. No bones about it. Your group did seem to be different. Would that be a piece of advice to the parties when they're choosing the commissioners? To look for people of a certain cast of mind?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think if you pick people who are responsible and objective and maybe a little bit on the low-key side, it shouldn't be a real difficult assignment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can imagine that if you pick a certain type of commissioner this whole thing could just go south pretty fast.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy! I'll say. If there's just one in the group, that could really cause some problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you say you were an older style of politician where you were still in the "compromise is the way to go" mode? Is that still a political value?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure it is. I think that unfortunately in the past few sessions that's been lacking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Earlier I called you an elder statesman of the Republican Party. Do you have any concerns that in future years there might be a shortage of your type of politician for this sort of job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I think so. It seems to me that there are too many ‘one issue’ people. I think that’s a real tragedy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were in the Legislature for quite a while and then you had the Liquor Control Board job for nine years. You saw quite a stretch of legislation. I wondered if that gave you a perspective that a legislator who cycles in and out pretty rapidly just can’t possibly have?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right. And that’s why I question term limits. It sounds good, but you need a little training period of time in there and you just don’t get it in one session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. I can’t imagine. You also came in an era when freshmen were not supposed to jump to their feet immediately and know everything.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That’s right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s somewhat gone away, but still, I can’t imagine how a legislator who’s only been there a few terms can have the long perspective that you would have gained in your time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be most difficult. It would take an exception, a different type of person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So we’ll have to see how redistricting goes in the future.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It will be interesting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I hope that there always are people of your caliber in charge because it’s very important to get it right.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was an interesting exercise in government.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With all these political duties and adventures, you weren’t just sitting around. During this time, you also developed your current business. Nanci, your wife, was already deeply involved, and you were getting in there, too. About when did that start to really take off for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I suppose in the eighties.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was her interest first and then you were brought into it after it got going?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, she worked in the Legislature after I was out. She worked for Harry Lewis and George Sellar, I believe. She first got involved in insurance. She was with Sunset Life, primarily selling group policies to employee groups. Then I think she decided that didn’t move fast enough for her.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So she quit the Legislature and started to do this new thing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She just got tired of it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then she went from insurance into real estate. She was with Boone and Boone for a number of years and then at some point after that she got her broker’s license and set up her own company. And then I got a license. I had never listed or sold a piece of property all the time I was involved, but once we got into the property management part of the real estate business, I was involved primarily in the maintenance area. When we first started, I did a lot of the maintenance work myself.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you buy properties to resell or rent?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, we actually owned two properties, and one of them

we split. And then we bought the two apartment buildings that we shifted from just regular apartment rentals to motel apartments.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Furnished?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Furnished. And that's where we ended up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was your thinking? That would be more lucrative or more interesting or a specialty niche kind of business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We could see a need for that kind of facility in this community, and it was kind of a challenge. First, we acquired the properties, and then to get them set up for furnished rentals, we had to do a lot of purchasing of furnishings and getting them all outfitted, and had to do painting and some repairs and so on to get them all ready to rent.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you be using your former legislative connections to pull in that seasonal market for your rentals?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had always envisioned that would be part of our clientele, but it really didn't work out that way. We did get a few legislators at the outset, and some lobbyists.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just picture all these people coming into town. They've got to go somewhere. A little suite might be kind of nice.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But you see, it was that shift over at that point where legislators were beginning to purchase properties because they were in Olympia more and more for committee meetings, and it was almost annual sessions, and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, beginning in 1980.

**Mr. Eldridge:** So it was probably more cost effective to have a place and then they could

come in any time, any hour of the day or night, and have everything set up.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was the era of legislators living out of hotel rooms closing, and people want a little bit more home-like atmosphere?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The golden era for rentals is maybe just a little bit passed?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think for legislators and lobbyists it probably was. You see, a lot of lobbyists have properties here in Olympia. It was a shift in the way they think about housing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you then had to rethink this a little bit and get a different kind of clientele?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Our operation was building up and we were getting more just general people. As a matter of fact, the last few years we've had a lot of people who are working on contracts. They have a contract to do a new building or remodeling a state building, or whatever it happens to be, and we're getting a lot of those people. And some folks just kind of throw up their hands and say, "Oh, what do you want to let a bunch of carpenters in there for? They come in with dirty feet and trucks and one thing and another."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They have to live somewhere.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But we just have had a good relationship with people like that and we welcome them and we try to do a little extra for them and it's worked out real well. And the other thing is, those people ordinarily aren't there for two or three days. They're there for the long haul. And so we can usually work something out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I want to hear about your maintenance work. From the stories you've told me, you're rather famous for some of your plumbing skills.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I've always enjoyed puttering around, and we don't do any electrical work, except maybe change light bulbs and that sort of thing. We contract that out. And the plumbing—I used to do almost all of that unless there was a major problem, like replacing a sewer line or maybe we'd have a broken toilet bowl where we'd need to replace the whole unit. Once in awhile you'd get a bathtub that was on the second floor that the drain, just from people getting in and out of the bathtub, would loosen up and we'd have water coming down into the lower level, and the ceiling would be wet and dripping. Those kinds of things we always hired a professional plumber to come in and do.

But plugged toilets and supply lines for under the sinks and dishwashers and that sort of thing, why I always did those. I always told my friends that I had unplugged every toilet in Thurston County.

I always say, "I used to work forty hours a week. Now that I'm retired, I work sixty hours a week."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now that you've got all this free time, yes.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But I don't really do too much now.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm sure you've put in your time. I understand though, that you'd go to the apartment owner's association conventions and put on quite a show. Do you still do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I haven't for a number of years now. Yes, I used to get called on to do a maintenance program and I'd always haul a toilet in and all the fittings and everything, and then I'd go through my routine. It was kind of fun. I enjoyed that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you make a bit of a show out of it? How one deals with toilets?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. There are a lot of things you can do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There's a lot of humor there. So these are pretty big trade shows?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hundreds of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The Washington State Rental Owners Association always had an annual meeting and trade show. I performed a number of times with that group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You just never can guess where a person's going to end up, you know!

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've kind of come a little bit in a circle again because you started out being very interested in shop and building and tinkering, as you call it. I remember you telling me stories about your grandfather and helping out around in his workshop. Now you've got your own workshop, presumably, and you get your hands in there again. Is that satisfying?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I always enjoyed doing that kind of work. But, you know, after my last stroke three years ago, it's just hard for me.

## CHAPTER 18

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### REFLECTIONS

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you were going through your Liquor Control Board trial by fire, it was at the same time as Watergate. We touched on that very briefly, but I really would like to go back and get more of your reflections on that whole rather painful issue and just how that was for you as a politician.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, I was so busy with my own problems I didn't have too much time to worry about the president. I think that the media really overlapped it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was something of a backlash against Republicans with that, and politicians in general. You were out of the Legislature then, but did you—you wouldn't have felt it personally because you weren't in office—but did you notice that there was a difference after that? How the Press treated all politicians?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they were entering into the time when the general tenure was that all politicians are bad and the media, of course, were just looking for reasons so they could say, "See, this is what we've been talking about." I really don't think that the general public as far as that one incident was concerned, really gave it an awful lot of thought. It was there and they kept bringing it up, but I don't know that the man on the street was too concerned about that incident.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think now, when we look back on it, we see it all of a piece because that's the way it's written or that's the way it's been documented. But living through it as it kind of dribbled out bit by bit, it's hard now to recapture what it felt like at the time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it personally affected me to any extent. I knew just through the Press what had happened and all, and I really couldn't get too excited about it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people see that as a kind of turning point where government, itself, took quite a hit in people's trust and respect. And that it's been difficult to rebuild some of that. Certainly though, journalists looking for their own great story that they're going to break, there's kind of a new culture of exposé in political life that some people think has made working in government service much more difficult.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. It's just a good example of how powerful the media is, and how they can build up an incident or a number of incidents or almost anything. And they have a real ability to weave any kind of a story and its result that they want. I guess over the years I've become pretty critical of the news media. I've often times said, "They don't want to report the news, they want to make the news."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a critical difference.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's quite true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As anchormen become almost like movie stars—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Another Republican who was somewhat made by the Press in some ways was Ronald Reagan. When Richard Nixon resigned the presidency and then the Ford presidency

