

Dan Dalton Interview (October 16, 2013)

Rick Sinding: Hello. I'm Rick Sinding. It's Wednesday, October 16th, 2013. Amazingly enough, it's Election Day here in New Jersey. We're electing United States senator in a special election, but that's not the reason we're here today at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University, but for the Center on the American Governor I'm interviewing Dan Dalton, who served in the New Jersey legislature, both the Assembly and Senate and later as Secretary of State in Governor Jim Florio's administration. Dan, welcome to Eagleton.

Dan Dalton: Thanks. It's great to be here, Rick.

Rick Sinding: Let's start with a little bit of background about you, biographical information. Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school? What was your early professional career? What did you want to be when you grew up?

Dan Dalton: I grew up in Glassboro, New Jersey, which is Gloucester County, and attended school there locally and went on to Gloucester Catholic, where I graduated high school. And from there I went to a small school in northeast Pennsylvania, King's College.

Rick Sinding: In Wilkes-Barre.

Dan Dalton: In Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. When I graduated from King's, I had a brief stint in the Peace Corps in West Africa. I came back from that and taught for a year, an elementary school in our area, St. Mary's in Williamstown, and then went on-- went back to Tennessee, to Memphis, and got my master's degree in public administration. So that's my academic background. During those stints either teaching or going to graduate school, I met Jim Florio, and that was probably back in the early '70s, and he was a-- I think he was a first-term Assemblyman at the time and very interested in becoming congressman from our area. And so that's how I met Jim, through his early political campaigns for the U.S. House. He ran in the early '70s against an incumbent by the name of John Hunt, and John was our local congressman. And, interestingly enough, my dad, who was in politics and very involved in politics locally-- he was the mayor of Glassboro and a Gloucester County freeholder, a Democratic chairman from Gloucester County, was adamantly opposed to John Hunt, I mean, just did not feel John Hunt was the kind of congressman that certainly he wanted representing him.

Rick Sinding: Gloucester County and south Jersey in general is a pretty Republican area at that time, right?

Dan Dalton: Very Republican, yes, and the district, the first congressional district at that time had been represented by a Republican for over 100 years, and John Hunt was a dyed-in-the-wool, right-wing Republican.

Rick Sinding: By 1970s standards.

Dan Dalton: By 1970..

Rick Sinding: We should probably differentiate that from today's politics.

Dan Dalton: And so, the times, too, were interesting, because we were all sort of growing up at that time politically, and we had just left the-- we were still in Vietnam. We had the 1968-- the assassinations. So, at that point, when you were coming out of school, undergraduate or graduate, we had a high level of political consciousness, and so being raised in the family, where, I guess, the two main conversations around our dinner table were politics or Philadelphia sports, that's sort of the atmosphere and the environment that I grew up in.

Rick Sinding: Did you always think that you would run for office, or..

Dan Dalton: No.

Rick Sinding: But you were always politically interested?

Dan Dalton: Yes. I was always politically interested, because it was-- again, it was sort of part of growing up in my family. There were eight of us, and when we sat down for dinner, as I said, there were two subjects. There's either politics or there was sports.

Rick Sinding: You said there were eight of you. Your parents and six children or eight children?

Dan Dalton: Eight children.

Rick Sinding: Where do you fit in that?

Dan Dalton: I am number four in the pecking order.

Rick Sinding: Smack in the middle.

Dan Dalton: Right smack in the middle. So, my brother Sean still is involved. He's the prosecutor in Gloucester County.

Rick Sinding: And also served in the legislature, as I recall.

Dan Dalton: Sean served in the Assembly for a couple terms as well, so, again, my dad was mayor. He was freeholder, so that was-- politics was part of our..

Rick Sinding: So you met Jim Florio through your father I mean through the fact that you were sort of-- he was actively involved in politics and Jim was a fledgling Democratic office-holder?

Dan Dalton: Yes. He was a first-term Assemblyman running against a longtime Republican incumbent, and that's how I first got involved with Jim Florio.

Rick Sinding: So was that the '72 election that I think he lost, or was it the '74 election that he won?

Dan Dalton: It was the '72 that he lost. McGovern was at the top of the ticket, and..

Rick Sinding: And that, as they say, was that.

Dan Dalton: That was that. It was interesting, because even though you had McGovern at the top of the ticket in a very strong Republican district, Jim Florio ran amazingly well and really made inroads, particularly into Gloucester County, that had never been made by any Democrat before.

Rick Sinding: Why do you think that was?

Dan Dalton: I think there was a couple reasons for that. Number one, he worked so diligently. I mean, he was-- had a tremendous work ethic. He's one of the politicians when you would say when two or more are gathered together, Jim Florio will appear. I mean, he was just omnipresent in the district. And so, that type of energy I think certainly had an impact. I think those were the days, too, that as a politician, good old-fashioned shoe leather, knocking on doors, the coffeeklatsches, that sort of one-on-one retail politics really made a difference. Now, today, obviously, if you're not on TV, you're not real. You're kind of not considered real. That wasn't the way it was then. Additionally, I think, because of the era, Jim attracted people such as myself, young people who felt that there was-- obviously government could play a significant role, significant positive role in the lives of people.

Rick Sinding: Now, the first district at that point was still fairly rural, as I recall, but beginning to become more..

Dan Dalton: Suburbanite, yes.

Rick Sinding: And would that also have been an-- that the Philadelphia suburbs were spreading and that it was a more diverse population and perhaps becoming more politically independent at that point?

Dan Dalton: I think so. I still think it was a tough district. I mean, it was still predominantly rural, at least the Gloucester County part of it, where Jim's base, which was Camden County, obviously I think it was more a Philadelphia suburb than certainly Gloucester County was.

Rick Sinding: It hadn't spread out to Gloucester? Well, it certainly has since then.

Dan Dalton: Not at that time. It sure has.

Rick Sinding: So, '74 comes along, and that's the Watergate year, and..

Dan Dalton: That's the Watergate year.

Rick Sinding: ...Jim gets elected.

Dan Dalton: Jim gets elected, and..

Rick Sinding: Were you actively involved in the campaign?

Dan Dalton: Yes, was actively-- just had gotten out of grad school. I think I graduated in August and literally moved back up and got firmly just immersed into the campaign.

Rick Sinding: Full time?

Dan Dalton: Full time.

Rick Sinding: As a paid..

Dan Dalton: No, not paid. I mean, that was not a-- I don't know about-- maybe the campaign manager was paid, but there was not too many paid people on his staff at that time.

Rick Sinding: Now, you had gotten your master's in public administration. To what end? What were you anticipating doing?

Dan Dalton: I wanted to work in government. Ironically, I think at that time I was interested and I had made application for a job in the Office of Legislative Services in Trenton. I enjoyed..

