ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH CARMEN BRUTTO

Interviewed by Russ Eshleman

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Carmen Brutto Interview

Eshleman: OK, this is Friday, September 9th [2005], and I'm at the home of Carmen Brutto, a retired reporter with the *Patriot News* who covered the Hill for many, many years. Why don't you say something now?

Brutto: Many, many years, turns out to be 32.

Eshleman: Thirty-two? That's pretty many.

Brutto: That's pretty many.

Eshleman: At any point, if I'm going too long and you want to stop me, do that.

Brutto: Oh, sure.

Eshleman: Don't worry about it.

Brutto: That will be fine.

Eshleman: OK, Carmen, tell me, where you were born and tell me a little bit about your mom and dad.

Brutto: Born in Shenandoah in 1923. That's a long time ago.

Eshleman: Is that Schuylkill County?

Brutto: Schuylkill County. Yeah, my father came over from Italy in 1914. My mother was born in Shenandoah in 1903. He went from a farm in Italy to a coal mine in Shenandoah but I guess that's a typical story.

Eshleman: So he was a coal miner?

Brutto: Yeah, he was at work at the mines up there.

Eshleman: How many years was he a coal miner?

Brutto: These are the things we never kept. Lots.

Eshleman: Yeah.

Brutto: So, I mean, that was his job. I remember he worked in the winter time, he'd never see the daylight.

Eshleman: Right.

Brutto: They'd be inside every winter. I think they were working 12 hours days.

Eshleman: Wow.

Brutto: Started in the 20s. Until the United Mine Workers came along, they were pretty much devoted to staying at their jobs which kept them down.

Eshleman: Sure. What was the town like? What was Shenandoah like?

Brutto: It was a big town. It was about 25,000 people in '41 when I got out of high

school. And they had their own newspaper and since then it's really gone down. There are only about 5,000 people up there now. That's smaller than Camp Hill.

Eshleman: Sure. Because I guess the mines were booming.

Brutto: Well, the mines all went out, really went down after World War II. My wife's father worked the mines too and, the mines went down—they lost everything. Pensions, sick benefits, whatever benefits they might have had.

Eshleman: What was the name of that newspaper?

Brutto: *Evening Herald*. It's now combined—the *Pottsville Republican* has taken it over. Schuylkill County had newspapers in Tamaqua, Mahanoy City, Ashland and Shenandoah, and two of them in Pottsville. And there's just the one in Pottsville left.

Eshleman: And of course you're close enough to Hazleton and Wilkes Barre, all those papers.

Brutto: Oh yeah. Lansford had a paper, Mount Carmel had a [paper]—all the towns up there had their own newspapers. But they're basically suburban developments nowadays. There's no business district to speak of. The Wal-Marts have moved in and the shopping centers have moved in.

Eshleman: Sure. Now, you mentioned the newspaper. Did you guys get the newspaper at home?

Brutto: Yeah, we got it. Well actually, when I was about 12, I was a newspaper carrier.

Eshleman: OK.

Brutto: They don't call them carriers anymore. They call them newspaper boys or something. And I did that for, oh, probably six or seven years.

Eshleman: Is that right?

Brutto: And that was where my first job was.

Eshleman: So you were always in the newspaper business?

Brutto: Always in the newspaper business since I was 12. I get a charge out of today's kids talking about, you know, salaries. I graduated from Temple

and I got my first job on the *Evening Herald*. I was out of work for about four or five months. Then the Korean War came along and a job opened up 'cause of one the guys was in the Reserves. And my starting pay was 75 cents an hour, which was the minimum wage, and I worked a 40-hour week which was five seven-hour days and Saturday we worked five hours. There was nothing like overtime.

Eshleman: Now you're a graduate of Temple at that point?

Brutto: I was a graduate of Temple, yeah.

Eshleman: What was your major in college?

Brutto: Journalism.

Eshleman: Journalism?

Brutto: Yeah. We can go into that later, I guess, how I got into newspapers. But it was fun. I got out of the Army, I didn't want to go to Penn State or Ursinus or one of those other places.

Eshleman: So you graduated from high school in?

Brutto: '41.

Eshleman: '41. And then went straight into the Army?

Brutto: Ah, went in the Army in early '42.

Eshleman: '42.

Brutto: And then I stayed there until '45.

Eshleman: OK. And what did you do in the Army?

Brutto: I was an airplane mechanic. Should we go how I got into journalism now?

Eshleman: Well, tell me a little bit about where you were stationed in the Army.

Brutto: I was—first I started out in—I went to mechanic school. I should show you that picture; I was cute in New York City. Then we went down to Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas, and then from there we went over to Europe. I went to Europe; I was in England. Then we went to France, Belgium, Holland.

Eshleman: And you were there at the end of the war?

Brutto: Then we went to occupation duty in Germany. Actually, we went to occupation duty about a week after the Armistice. I was in a mobile repair unit. What we did was whenever any of our planes from our base

were forced down or landed in another field, we would go out and either repair them if they could be repaired or just take off the important parts that we needed. So since we had trucks and a couple of jeeps they sent us down and—World War II ended on the 8th [May 8, 1945], I guess, and by the 20th, we were on our way into Germany. We went down into Stuttgart, an air field. We had a whole bunch of gliders. I don't know why they brought gliders into Germany. We had, we must have had 200 of them. And that's when I got my journalism started.

Eshleman: Is that right?

Brutto: Yeah. Someone had to write a monthly report and, you know, it got all GI on you, as they say, after the war. We had to wear leggings and helmets and all that kind of stuff. But if you worked in the office you didn't have to. And they needed the monthly reports, so I started writing them. And the captain liked them. And, after the GI bill, I knew I was going to college, but I wasn't going into some kind of science or something. But journalism seemed to be more fun.

Eshleman: Did you enjoy writing those things in the Army?

Brutto: Oh yeah, I had a free hand in writing. Well it was monthly reports, just what we were doing, how much men we had and that kind of stuff. And then, I guess we go into journalism. We were coming back, I got on the ship—and there must have been a couple thousand guys on the ship—all packed in. Two meals a day, morning and night. So they were looking for someone to do the ship's newspaper. And, of course, you didn't have to go through the lines. They fed you in your office. So I said, "Hey I'll do it." And I started doing the ship's newspaper. We were on the sea for 21 days from France to New York so I had a lot of writing to do and I liked it.

Eshleman: Now, had you written in high school for a high school newspaper or anything like that?

Brutto: Actually, no. Our high school newspaper—I didn't do any writing for it. But I did get an award from B'nai B'rith at graduation for writing a story about national defense. That was my one thing.

Eshleman: So anyway, you were on the ship, then coming back, and you are writing this?

Brutto: I was writing the newspaper—the daily mimeograph—I guess that's what they had then.

Eshleman: What was it called? Do you remember?

Brutto: Oh, I don't remember, no. I have copies of it downstairs somewhere in the footlocker. And, ah, it was all pretty silly. I listened to the radio, talked to the captain, that kind of stuff. What the weather is going to be like tomorrow, as though we didn't know it.

Eshleman: Was this a daily kind of newspaper?

Brutto: Yeah, two sheets, two sides. One sheet. And then I got home and I started applying for colleges and Temple sounded good. I didn't want to go up to Penn State. They were living in trailers then.

Eshleman: Oh, is that right?

Brutto: Well yeah. They didn't have any liquor license so I couldn't drink any beer. I was 22 years old or something like that. So I went to Temple.

Eshleman: And they had a journalism major?

Brutto: They had a journalism major. The head of the department was a guy named Henry Birdsong. I loved that name.

Eshleman: What kind of courses did you take? Do you remember?

Brutto: Some writing courses, history, English.

Eshleman: Let me just stop this a second. OK

Brutto: Journalism was in the School of Business.

Eshleman: How about that?

Brutto: They have a school of journalism now, a journalism department. But the standing joke was in journalism we didn't have to take accounting—although it was business school—because, as they said, there's no accounting for journalists. We had a lot of people that worked on the *Inquirer* then.

Eshleman: As teachers or as?

Brutto: No, as interns and that kind of stuff. We had instructors from the *Inquirer* and the *Bulletin*. I guess the *Daily News* too. We had an instructor, I think

he worked for the *Inquirer*. His name was Ryan. And he used to tell us about the importance of writing. And he covered sports. He was a sports writer. And nobody in all his writing ever fumbled the football. Nobody ever threw an interception. There were interceptions and there were fumbles and recoveries, but he never named the people that did it., which I thought was great. He said, "It lives with them the rest of their lives."

Eshleman: So he was protecting the innocent?

Brutto: Well, protecting the innocent. You know—it's a game. So I guess, the kid knew he did it, but no one else did. Of course in Philadelphia, I guess, there were no neighborhoods. There were neighborhoods but, of course, high schools didn't mean that much. We had a lot of players from Philadelphia, too, on our football team.

Eshleman: Right. Now where did you live when you went to Temple? Were you down in north Philadelphia?