didn't quite take fire with the public, it looked like the Republicans were going to be out of the picture for awhile. But it's not very long before you have this resurgence and whole new message. Was that a heartening development for you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was kind of a repeat of the Eisenhower situation. I don't mean that the two individuals were alike, but the situation was similar.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you draw that out for me a little bit more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was just being at the right place at the right time. And certainly Ronald Reagan was well-known. He was a nice appearing person. He was an excellent speaker and I think even though, if you had to look at him as a movie actor, you still had to think that he was objective and pretty forceful and had a certain appeal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was his appearance on the scene something to get excited about for the Republicans? Pull your Party together and put you on some new level?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not sure it's that simple. He, of course, was strongly supported by the right wing ultra-conservative people in the Party, and some of the more moderate to liberal folks in the Party kind of resented the enthusiasm that was put forth on his behalf.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this kind of reminiscent of the Dick Christensen movement in this state? The more evangelical side of the Republican Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's a pretty fair comparison.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does that mixture of religion and politics concern you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It doesn't and it didn't. I'm not what you'd call a strong religious person, I certainly philosophically think that there's a real place for religion in the community and in the country, and I think so much of it was concerning the people who were involved. You know, there were some pretty wild people who were attracted to the Republican Party because of Reagan, and it eventually got to the point where they sort of became the dominant part of the Party and a lot of the old-line old timers just didn't go along one-hundred percent with him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there's a group of old-line Republicans that kind of stayed steady with what they had always thought and believed, but the Party, itself, shifted a little so that perhaps you become the fringe and the Party's kind of over somewhere else? Is that what happened?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there was quite a shift in philosophy and the activities of the people who had been attracted to the Party, and ultimately took over. I think the pendulum is now swinging back the other direction. But it won't be as pronounced as it was in those days. But I do think that the Party is getting back to the old-line, main stream philosophy that they had.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would you say that core was?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It started out pretty much as people in agriculture and small business people. I think those were the two major groups. Now, agriculture has changed considerably in this state and there aren't as many small farms as there used to be. And there aren't as many small businesses as there used to be, although I think we're beginning to get back into that with more specialty type businesses.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps as the economy shifts into the service sector that everyone talks about, that'll be an area for small businesses.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. That's where many of the small businesses are today, in the service area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you have the feeling that the Party's kind of coming back to what seems more familiar to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you ever, during all these pendulum swings, feel almost out of your Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I had never had that feeling, although there were some Republicans who certainly did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of the more Evans-type Republicans have, on occasion, said things like that. That they're not sure where they are any more.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We've seen both Parties, the Democrats swinging left and right, and the Republicans swinging here and there. But is it still true that the great mass is in the middle, and that the Parties need to cover that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They have to. You've got to have fifty-one percent of the votes for anything you do, and you don't have that in either Party, so you've got to attract the folks in the middle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The great undecided?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So what would be the messages you think would resonate now? Say if you were suddenly going to run for office again, what would be your platform?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I still adhere to the basic, I think, Republican approach would be very much a conservative fiscal person. Maybe moving a little more to the liberal on social issues. I find that I have changed considerably in that area. There's certainly a wide opening there for people to express themselves.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So a fiscal conservative these days would be trying to lower taxes, presumably, or what? I'm not sure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm not so sure you can just say, "We've got to lower taxes." I think you've got to say, "We've got to live within our means."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How do you decide what our means are? This is a really tough budget year. They're all down there just tearing their hair out.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I know. It's a difficult time. I just don't think that the normal approach is going to work during these times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you would set priorities a little differently or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think you almost have to tear the whole thing out and put all the pieces out here, and then, as you say, you pull the number one priority out of the jumble and just work your way through it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And see what's left.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And there's going to be a lot of things at the bottom of the pile that aren't going to get taken care of.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems to be the method. One really big difference between when you were a legislator and now is that health care was not an issue.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It wasn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's one of the biggest budget issues this year. If you had to weigh in on health care, the government responsibility for health care, what would you propose?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's one that I'd need to see what are we doing now, because the federal government is certainly into health care and you've got Medicare and Medicaid. It's just gotten driven up and up and up. And it is a problem for the economically lower end of the population.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think health care is a government responsibility on some level? State or federal or local?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that they certainly need to participate, but I don't know, we may have gone to the extreme. There are so many agencies at all levels that are participating, and there's a lot of money being pumped into the system. But I think a lot of families just haven't concerned themselves with that, and now that it's a real issue they're jumping on board and saying we can't afford all this and yet they haven't over the years prepared themselves for any kind of a situation like this and they just don't know how to handle it. And we've been so used to just turning to the government whenever we have a problem of any kind, and whatever the magnitude is, just say, "You've got to bail us out."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that would be something you would rather turn around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we need to slow that mindset down and take another look at it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm trying to think of other differences that people in the Legislature face now that that were not there for you.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Certainly environmental issues were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They were just coming in.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But it wasn't a big issue like it is today. Government regulations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Has that made life more complicated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Just in the matter of housing—that used to be kind of the single thing—that when people were young they always look forward to the time that they could have their own home, and we've made it so complicated that it's just—I don't see how some of these young people can get into the housing market.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It is pretty steep.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you think that's regulation that has driven that up, or just normal costs?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think both.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Of course, the state has grown tremendously over the years, so with more people, it's bound to be little more complicated. Trying to fit everybody in.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. We've got so many more people. That's right. And I think some of our liberal policies have attracted a lot of people from the outside.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a pretty strong economy here. That, generally, is a driver of population.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That can attract people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Perhaps as we strangle them on the freeways they'll feel differently. Maybe you served during the golden era. You could do a lot of great pragmatic things before the real problems started.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a good time to be in the Legislature even though there were some rough times. But it was a good time. We really had good people, and we had a wide spectrum of interests with the legislators.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think that's not so true any more?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think the quality of the legislator today is as good as it was back twenty, thirty years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people say that that's a function of the near constant-ness of legislative service now and electioneering. That it's harder to hold a real job, a full time job, and be in the Legislature, so it attracts a different kind of person.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That doesn't bring that other career experience into the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's very true. I don't know how you work around that or through it or over it or whatever, because some people would say, "Well, we've got to pay them more so they don't have to do anything else." But, you know, I think that's just opening up a Pandora's box and you'd really have some problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Are there states that do that? That have professional legislators who don't need to do anything else? I'm just wondering how that works.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I suppose California is probably as close as you'd come to that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It might be a bit of a laboratory to see what kind of outcome you get with that situation. We're kind of in an uncomfortable

middle ground in the sense that being in the Legislature now takes up a lot of time and energy, a certain amount of expertise, and yet it's not really a profession, so you're sort of betwixt and between.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the rise of large numbers of women in the Legislature? Do you think that changes how things are done there as well?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's had some effect. I wouldn't say that it was a major consideration. The women that I've worked with and known in the Legislature have all been as good or if not better than the men who have come to the Legislature. Their temperament is a little different and they bring an entirely new segment of the population. And the ideas and the backgrounds, I think, have had a measurable influence on the Legislature. Those who have come to the Washington Legislature have done well. Many of them have gone on to Congress and have taken administrative positions at both the state and federal level and have been very influential, I think. They're sometimes a little hard to work with, but—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That could probably be said of some men, too.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Even more so, probably. But I certainly wouldn't put down the fact that we have a large number of women in the Washington Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Washington's one of the states that has the most women legislators in the country.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What made me think of that was as the Legislature takes up more and more