Rick Sinding: Which, at that time, was still a fairly small office there.

Dan Dalton: Very small. I remember the clerk at the Assembly at that time was a lady from Glassboro. Her name was Mary Weber, and I would go up and attend the legislative sessions with Mary Weber. And it occurred to me, boy, this is something I enjoy. I mean, it sort of satisfies that political itch that I have. I didn't necessarily want to run for politics but I wanted to be involved in sort of public-policy development.

Rick Sinding: Was Sam Alito running the Office of Legislative Services at that time?

Dan Dalton: He was. I still remember Sam.

Rick Sinding: Justice Alito's father.

Dan Dalton: And a pipe smoker, the gray hair and a gentleman. So, that was my interest at the time, and so got involved in Jim Florio's campaign, and he wins and did not invite me on his staff right away. Basically he got sworn in in January. I think I went down. He invited me down to be a part of his staff maybe in February, March, after he was sworn in as a first-term congressman. I served on his legislative staff. I used to type his legislative correspondence.

Rick Sinding: In Washington or in..

Dan Dalton: In Washington. I was in Washington.

Rick Sinding: So you moved to Washington?

Dan Dalton: Moved to Washington, and I think I was about 22, 23 at the time, so moving was not a problem. I can move anywhere in an hour with all my possessions. So, that wasn't an issue at all, and so lived and worked-- I lived in Maryland and worked on Capitol Hill for about two and a half years, which was at the time probably the greatest education I've ever had.

Rick Sinding: Tell us a little bit more about that. You responded to district concerns and letters. What else did you do? How did you learn the ropes of what was going on at the time?

Dan Dalton: Well, I think just by more or less watching and listening more than anything. I was probably-- I was assigned to the House subcommittee, which was part of the interstate commerce committee, which was the main committee that Jim was on. And so his assignment was the House subcommittee as part of that overall committee, and that's any correspondence dealing in that area. Subject matter that he got letters on and communications from constituents on I would respond to. Now, the ironic part of it at the time, Rick, is I was not a great typer, and you had to type up the..

Rick Sinding: In those days you had to use a typewriter.

Dan Dalton: You had to type. And so, I think what impressed Jim Florio about me wasn't obviously-- was the fact that I was in earlier than everybody and stayed later than anybody.

Rick Sinding: Because it took you that long to type a letter?

Dan Dalton: Because it took me that long to type the letters, but he thought I had this tremendous work ethic. Well, it's basically because I couldn't type that I was in there that long.

Rick Sinding: I think there's a little self-effacement going on here. I suspect that you did work hard and..

Dan Dalton: Well, I worked hard at typing. I'll tell you that.

Rick Sinding: And Jim Florio is known as a particularly hard worker, a guy who's up at the crack of dawn and then works late into the evening. Substantively, did you learn more about health care? Did you feel as though you were developing some expertise in that or any other particular subject area?

Dan Dalton: I thought that you couldn't help but learn. Again, you were surrounded by people who were just tremendous legislators and, again, just listening and being exposed to those level of people. If you didn't learn anything, then you weren't really listening.

Rick Sinding: Peter Rodino was the dean of the New Jersey legislative delegation at that time and was just coming off his stardom in..

Dan Dalton: The Watergate hearing.

Rick Sinding: ...the Watergate hearings. Was there a certain amount of star power to the folks that you were dealing with down there? Did you have dealings with other members of Congress or other folks who later went on to bigger and better and greater things?

Dan Dalton: Well, I often tell the story of being in elevators. I was always in elevators with some people that I was just awestruck by. I remember riding up and

getting on the elevator in the Longworth Building, House building, and I was rushing to get on the elevator. I stuck my hand in and the elevator door flies open, and there's Millicent Fenway with her pipe, of course. And all she did is said, "Get on, young man."

Rick Sinding: So did she know who you were?

Dan Dalton: No, she had no idea who I was, and having a similar experience with Barbara Jordan, the great congresswoman from Texas, very similar, by the way. I think I stopped her from moving along with her day by interrupting her elevator ride. Obviously Pete Rodino and Jim Howard I remember.

Rick Sinding: I guess was Bill Hughes in there?

Dan Dalton: Bill Hughes was. Like Jim, he was a freshman congressman. Congressman Ed Forsythe.

Rick Sinding: Republican.

Dan Dalton: A Republican. He was just a gentleman and was another congressman I remember very vividly and just-- I remember him just for his almost-- his manner, his very just gentlemanly manner when he dealt with you. And so, he was-- I was fortunate enough to rub shoulders-- or not rub shoulders but certainly be exposed to folks like that, and I think also it gave me a better understanding of the process. Literally when you served as a staffer for a member on a subcommittee, you sort of then get a real feel as to how much hard work goes into the development of public policy and how it can be tedious and it could be lengthy but how much work goes into it and how much thought, at least, in those days went behind it. So, I really got a great appreciation for all that, and again, I'm just coming out of school. I'm 23, 24 years old, so talk about an education. It was a tremendous education.

Rick Sinding: What was Jim Florio like to work for?

Dan Dalton: No nonsense, which never changed.

Rick Sinding: That's true.

Dan Dalton: Worked extremely hard, was demanding as far as a boss. He expected you to work hard. He expected you to give him information that was accurate. He expected you to do your job well, and he expected you-- if it meant-- he really didn't care the amount of hours you were working. You did what you had to do to get the job done. And, by the way, that was-- I felt almost honored to do it, so it worked. I just enjoyed the heck out of my experience down there with him.

Rick Sinding: Florio developed the perhaps unkind reputation of being a taskmaster of-- well, okay, I'll be blunt-- spitting up and chewing out legislative staffers. You probably went through more turnover of legislative staff than just about any other New Jersey congressman. Is that because he was so demanding and the staffers weren't willing to put in the amount of time that perhaps you and some others were? Is it an unkind reputation or is it a reputation that Jim Florio deserved?

Dan Dalton: Well, he never suffered fools very well, and if you weren't-- he was serious about his job, and he expected people that worked for him to be equally as serious. And so I think people who didn't meet that expectation that he had were not people that he..

Rick Sinding: Stayed around very long.

Dan Dalton: That he didn't tolerate well. And that's the one thing I remember, and again, from my perspective, I was glad as heck to be there, so I thought it was great. I had a great opportunity and I wasn't going to make the most of it. And so that was-- I don't think-- I didn't have an expectation of thinking that I was going to get in there and talk to Jim Florio about world policy issues or anything. I was there basically to learn. I was there to be part of a team and also to get done the little things. I don't think they're little, I mean, but to get done some of the tasks that perhaps other people don't want to do, but I was glad to do them.