Brutto: No. I lived right off Broad Street on Euclid Street. It's not there anymore. They put a library or something there. And it was just the first street off Broad. It is Broad Street, the main street, isn't it?

Eshleman: Yeah. It's north and south.

Brutto: And I lived with a guy who was going to the University of Pennsylvania. He was a former newspaperman with the UP and then I sort of lost sight of him after he got out of college and he turned up on Milton Shapp's administration as budget secretary or something like that. Small world.

Eshleman: Small world. Yeah.

Brutto: Yeah, well he's dead now, but he lived up in northern Dauphin County.

Eshleman: So while you were at Temple, did you start doing some writing again for the *Temple News*?

Brutto: I did some, but I didn't like the assignments I got. For me it was sort of cliquish. They were all the "in crowd." And I was covering some sororities and fraternities and that kind of stuff. I didn't think it was really worth my time. Like I said, I was conceited or egotistical or something.

Eshleman: What happens then after college?

Brutto: After college I did some work—mostly in advertising—with a guy I was friends with who started a newspaper or something. He was trying to sell ads to radio stations and after about three months, I guess, I got a call from home that the paper wanted to see me for a job. So that's why I started working at the *Evening Herald* at my fabled 75 cents [an hour]. That was, of course, the minimum wage at that time. It was good. Everything else I applied for I didn't have any experience. So I needed some experience. I stayed there about three years.

Eshleman: And what kind of things did you cover there?

Brutto: Everything, because I was a college guy. You know borough council. I guess they started covering the townships around the school boards. I was the first guy, I guess, that got to cover the West Mahanoy Township School Board.

Eshleman: Is that right?

Brutto: And I did some sports make-up; I did the sports pages. Mostly general assignment. There were no bylines on the paper, though.

Eshleman: You just wrote in anonymity?

Brutto: Yeah, we were anonymous.

Eshleman: Now, were many of the other reporters college graduates?

Brutto: No. They were local guys. But we had one stringer—Bill Witt. He was the city editor. And his real name was Witaconis. He went up to Scranton after I left the *Herald*. And he had a peculiar talent. The people from one part of the country all sort of congregated in one area. And he had a knack for telling where people lived by their last name. He was great.

Eshleman: He knew the area?

Brutto: He knew the area.

Eshleman: I guess that was probably the case with most reporters those days. They came from those towns.

Brutto: Oh yeah, yeah. The other reporter, Tom Dalton, I'm sorry, Joe Dalton was from the town. Tom Barrett, he was a coal miner when he started working for the paper. He was from the town and then there was a female reporter. By the way, one of my first jobs at the paper was doing

the weddings and funerals and obits.

Eshleman: Everybody writes obits, right?

Brutto: Everybody writes obits, yeah, everybody did it. We had one guy stay there for about six months and the publisher of the paper belonged to one of the local churches where the local Rotary Club met. And our assignment was to cover the Rotary Club. They had a luncheon and, whatever they talked about you had to write a story about it. And so he comes back one day when they sent him. He got hired after me, so they sent him to cover that thing. And he comes back the one day and they're waiting for the story because they're holding the page for him so they could put the story in the evening paper. And, I forget his name. He wasn't there for very long. And they said "Where's the story?" He said, "Nothing happened." I thought it was great. Which was true, but you still got to fill the hole.

Eshleman: Well tell me, like, as a kid, was your family into reading the newspaper and talking about politics?

Brutto: There was one newspaper in town—it had a 7,000 circulation. And, no, I mean it was a different era. You're talking about the '30s when I was a kid.

Eshleman: Did they talk about Roosevelt or the New Deal?

Brutto: I never remember political talk. If you work in the coal mines what do you care about politics? One thing I've got to say here—I never learned to speak Italian because my father was a Philadelphia Athletics fan and Connie Mack was his idol. And my grandfather spoke English. I never spoke Italian at home. We never did. So I guess we are sort of different from today's minorities.

Eshleman: Sure. Do you have brothers and sisters?

Brutto: I have four brothers and one sister.

Eshleman: Did any of them get into the newspaper business?

Brutto: No, all different. I was the weird one.

Eshleman: The black sheep.

Brutto: I was the only one that went to college. I was the first in the family to ever

go to college.

Eshleman: Is that right? Now where were you in the line?

Brutto: I was the third.

Eshleman: Third in line.

Brutto: Yeah, two older brothers. The three of us were in World War II. The other ones wound up in Korea. But that was about it.

Eshleman: Going back to your first job at the *Evening Herald*. Do you remember what your first story was?

Brutto: No. I started clipping all the un-byline stories and I have them all wrapped up somewhere. And I tried to give them to my kids to do something with them but it never happened. I was a columnist too for a while.

Eshleman: What kind of column did you write?

Brutto: A grab bag thing—a local commentary kind of column. It was called "Viewpoints." I really had some weird viewpoints at the time.

Eshleman: Well, now, tell me about the other people that worked for the paper. You said there weren't many college graduates.

Brutto: You mean on that paper?

Eshleman: Yeah. Was it the old typical stereotype of a reporter who was a hard drinker?

Brutto: Oh, Tom was a hard drinker. He was. I remember going to a political affairs [meeting] near Pottsville at one of the "Groves" that they have down there. That was my first bout with a martini. That was the first time I ever drove a car. I was probably legally drunk, but I drove from Pottsville to Shenandoah which is about 12 miles, I guess, and never stopped, never shifted gears. I couldn't get the car started again. Tom was out of it, sleeping.

Eshleman: Well now, tell me what happened. You stayed there about a couple of years?

Brutto: I stayed there until '54, I think, and then I went to York. I was hired by the *Patriot*. The York [bureau] guy was going to Washington and they had a vacancy there, so they asked me if I wanted to work there. I had no

idea what it was all about.

Eshleman: Now, at the time, the *Patriot* and the *Evening News* were separate?

Brutto: The *Patriot* and the *Evening News* were separate at that time. And Ted Unger was the bureau chief for the AP at the time, and he told Jim Doran [the *Patriot* editor] that I'd be available for a job, I guess. Probably lied about me, but he said I was a good guy and so Jim hired me at the magnificent salary of 95 dollars a week. I remember that.

Eshleman: Big raise, though.

Brutto: Oh, by the time I left the *Herald* I was earning probably 40, 45 dollars. So 95 dollars was a heck of a lot of money.

Eshleman: Sure.

Brutto: Then I found out about rent in York as opposed to Shenandoah where I paid like 25 bucks a month. I stayed there until '57, then I came to Harrisburg.

Eshleman: Now, what kind of things did you report on in York? Was it just a general beat?

Brutto: It was sort of a general beat, but emphasis on Sunday beat feature stories and that kind of stuff. But they had two local newspapers. I never thought we could be competitive with them. I never paid too much attention to local stories—a major fire or something like that you would report. But we didn't cover the city because you were concentrating on Sunday.

Eshleman: Is that where you got your first byline?

Brutto: That was the first byline, yeah. As a matter of fact I have the lead thing you put it on.

Eshleman: Oh, the linotype?

Brutto: The linotype, yeah, with the York beat. I remember that.

Eshleman: Oh, that's cool. What was the story? Do you remember?

Brutto: Oh, that was the heading on the column, so I don't remember what it was.

Eshleman: So then you said you moved into Harrisburg?

Brutto: I moved into Harrisburg in '57 and I worked for the *Evening News*. I guess

I was a reporter then but I worked the desk for a while. And then they got me on Saturday nights for the Sunday paper. I worked on the desk on the Sunday paper for a couple of years and that was a weird thing because you were always working for Sunday. You came in on Tuesday—we had Sunday and Monday off. And you're talking about Sunday. Everything was in the future. I was there for a while and wrote a lot of features, things like that. I didn't cover city government. Then the guy on the Hill was going to retire. He went to the welfare department.

Eshleman: Who was that?

Brutto: John Baer.

Eshleman: Oh, sure.

Brutto: John Baer's father. [Note: John Baer is a political reporter the *Daily News* in Philadelphia.] That was the guy that preceded me on the hill.

Eshleman: I didn't realize that.

Brutto: Yeah.

Eshleman: So he went to the state Welfare Department?

Brutto: Yeah, he went to the state Welfare Department. Then he retired, whenever that was. So Johnny Baer and I had that thing in common.

Eshleman: So you succeeded him, then?

Brutto: Yeah, I succeeded him. I think it was a fluke, though. I don't know how good I was. I was working on a Saturday night and I was walking past Jim Doran's office and I guess this was just after he was told that Johnny Baer was retiring and he calls me in and said, "How would you like to work on the Hill?" I said, "OK," but I thought he was talking about Allison Hill which is part of Harrisburg, because I lived up there. I didn't know he meant up on the Capitol Hill. So I went up there and worked for a while.

Eshleman: What year was that when you went up?

Brutto: '61.

Eshleman: '61?

Brutto: It was in March of '61, right in the middle of the Lawrence administration.

Eshleman: OK. Had you done any politics or government coverage before?