time, some kinds of people are more available to do that service than others, and women are one of those groups of people that sometimes have more time. Probably most women in the Legislature are professional women of one kind or another, but perhaps women's careers don't take quite the same patterns as men's careers do, so perhaps they have more time to take some years off and serve.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. Although I think that generally speaking, women are pushing more and more to get into that area where they have more responsibility and it takes more time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If you have a two-income family, one person can serve. It helps.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It makes a difference. You bet.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And I'm sure there are equally women putting their husbands through as they take up that kind of work.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the other group that has sort of come into their own are the young people. There seem to be more younger members of the Legislature that are really taking their place.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. There are some fairly young people in there. So that's a very different kind of voice. Earlier, was it considered that you developed your career, you got a certain amount of things under your belt before you thought of joining the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that would generally be the case. We did have some fairly young people who came in who had come out of the service and gotten into maybe a family business or struck out on their own. A lot of young attorneys were in the Legislature, and I think that's an area that's probably going to change over the years. I don't think we're in a set pattern at the present time, that's for sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One thing that's different too—when you spoke of attorneys, I was thinking there are far fewer attorneys in the Legislature these days than previously. In the old days almost half the members would be attorneys. Now, it's very few. And many people say that has a lot to do with the establishment of the Public Disclosure Commission. That attorneys are more reluctant now to list all their clients and have to disclose everything along those lines.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does that lack of attorneys change how the Legislature works?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Certainly attorneys have the background so that they could be very effective, and I think there's probably an area in there where not having attorneys as members hinders the government. But, you know, there are many who say, "We don't need attorneys as members. We need the ability to just go out and hire good attorneys for staff people, and if we need an attorney we'll hire one, we won't elect them." But I don't know.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That sounds perilously close to seeing staff people originate legislation. Or at least shape it more than some people would be comfortable with.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I have often times wondered about that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can members still understand the bills they write?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A lot of them don't write them. I think many times we have legislation by staff rather than by members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certainly when you started you had no staff. You had your desk and you had a steno pool. You had to rely on lobbyists and

your own wherewithal to figure out the issues and how to work them. That must be quite a difference.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's difficult, yes. And you need the technicians. They need to be available so that a legislator may have the idea, but how you draw all the parts together and put them down as a bill, it takes some doing and some expertise to do it right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can there be said to be a trend in how legislation is written? Say the legislation of your day and the legislation now? Is there any way to compare it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that you can compare it. I think that the Legislature today has more technicians available than they did in my day. I don't think, and I'm not sure of this, but I don't think today that the lobbyists have quite as much influence directly on legislation as they did back then because they were just one of the sources of technical help.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yet there are many more lobbyists now than then.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The halls are pretty thick over there. Is that because there are more issues, or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there's that, and I think the other thing is that transportation and communication is so much greater now than it was thirty years ago. It's easier for people to come to Olympia or pick up the telephone or send an e-mail or whatever to try to influence legislation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think, in the end, that all those communications, more and more information, more and more input, does it make a difference? Or does the legislator still have to

sit down at some point and make up his own mind based on his own experience and judgment, that in the end it's still political?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You certainly have to do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder if politics is still a matter of—I don't want to call it intuition, but the person's internal judgment rather than information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Because even if you have all this information somebody has to sort it out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** According to something. Some system of values.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It can either be a lobbyist's influence or your Party leader's influence as to what the political influence is. But you're right. When it comes right down to the bottom line, it's the individual legislator's responsibility and his own background and research that's going to make the decision.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think with all this communication with e-mails and the Hot-line and all the different ways for constituents to weigh in—there are way more polls than there ever were—is the public better represented than ever before?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They just get to put their two cents in as much as they ever did, but just in more ways?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. And you know you have these people on the outside, and it seems to be the same individuals that are on something, and they just flood all of these communications outlets.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. Some people make a hobby of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They do. You look at the letters to the editor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certain names are rather prominent.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And they're in there all the time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some of them are fun to read.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They are.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that a good thing in political life? That there are more avenues for public expression and more ways to take the temperature of the public?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know that it makes things any better. It certainly clutters up the whole system. But I think if you elect good people, that's the key to the whole thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It still comes down to the representative, what kind of person they are?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It does.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was thinking there are open meetings, there are a lot more hearings, there are a lot more meetings. There are more lobbyists. There is more Press, although the Press may not be as thorough as perhaps they were in your day. There are different kinds of Press as well. There's just a lot more to deal with.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But in the end, are the decisions as good or better or not as good as they ever were?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There are all kinds of experts that try to answer that question, but I still think

that it's a pretty good system. And over the years there have been some flaws but it's just better than anything else that's ever been tried or developed. As I say, the key is to have good people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think the campaign styles of today allow good people to come forward and show who they are? Is it more difficult to actually figure out whether various people campaigning, what they're like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it is difficult. I think, here again, a lot of that is the enlargement of the various communication media. A lot of candidates, they're just playing to the Press and the TV cameras or whatever. I think there's a lot more negative campaigning.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That can seem destructive of the whole enterprise if politicians are tearing each other down. Whoever wins can feel diminished. Why anyone would want to engage in that? Yet, it's true. Good people still go to the Legislature and certainly work very hard and devote themselves to it to the sacrifice of their business, their family, their other interests. It's a huge undertaking.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's certainly true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have any advice for any of those people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** My only advice would be: if you have any inclination to get into public office, then you ought to do it and do it starting at the local level. The school board, the dike district, maybe county commission as the next step. There are all sorts of ways that you can kind of get the feel of it without jeopardizing everything else in your life. I've always thought that in my own personal situation it was unfortunate that I didn't have a term or two on the city council or the hospital district. There are all sorts of local opportunities and the problems may be different but the