Rick Sinding: How long did you do it, and when did you leave and why?

Dan Dalton: I left in '78. I had worked in his congressional office in D.C. for a little over two years, and as you point out, there's a lot of turnover, and all of a sudden I almost-- I start becoming senior because of the turnover. But I also understood that I wasn't-- most of the folks back then who had long-term careers as legislative assistants in D.C. were basically-- they were lifers. They were going to be there for a long time. I had no desire to be there for a long time. One way or another, I

wanted to come back to New Jersey. I think at that point, that's when I felt that I could- I think I could run for office. I felt like that sort of time in D.C. and on his congressional staff back in New Jersey were the times when I started thinking, "Hey, I think I can-- I'd like to do this. I would" ..

Rick Sinding: You came back to his district office?

Dan Dalton: Yes, and I don't think he was- I basically felt that I could start looking into running for office by being back in the district. I didn't think I could do that from- so it was self-serving, to a great extent, me asking him to go back to the New Jersey office. I'm sure he recognized that that I had then ambitions, but we never talked about it to a great extent. I know initially he didn't like me leaving, because I was-- I think he felt that I was one of the guys that he could count on to do stuff, to do the job.

Rick Sinding: To do all the things that nobody else would do.

Dan Dalton: He knew I wouldn't complain about, for the most part.

Rick Sinding: But after a while he reluctantly said okay.

Dan Dalton: He just said okay.

Rick Sinding: "Go back to" ..

Dan Dalton: "Go back to congressional office." And I stayed until late '78 and then I left the office. Now, at that point, I knew I wanted to go out and see what I could do for myself both professionally-- not necessarily in politics but I was ready to move on. And I was..

Rick Sinding: And you moved on to?

Dan Dalton: The Dalton Insurance Agency, where my dad ran the insurance agency. And I was probably the lost leader in the insurance agency, because I always found something else to be doing, but he paid me like the lost leader, too, so it worked. And in '79 there was an internal, I guess, war that developed with the Camden County Democrats, and it was the..

Rick Sinding: This was Errichetti and..

Dan Dalton: Yes, and the fourth legislative district, fourth state legislative district at the time was run by two Assemblymen, Ken Gewertz and Franny Gorman. And they had decided that they were going to be part of the Errichetti team. And as a result, Jim asked me to run for the Assembly on his team, and so I..

Rick Sinding: So you took on Kenny Gewertz?

Dan Dalton: Yes.

Rick Sinding: That must've been a fascinating race.

Dan Dalton: It was.

Rick Sinding: He was somewhat, for those who don't remember him, a flamboyant legislator.

Dan Dalton: He was.

Rick Sinding: Drove a Corvette, dressed in loud clothing, was a histrionic speaker.

Dan Dalton: He was an actor, and he was on stage.

Rick Sinding: I can say as a journalist at the time that he was very entertaining.

Dan Dalton: I bet. I didn't feel that way.

Rick Sinding: In _____ not. He had the nickname, by the way, among Democrats in the Byrne administration of Kenny Gets Worse, so very interesting fellow.

Dan Dalton: And he was flamboyant and he was a volatile character and he's generally in fights with Governor Byrne about something. Pinelands was a huge issue..

Rick Sinding: A big one.

Dan Dalton: ...at the time. And Jim Florio was looked upon by a lot of the traditional Democrats in that area at the time as a real-- somewhat of a loner, somewhat of a renegade. He wasn't one of the guys, so Gewertz was very suspicious of Jim. And so there was just the- there was some real political animus there between Errichetti and Gewertz. And Gewertz was basically the head of the Gloucester County party. Errichetti was the head of the Camden..

Rick Sinding: So you were the Florio Gloucester County Democratic primary candidate?

Dan Dalton: That's correct.

Rick Sinding: What happened?

Dan Dalton: And we won, and I think basically we ran as the Florio team and ran under that banner, and Jim Florio was tremendously popular at the time in the district.

Rick Sinding: Also gearing up for his first gubernatorial run at the time.

Dan Dalton: Exactly. And I think he knew he had to solidify his base if he was going to have any further aspirations statewide. He did that. He won our legislative district. He won freeholder seats, I think, in both counties. He then became the leader of the party in the area, and so I was able to be at the right place at the right time, and in 1980 I'm sworn in to the Assembly.

Rick Sinding: And so you spent the first two years, then, '80 to '82, in the Assembly.

Dan Dalton: That's correct.

Rick Sinding: Majority? Minority at that time?

Dan Dalton: We were majority at the time. Chris Jackman was our speaker and he was another..

Rick Sinding: Another valuable fellow.

Dan Dalton: He was..

Rick Sinding: Hudson County.

Dan Dalton: Hudson County through and through, my first exposure to a real Hudson County politician, and he was just a nice man and enjoyable and fun and just, again, a real learning experience for me.

Rick Sinding: And these are the final two years of Byrne's second term.

Dan Dalton: Final two years, right, and became-- Governor Byrne was great to me, gave me some legislative opportunities at the time that-- first statewide recycling bill I sponsored at that time, which was, again, sort of followed not only my inclinations about the environment but also Jim Florio's as well, and..

Rick Sinding: Had you begun to develop environmental expertise and interest at that point?

Dan Dalton: Yes. Well, certainly interest. I had become interested in the environment, because if you lived in New Jersey at the time-- and the environment just had started ballooning as just a critical issue on people's minds.

Rick Sinding: Well, Jim Florio often speaks of the fact that it was around that time or perhaps a little it earlier that he read Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" and it was an epiphany to him that that actually made him become an environmental activist in Congress. Did you have a similar epiphany, or was it more of a..

Dan Dalton: No.

Rick Sinding: It was more function of the times?

Dan Dalton: It was more a function of my district, I think. One of the landfills that's most notorious..

Rick Sinding: Bedford

Dan Dalton: ...in New Jersey-- there was the famous Kinsley landfill, and about four miles from there was another landfill called the Gems landfill. And the Kinsley landfill was an example of our basically non-- or probably a lack of a coherent solid-waste strategy, whereas the Gems landfill was an example of basically a toxic-waste dump in the middle of people's back yards. So, you had those two things going on in the district, so my..

Rick Sinding: Florio's pushing Superfund at the federal level at the same time.

Dan Dalton: Correct, and so my involvement in the environment was just a function of my district and function of the area that I serve more than some sort of academic epiphany. But it was real. It was as real and it was as critical to the people that I represented.

Rick Sinding: '81 comes along. It's '81 election. Jim Florio's at the top of the ticket running for governor. Were you involved in his campaign, or were you paying more attention to your own?