Brutto: Not really, except if it came up as a daily assignment. I did a story with Wayne Morse who was then a U.S. senator from Oregon and I was kind of lost, really. We had a Washington bureau—they were doing all the Washington stuff. So I got up there and got taken under the wings of some guys. Charlie Ettinger worked on Capitol Hill for the Allentown paper, the *Morning Call*. He was very helpful to me. Duke Kaminski was.

Eshleman: Now he was at the *Bulletin*?

Brutto: He was at the *Bulletin*. He was also a big help. Whenever you needed something, he didn't try to play the big-city guy. He was very helpful too.

Eshleman: Now what was the culture like up there? How many reporters were there?

Brutto: There weren't too many reporters, maybe 20, I guess. The wires had their bureaus. The *Inquirer* had a come-and-go guy until Saul Kohler came. Joe Miller and Cap Cummings were the political writers and Easton had a guy there for a while. The *Pittsburgh Press* and *Post-Gazette* had some. The only other people you'd get would be if the governor got elected from some area. Like when Bill Scranton got elected, the *Scranton Times* sent somebody there—that kind of stuff. And they were a hard-drinking kind of crew. They had card games. Well, of course, you only had one-year sessions then. I'm sorry, you had one regular session. There was an election in November of the even numbered years. You'd come in January and the budget would be introduced and then you would adopt a two-year budget. And then when they adjourned, they'd come back in the even numbered year and handle other state matters. And that lasted until about '64, '65 or '66. That's when one-man, one-vote came into and we went to the two-year sessions. I covered the first billion dollar budget.

Eshleman: We've dwindled to about 5 billion since then.

Brutto: Yeah. I remember we had a press conference—it must have been Dave Lawrence at the time—they were talking about appropriations for Penn State. And one of the reporters says, "Is Penn State gonna get more money?" He says, "They're only getting 15 million dollars now" and

everybody laughed. Only 15 million? What is it now? Two hundred million?

Eshleman: Oh yeah, I think it's even more than that now.

Brutto: But it was a different—I'm not saying better when I say different. The press corps was very small. You would cover the departments more than you covered the legislature because after the budget, you'd have that whole area of government all the time, so you were a regular. You had to do something, so you covered the departments.

Eshleman: What kind of stories did you cover? When you say cover a department, for instance, what kind of story would that be?

Brutto: Well, I covered the General State Authority. The retirement board was covered. What else?

Eshleman: So when they met and made decisions you would go to the meeting?

Brutto: Yeah, the Liquor Board met. And welfare was always a good one; there was always welfare subjects. The health department was just a minor part which I went to work for later. And I worked in the Health Department for about 15 months, but it was too restrictive and I got rehired by the *Patriot*.

Eshleman: That's good.

Brutto: And the guy that succeeded me—Rusty Cowen—he worked on the Hill for, let's see, who was the governor? That was in the Scranton administration. And when Ray Shafer was elected, the Democrats hired Rusty as their PR guy and he did a good job. I think he set up their PR operation. And the Patriot News and *Saul Kohler* as a go-between, convinced me that I should apply for a job back at the *Patriot i*f I wanted it. So I went back to the *Patriot* and they hired me.

Eshleman: Well that's a good deal.

Brutto: Well they didn't usually do that.

Eshleman: Yeah, once you crossed the line.

Brutto: Once you crossed the line you were out.

Eshleman: Why did you leave? Do you remember? The *Patriot*, I mean.

Brutto: I didn't want to work Saturday nights. I was working Saturday nights

and I thought I could do better financially. We didn't'have any overtime. All the other guys that worked Saturday nights were getting overtime pay. That was one of the ways they rewarded them. And I worked there and I wasn't getting paid for it, so I left. I had this job offer from the Health Department—I knew one of the guys over there, the director of personnel named Byron Lidle. He convinced me I should try the job there. And of course, after I got there a couple months, he left. So that was pretty good. And when I came back, I got off Saturday nights, and so I got an increase in salary.

Eshleman: So it worked out then?

Brutto: So it worked out. Yeah.

Eshleman: Let's go back to when you first came to the Hill with Governor Lawrence?

Brutto: Governor Lawrence was there.

Eshleman: What was he like?

Brutto: Lawrence was a hell of a good guy. He was a big honcho in the Democratic Party.

Eshleman: Sure, the mayor of Pittsburgh at one time.

Brutto: Yeah, mayor of Pittsburgh and, I think, he may not have been national committeeman, but he was one of the real powers in Pennsylvania—Democratic powers. Of course, it was a Republican state. He was inclined to say "no comment" when he meant no comment. But he was a great—he loved Pennsylvania and he was a Pirates fan, of course.

Eshleman: Did he mingle with reporters? I mean, could you go up to him and talk to him?

Brutto: Well, we had open access to the governor's office. Well, not his inner office, but his staff office. You've been in there. You could go past the reception room right into the governor's office. His staff was in there talking—Scranton kept that all out. And he would spend a lot of time in Pittsburgh, which I couldn't figure out why, but then when I got the job, when I started working up there, I realized that he didn't have to be in Harrisburg. The press conferences were at a big U-shaped table in his inner office and the reporters sat around him. We had two still

photographers. We had AP with Paul Vathis and Pat Cahill with the UPI and there were probably a half dozen reporters, I guess. And we all had our own spots around the U-shaped, horseshoe shaped table. He sat in the middle and we were around him. I sat in the one corner; I always sat in the same spot.

Eshleman: Now was that an every day occurrence?

Brutto: Oh no, probably once a week. UPI had a bureau chief who refused to abide by the embargo. Of course he said he's not going to hold his stuff from 10 o'clock in the morning until evening and release it. So he broke the embargo. He broke the whole system. Then they would schedule their press conferences for late afternoon. It didn't help me any because I was with a morning paper. I didn't need to go to the morning press conference then.

Eshleman: Do you remember any of the big stories during the Lawrence administration? Do any stick out?

Brutto: Well, I only had him for two years. I guess the biggest story then was the consolidations of the school districts. There were 2,500 school districts in Pennsylvania and that was reduced to 501. And that was a big fight then.

Eshleman: Was it a political fight?

Brutto: Well, it was more of a rural fight, I guess. Well, fight might be the wrong word, but everybody was fighting for their own turf because if you're knocking out 2,000 school districts, you're knocking out a lot of locals that got to travel. That's when busing came in. Busing was a big thing, too. I lived in Harrisburg then, so it didn't affect me, and later I moved to Camp Hill where the kids walked to school, so that didn't affect me either. That was pretty rough too, I remember that. But Lawrence would have a picnic for the reporters out at the Gap.

Eshleman: And that's when the governor's mansion was out there?

Brutto: That's when the governor's mansion was out in the Gap. And that's Indiantown Gap.

Eshleman: Right.

Brutto: That's how I found out how important my job was. I got an idea of it

when I left York, but when I was invited to those parties at the Gap, and then I went over to the Health Department, the invitations stopped.

Eshleman: So you realized it's better to be in the press.

Brutto: Yeah, you got a free meal.

Eshleman: Now who succeeded Lawrence?

Brutto: Scranton.

Eshleman: Scranton. Did you cover that campaign?

Brutto: Yeah, we covered the campaign and when he ran for the nomination for president, we went out to San Francisco.

Eshleman: Oh, is that right? Well tell me, when he ran for governor he was a congressman at the time, right?

Brutto: Yeah.

Eshleman: You traveled around the state with him when he was running for governor?

Brutto: Yeah, we traveled with him, but not on a daily basis. We had two reporters—we had the *Evening News* and the *Patriot*—so one or the other was with him wherever he was going. But of course if it cost money, we didn't go.

Eshleman: Did you drive around mainly?

Brutto: We drove around. We flew, come to think of it. But not too much because when he got elected to Congress, which I guess was '62, immediately he became a candidate for governor, so basically that's what he ran for. I remember the picture in *Life* magazine of him sitting in his office during the campaign because the governor couldn't leave the state or something, but of course they could. But it was a good picture.

Eshleman: How was his relationship with the press?

Brutto: He was a nice guy. You couldn't get angry with him. He had his press conferences. In the reception room, he put a desk there and that's as far as you could go. There was no going into his office.

Eshleman: OK.

Brutto: But he was accessible. His people were accessible.

Eshleman: You couldn't get beyond the reception room?

Brutto: You couldn't get beyond the reception room, except with an appointment.

Eshleman: In those days, could you get an appointment with the governor, call up his press secretary and say, "Could I see the governor for 10 minutes?"

Brutto: I guess you could, particularly if you were with the *Inquirer.*

Eshleman: What was the state politics like in those days? I mean, Republicans were still in control, but when did the Democrats start to get more power?

Brutto: I guess when they started getting power in Philly. Yeah, because Bill Green, the congressman from Philadelphia, was a major player. And, of course, Lawrence was out of politics, then. That was my first brush with television with Bill Green when I realized what it was. We had reapportionment. I guess it was a Congressional reapportionment in '62, I guess it was. And Bill Green was meeting with George Bloom, who was the state chairman for Republicans and they were meeting at the Democratic headquarters in downtown Harrisburg. We reporters were up in the hallway sitting down, naturally, waiting for them to come out of the office and they walk out and say, "no comment," nothing. They wouldn't say anything. They started walking down the stairs and just as they get coming down the stairs, the television lights go on. The TV stations from Philly were there, the local ones. The lights go on and Bill Green lights up. "OK, what do you want to know?"