procedures are pretty much the same. You need to have some kind of background before you get into it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had a pretty extensive community service background. The Jaycees and all the clubs you worked with. The Boy Scouts and being on the YMCA Board and that. Is that another route that teaches a person how to be in public service?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Those experiences are certainly helpful. But I think you need at some point to get into a governmental body because it's a little different—operates a little differently than a civic service type organization.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. You actually have to make decisions that stand up in public and be for something in a different way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's probably more difficult, but it's a good training ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How people get into politics; there are those different routes. Either through community work or the local government ladder. Sometimes people propel themselves into public office on the coattails of one issue. They get known in the community for speaking out on a certain thing, and they get around, and suddenly somebody proposes that they run for office and they do and they're successful. What happens to people like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They probably wind up in the Legislature. I'll tell you, that's one of the problems today in the Legislature. You've got too many one-issue people. They've got blinders on and they won't even stand still and listen on anything except just that one thing, and I think it's a real problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do those people last very long?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Ordinarily not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people, of course, grow and find out that there's more to life than their issue. I don't know how common that is.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. But you have some people in the Legislature and in Congress who year after year are on the same issue. They may get knocked down one session and they'll come back the next and try it again.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Depending on their issue, it's either admirable or not. Depending on what it is, I suppose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** The one that I can think of as a recent situation was with Dave Quall who's a House member from up in my old district. He's a former school teacher and coach and he's been on the charter school proposition. While I support that, he's not been successful to this date to get the Legislature to buy it, but I think maybe this time it may fly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In that case, persistence would be a virtue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I've heard stories of people who sailed in on their one issue and then they don't even get on the right committees so they never actually get to talk about that issue at all, except for maybe in the hallway where it doesn't do any good. I wonder what happens to legislators like that? They either learn to develop a broader scope or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Or just fade into the woodwork.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They must be pretty frustrated, I would think. I wonder how much new legislators know about committee work and working within their caucus and what it will really feel like to be a legislator? It's not the same as campaigning.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Once you're actually there, do you think that's hard to understand from the outside what it will really be like?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. I don't believe that the average citizen has any concept of what it's like to be a legislator. I used to always say, "We'd have a great state if every citizen could spend a year in the Legislature just to get an idea of how it happens."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Get a taste for it. What about the issue of compromise and working with other people and the concept of the half loaf? Working together to get at least something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Compromise is the secret word in the Legislature. You've got to compromise or you just don't get anywhere.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's getting to be a bit of a lost art.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It is. And it's because we've gotten so many one-issue people in there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** If all their principles are based on something, they can't compromise, I suppose. They just can't afford to because they'll lose their supporters.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But there are a lot more issues than just that one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think there's a way to teach these values or this perspective?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really don't think that you can do it in the classroom unless we have a change in our higher education system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know if they still have it, the Youth Legislature, where kids come in and do a mock Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The YMCA still has that. I think that helps some. But I think there needs to be a step above that. We started the intern program during one of the sessions I was Speaker. We had college students who would come in for six weeks or a couple of months and work with a legislator.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of as an assistant?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And just kind of follow them around and help with research and that sort of thing. I think that was a good program. I don't know, they may still do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many kids would cycle through something like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We'd have probably twenty at any one time. But you know they'd move through and then you'd have another group. So there were, during the period of a session, there'd be quite a few that would go through.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess it's one of those things where each person going through would then tell their family and friends about what it felt like and that would kind of filter out into the public.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And a lot of them would go back to their college or university and meet with their other members of the political science class or whatever it happened to be, and they'd discuss legislation and so on. I think it had some merit.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What about the new development of having television coverage, "gavel-to-gavel," as they say, the TVW channel, where people can see hearings, see the chambers, see the action?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's just a small window of what goes on. Unless you have kind of the whole picture, I don't know that it's all that great.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe all these things add up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. Then you have to try some of these things and either improve on them or get rid of them and move onto something else.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess it's just a quintessentially human activity. Always have to tinker with it and see what you can come up with.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, sure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Each era has its own issues. I don't know what will be the next thing, but—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. It's ever changing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's fascinating to always be looking at it and thinking about how it was and how it could be. I think it's really interesting that you said it all comes down to character. So let's talk about character. Some of your early influences, things that made you the person you are today, the person you were then.

At one point you told me that your early experiences in the business world were really formative for you. You went right back to your childhood. You told me once that one of the things you clearly remembered was selling strawberries. So let's go back to that story.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had two sources of strawberries. One we had at my home, a small garden in the back yard, and we had a few strawberry plants there and some raspberry bushes. Then my grandmother and grandfather had a little five-acre farm just on the north edge of Mount Vernon and they always had quite a garden, and had quite a number of strawberry plants. They would harvest quite a crop. And so with those two sources I picked strawberries and brought them to our home and then I went door-to-door in the neighborhood and sold strawberries. As I recall they were twenty-five cents for a box.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a pretty good price.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, it was. But they were real nice berries and they were large.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hand picked with care?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. Yes. I did that for two or three seasons.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you allowed to keep the money for yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As long as it went into my savings account or if I was working towards a particular purchase, why then some of it could go that direction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not to the local candy store?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this to teach you something or just keep you busy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably to keep me busy and to keep the strawberries picked. If you don't pick them they rot on the vine.

I went from the strawberry business—and I suppose every kid either has a newspaper route or sells magazines. As I told you, I started out my first venture into the magazine business with *Literary Digest*, and of course that wasn't a very big market. And then when I got into the Scouts, we had a scoutmaster who was a sales manager for the Curtis Publishing Company. They had *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and the *Country Gentleman*. He told me about the magazine business and how it operated, and said that they had an opening for what he called a district manager. I was about fifteen at the time. But it was kind of a good business.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were developing organizational skills, management skills, money skills. All the accounting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a good training ground.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were hitting almost all the aspects of the business world.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I think I did that probably three years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's intense. For that kind of business, was it fairly lucrative?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I wasn't buying any automobiles or skis or anything like that, but it was pretty good. I don't remember what I made in commissions, but it was worthwhile.

After I graduated out of that phase, my friend, Al Polson, who was a neighbor and we grew up together, we did a lot of camping and hiking together and then in high school we got into skiing. Then after he graduated from high school, he went to Mount Vernon Junior College. He was two years older than I; I was still in high school and we started a ski shop.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Selling skis?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Selling skis. And we had rental skis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you build your inventory? It takes a certain amount of capital.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's another story. I'll tell you what we did. We decided that we wanted to get into this, and so we wrote a letter. We had letterheads printed up and business cards and the whole nine yards, and we wrote a letter to Eddie Bauer who at the time had the one store in Seattle. We wrote to him and kind of laid out what we wanted to do and asked if we could get equipment from him on consignment. He wrote back and said, "Yes, he thought they could arrange something like that." So Al's dad had converted an old Model T—it must have been a coupe to begin with—but he built a box on the back end

of it and made a pickup out of it. So we packed a couple of sack lunches and got in the pickup and drove to Seattle and pulled up in front of Eddie Bauer's and went in and announced that we were here to pick up inventory for our ski shop.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were they aware when you wrote the letter that you were rather young?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And we really got the eye when we walked in there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you dress up? Did you try to present yourselves?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We were in more than just overalls and sweatshirts. But anyway, the secretary said, "Well, I'll have to check with Mr. Bauer." So she trotted off into the back room and he came out. By that time we had produced his letter saying that, yes, we could work something out, so he knew he was stuck. We had made up a list of what we needed to start out with and we gave that to him and he looked it over and he said, "That looks pretty good, but how are you going to get this stuff to Mount Vernon?" We said, "Oh, we brought the truck." He took a look out the window and saw this decrepit looking piece of transportation, and he said, "Okay, drive around behind and we'll load 'er up." So we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have to present some kind of security or something?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is all just on a handshake?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. It was the early days. But anyway, it worked out real well. And we went through that first season and then the next year—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where did you sell this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We took one end of the garage in my mother's basement. We got some logs and made a rustic kind of area there and had some shelves.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you advertise? How did people know that you were in the ski business?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We both belonged to the ski club and I don't think we ever did any advertising as such.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, word of mouth?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. The word got around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you offer good prices?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were competitive. They weren't anything special because we weren't getting a great discount.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This is interesting. So you did this for a couple of years?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And then when Al graduated from the junior college and went over to Washington State, by that time I was in junior college and I had been working at our store after school and on weekends all during this time, so I was there. Then when I got into junior college, we hired another young fellow to work in the store and I kind of trained him and he sort of took over, because we closed up the garage location and brought all the inventory down to our store. We had a little area there where we ran the thing. And of course we had more traffic there and all.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Stationery and skis. Kind of an interesting combination.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It worked out pretty well. My mother got kind of interested and of course she and this other student ran the thing. And then

when I went over to Washington State that next year they ran it for a year. They got more heavily into rentals. There were quite a number of new members of the ski club at the high school who didn't have equipment, and so they rented at least for a season to see if they liked it and so on. So that worked out pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you go back each season to Mr. Bauer and say, "Well, how about next year?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, I don't know whether it was maybe two years that we bought from him, then we started buying direct from the distributors and manufacturers.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You figured there might be another way.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So that worked out pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was he supportive of your endeavors?