Dan Dalton: I was always involved in his campaigns. The one other great education that I had when I was working in associate with the governor is you became very, very good at the operation, campaign operations, because he generally was running for something almost every year, whether it was..

Rick Sinding: Well, when you're in Congress, you..

Dan Dalton: Every other year, and then he has aspirations for governor. And so I'm involved in his campaigns at every step of the way.

Rick Sinding: So, while you were on the congressional staff, because there is a fine line there of what you're allowed to do and not allowed to do, but..

Dan Dalton: In his first race against Governor Byrne, he-- in the primary.

Rick Sinding: That's right. I had forgotten about that. This is the '77 one, right?

Dan Dalton: Right. We went off staff and worked on his political staff at the time. We lived up in a motel in East Orange, and there was three, four of us that were his North Jersey campaign operation. And..

Rick Sinding: You having absolutely no knowledge of North Jersey at this point, I assume.

Dan Dalton: None at all. All we had was our youthful enthusiasm, and..

Rick Sinding: Who were the other people involved? Do you recall?

Dan Dalton: Joe Salima was in North Jersey; a good friend of mine, Chuck Manella, was up there in North Jersey. And then, I mean, we were basically the three folks that were charged with getting Jim around in North Jersey. And so that was another great education. Particularly you're up in Essex and Hudson County, where as a young person fairly naive, fairly not clued into the local politics, talk about getting bounced around.

Rick Sinding: And that '77 primary was a fascinating primary, too, I mean, because so many people jumped in because they thought Byrne was so vulnerable, but he ended up winning the re-nomination with something like 30 percent of the vote.

Dan Dalton: Exactly. So at that time I would go off of his congressional staff and go on his political staff. When I was in office, I had the luxury-- first of all, I didn't get paid by him, because I had a legislative salary. I was single. If I had 10 bucks in my pocket, I thought I was rich. And so I would be going off to wherever he needed me to go off to and, again, enjoy the opportunities. So..

Rick Sinding: So you were a surrogate in the '81 election. Did you go off and represent him at those places?

Dan Dalton: Sure.

Rick Sinding: Was your seat so secure at that point that- now, are you also running for Senate at the time?

Dan Dalton: Yes. At that time, after..

Rick Sinding: We're back to '81 now.

Dan Dalton: We're back to '81. We have Abacam, by the way, that is-- sort of erupts locally. And Errichetti gets caught up in it. The state senator from my district is implicated in the scandal, Joe Maressa, and so Maressa leaves the ticket and leaves the Senate. So, I am now the Senate candidate in 1981 from the fourth legislative district. Again, opportunity presents itself being at the right place at the right time.

Rick Sinding: And with Florio at the top of the ticket, that's a-- I assume it's still reasonably competitive, but you've got a pretty good..

Dan Dalton: Yes. I run against Gewertz again. Gewertz..

Rick Sinding: Gewertz ran for Senate at the time?

Dan Dalton: Yes.

Rick Sinding: In the primary?

Dan Dalton: In the primary. I win the primary and then win the general election. And so, in 1982 I'm sworn into the Senate. Carmen Orechio is the Senate president. There are 23 Democrats.

Rick Sinding: From Essex County. By this time you know Essex County like the back of your hand.

Dan Dalton: Exactly. I've bounced around up in Essex County more than a lot of people at that point, and Hudson County. And because there was only 23 Democrats, there was chairmanships available immediately. So, I become the chair

of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee, where I continued on until 1990 and chaired the committee during that period of time, which is, again..

Rick Sinding: It's a Democratic-controlled Senate the entire time that you were in office.

Dan Dalton: Correct. So, the Assembly changed, but the Senate was in Democrat control, and the two presidents then were Carmen and John Russo were the Senate presidents and then, lastly, John Lynch.

Rick Sinding: And Alan Karcher over in the Assembly.

Dan Dalton: And Alan Karcher over in the Assembly, so it was..

Rick Sinding: Those were interesting times. You're working with a Republican governor and a Democratic Senate and got quite a bit of environmental legislation passed. And I assume at this point you're now beginning to develop some real expertise in that subject area.

Dan Dalton: Yes. Again, basically I now chaired a committee, which was as important to my district as I thought any committee in the legislature and also had statewide significance because of the number of issues that New Jersey was trying to address at the time. You also had a political environment that lent itself to addressing these issues. I mean, the public was in full support of attempting to address these issues.

Rick Sinding: And there is a series of events that occurred throughout the 1980s, Bhopal in India, which led directly to the right-to-know law that you- which you were the prime sponsor. You had needles washing up on the shore. You had..

Dan Dalton: Dioxin in Newark.

Rick Sinding: ...dioxin, radon. It seemed like every time you turned around there was another environmental scare of some sort.

Dan Dalton: And basically the science, I don't think, was anywhere close to the politics or the policy at the time. I mean, we were catching up. We were attempting

to catch up, and so oftentimes we may have been guilty of overreach as far as some of our legislative attempts at addressing these issues, but I think that the politics demanded it at the time that we be aggressive. And certainly looking back at it now in hindsight, I think the science didn't really catch up to the policy, and as a result, there may have been some things that we did were more of our political overenthusiasm than based upon the science.

Rick Sinding: But many of the debates about environmental regulation that continue to this day are maybe a result of that.

Dan Dalton: Absolutely.

Rick Sinding: Jim Florio's back in Washington throughout this period of time. He thinks about but demurs about running against Tom Kane in '85. He's devoting himself to Washington stuff; you're devoting yourself to New Jersey stuff in Trenton. How much interaction did the two of you have during this period?

Dan Dalton: We had a lot of interaction from the perspective of being two politicians or two public figures who were both aggressive as far as the retail aspect of politics, so I was always in contact with Jim Florio and I always-- I considered him a mentor, and he was my mentor politically and legislatively. He's a great role model for me, so he was someone that-- there was a saying particularly in Camden County in those days: You didn't have friendships; you had alliances. Well, with Jim Florio I had a friendship.

Rick Sinding: That's interesting, because you were leading me into asking that question. Many of the people that I've-- most of the people, I think, who have been close associates of Jim Florio, it took them a long time to develop what they now refer to as a friendship. But you evidently developed that kind of a relationship with him relatively early on.

Dan Dalton: Yes. And, again, I think the fact that he had brought me in early on and I was always-- we were always traveling in the same circles because we were both, again-- we were both in politics. We both represent much of the same area. We both had similar concerns in also areas of expertise, although, I mean, I certainly don't put myself in the Florio category as far as policy expertise, because I think he truly has great expertise in many, many different areas. So he was someone that I looked up to; I really did, and I think the people that were his staffers at the time, particularly his local staffers, were totally devoted to Jim Florio

and wanted to see him succeed, and as well as I did. I believe in his sort of perspective of government and what government should be about, and he had tremendous integrity. The other thing that I appreciate him a lot is he allowed-- he did not-- he wasn't a boss in anyway. He was-- I was in the state senate and I don't think I ever got a call from Jim Florio asking me to do anything. And by the way, most of the calls were from me asking his advice on certain things. So he was a mentor. He was a true mentor to me.