Eshleman: So they liked that idea of TV?

Brutto: Oh, they liked the idea of TV. They've liked it ever since. Because there was no TV on the Hill. Local stations didn't cover it. I mean, it's not that they didn't cover anything, but they didn't sit there in a press conference.

Eshleman: Yeah. Well tell me about some of the other governors that you covered and some of the stories.

Brutto: Well, Scranton was followed by Shafer who got tied up with the Scranton highway problem and then he put in a constitutional convention.

Eshleman: I remember that.

Brutto: And that took up a good bit of his time. And a lot of people felt that he should have paid business to something else other than the constitutional

convention because that was restricted.

Eshleman: Was it magistrates?

Brutto: Judiciary. Yeah, the two-term governors came in then, so Shafer was the last guy that couldn't succeed himself. He probably had some political ambitions after Scranton had his. But he might have learned something from Scranton's campaign—it wasn't too successful. And that was the big thing. Oh, the unions were big—that was the state employee union. There was the state police union in '77, I believe. But the other state employees didn't have any public employees. But then in 1970, they come in with the big fight for unionization for all public employees. And Jerry McEntee, who's national head of the AFSCME, was in here campaigning and I covered a lot of his stuff. That's caused I like Jerry McEntee. He came in 1970 with the unions. When Shapp beat Broderick in 1970, Republicans put out the word to all the highway workers: "Join the union." And they joined the union. You had good job protection because there was really no job protection when the governors changed, a lot of the people changed.

Eshleman: Even down into the highway sheds?

Brutto: Oh yeah, especially in the highway sheds. This one guy said at a hearing, "How do you give a civil service test to a maintenance worker? Check how he does work with a shovel?" Shapp was a good guy, he was a great guy. He was always late. He would be late for a 9 o'clock appointment if it was the first appointment of the day. He reminded me of somebody's Dutch uncle. He was a heck of a nice guy. But when he came in they were going to do some housecleaning. They fired some highway workers in York County and ASFCME—that was just what they were looking for. And they come into commonwealth court and they contested the firing because these people were union people and you couldn't fire them without cause at that time, because they still didn't have the big contract, but they had the regional contracts. And Shapp got beat. And once the unions came in, that was it.

Eshleman: Sure. I want to go back a bit. You mentioned Broderick. Wasn't Broderick

sort of an accidental candidate? Wasn't there a plane crash or something?

Brutto: Oh yeah. Well Walter Alessandroni was Scranton's attorney general. He was an attorney from Philadelphia, really big guy in the American Legion at the time, as I remember. Real natty dresser. It was really great. And he was killed on Mother's Day in the election year, 1966.

Eshleman: He was supposed to be the lieutenant governor, right?

Brutto: He was supposed to be the lieutenant governor, and he was on a small plane going to a meeting in western Pennsylvania and the plane crashed in a storm. And he was out, and so Broderick was there, and he got it.

Eshleman: And Broderick was a Philadelphia lawyer?

Brutto: He was a Philadelphia lawyer, too, yeah. And Shapp beat him. Oh, I'm sorry, no it was Shafer. It was Shafer who then picked Broderick as the lieutenant governor and he was supposed to be the governor because Shafer was the last one-term governor and then Alessandroni was killed, so I got my dates kind of mixed up. And then Shapp came and Shapp was unsuccessful in trying to run for the governor in 1966.

Eshleman: Right.

Brutto: And then he ran again against Broderick in 1970 and won. So then he got reelected. He was the first reelected governor.

Eshleman: Now the Shapp administration is always remembered as being corrupt.

Brutto: Well, it was corrupt but nobody ever --well, I guess some people went to jail. They had the hearings on what we called "liquorgate" with Shapp and the corruption. And I guess there were a lot of unsavory characters.

Eshleman: What was that about? Liquorgate?

Brutto: Liquorgate—it was a corruption thing. This goes from memory. They had the hearings. Shapp appeared at the hearings, the House committee's, and the funny thing is it was held in '74 and they had him up before the committee. They tried to rake him over the coals. The Republicans weren't too easy with him. But the funny part is he won like by 300,000 votes or something in the reelection. It was bigger than the first time.

Eshleman: Sure.

Eshleman: But he personally was a good guy, you think?

Brutto: Yeah. He had a guy from Pittsburgh who was supposed to be a shady character but he never went to jail or anything. There were some figures who went to jail, but they didn't touch Shapp at all. Of course, we were local. I covered on a daily basis the goings on. But the *Inquirer*, the *Bulletin*, the *Press* and those people, they had selected coverage depending a lot of times on who was being interrogated and who was appearing as witnesses. It was pretty heavy, but Shapp was in control. He didn't dodge any questions as I remember it and he won easily. Nobody laid a finger on him.

Eshleman: Watergate's going on at the same time and the Washington Post is reporting.

Brutto: Yeah. Watergate was in '76.

Eshleman: Well, '73 I guess.

Brutto: Was it '73?

Eshleman: Yeah, because Nixon resigned in '74.

Brutto: Oh, OK. Yeah, that took over. But they didn't get any local attention. I mean, local media—reporters—didn't write Watergate stuff.

Eshleman: But were the reporters here as aggressive as the *Washington Post* was covering Watergate? In other words, were reporters here trying to break news about corruption in the Shapp administration?

Brutto: Oh, sure. The reporter up in Sunbury actually he was a—I wish I could remember the story—he really wrote an story, but he wrote it at the right time and it captured the public's attention. That's really what set off the investigation. It had to do with the county chairman—Henry Larkin was the county chairman up there. And he was big in Republican politics and he was one of the guys who told the state workers to join the union.

Eshleman: Well, now at this same time, wasn't the Cianfrani stuff and the Herb Fineman stuff going on? [Note: Henry Cianfrani was the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Herbert Fineman was speaker of the House. Both went to jail on corruptions charges, stemming from separate incidents.]

Brutto: Cianfrani came after that. Fineman came after that.

Eshleman: How about—did you get involved in covering those stories?

Brutto: Yeah, we wrote them, we covered Cianfrani.

Eshleman: What was that story about?

Brutto: Ghost pay rollers.

Eshleman: Yeah.

Brutto: I remember, with Shapp, there was a guy, I was trying to think of his name, I know there's another guy. Gino Cerilli was from Westmoreland County. He had a reputation—I'm talking about reputation, not character. And he was nominated for the Turnpike Commission, I believe. And they went after him with the FBI, whatever they could get on him. And there was nothing. And Sam Begler.

Eshleman: Sam Begler?

Brutto: Sam Begler was from Allegheny County and they went after him, too, and he was nominated for some role. But nothing ever happened. Fineman had to do with scholarships.

Eshleman: Awarding scholarships to friends?

Brutto: Yeah.

Eshleman: Well Cianfrani, too. His wife worked—what hat was that story about? She was covering him?

Brutto: Well, she was on the Hill. Did she work for the *Inquirer*?

Eshleman: Yeah.

Brutto: OK, and he was dating her at that time and then they eventually got married and, of course, the *Inquirer* pulled her off as soon as they found out about it. She wasn't one of them, but he had ghost pay rollers. One thing about Cianfrani, I think *Time* [magazine], yeah, it must have been *Time*, had a story on it.

Eshleman: Is that right?

Brutto: And they used Henry Cianfrani's picture, but it was his father who was a former legislator. They used his picture instead of the other Henry Cianfrani.

Eshleman: Oh my. Well, how about now the relationship between reporters and legislators in those days. Did you go out at night with them and drink

and try to develop sources that way?

Brutto: Yeah, when I first went on the Hill, Harrisburg was sort of a lively town. Legislators lived here. Those that lived here had rooms and apartments and all that, and the Democratic club and the Republican club had two hotels. Well, half the Monday session they would generally repair to the local watering places and have dinner and have a couple of drinks. And you would go and you would meet with them and see them and talk to them. That was the only way you could really get news because—as I said in the beginning—by Wednesday, they were all out of town. But most of the stuff, there were some more important players than the individual legislators. There were people who set the agenda. And our local state senator, Harv Taylor, really controlled the whole thing. And he got defeated for reelection, I guess, in '66 or somewhere around there. The year that I covered him, he never made a speech. He never talked. The president pro-tem in the Senate never said anything. He didn't have to. But you want to talk about drinking? We had Bob Fleming's Bar and Grill after the sessions—he was president pro tem of the Senate. He was from Pittsburgh. We would repair to his office, where he would serve midnight snacks or after-session snacks and he would just lay forward the agenda for the week. I mean nobody got an exclusive story [but] everybody went there. Not everybody of course, but those of us that would go in there would find out what was going to happen during the week.

Eshleman: Do you think the relationship between reporters and legislators in those days was different toward the end of your career?