**Mr. Eldridge:** After that first meeting we never did see or hear from him. We'd go and pick up what we needed and pay for it and that was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I would have loved to have heard his side of that story. That must have been a great dinner table conversation that night.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I had often thought that sometime I ought to go down there and see if I can't see him and sit down and just talk to him about it. Just for fun.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Both Eddie Bauer and you have certainly gone on to bigger things.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. He's got quite an operation now. Those are just some of the opportunities that are out there if you want to throw it up and see what happens.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had your idea and you ran with it. In that case, that was spectacular.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was fun, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder if he, himself, started his business as a very young man and thought he'd give you guys a leg-up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It could be, because he really wasn't too old at the time we went down there that first time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know if that happens anymore, but that's pretty interesting.

We should talk about Boy Scouts as an influence in your life. That's one of the threads that ran all through your life. We've talked about some of your experiences with the jamborees—the ones that you attended as a Scout and then as assistant camp director in 1960 and '64. When you were in the Legislature, you were still doing this.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Hospitality committee, World Jamboree, 1967. That was a busy year for you. You were Speaker of the House and carving time out to do that. Camp director for the national jamboree in 1969. Area One jamboree chairman in 1975 when you were with the Liquor Control Board. And then director of the daily program, the national jamboree in '77. So you kept your hand in on the national and international level.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I was pretty busy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were also involved in the governance of Scouting: president of the Mount Baker Council, '55 to '57. And then again in '63 to '65.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Each council has a number of units, troops and packs, cub packs. And then they have the older boy program, the Explorers.

And the Sea Scouts are in that group. The council is the lay body that oversees all of those units.

The council executive committee would meet probably once a month. Have a formal meeting and they'd ordinarily have a fund drive once a year. Then the individual troops and cub packs would probably have their own fundraisers for their local funds. But we would basically be responsible for the camp and for the paid professional staff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you make policy decisions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It's a pretty active group and you're dealing with a lot of different things.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were president those years, but you were also a member of the Western Region Committee. Would that be beyond the Mount Baker area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was the councils from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, western Montana and Alaska.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a big region. You did that for almost twenty years. Part of that time you were the vice chair for three years in the early sixties. That would be a big commitment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That was really the Puget Sound councils that I was responsible for within the region. Then not too many years ago, they combined—there were twelve regions in the country and they combined those twelve into six. So we were thrown in with California, Arizona and Nevada.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Much bigger.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And at that time, I kind of was getting more involved in the Legislature and so I didn't assume any other responsibilities. Except when I moved down here, I was president of the Tumwater Council for one, I think, two-year term.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were a member of the executive board for quite a while, and then two terms as president. I understand that during this time you were also, of course, a member of Rotary for many years, and that Rotary has an association with Scouts. I wasn't really aware of that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Every Scout troop and Cub pack has a sponsoring organization. It could be a church or a service club like Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis. A lot of the Sea Scout units are sponsored by American Legion posts. There are a number of Cub packs that are sponsored by parent groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When you joined the Olympia Rotary when you moved down here, were they already sponsors of the Cub Scouts or was that something that you did?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They had been and then we got a woman president and she decided on her own that the Rotary Club shouldn't continue sponsoring the Cub pack and the Scout troop, so she just arbitrarily wrote to the two leaders and said, "As of tomorrow, that's it." Well, that just didn't sit well. So I, when I heard about it at the next Rotary meeting, I took to the floor and really gave them the story and a couple of days after that why she wrote another letter to them saying that they'd made a mistake and they reconsidered.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It must have thrown them into quite a loop, suddenly having their backing yanked out from underneath them and then restored within a few days.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And the thing is that Rotary and the Boy Scouts have been so closely allied over the years that it just didn't make sense, because at the outset most of the initial people involved in Scouting were from the Rotary Clubs around the country. And they sponsored a lot of the original organizations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So this is a long historical connection.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. I understand that you had almost perfect attendance, or literally perfect attendance, for twenty-two years of Rotary. That's pretty steady.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, but we've got people with perfect attendance for fifty, sixty years.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's amazing. Perfect attendance or not, you've been a member of Rotary for decades, so that's a long time commitment.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Quite a while, yes. I'm on a leave of absence and have been for the last year. But I keep in touch and I'm still the representative of the Rotary Club to the Scout troop and the Cub pack. And they bring applications by for me to sign as the sponsoring organization representative.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You've been able to keep that up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And I still participate in the Eagle courts of honor and they've turned out quite a few Eagle Scouts in that troop.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. From time to time in the newspaper there'll be an announcement of a new Eagle Scout. Let's talk about some of your own awards. In 1960 you were awarded the Silver Beaver.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's an award at the council level for outstanding service. And then the Silver Antelope is the regional award for the same thing. And then they have a national award which is the Silver Buffalo.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you have that, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. That's pretty much for like the president of General Motors.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We won't worry about that one, then. But you have a Vigil honor. The Order of the Arrow in '65. What's that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's a national camping group. You're selected by the campers in your own troop, and they have a regular organization and it's kind of based on Indian lore. A number of the groups have dance teams and they do Indian dances and make their own costumes. My son, Ray, was real active in the Order of the Arrow.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is it kind of a reenacting group? I've never heard of this group.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It really isn't publicized. It's sort of an in-house thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I see. So it's a way of going deeper into that aspect?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They do lots of ceremonies for troops and so on. But Ray made a button blanket and it's quite a piece of work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So they really learn the culture?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you win this award? What was it that you did?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They have three steps—the ordeal, the brotherhood and the vigil.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The ordeal?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's the first step. After you're selected by your troop, then one night at summer camp they take each individual out in the woods and leave him all night. I was an adult when I was selected to become a member of the Order of the Arrow. My son, Ray, was selected at the same time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you get into it because he was interested in it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. But I was still active in the movement, so I was selected at the same time he was selected, but he was in another troop, so they selected him and a couple of his friends at the same time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you go out in the forest alone. Did you make a little shelter for yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of. Yes. Just to keep the wind away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In different things I've read about Indian life, you're supposed to have a spiritual experience out there in the woods finding yourself and communing with nature. Was it kind of like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sort of, yes. And then they come and get you in the morning and herd all of these kids from out of the woods into the dining hall and they have a big breakfast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not too much hardship.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Oh, no. The vigil is the top. But they have an organization. They have a chief and I can't remember just the officers of the group. They have a national organization that all of these local council groups belong to. When they have annual meetings and so on, they'll all get together and it's kind of interesting because it's a little different than just the regular Scout program.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How long did you stay involved in this kind of activity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just a few years in the mid-sixties. I was never an adult advisor or anything like that with the Order of the Arrow.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then, finally, in 2000, you were awarded the Distinguished Eagle Scout award. I understand that's rather rare.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It is. That's a real accomplishment. I think the most famous of the Distinguished Eagles is President Ford—and Governor Evans is one. Then, the only other one that I know of here in this area was Rufus Kaiser who was a professor at Centralia College. He'd been a Scoutmaster for fifty years down there with the same troop. He was a botanist and he wrote a book called *Walking with Rufus*, and it tells about all the flora and fauna that he cataloged on Seminary Hill, which is just east of Centralia. He had covered that time and time again and knew every weed and every wild flower and every tree in that whole area. He passed away about seven years ago.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How does one get nominated for this? Does your local group put up your name?