Rick Sinding: So we come to 1989 and now he is the Democratic Candidate for Governor and in a much better position than he was in '81. Although that too was a-- that was a very close race. He nearly became governor in the '81 election. But by midway through 1989 it's fairly obvious not only that he's going to win the democratic primary but that he is very likely to become the next governor. At this point, were you on the ticket to run for senate that year? Or was the senate up in '89? Were you on the ballot that year running for senate?

Dan Dalton: That's a good question.

Rick Sinding: I don't recall because of the strange nature of the way in which redistricting happens in New Jersey. There are four-year terms for the senators but then it becomes a two-year term right after the-- right after the census.

Dan Dalton: Yes. I think it may have been-- it was 4-2-2. So, yes, I think we ran in '89. I won. The governor wins.

Rick Sinding: But are you thinking at that point or did he give you any indication that he might be interested in having you come and work in his cabinet?

Dan Dalton: No. No. No, I-- and I had no interest in working in his cabinet. My decision in 1989 was whether I was going to run for a seat in Congress or not.

Rick Sinding: Oh, sure. Because he was giving up there.

Dan Dalton: He was giving up a seat. And so I make the decision that I'm not going to run for a seat.

Rick Sinding: Why did you make that decision?

Dan Dalton: A couple of reasons. Mostly, you know, when I started in politics again I was-- I was single. I had, you know, I lived in an efficiency apartment. I was, you know, I didn't need much.

Rick Sinding: No, wonder Jim Florio was your mentor. He lived over a liquor store--

Dan Dalton: Yes, we were very similar that way. I might have even had a nicer car than Jim Florio, which wasn't saying much. But he-- but then I'm married and I - and I have-- my wife has two children. We immediately have Katelyn. my daughter. And so I make the decision that-- and having been in D.C. and understood sort of the-- what it took to be successful in D. C. as a congressman decide that that was not the life I wanted.

Rick Sinding: Didn't have the fire in the belly.

Dan Dalton: No, did not have the fire in the belly. And just wanted to certainly be around at that time the kids a lot more. And but felt that the state legislature was perfect for me. And ran for the majority leader's spot and became majority leader in the senate so.

Rick Sinding: So now we come to the real nitty-gritty, which is the first six months of the Florio administration. You are now the majority leader.

Dan Dalton: Right.

Rick Sinding: Your responsibility is to now carry out a series of far-reaching, controversial pieces of legislation. The first of which is an area that you have some professional expertise in, which is insurance. Tell us about that-- I mean that's the first one. That's the first one that gets rolled out and in many ways may have been the easiest. Although, not to suggest it was easy but tell us a little bit about that experience.

Dan Dalton: Well, that was number one on the Governor's agenda. His-- I believe his-- inaugural, address was to-- just to do away with the-- at that time the Joint Underwriting Association, the JUA.

Rick Sinding: JUA was DOA.

Dan Dalton: Yes, JUA was DOA. And basically the JUA was a state-funded auto--personal auto-insurance program that was created to become a haven for bad drivers.

Rick Sinding: High-risk pool.

Dan Dalton: But ultimately became-- was insuring most of the drivers in the state. And the rationale-- the reason for it is because they-- the private markets did not want to write automobile insurance, private automobile insurance in New Jersey. So that they can--

Rick Sinding: Kind of ironic that now you can't watch television for more than five minutes without seeing a Geico commercial.

Dan Dalton: Yes. Yes that's correct.

Rick Sinding: And Geico that did not write--

Dan Dalton: That they left. Yes, left New Jersey. So basically the Governor took the liabilities from the JUA and basically disbursed them amongst the writers of personal. Or actually insurance in the state, which is tremendously controversial.

Rick Sinding: Not entirely different from what President Obama is talking about doing with healthcare.

Dan Dalton: That's correct. That's correct.

Rick Sinding: Although there it's not the high-risk. It's actually the very low risk people that they want to disburse among _____.

Dan Dalton: And so that was tremendously controversial.

Rick Sinding: Among the-- primarily among the insurance companies.

Dan Dalton: Correct. Correct.

Rick Sinding: But not with the general public.

Dan Dalton: Not with the general public. The general public I think sensed that we needed to do something. Everybody-- I mean that was on the top five public policy issues, automobile insurance. And basically the Governor addressed it right from the get-go. So as you pointed out amongst the legislators, particularly I had taken a look at this issue for a long time when I was in the senate. So I sort of understood the components of the problem.

Rick Sinding: Well, you also had professional relationships with most of these insurance companies.

Dan Dalton: I did. I was a broker. So I wasn't a company guy but I was-- I was broker.

Rick Sinding: But for that reason you also knew a lot of the different insurance companies as opposed to any particular one.

Dan Dalton: That's correct. So--

Rick Sinding: So you must have been under some intense pressure from the insurance industry?

Dan Dalton: You know, I never felt that way.

Rick Sinding: Really?

Dan Dalton: No. I never felt that way. I always felt that I was-- I never felt like the-- I was there to represent the carriers. I wasn't.

Rick Sinding: No, I understand that. But did they not feel. I mean, did you not get a lot of pressure from them to do?

Dan Dalton: Oh, sure. But, you know, it wasn't-- I didn't really feel. To me, it was a non-issue. That, you know, they had-- they certainly needed to step up and be a part of this solution. And so I was one of the leaders in the reforms that Governor Florio initiated. So I-- there was no problem with me. I really thought that it was the right thing to do. And the carriers needed to be a step up and bear responsibility for some of the problems that we had. And maybe again it was naivety but it was something that I just thought that this was the right thing to do. And he was absolutely on target.

Rick Sinding: Okay. The next one is assault weapons.

Dan Dalton: Correct.

Rick Sinding: I can vividly remember having a certain amount of fear working in the state house during particular legislative sessions. I assume you faced some pretty intense pressure coming from a district of a lot of gun owners, hunters.

Dan Dalton: Right.

Rick Sinding: Tell us about that experience.

Dan Dalton: Well, that was an experience. I think that was difficult on a local level because there was so much misinformation that was being put out by the NRA to the local gun clubs. And, you know, certainly our area was well represented by the gun clubs and a lot of hunting clubs. But, again, I let it be known that I was squarely behind the Assault Weapon Bill. And there was-- I was-- it was not a negotiable position. That was I going to be supportive and be a proponent of the bill.