Brutto: Oh yeah.

Eshleman: How was it different?

Brutto: Well, it was more standoffish at the end. Sandy Starobin [A radio news reporter who covered the capitol] used to say, "Keep them at arm's length amiability." But it got to be more than that. In the beginning, you were friendlier. You had meetings. You would walk into their offices, you didn't need meetings with them. The legislative staffs were much smaller,

so if they wanted anything, there was nobody else to talk to.

Eshleman: Nowadays, everybody has a press secretary.

Brutto: Yeah, you have your press officers. Rusty Cowen started the press office and it got big. He didn't have anywhere nearly as many personnel—they had secretarial pools. That's what the rank-and-file legislators had. Maybe the senators had some offices, but the House members had secretarial pools. That's what they called them. They'd get somebody to go up and take your dictation. After that, they started getting all kinds of offices back home, offices, everything. It's entirely different.

Eshleman: Do you think it was harder to do your job at the end of your career in terms of your relationship with legislators, as opposed to the beginning of your career, in the sense of accessibility.

Brutto: Well, maybe at the beginning of my career I was too ignorant and too unknown to have any, but at the end I was, in modesty, pretty well-known. I was there for 32 years. Heck, I would go to state committee meetings and everybody knew you. But on some occasions, I had with legislators—who we won't name, obviously—who had no idea how the government operated and they got elected, especially those from the rural areas. I don't mean the immediate area, here, but circulation areas up north . They would want some info on how things are going along. I had one legislator who wanted to do something with the pensions. And he was under the impression that the Pension Board set the pension rates and I had to inform him, "No, you guys set the pension rates." And he backed off it.

Eshleman: So you had to do some educating yourself.

Brutto: I guess the first time I really came in to having some input was when George Bloom was still in office so it must have been the '64 election. There was a guy from Congress named Jimmy Van Zandt. There were two legislators—[U.S. Rep.] Jimmy Van Zandt and [State Sen.] Johnny Van Sant was from Allentown. Van Zandt was from somewhere in western Pennsylvania and we had a meeting up in Oil City. It was the winter time, it was, January or February. I went up with George Bloom,

who was the Republican chairman, and I met Dick Frame, who became a candidate for the Senate and was elected senator. But to Dick Frame, I was that guy from Harrisburg who knew everything. And he finally came down and he was the majority leader in Harrisburg. So I was in with him because I knew him from before he was elected to office. So you built up that kind of thing.

Eshleman: Were the papers competitive within the newsroom?

Brutto: The *Patriot*?

Eshleman: Were all the papers really competitive?

Brutto: There were two. There were the evening papers and the morning papers. If you were, say John Scotzin, on the *Evening News*. If he got something, he only competed with me until he went to press. Then he wasn't my competition, because now it was allowed. And I knew what he wrote for that day, but he was competitive on the next day. The evening stories for the next day.

Eshleman: How about among the other papers: Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Allentown?

Brutto: The afternoon paper guys—Lindgren from the *Pittsburgh Press*. Duke Kaminski were close friends, but they were evening papers. Now, the *Bulletin* and *Inquirer* were not that close because they were in the same town. The *Evening News* wasn't too chummy with the morning papers, but they were chummy with the evening papers because they were not competing in circulation. I mean one was in Philly, the other in Harrisburg and the other in Pittsburgh, so there was no competition. I doubt they even knew who we were in Pittsburgh. And so you weren't really competitive, in that sense—only for matters of pride that they would get the story first. The circulation of the *Pittsburgh Press* in Harrisburg was pretty low.

Eshleman: Yeah. No Internet in those days.

Brutto: No Internet. When one of the guys, well it was John Scotzin, wrote a story about Johnny Van Sant, it was one of those not-too-nice stories. I don't remember what the story was. But Scotzin saw Van Sant the next day and

he said, "What do you think of my story?" "It was a good story," he said. Scotzin asked, "Well, what about your readers?" Van Sant said, "Nobody in Allentown reads the *Evening News*." They didn't worry about it that much. It's different today.

Eshleman: Well, you said you actually left the *Patriot* to go to the Health Department. What year was that?

Brutto: That was '64, I think, or '65 because I came back to the Shafer administration.

Eshleman: Now what did you miss about the newspaper business?

Brutto: There was no bureaucracy. I worked on the Hill. I didn't work downtown. When I left *Patriot News*, I was talking to a guy that's retired like me. They had a [regular] get-together, some people, every Tuesday morning or something. And he was naming the guys that were gonna be there. Well, I didn't know these people. I would work out of the Hill, I'd report there and then go home. I didn't go down to the paper. I just had to go occasionally, but people worked with the paper in the newsroom that I never knew.

Eshleman: Now, actually that brings up something now. Now, if you work on the Hill, you send the story via e-mail back to the paper. How did your story get to the office then?

Brutto: I walked it down.

Eshleman: You walked it down?

Brutto: At 6 o'clock.

Eshleman: So you actually carried the papers down and handed it in?

Brutto: I actually carried all my copy down at 6 o'clock.

Eshleman: Handed it to the editor?

Brutto: Handed it to the editor—and then went home.

Eshleman: Now, if they would edit the story, did they call you at home if they had questions?

Brutto: They'd look at the major stories, but if there was anything, they would call me at home. We had computers before I got out. In the beginning, it was different. We went electronic, I guess, with the selectric typewriters,

if you remember those?

Eshleman: Oh sure.

Brutto: And we went to conventions later in the '70s with the portables. They were huge—you ought to see the size of them. They were like suitcases. And I was looking for the electronic equivalent of a portable typewriter. They had this thing, the muffins, as we called them, and they'd send stuff over the telephone and they were huge.

Eshleman: And they didn't work that well, either.

Brutto: Oh, they didn't work that well. I was in New York at a convention and I was in a hotel room and I was writing my story and there was a short [circuit] and I couldn't send it. I guess we were staying at the Roosevelt Hotel or some place like that. And I had to actually go down to the convention center to get a place where I could send my story and that was kind of rough.

Eshleman: Now how many conventions did you cover?

Brutto: I covered Scranton, all of them from '64, I guess, yeah, up until Tom Ridge. Except for Johnson—the Johnson reelection was held in Atlantic City. We had to be fair on this thing, see? And one of the editors vacationed in New Jersey and he convinced the other editor that he could cover the convention there. So they said [to me], "You better stay home."

Eshleman: So, you didn't get to go to Atlantic City?

Brutto: No. Well, in '72, I was down in Miami and this was after [Hurricane] Agnes. You know, you covered the convention, but I was told then not to wait for the Vice President, but Shapp was governor, and he decided to move the mansion. He didn't go back to the mansion. He went over here across the river because of the flood, and the guy who broke the story was Saul Kohler of the *Inquirer*—that Shapp was going to move out of the mansion, not gonna go back to the mansion, and was going to set up across the river. And I got back and I got all kinds of hell for it. They thought I missed the story. Well, they told me to come back after the presidential nomination. I came back and then they picked the vice president—I was on my way home. It was a surprise for me when I got

home.

Eshleman: Did you cover Chicago, the Democratic convention?

Brutto: Yeah.

Eshleman: What was that like?

Brutto: I was trying to remember his name, now. Claude Lewis.

Eshleman: Claude Lewis?

Brutto: Did you know Claude?

Eshleman: From the *Bulletin*?

Brutto: Yeah, I was there with him. We sort of went around together. That was rough, but the good part of it was that the Pennsylvania delegation stayed at one hotel there, but I stayed at another hotel. I stayed at the Bismarck in Chicago, which was with the Wisconsin delegation, or Iowa, or something like that, and I had my own room there and that was across the street or something. So all the trouble that went on with [the Pennsylvania delegation] at night was away from me. So I could get my sleep and Claude went to Grant Park. Do you remember that? That was where they had a confrontation with the police. What was his name, Ed Daley? William Daley? Claude was clubbed.

Eshleman: Richard Daley.

Brutto: [Chicago Mayor] Richard Daley. He was clubbed at this confrontation and I was safe in my room.

Eshleman: Oh, Claude Lewis was clubbed?

Brutto: Claude Lewis was clubbed, yeah. He was not injured [seriously]. Of course he wasn't participating in the demonstration

Eshleman: If you look back over your career, was that one of the most exciting stories you ever covered—reporting from that convention?

Brutto: Well, truth be told—and you got to be truthful here—I really covered the delegation.

Eshleman: Not the riots, themselves?

Brutto: Not the riots. Because, whatever the delegation, I covered the delegation. We had a hot spot when some of the people were jailed, not Pennsylvanians. And Shapp tried to get the delegation to ante up some

cash to bail them out, but these guys weren't about to pay that kind of money. They got real hot over that.

Eshleman: I have some more tapes in there.

Brutto: Are you looking for a Philadelphia angle?

Eshleman: Not necessarily.

Brutto: Well, I'll give you one. Ed Rendell and I, for whatever reason, had a good relationship. He was always a good source for information. He was then, I guess, DA or something. When we went to the Pennsylvania Society dinner, he was always one of the guys I always looked up. We were in San Francisco in, whenever it was, the second convention—'82, something like that. And the delegation, which we covered, who was mayor of Philadelphia?