**Mr. Eldridge:** For the Distinguished Eagle? Yes. You have to be presented by your local council.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's very fitting when you've been involved for much of your entire life.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That probably meant more to me than almost anything that I've ever done.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know you've said that being a Scout is just something that makes a person. It distinguishes them. Gives them a set of qualities that aren't usually found elsewhere.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's true. It's surprising how many men indicate that they think it had such an influence on their lives. It's surprising what a high percentage of the young men who were Eagle Scouts there were at least two astronauts, Neil Armstrong—as a matter of fact he's the president of the national Eagle Scout Association this past year. There are any number of the members of Congress, the House and the Senate, who are Eagle Scouts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you get together in any sense? Do you have conventions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They do have a national association and they have an annual meeting. I've never attended one. They always seem to be in the East and it's just a little expensive to take a trip back there for a meeting like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine that would be an amazing get-together.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be. Some day I'll have to do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were also saying that many people in the military have that background, there's that connection.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I don't have the figures, but over half of the students at the Army military academy at West Point, the Navy at Annapolis, the Air Force at Colorado Springs, all are Eagle Scouts. It's surprising what a plus it is to have that on your résumé if you're going after a job. Most of the major corporations look at Scouting experience a real plus for anyone that they're hiring.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would you say would be the main values or characteristics that being involved in Scouting would develop in a person?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They always consider it a great character-building organization. And then the possibility to learn all kinds of outdoor skills is very important. There are certainly a lot of opportunities for leadership development.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that's actually been the most constant thread in your whole life is your involvement with Scouting. Business had come and gone in various ways, and government service and, always, you've been involved with Scouting.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. That's very true. One other thing. At Washington State there was an honorary service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega, which is for former Scouts that I belonged to. But it was surprising when I got really active in the statewide Jaycee organization, I ran into the president of the Spokane Jaycees and discovered that he and I had been in the Alpha Phi Omega group on the campus at Washington State, and we still maintain contact and are very good friends.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Through all your activities from the Jaycees up, you must know the state pretty well? You've ridden horseback over the North Cascades, you swam in the cold waters of Puget Sound, you've campaigned extensively in various corners and given speeches and gone to school here and there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. I've had quite a wide experience here in the state. There's no place like it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did all that, when you were in the Legislature, help you see the big picture—the whole state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so, yes. I'm sure that it helped a lot. I could understand it better than if I hadn't had that experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't know how many legislators bring that kind of breadth to their service, but—

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's surprising what the background is on some of these members.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes. It certainly gave you perspective. A real integral knowledge of all kinds of people and situations. It would bring that to the fore.

As we close, are there other things you want to include? Stories about yourself or the times that would help explain your life and years of service to the State?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would say that, basically, my mother had the most influence on me. She was always very supportive of my activities. I don't know how many times she loaded my Scout patrol in the car and drove us to a trailhead and dumped us off and then picked us up a couple of days later. She was always there.

And you know it was during a time when my father had had a serious stroke. At one point in time he was in the hospital in Seattle, and she would get up in the morning and get me fed and off to school, then she'd go down and work at our business all day, lock up at night, go over and get on the Greyhound bus, go to Seattle, get off the bus, take a taxi from there up to the hospital, spend a couple of hours with my dad, and then turn around and get on the bus. There was one late bus from Seattle to Bellingham and they ordinarily didn't stop in Mount Vernon, but because she became a regular rider the driver would pull down off the main highway into Mount Vernon and let her off.

Ordinarily, she'd go back to the store and take care of some bookwork and that sort of thing, and then go back home and many times help me with homework or whatever. She was quite a reader so she might even stay up another couple of hours reading. Then she'd go to bed and get up the next morning and start all over again. She was quite a woman.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And she needed you to do your part?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I usually got out of school about 3:00 p.m. and I'd walk down to the store and I'd work there until closing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you'd have a chance to talk about your day with her and go over whatever was going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Although it was pretty busy. And then after my father passed away, my mother and I formed a partnership and ran the business

together. I'd have to say that she was the dominant person in the business. She had been there quite a long time and knew and understood it, and I just learned an awful lot from her.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Some people are really good at bringing a young person in and teaching them the business and sharing their knowledge and experience. Did your mother do that with you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not as a structured type.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Explaining as she went along what she was doing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Right. She was very good at that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With the ski business, I'm getting a sense of how open-minded she was.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The first image sounds fairly disciplined—a highly organized person. But willing to accommodate a ski business inside a stationery store is a little bit of a different picture.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Well, yes. She was pretty objective and reasonable.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Not to mention somewhat indulgent.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did she help you get on your feet and find your ambitions and develop yourself?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not so you'd notice it, but she was there all the time. She was certainly very supportive.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was she inspiring in a way that helped you? You certainly had the

entrepreneurial spirit and the adventuresome spirit at a young age.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You got to try a lot of different things. One of the things that seemed to be important in your life is just all the relationships you had with people. A very social life. You joined a lot of things and you were just out there mixing with all kinds of people.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I knew a lot of people, but I really didn't have very many what I call close friends. But the three or four that I was close to, I was really close to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it all add up in some way, or it's just one long adventure?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was certainly an experience. A very broad experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is there anything you'd like to be best known for?

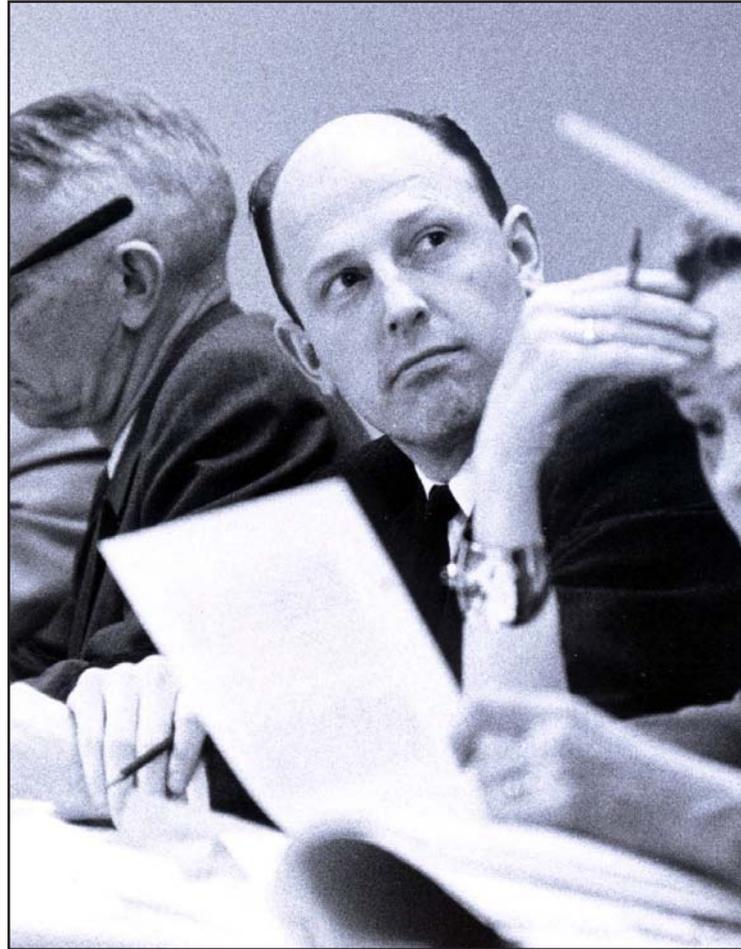
**Mr. Eldridge:** I guess that I always tried to be fair. That's the thing that a number of people have indicated that they thought, particularly during my legislative years, that I was fair. I hope that that started in my Scouting, in my Jaycees and Rotary.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a pretty nice accolade.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really appreciated the fact that a number of people have said that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's not simple. Those were complex situations with many competing interests. To be fair and let people be heard and do their part. That's a big thing. Anything else you want to say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think we've covered a lot of ground.