Rick Sinding: As majority leader, how much work did you have to do getting others in your caucus to support it?

Dan Dalton: It was-- to be perfectly honest, I thought it was-- for the most part, most of the members in my caucus save one were on board with the Assault Weapon Bill. And then Senator Gormley came--

Rick Sinding: Okay. You had the one from the other side?

Dan Dalton: Came across from the other side and I mean Bill Gormley's roll in the assault weapon bill is significant because the courage it took for him to cross to the other side on an issue like that is, you know, I think about it to this day. And the pressure that he was under. But, you know, he was-- again, he decided fairly early on what he was going to do. And we knew we could support him. We knew in the senate the votes were there.

Rick Sinding: Now, interestingly enough many people today attribute the loss of the legislature two years later and ultimately Governor Florio's loss-- re-election to the NRA, which worked vigorously behind the scenes with Hands Across New Jersey and other groups, even the New Jersey Education Association, which we'll get to that in a minute. A variety other reasons to not like things that Governor Florio had done. Do you think there was any way in which this whole issue or set of issues could have been handled that would have made the opposition of the NRA any less voluble? Would have made-- keeping the control of the legislature in democratic hands or keeping Governor Florio's re-election possibilities alive, do you think there are ways in which the assault weapons band in particular might have been handled differently that would have allowed that to happen?

Dan Dalton: No, I thought-- I'll be honest with you, Rick. I think that the-- that the assault weapons band certainly played a-- was a major factor than the NRA's opposition to Governor Florio's re-election was a factor in not being re-elected. However, I thought if we would have done things differently as far as the budget and then the court decision we could have isolated the NRA and we could have survived their mischief.

Rick Sinding: Okay. Then let's get to the court decision. And actually the Florio administration moved in advance of the court decision.

Dan Dalton: Correct.

Rick Sinding: In the Quality Education Act and changes to the tax structure.

Dan Dalton: Correct.

Rick Sinding: This is probably the heaviest lift that you had. The most difficult one to get through the legislature and the one that had the greatest consequence.

Dan Dalton: Yes.

Rick Sinding: Let's talk first of all about how that all transpired. The work that you had to do as majority leader to get that set of bills through and then let's talk about the consequences. First, the process of getting the reforms passed.

Dan Dalton: Well, and the process I think was what should have changed with looking back on it. And the process was that you had a budget-- a significant budget deficit and then you had a Supreme Court decision that was basically saying that we had-- we were required to equalize the funding opportunities for urban-- certain urban districts with the wealthier suburban districts. The bottom-line is there was tremendous-- if you looked at it from just a strictly academic sense there was a budget shortfall of great significance. And then the call for shifting the money. And, of course, we were-- we did not have a whole lot of money then to urban education. And the lack of understanding I think publicly of those two issues and our inability to explain those two issues and their interrelationship on a public level, I think was really the cause to our political failure and the Governor's re-election and certainly the legislature for a decade. And I-- and that really is the nub of I think how we didn't handle the issue as well as we could.

Rick Sinding: Did you feel that at the time?

Dan Dalton: I thought-- I thought at the time that we could-- we could-- we were doing the best we could as far as trying to bifurcate those two issues and explain them to the public. But obviously we didn't do a good job in that area.

Rick Sinding: Well, the-- and there's some folks in the administration who counseled very strongly to go ahead and do everything quickly. Get it all done with for two reasons. Number one, that the benefits of the changes would show up over a period of time. And number two that the public would forget three and a half years later or that time would heal the wound three and a half years later and that the governor would spend all of his political capital. And then bring it back up again to the point where he could get re-elected. So there appears to have been a conscious decision to do it that way.

Dan Dalton: Oh, no question. No question. And the consequences for the prediction that the governor would spend as political capital and be able to survive almost came true. So people don't recognize how close that-- despite all of the

issues that we were dealing with how the governor almost did survive. Unfortunately--

Rick Sinding: But the legislature didn't.

Dan Dalton: The legislature-- the legislators' election was right up against the-- those two issues. We were the next year. And that's when the legislature, literally, the democrats in the legislature were literally decimated by that. The governor had a year or two more time to try to layout, you know, the-- and as they say, bifurcate, explain the convergence of the massive budget shortfall and the court decision. The legislators did not have that time. Nor in those days did the legislature have the resources to really get that message out.

Rick Sinding: What was your experience from let's say July, August of 1990 up through the election of 1991 in terms of what was it like to serve in the legislature? In terms of dealing with your constituency, what was it like to serve in the legislature?

Dan Dalton: Oh, it was a volatile time. It was extremely volatile but again I guess maybe it was youth or something. I thought we--

Rick Sinding: You weren't that young anymore at that point.

Dan Dalton: No. Well, no. I would say I was experienced then. And I was still relatively young. But, you know, it was difficult because--

Rick Sinding: You were getting hounded at every public meeting.

Dan Dalton: We were getting hounded at every public meeting. And but the economy-- general economy in a tough position. We had then the agitation of the NRA. They were-- they were going to make sure that we paid.

Rick Sinding: And the Hands Across New Jersey crowd.

Dan Dalton: And the Hands Across New Jersey crowd. So, yes, it was-- it was a difficult time to be public office so.

Rick Sinding: Did you run again in '92?

Dan Dalton: '92, I did not.

Rick Sinding: Well, '91.

Dan Dalton: '91, I did not. I had-- I had made a decision again that I was-- I was going to leave government.

Rick Sinding: Did the year leading up to that have anything to do with it?

Dan Dalton: No. I had-- once I won in '89 I wanted to become the majority leader and then I wanted to leave. And I remember telling Dick Codey who was a uh.. It was interesting becoming majority leader. I go, you know, that I would not be long for the job. Of course, we laugh about it today because he-- little did he know nor I know that the party would be decimated nobody-- there would be nobody worrying about majority leader for a while. So I had thought that I had again, you know mortgage, four kids, etcetera. I was ready-- I was literally ready to move on. And told-- I remember telling John Lynch that and telling Dick Codey that. I don't think I ever told anybody else, my wife, obviously. My wife really wanted me to stay on. She was-- she's more the political junky than even I was. But I had had enough. It was-- I was in the middle of everything. I had felt that I was-- by the way, I thought we could still win my district. I thought whether I was running or not and we almost did.

Rick Sinding: I was going to say you didn't.

Dan Dalton: Almost did. Yes, we did not. And we did not, which I was really disappointed in. I thought that was really-- and why perhaps I should have stayed on. I was more involved in the business. I was more involved in trying to take care of paying bills. And being-- having four kids in the house. So I was-- I was running around trying to be-- do all things and it was just.