Eshleman: Wilson Goode?

Brutto: Wilson Goode, yeah. He was the chairman of the delegation. And they tried to exclude the press from their meetings. And I got up and I had a disagreement with Wilson Good. I said, "No, I came here to cover the delegation. You want to exclude me from the delegation, depending on the assignment, and then complain about the press not covering things properly." And we went to the point where we had a vote on it. And the delegation voted Wilson Goode down. That was a good feeling. I knew him when he was with the Liquor Control Board.

Eshleman: Wilson Goode?

Brutto: Wilson Goode, yeah.

Eshleman: Well how about Rendell? You mentioned Rendell.

Brutto: Well, when I say he was a good source, I don't mean he gave me secrets, but he told me what was happening at the Pennsylvania Society dinners, particularly. They were unstructured. You went over there to New York and there was nothing scheduled except the big dinner, but that's not why they sent you over. So when you wanted to know what is going on, you had to visit the various suites where the parties were held trying to meet somebody. But Ed Rendell was always cooperative. When we had a question and somebody would drop a name on somebody who you had

no idea who he was. Sometimes you'd ask Rendell, "Who is this guy?" He would say, "Well, he's the guy from X county, or he's from Philly."

Eshleman: Who was the smartest politician you ever covered?

Brutto: By politician, by smart?

Eshleman: A guy you thought was really shrewd, was very effective in the sense he got what he wanted.

Brutto: Herbert Fineman was very effective. But, probably the most powerful was Harrisburg's Harvey Taylor. He never spoke. I mean I covered him, when the Dauphin County Republicans would meet and he ran the whole show. He didn't speak at the meetings.

Eshleman: What was the source of his power? Why was he so powerful?

Brutto: He was a Republican. He was in politics from like, 1916. He was born in 1875. No, I'm sorry, 1876. He lived to be 105. When I saw him in the '60s, he was not a young man.

Eshleman: But he just had a lot of power?

Brutto: Yeah, he built it up over the years. You had first Dave McClure.

Eshleman: Delaware County right? John McClure.

Brutto: Delaware County.

Eshleman: The war board.

Brutto: Yeah, Ed Malone from the manufacturers' association. You had Harv Taylor. I guess Henry Lark was in there too. They had the Blue Ball crowd that ran the politics. They picked their candidates. That's what the Pennsylvania Society did in the beginning. It didn't toward the end, but did in the beginning.

Eshleman: So, they would go up there and they'd decide who would run for office?

Brutto: Well, they could be away from all the people and they pretty much decided. And they would pick whoever for candidate. Well heck, in Dauphin County, the only Democrats that ran were on the state payroll in the administration. Whoever they picked—they picked everybody—there was no opposition. Bill Lentz ran against Harv Taylor [for Senate] and that was a wild night. Bill Lentz was a real estate guy from up in Millersburg up in northern Dauphine County who wanted to see Harv

Taylor. He wanted to get his blessing for the Legislature and he didn't get it. So he decided to throw in against Harv. Now Harv was about as close to God as you could get, you know. So Lentz goes campaigning, going knocking on some doors and stuff. Getting on the soap box really, literally, and he started running and the results are coming in. I lived on Allison Hill in the 13th Ward and I would vote right before the polls closed to see what's going on. And I was with the House member from up there, John Sullivan. And Harv Taylor lost the district, lost the precinct and John blanched, so I come down here to the *Patriot*. And we had the most archaic kind of tabulating. We always tabulated the city first and the rural second. And you could see Harv Taylor was winning in the city, but he was getting hammered in the rural districts. But I had to write my first story, like, I had a midnight deadline or something like that, with Harv Taylor winning the city and losing in the county. Now how do you write a story saying "this guy is losing?" He's not because the figures don't' show it. And, well he lost. Taylor lost the election.

Eshleman: That brings up a good question: the idea of reporting about election results. Back in those days, of course, again, we didn't have computers. So how did you count votes?

Brutto: Well, they borrowed this big machine from some corporation and they had a guy in there who tabulated [the results] precinct by precinct.

Eshleman: People would phone this guy and tell him?

Brutto: Well, you would have runners, or you would have people taking messages. We had the guys at the courthouse where they would call in. And then they would tabulate all this stuff and that's how it worked. When I was at the *Evening Herald*, we did it differently. We went, physically, to the precincts. They would divide all the precincts up in whatever our circulation area was, and they would post them on the door. You would have to wait there until they counted the ballots and then just come back to the office. Of course, we were an evening paper so it wasn't too bad. And you would come back and they would tabulate the votes, so you had all the votes that were important by the time you went

to press. But that was it.

Eshleman: When you used to cover governor's races, did you ever have trouble calling a race? Was it ever so close that you couldn't call it before your deadline?

Brutto: No, you pretty much had an idea, in some of them. I never went into calling races because if you'd call it, they'd probably want a Sunday story on it, and you don't want to write a Sunday story on something that's gonna be in the paper on Tuesday because no one is going to forget it if you're wrong. And, no I didn't try to call them. Well, those who knew politics knew how the votes were counted and that way you learn very fast. Even in the state, when they are reporting the elections, you're getting Philadelphia first. And then you're getting Pittsburgh, and then you're getting the cities, but you're not getting the rural areas.

Eshleman: The Republican "T."

Brutto: When you say, "He lost an early lead," he never had a lead because it depends where you count the votes that makes it happen. I remember before I left the paper we had television then—it was in the room—and the staff was watching the television reports. And the wire, meanwhile, the wire is running and I'm taking my story off the wire. And television is running behind the wire because they were trying to give everything. And the wire, you could see that the candidate was wining or losing. And it might be just the opposite on the television and these people are saying, "Oh no he is leading." And I'd say, "No, no, he's not leading."

Eshleman: Talk a little bit about the newspaper itself. How did the *Patriot* change over your career there, just in terms of the kinds of stories it wrote?

Brutto: It became more aggressive. In the beginning, it wasn't all that aggressive. Because the area was all Republican and the voting was all Republican. There was a population of 90,000 in Harrisburg [and] it was like two-thirds or three-fifths, or something like that, Republican. And there are stories that the Republicans even picked the minority county commissioner, because you know, you split your vote. Just vote for this guy, so many people vote for this guy. So he would win the vote.

Eshleman: Well, how did the fact that it was such a Republican area, how did that affect the paper's coverage?

Brutto: Well, it didn't affect my coverage because I wasn't really covering local politics. After I got here—I only got here in '57 when it was out of the local scene in '61. I would cover the county committees and the city committees and that stuff, but that was a lot different than the political figures. I really didn't know what was happening in city hall or in the courthouse. I mean, they knew who I was and when I went to meeting I had pretty good access to them, but that's because they knew who I was, it wasn't because of who they were.

Eshleman: Did editors change over the course of your career? Were they more aggressive in terms of how they handled copy from the beginning of your career until the end? Or does that just go with the experience. You became more experienced.

Brutto: I guess the times changed. Reporting became somewhat different.

Eshleman: How so?

Brutto: Well, what you have to understand is that we were a one-newspaper town. Whenever I gave speeches, I gave this when I talked about one newspaper towns. But our competition—the reporters' competition—was not the *Evening News* or the *Patriot*. It was the guy who was trying to get a job on the *Inquirer* or the *Washington Post* or the *Toledo Blade* or wherever, because we lost a lot of people to major newspapers. But it wasn't because they were competing with the other paper in town. They were competing with all the other people from around the country that were trying to get the paper. When I was on the Hill, after Scotzon retired, I was there for about 10 years before I retired. And I had, maybe 12, 13 different reporters. I had Phil Galowitz, was with me. He's with the AP now. I had Eric Conrad with me. He went to Fort Lauderdale I believe. He's managing editor of the Portland paper in Maine.

Eshleman: Is that right?

Brutto: Yeah, I went to see him last year when I was up on vacation. We had guys who competed for state jobs, well, I guess state jobs were not

competition. But they weren't competing against somebody in town. They were competing against other people that wanted those jobs. We had in the beginning guys that went with the *Bulletin* or *Daily News*. And Stan Rapp went to the *Inquirer*. And an editorial writer went to the *Inquirer*, I forget what his name is, he went in the '60s. But it wasn't because he was competing against anybody here, it was because he was competing against other papers because the first thing they ask is, "Show me some of the stories you've done." So you've got to convince the guy who is hiring you that you are better than the guy from Toledo that wants that job. So that's where your competition was.

Eshleman: It was more of a personal competition then?

Brutto: It was a personal competition. It was like a Pulitzer Prize or the Keystone Prize or something. You are competing against people from all over the state or all over the country. We got people on *Newsday*, I think the *New York Post* got one, but there was Jim Welch, who was, I thought, was a very good reporter. He went to the *Washington Times*. But he wasn't competing against anyone here when he was writing for the *Evening News*. He wasn't competing with the *Patriot*. He was competing with whoever wanted a job on the *Washington Times*. That's where his competition was. So, admittedly, there are people who are up to snuff. There have to be.