# Appendix

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS



*Eldridge  
Grandparents,  
Mother and Aunt  
holding Don , with  
family Model T and  
strawberry crop, 1920*



*Don with  
Grandmother  
Eldridge*





Dressed for Scout camp, age 8

## Merit Badges I Have Earned

Badge	Date	Date	Badge	Date
Carpentry	4/5/33	6/23/34	Pathfinding	8-14-34
Firemanship	4/3/33	6/23/34	Pioneering	
Public Health	3/29/34	6/23/34	Leathercraft	
Personal Health	1/28/33	7/30/34	Handicraft	9/23/34
Stamp Collecting	9/28/34	7/30/34	Aviation	
Woodworking	3/28/34	7/30/34	Woodcarving	
Cooking	5/23/34	9/26/34	Music	
First Aid	5/23/34	9/26/34	Birdstudy	
Athletics	5/23/34	10/24/34	Civics	

7-26-35

**BOY SCOUTS  
OF  
AMERICA**

Whereas

*Donald Delos Eldridge*  
Earned the rank of Eagle Scout

As a member of the Boy Scouts of America 63 years ago on November 5, 1936, and  
Whereas as an Eagle Scout he has continued to serve God, his country and other people by  
following the principles of the Scout Oath and Law and

Whereas, he has achieved distinction as an entrepreneur and

Whereas, he has given distinguished service to his community and nation as a proprietor of  
Shalimar Real Estate; member of Olympia Rotary Club; Member and Past  
President of Mount Vernon Rotary Club; Past Director of Industrial Reform Task  
Force; Past Member of Executive Board, Tumwater Area Council, Boy Scouts of  
America and having received numerous awards and recognition; and

Now, therefore, in recognition of these and other achievements and the desire of the Boy  
Scouts of America, upon nomination of the Pacific Harbors Council acting on  
behalf of the executive board of the Boy Scouts of America, the honor and rank of

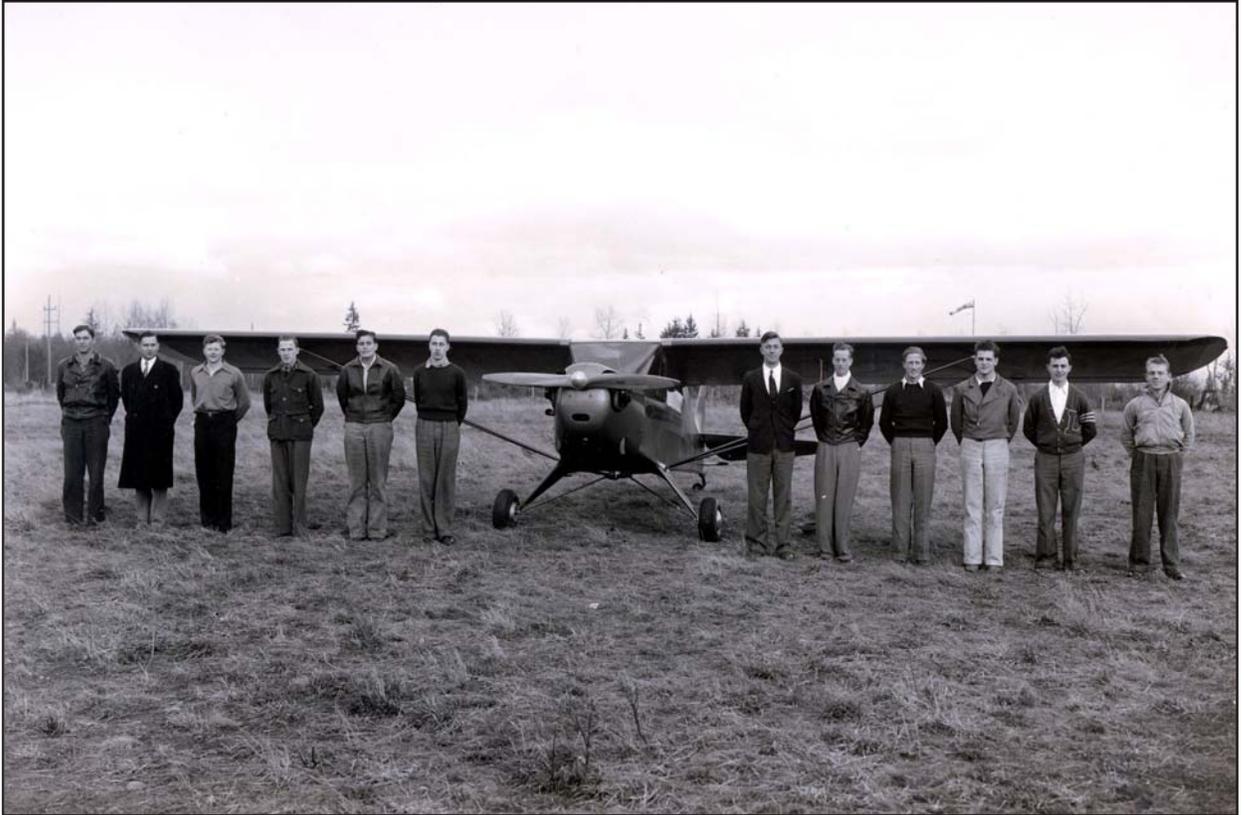
**DISTINGUISHED EAGLE SCOUT**  
is awarded to and conferred upon him.

In testimony whereof, the Boy Scouts of America and the National Eagle Scout Association  
have caused this commemorative document to be signed by its officers and  
its corporate seal to be hereto affixed.

<b>Edward E. Whitacre</b> PRESIDENT BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA	<b>Jere B. Ratcliffe</b> CHIEF SCOUT EXECUTIVE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA	<b>Robert Gates</b> PRESIDENT NATIONAL EAGLE SCOUT OF AMERICA
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*Don Eldridge with fellow Eagle Scout Dan Evans  
at Farragut, Idaho Jamboree*



*Civilian Pilot Training Program, Mount Vernon Junior College, 1939, Don fourth from left*



*Eldridge's Stationary Store, Owner and Manager, 1945-1970*



*Don with wife Harriett and children, Sally, Jean, and Jon*



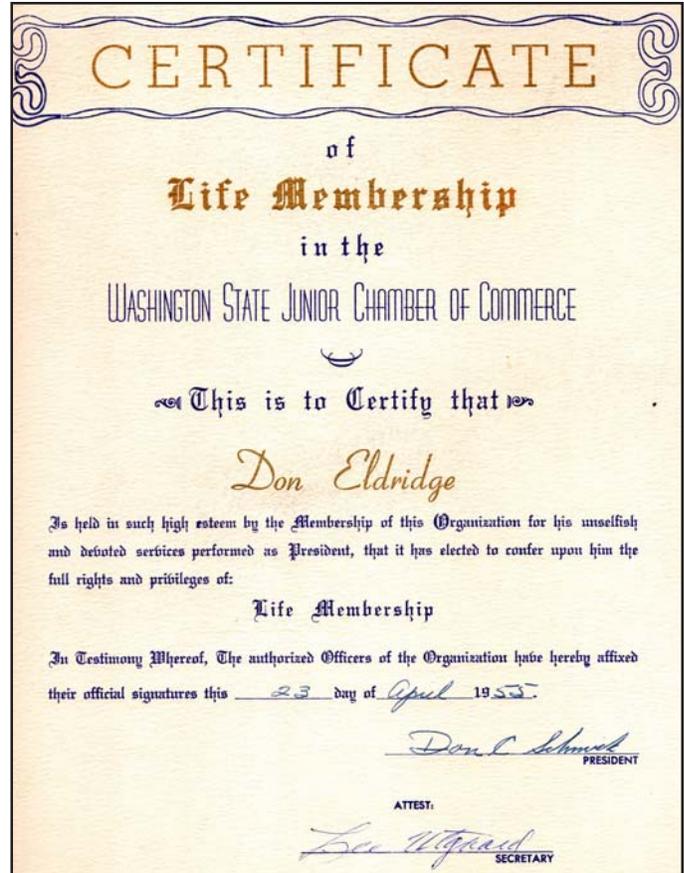
*Don, son Ray with wife, Elaine and first grandchild, Thomas in Speaker's office, 1967*