Rick Sinding: So the middle of 1991 you've made your decision. You're not going to run for re-election. You're going to go back to South Jersey and focus on your insurance business and more time with your family. And then somehow that got delayed by a couple of years.

Dan Dalton: Yes, it got delayed.

Rick Sinding: How did that happen?

Dan Dalton: Basically, I was on-- made the decision to leave and at the time the front office was in somewhat of an uproar and an old friend of mine re-appeared in the front office by the name of Joe Sweeney . Okay. And basically Joe asked that I stay and asked that I become part-- a part of the administration. And his--

Rick Sinding: Did he have a particular spot in mind at that point or he just wanted you to be in Trenton?

Dan Dalton: He wanted me to be in Trenton. He-- that felt that I had relationships with the legislature that were-- would be helpful to the governor. And that the-- that there was a significant role I could play as far as though legislative relationships as well as continuing public policy. And basically my promise to Joe was that I would-- I would stay through the first term. And then I'd go. And I remember my father telling me that at that point, "You will come home after this." Because he was ready to leave the business. Okay. And so he was-- he was literally wanted to leave. And, of course, I'm still out tilting at windmills.

Rick Sinding: Do you think that Joe also felt as though Jim Florio needed as many of his old friends as he could have around him during the embattled second-thirds of his administration?

Dan Dalton: Yes. Yes. I think he needed-- he needed some. He-- Joe felt that he needed people with sort of the retail political experience with the governor - that were loyal to the governor. He wanted them around during this time because he thought-- he knew it was going to be particularly difficult time.

Rick Sinding: So how did the Department of State come to be the place where you landed?

Dan Dalton: Yes, it really was-- it was the Governor's and Joe's idea. I think traditionally the Department of State was a political roll.

Rick Sinding: Well, certainly. I mean back in the days of Governors Meyner and Hughes the Secretary of State was the chief political operative of the governor.

Dan Dalton: Correct. And I think that's what Joe had envisioned. That it was a-- that would be the model. That you were there to support the political, you know, agenda of the Governor.

Rick Sinding: Which meant both relations with the legislature and with county and local officials of the party.

Dan Dalton: And retail and certainly being a surrogate on behalf of the Governor. And he felt that was a role, particularly in South Jersey that I could play.

Rick Sinding: So what was it like suddenly being the executive branch of government after all those years in the legislature?

Dan Dalton: It was different. It was not-- it was a-- it was a different pace than the pace that I was used to. Because I-- it was the sole thing that I did for me personally. When I was in the legislature--

Rick Sinding: Much to your dad's regret, I guess.

Dan Dalton: Yes. Yes. Exactly. And when I was in the legislature you were-- I was, you know, literally I was doing-- I was at the business. I was trying to--

Rick Sinding: Monday and Thursdays you're in Trenton.

Dan Dalton: Monday and Thursdays I'm in Trenton. I'm on the phone a lot to Trenton but I'm not in Trenton every day. So there was-- there was a whole other business life out there. So that part of it changed a lot. The-- but it was enjoyable to the sense-- in the sense that Joe set up a group that met every morning. His feeling was that during the first part of the Governor's term that there wasn't a real focus. There wasn't a real message that was getting out on a daily basis. So he puts together this group called the Core Group.

Rick Sinding: Who was in that?

Dan Dalton: Basically it was the Governor's counsel at the time.

Rick Sinding: Was that DeCotiis?

Dan Dalton: Bob DeCotiis was part of it. Brenda Bacon was part of it. I was part of it. Joe certainly was part of it. I don't know if Jamie was part of it. Jamie Fox at that point. But there was-- but the whole focus of the Core Group was that there was going to be one single message getting out from a policy perspective during the day. And it was going to be focused and the Governor was going to be talking about it. And he felt that there wasn't that type of planned message development during the first term. That it was-- it was really scattered and sort of events would dictate what the message was. So we were trying to be more in control of the message on behalf of the Governor. And so that was the-- and I enjoyed that. Again, it sort of gets into my policy development. You know, it allows me to enjoy that. The other thing is I got-- I was still involved in the automobile insurance issue at the time. I was used as a surrogate because as you well know the Commissioner was not allowed-- the Commissioner was supposed to be a--

Rick Sinding: A quasi-judicial.

Dan Dalton: A quasi-judicial official. So I had the luxury of not being-- having those ties. So when there was a need to go out and to layout the Governor's position on automobile insurance or something I was-- I was the guy that would do it. I also had the opportunity to be involved in some education issues at the time. We had a new commissioner that I introduced to the Governor, Mary Lee Fitzgerald.

Rick Sinding: Oh. Yes. How did you know her?

Dan Dalton: I knew her through Essex County and through--

Rick Sinding: Back to Essex County.

Dan Dalton: Back to Essex County. Yes. And I got to know her through a staffer in the senate, Bob Newnan who was-- Bob was very close to Mary Lee Fitzgerald. So that's-- so those were types of things that I was able to do and I enjoyed the opportunity. And then, you know, I would sit in on with various meetings about how we were going to-- how the administration was going to address a multitude of issues and be part of that. So that was-- that was fun for me and I enjoyed it. And

even though the times were difficult because usually there was folks parading outside the office every day.

Rick Sinding: And you had a hostile legislature.

Dan Dalton: Yes, hostile legislature.

Rick Sinding: How about the fact-- I mean you obviously had developed some relationships with-- across the aisle in the legislature. Did you-- were you called upon to work as best you could with Chuck Haytaian and with who was the president of the senate at the time. I'm trying to remember. It would have been-- oh, Donny DiFrancesco.

Dan Dalton: Yes, Donny Di (DiFrancesco), yes.

Rick Sinding: That you must have had some relationship with some of them. And you mentioned Bill Gormley.

Dan Dalton: Yes. It was-- there were still members of the legislature that I could-- I worked with. Jack Collins was a majority leader at the time in assembly and he was someone that he was a South Jersey guy that I was close to. And we-- I had known Jack previous to both of our political lives. You know, we went to the same high school. We're from the same area. So he was someone I was friends with. I had gotten close to John Bennett who was not only someone I worked with, but he was a friend on that side. I was close to John Lynch who was still majority leader at the time. I was close to Dick Codey who was a friend. So there were certain.

Rick Sinding: I think John was minority leader at the time.

Dan Dalton: Minority. I'm sorry. You're right. I'm sorry. And I wish he was majority leader at the time.

Rick Sinding: So does he.

Dan Dalton: Yes, I'm sure. And so I still had friends in the legislature that I could go to and try to get the latest lay of the land about whatever issue that was before the legislature and the Governor need it done.

Rick Sinding: How much interaction did you end up having during that two-year period with the Governor personally?