Eshleman: Did you ever want to become an editor?

Brutto: No.

Eshleman: Why is that?

Brutto: I didn't like being in the office. And that was it. I didn't like being under anybody's thumb.

Eshleman: Sure. How about your impression of the public's feeling about reporters from the beginning of your career toward the end of your career? Are people less trusting of reporters or less respectful?

Brutto: Well, probably in the beginning they were more trusting, I guess. Well, I really never dealt with the people. I guess when I was in York I did. And, for my first couple of years here, but most of the time I dealt with people

in government. That was about it.

Eshleman: Did those people change at all over the years?

Brutto: Well, we didn't change as much as the public officials changed because their attitudes changed when they got here. I mean, we became the enemy. I remember when Fineman created for new legislators, some kind of classes for them. All the new legislators would come in to these for orientation. We called it the school for scandal. It didn't sit too well. But they would come in and they would talk like they were here forever. I mean, "You guys and us guys." Most of them, realistically, had never seriously questioned by the media before. If you are from, oh, Bradford County or Centre County or Tioga County, who questions you? Then when they get here, you have a different type of reporter questioning. You are on a bigger arena. You're not dealing with the local press who probably know you but to us, you are just another guy. You had to vote on things which were critical and that was it. I don't know how, I guess there are stories to tell. And a lot of the legislators came here and they didn't really know why they were elected, didn't have any idea. The one legislator I use as an example whenever I speak, who came here with a goal in mind was John Laudaddio from Westmoreland County. You probably don't know him.

Eshleman: No, I don't remember him.

Brutto: He's long gone. He was president of the Pennsylvania Sportsmen Association, and he was a lobbyist for them, I mean the president of it, and he didn't get the kind of respect he expected. He had to make appointments to see people, so he ran for the House and he got elected. Now he came in and they had to listen to him. And he stuck with that outdoor stuff. He was in the caucus and a bill came up on something [about] hunting or fishing, he had his say and they had to listen to him because he voted with them on other bills. Now there are others who have similar interests, but he knew why he came here, and he stuck with it.

Eshleman: Tell me about covering Bob Casey. You covered his career from, I guess

beginning to end, right?

Brutto: Yeah, I guess so. He was supposed to be the new Bill Scranton when he got elected to the legislature.

Eshleman: What was it like covering Casey? Casey then became governor, of course, and had the heart/liver transplant. So you covered his entire career. Did you have a good relationship with him?

Brutto: Yeah. Casey would have his press conferences, he would have a lot of them in his inner office, shirt sleeves kind of thing. By the way, no governor, as far as I knew, ever used the media center. Is that true with you, too?

Eshleman: As far as I could tell, yeah.

Brutto: They never used it. Now, he would be in his shirt sleeve and we would sit there talking with him. I mean, there was a crowd there, but he was always in the governor's office, in the reception room. But he was a down to earth guy. He was real nice. I liked him.

Eshleman: How about Dick Thornburgh?

Brutto: Thornburgh was extremely kind. I liked that. He had Three Mile Island. That was probably the number one story, I guess. The problem with Three Mile Island is that we had the major metropolitan papers and we had the wire stories covering it. They were reaching for the "A Wire." They wanted to get national attention. We were dealing with the people we knew. When Three Mile Island was resolved—all the other reporters left—but we had to stay here. I remember when we had these reporters—some out-of-state reporters spinning on local guys, talking about, writing their stories about conservative middle central Pennsylvania community—all this kind of stuff. And I said to the one reporter, this fellow from the Chicago paper. I said, "Do you know that the mayor of Middletown is black?" You don't have one in Chicago, do you?" They didn't at that time. And I said, "He's a Republican too."

Eshleman: Well now, when Three Mile Island happened, did your family evacuate?

Brutto: No.

Eshleman: You stayed here?

Brutto: I was stubborn, I guess. I didn't think it was as bad. I was given some information. It was kind of lonely around here. We lived like 12 miles from it.

Eshleman: Did you go to the plant that day?

Brutto: No, I didn't go to the plant. That was covered—that stuff was covered locally by local reporters. I covered mostly.

Eshleman: The government stuff.

Brutto: The government stuff, yeah.

Eshleman: Now, Thornburgh was just in office, right?

Brutto: Yeah.

Eshleman: Thornburgh and a young Bill Scranton.

Brutto: That set him off on his national recognition. And he handled it very well. Thornburgh did a good job and he was a good governor. I think he had something with ASFCME, a big union raise or something, the best contract, and then they endorsed his opponent in the next race which, by the way, they later rescinded. ASCFME later went to voting for the guy who did the most for them and I think they went for Tom Ridge.

Eshleman: What did you think of Ridge?

Brutto: I retired in '93.

Eshleman: OK, so you missed Ridge. If you look back on your career, what do you think was the most important story you ever covered for readers? The most important thing you wrote?

Brutto: For local readers?

Eshleman: Yeah.

Brutto: I think, because I covered state government, probably the governmental stories were the best because of the reader interest in them. Reapportionment was real big and they'd scream about it. But who the heck cared about reapportionment here? You were going to be a Republican wherever you went. Steve Reed was the first Democratic mayor here, oh, no he wasn't. But Jack Lynch was mayor of Harrisburg. He worked on the Hill for awhile, and he worked for Casey.

Eshleman: Is that Frank's dad?

Brutto: Frank's dad, yeah.

Eshleman: Oh, I didn't realize he was a mayor.

Brutto: Yeah. I think he was.

Eshleman: How about that. Because he'd been a reporter too, hadn't he?

Brutto: He was a reporter for the AP, yeah. Frank was a reporter for the *Patriot News*.

Eshleman: Right.

Brutto: But, as I said, if you redraw the lines here, what difference does it make?

Eshleman: How about the most interesting character you ever covered? Is there somebody that really sticks in your mind? Somebody who was fun to cover?

Brutto: Well, I guess Erg Murray. Erg Murray was a legislator, a Democrat from Cameron County.

Eshleman: What about Murray?

Brutto: Erg Murray was a World War II vet who had a Section Eight discharge. I think he got a Section Eight.

Eshleman: Now what is that, Section Eight?

Brutto: Section Eight is a psychological, psychiatric, discharge, which of course, they tested him. And he used to say, "I am the only one who is certifiably sane in the legislature." But he was the person who—you had to read bills. Three readings of bills before it could come up to a vote. That was in the Constitution. And he demanded that they read the bills—read the bills, not the title—three times on each reading. That's when they changed it to considering the bill three times. That was entirely different, because you try to read a budget bill three times, you're gonna have problems.

Eshleman: Sure, colorful that way.

Brutto: Yeah, he was. Well, Buddy Cianfrani was a no-nonsense guy. He was a nice guy. Nice guy meaning nice to us, because he was honest. You could believe what he said. There was a legislator from Franklin County named Elmer Hawbaker who was about as right-winged as a dinosaur. But there was one thing about him, if he said something, you could believe him. I

was 180 degrees from him politically, socially, whatever it was. But you believed what he said. If he didn't have anything to say, he just wouldn't say it. But he was nice that way. And I dealt with a lot of people who were not from this area here. I liked Rick Cessar from Allegheny County. Hell, I sat in with Rick and some other Republican legislators in Matt Ryan's office during a budget fight and it was one of those overnight things and all the second-rate back bench guys were in the office. And Matt was the—I guess he was the speaker or majority leader—and he walked into the office, and I'm sitting there with all these legislators. And he said, "What's he doing here?" And Rick says "It's OK. He won't write anything that we tell him until after his edition." Because they were talking about everything. Of course, this is in the morning so it's past my edition anyhow because I'm not going to come on until the next day. And he said, "Well, his word is good enough for me." And that was it. And I sat there. Now, they weren't giving me any secrets, we were just talking. But they were very good and they were good sources.

Eshleman: Matt was probably a pretty good source, wasn't he?

Brutto: Matt was good, yeah. He was from Delaware [County]. I used to string for the *Delaware Times*. Matt was a good guy. I liked him. And Matt came up here, I guess, right after I did. Yeah, I guess he did. Yeah, he was a good guy—I liked Matt.

Eshleman: Did you ever think about going anyplace else, to a bigger paper, or go to television?

Brutto: Well, I got a late start because I went in the army, I went into college, and I went to a smaller paper.

Eshleman: What year were you born?

Brutto: '23. I'm like 82 years old today. I was 70 when I retired. So when I'm talking about old times, I'm talking about old times. I had some minor offers, I guess I should say, but most of them had that caveat on them, you know, you come here and stay for a while and then if we like you, you can stay. Well, I didn't want to give up my job because this is the only newspaper in town. And they're not likely to take me back a second

time. So I didn't like that idea. And, besides, I was a big fish in a small pond, I guess you'd say. And it wasn't as financially rewarding as working for the major papers, but I guess I was 32 when I came into the *Patriot*. I was pretty old.

Eshleman: So you had a family at that time, I guess?