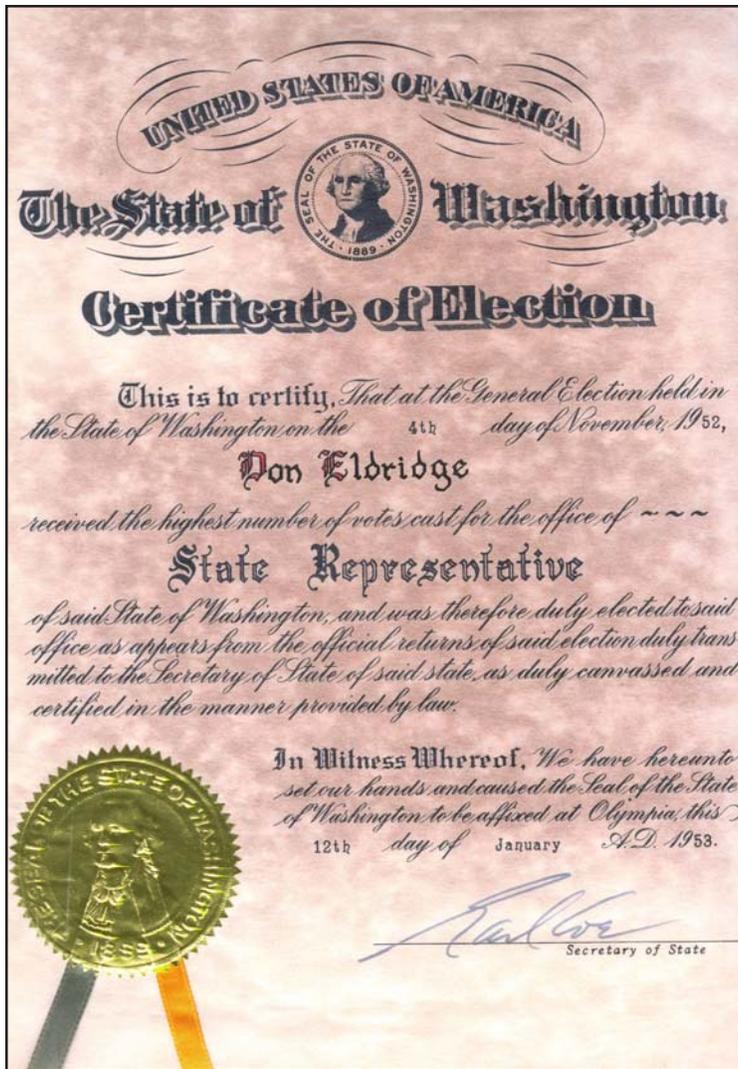
*North Cross-State trek with Duane Berentson and sons  
"Before the trip" with daughter Sally and Berentson family*



Washington State President of Jaycees



Mount Vernon Rotary Club, Don Eldridge presiding, 1954



"The highest number of votes cast for the office of State Representative"  
First election, 1952



Freshman legislator Eldridge with Speaker Mort Frayn, 1953



*Representatives Eldridge and Ovenell with Governor Langlie signing forestry bill, 1953*



*Representative Eldridge with district mate, Ralph Rickdall tabulating questionnaire returns, 1961*

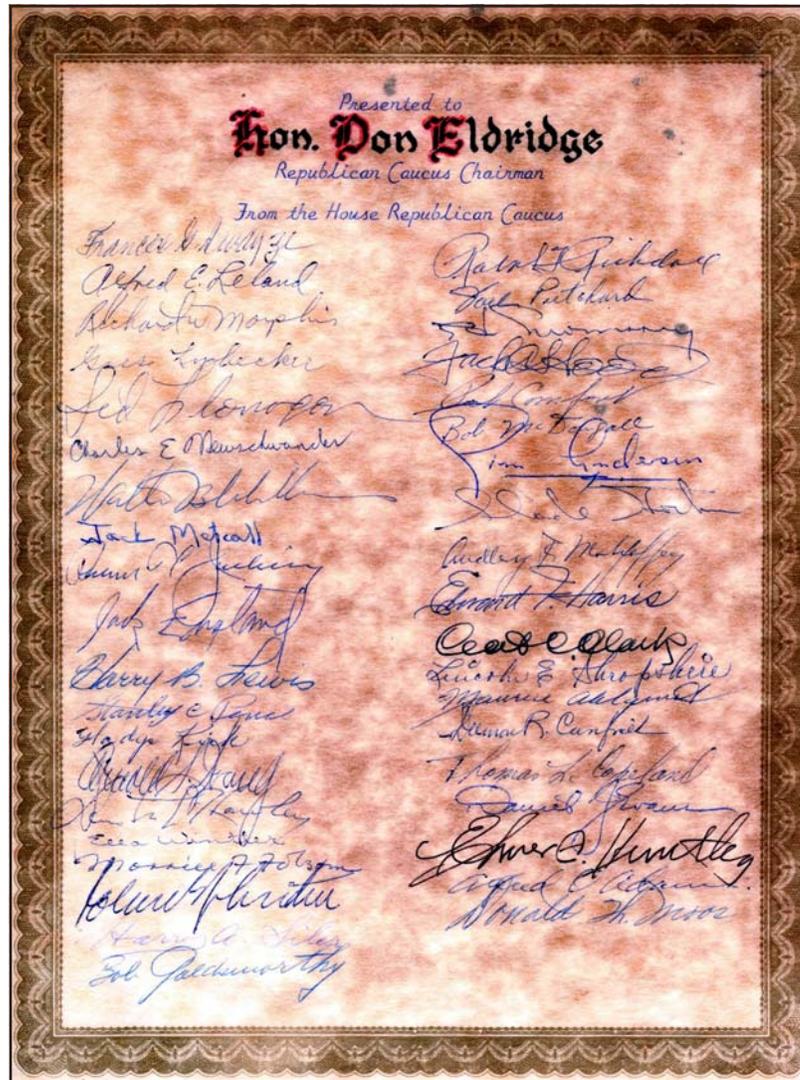


*Interim Committee on Education, 1961*

*[Left to right] Sid Flanagan, Jack England, Fred Dore, Don Eldridge, Web Hallauer, Frank Brouillet, Frances Haddon Morgan*



*Don Eldridge conferring with Republican leaders, Dan Evans and Damon Canfield, Coalition Session, 1963*



Tom Copeland presenting Certificate of Appreciation and gavel from Republican Caucus to Don Eldridge as Caucus Chair, 1961





*Election as Speaker, being escorted to the rostrum by Representatives Avery Garrett and Helmut Jueling, 1967*



*Speaker Eldridge*



*Republican leadership breakfast meeting at Eldridge Olympia residence  
[Left to right] Stewart Bledsoe, Slade Gorton, Norwood Cunningham,  
Dan Evans, Don Eldridge, John Ryder*



*A light moment with Governor Evans*



*Rules Committee meeting,  
[Left to right] Stewart Bledsoe, Don Eldridge, Tom Copeland, John O'Brien, Avery Garrett*



*Mary Ellen McCaffree discussing tax policies with Don Eldridge, Stewart Bledsoe and Duane Berentson*



*Addressing students in Capitol rotunda*



*Nanci Mooney, Speaker's secretary*



*New member of the Liquor Control Board, with Justice Stafford, wife Harriet, mother Blanche Eldridge, Governor Evans*



*Wielding the gavel at NABCA convention, circa 1978*



*At a Republican picnic*

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