Brutto: Yeah, I was married, I had a family, I had kids, and I wasn't going to move, uproot them. I liked it here. It was a good job. I had nobody over me, particularly since I worked for the morning paper, nobody came around in the daytime. All the staff came in the afternoon. It was nice.

Eshleman: Can you think of a story or stories that you wrote that you saw really affected some change, either in government or policy? Anything that you covered that seemed to really make a difference? Maybe you broke a story that caused the legislature to do something or government to do something.

Brutto: That would mean I had to pay attention. No, really, I never took myself seriously, just my job. I'm retired for 13 years now.

Eshleman: Is that right? That's hard to believe. Well, of course, I've been out of the newsroom now for six years.

Brutto: Are you're full time at Penn State?

Eshleman: Yeah.

Brutto: Oh, OK, I though you were just moonlighting. I don't know. I can't think of any. I guess you don't know whether stories changed things. I had some [stories]—I wrote about some things that resulted in legislation being introduced, but I don't remember whether they were contentious or whether anybody. One of the things I know I had introduced was, yeah, I think I can name one. [I wrote how] they should pay school board members more money, because they were all part-time getting 100 dollars a session, whatever it was, and it was introduced as legislation [to] give them something to keep them around. [Another story was] black flies—this is funny. You know, I played softball. And I was annoyed by black flies and I did a column one time about the black flies. In this area they were really monstrous.

Eshleman: Off the Susquehanna.

Brutto: Oh, they were awful. You play and you're running after a ball and they'd get into your mouth and eyes and everything. And a legislator from the southeast—I can't remember his name now—he put in a legislation which resulted in the spraying program.

Eshleman: The spraying program—there you go.

Brutto: So I would probably have more friends in Pennsylvania for that, if they knew it. I never got any credit for it.

Eshleman: You wrote a column for how many years?

Brutto: I guess all the time.

Eshleman: The whole time?

Brutto: I guess not in the beginning. Well, the way it started was that George Draut was the assistant to the editor, and he thought that since Scotzin wrote the in-depth column kind of stuff, he thought we should have a light column from the Hill. So I was asked, "Could you write something light?" I said, "Oh, I'll give it a try." And that was about it. So I had that side of it. Until later on, well actually I used to write a column, a serious one. And, I thought, well heck, why don't I write one here and I can do it on company time and just mail it out to them after we published it here.

Eshleman: Who did you string for?

Brutto: Oh, everybody. The *Scranton Times*, the King of Prussia [newspaper]. Who else? I forget now.

Eshleman: Because these papers didn't have a presence?

Brutto: No, they didn't have anybody here. I remember, I was I was doing some stringing for the paper in King of Prussia. Art Mackie was—did you know Art?

Eshleman: No.

Brutto: He was active in the Pennsylvania newspapers and PNPA stuff. And I was stringing, you know, I was working for a much larger newspaper and when they wanted stories on whatever it seems to me to have some significance, you would call it down to him. So he called me one day and he said, "Well, what's going on?" I said nothing that you'd be interested

in. And he said "Look, we write stories about kids that fall off bicycles."

Eshleman: Now, these stringing jobs. How much did you get paid for those, so much per column or per inch?

Brutto: Different. Some would pay per column and some would pay you per inch. I strung for the *Delaware Times* until Hal Ellis came up. Well, he worked for the *Patriot* too.

Eshleman: Oh, I didn't know that.

Brutto: Yeah, he worked for the legislature too, then he took a job at the *Delaware Times* and they used to pay me by column inch. And they were good, because if even if you did stories with somebody else, you would still get credit for it. I forget who I was stringing for. Oh, the Reading paper, the *Reading Times*. I did some radio too.

Eshleman: Oh, did you do radio? Local radio stations?

Brutto: Nothing local, no. Just Pittsburgh, I did Philly, Scranton, but that was not too much. This is a humorous story.

Eshleman: That's fine.

Brutto: I got a call from somebody and it was Christmas. And he said "What have you got, we need something." I said there's nothing happening here. The place is deserted. You have the Christmas tree up and there's people looking at the Christmas tree. And he said, "Can I have 30 seconds on that?"

Eshleman: What about now, even in retirement. Do you still follow what's going on over there? Just what you read in the papers?

Brutto: I follow it. Sometimes I try to figure out what's planned and what's not planned and what should be done better. I did some stuff for AFSCME. I guess it's something I forgot to mention. I did a book on the First 25 Years of ASFCME for AFSCME.

Eshleman: Oh, is that right?

Brutto: That was in '75, I guess. That's when I knew more about government than I knew even when I was working for it. But that was it. And then I stopped.

Eshleman: How about now, what do you think about newspaper coverage now? Do

you think papers are still doing as good a job as they did?

Brutto: The local papers?

Eshleman: Yeah.

Brutto: Well, I'm not there, which is first. I don't think that they're as interested in government—the whole thing—as when I was there. I did a civil service column, a serious column when I was there. The civil service column meant I had to write about state government, so I knew a lot about it and I knew a lot about the retirement board because I covered the retirement board, which interested people here. And I covered the unions from day one. From the first day before they recognized because they weren't recognized until after Act 95 inn 1970. So I had an in with the union guys because I did so much reporting on what they were doing. That was probably the only coverage they got. It's not that I would do a one-sided story—if they would meet with the administrators of the state like—I forget the names of these groups now.

Eshleman: Employees retirement system?

Brutto: Well, not the retirement system. If the administrators that have an association, there'd be another association. Well, they would meet with the union and talk with them and I'd cover them. And I got the viewpoints of both of them. And that was in the '60s and there was nothing around. So I think this had a lot to do with at least their knowledge of it and the contracts that they ran, that the admitted. Hell, I had some of the contracts before they were approved. I remember one day, entirely unrelated to the union, I went over to the Highway Department and they had posted the contract—the proposed contract—on the bulletin board. And I'd sit there reading the contract before it came up for a vote. And I'd have it and that was it. Well this, of course, the one contract that covers, is just about for everybody. AFSCME is statewide. And what one union got, the others got. And so this interested people.

Eshleman: So the papers used to pay more attention to government?

Brutto: The papers did then, yeah. I see some omissions in some of the stories that I think aren't mentioned. Did you read this flap about the state

police deputy? I haven't called anybody on it, but I think it's a mind your own business kind of thing. If this woman is working for the state in a newly created position, my question would be, "Who created the position?" My position would be "What are her duties?" They have to have job descriptions; they paid her attorney fees. That's the first time I ever heard of paying the plaintiff's attorney fees. She's gonna retire at the end of this year with a 25-year pension. That's not the law. The retirement board can't make the decision.

Eshleman: So who did?

Brutto: I don't know who did. She's getting this big pay hike. This is the kind of stuff I see that is not getting mentioned. My political story questions are they gonna hold an election in New Orleans [after Hurricane Katrina]?

Eshleman: That's a good question. That's a really good question.

Brutto: They can't have absentee voters. They don't know where they are.

Eshleman: They don't have any polling places either, I guess.

Brutto: I don't know if they're voting for governor this year or not.

Eshleman: I don't know.

Brutto: But they gotta be voting for somebody.

Eshleman: Yeah, sure.

Brutto: There's your scoop.

Eshleman: Yeah, that's right.

Brutto: Oh, that's right, you don't work anymore.

Eshleman: Let's see, you still read the *Patriot News*, I guess, every day?

Brutto: Yeah, I get it.

Eshleman: Do you read anything else? Do you read any other papers?

Brutto: I read *Newsweek* magazine if my neighbors gives it to me. When I get to the library, which is just up the street here I read the [out of town] papers.

Eshleman: Sure.

Brutto: I have a son that lives in LA. My daughter lives in Atlanta. I go down to Atlanta and get the *Constitution*, but what does that mean?

Eshleman: Did the kids get into journalism?

Brutto: My son's a banker.

Eshleman: Actually one of my sons is a banker.

Brutto: Is he?

Eshleman: PNC.

Brutto: My son works for Union Bank in California. He's been merged out of three jobs, but he still lands on his feet. My daughter is retired—she's 46 years old, I guess. She's retired from Home Depot on a buyout. So she's just—I guess I can say this—she looking for a job with some non-profit groups. She just retired this year.

Eshleman: Didn't follow your footsteps into journalism?

Brutto: No, none of them did. I told them they can always get a job in journalism if they fail where they are. It was true then, it's not true now.

Eshleman: All right. Anything else you need to talk about.

Brutto: Well, the family thing. My oldest daughter is a psychologist in the Washington area. And my youngest daughter works for Columbia TV.

Eshleman: Columbia, Maryland?

Brutto: No, Columbia for SONY Corporation in LA.

Eshleman: Oh, OK.

Brutto: I have two of them in California. They got as far away as they could and still stay in the country. She deals with the behind-the-camera people. She doesn't have to deal with the on-camera people. Human resources, I guess they call it now.

Eshleman: She's sort of in the media a little bit.

Brutto: Yeah.

Eshleman: Well, good, well thank you.

[End of interview]