Dan Dalton: I had-- I thought I had access to the Governor if and when I need it. If I had something that was worthy of him hearing I had the ability to sit down with the Governor.

Rick Sinding: Is that how one approaches one's relationship with the chief executive. That you don't want to bother that person with anything other than something that you think is something that belongs at his or her level.

Dan Dalton: Yes. And that's exactly right. And I-- and there was something I could contribute positively to the discussion. And if I felt that there was-- I did not-- I was very mindful of his time. I was also mindful of the fact that there were many areas that people in the administration had greater expertise than me in certain issues so I knew what I--

Rick Sinding: You knew what you knew and you knew what you didn't know.

Dan Dalton: I knew what I knew. And that was what I was what I was going to talk to the Governor about. And can make a contribution about.

Rick Sinding: He was also a notorious memo Governor.

Dan Dalton: Yes.

Rick Sinding: The famous capital letter TTM, Talk To Me, if he wanted your input and otherwise a lot of it was done by internal memo and passing of the memo that came to him, a long to someone else for comment. So I assume there was an awful a lot of that that was going on.

Dan Dalton: Yes, there was a lot of that. And also I traveled with him a lot politically. So there was, you know, I had the opportunity to travel with him so there's-- I could talk to him about the issues that I thought were important or again what I could contribute. So I had that opportunity where maybe a lot of the folks didn't have that opportunity.

Rick Sinding: Now, as his term office is coming to an end and he's running for re-election. And you absolutely know at this point that you were not going to stay on regardless of what happens.

Dan Dalton: Right.

Rick Sinding: Did you get involved in the campaign? Did you-- how did you handle those last few months?

Dan Dalton: Well, again, I was-- I was sort of subject to whatever the campaign needed and wanted me to do. If they needed a surrogate in Southern New Jersey, I was the surrogate in Southern New Jersey. If they needed someone to go talk to a local county chairman or chairperson or a local political, I would oftentimes be sent off to talk to whomever, the mayor or whatever. So I was used in sort of as a liaison to the campaign, particularly in South Jersey.

Rick Sinding: Were you with the Governor on election night?

Dan Dalton: Yes. Yes, I was with him. I was with him at the initial part of the evening. My brother was running for the assembly at the time and so I remember spending most of the evening with the Governor and then leaving, I guess, we were up-- it may have been up in East Brunswick. I'm not sure.

Rick Sinding: Yes, I think so.

Dan Dalton: Yes, and went down to South Jersey.

Rick Sinding: At the point when you left East Brunswick did you know what the outcome was?

Dan Dalton: I thought we were-- I thought we were going to lose. I wasn't sure but, you know.

Rick Sinding: By all accounts on election night, he was less devastated than most of the people around him.

Dan Dalton: Yes. I thought-- I thought there was-- and I remember thinking that the last couple of days that he was, you know. He understood that it was-- it was going to be very difficult for him to win re-election. He was not going to get clobbered. He was, you know. And he didn't. And he, I thought, under-- I mean who-- he ran an outstanding race. I wish-- I wish we had explained the whole education issue a lot better during the race because I think there is-- I always thought that the urban areas underperformed for the Governor and those were the areas that he really stuck his neck out for. And they should have if anything overperformed for him. And that didn't occur. And so that was my political judgment at the time was telling me that they just-- they didn't turn out.

Rick Sinding: Why do you think that happened? Do you think that there was still some resentment on the part of some leadership in those areas that they had lost the legislative election and therefore they didn't feel as though they had a--

Dan Dalton: Internally there was-- there was a debate going on in the campaign. And it was a debate that, you know, you didn't want to shine a light on the Quality Education Act because in most-- with most of the white independent suburban voters it was not a-- it was not a political advantage.

Rick Sinding: No. And it had been largely repealed at that point.

Dan Dalton: My point always was but it may not be, but you have to go into the urban areas and really target those areas and remind those folks that this is the Governor that stuck their neck out for their kids and their education programs in those areas. And I didn't think we did that-- did that well. And I remember being in a meeting with a James Carville at the time and making that point and he said, "Danny, that," in typical southern drawl. "That's like pushing a noodle up a mountain with your nose. You ain't going to make it in time." But-- and I disagreed. But that's, you know, he was running the campaign at the time.

Rick Sinding: So you were involved in some strategies?

Dan Dalton: Yes, correct. Yes. Yep. So and had the opportunity to meet James and be involved with him and Paul Begala who is a great guy and I enjoyed being around. And they were both characters.

Rick Sinding: Absolutely.

Dan Dalton: Absolute characters. Yes.

Rick Sinding: One question that I had skipped over and wanted to get back to is there are a number of people and you would probably be in a position to judge this better than most, who think there was a pronounced change in Jim Florio's demeanor and I don't want to say accessibility-- warmth, humor public persona after his marriage to Lucinda. Do you think that there is any truth to that?

Dan Dalton: Well, I think he-- I think he from a public perspective I would assume that there is truth because Lucinda is beautiful lady. And certainly publicly it softened, I guess, the perception of the Governor. And warmly so I always-- and again because the length of time I was with the Governor from a personal perspective it didn't change.

Rick Sinding: You always saw a warmer side of him, I guess, than--

Dan Dalton: Well, I always saw the-- I always saw a side that was to the point, you know. He was--

Rick Sinding: Oh, everybody saw that side.

Dan Dalton: Yes. And also it, you know, a guy that I could joke around with and he could joke around with me. And but we had that early on so that didn't change too much for me.

Rick Sinding: Tell me about life for Dan Dalton after politics and public life. What have you been up to for the last 20 years?

Dan Dalton: Yes. The last-- again, being very involved in the family business, which I sold five years ago. And just recently left the business totally in April. So I'm a-- I am not-- no longer the insurance guy. So--

Rick Sinding: But I know you serve on some boards.

Dan Dalton: Yes. I-- we started, which I'm proud of, a Boys & Girls Club in Gloucester County, which started out with a site in Glassboro and now there's a site in Paulsboro and a site in Woodbury. So we grew. We have grown the Boys & Girls

Club of Gloucester County, which I think is a terrific program. Involved on the board at Kennedy, at Kennedy Hospital. Very involved on a community bank-- Park Bank, a local bank in Gloucester County with branches in Atlantic County and Philadelphia. So there's some of the areas that I've been involved in.

Rick Sinding: You called upon to be an elder statesman politically or are you pretty much out of the--

Dan Dalton: I'm pretty much out of it. I was involved politically for a short period of time after I left office and but no longer, you know, am in that role.

Rick Sinding: What involvement did you have?

Dan Dalton: Well, I was involved. I got involved with Senator Sweeney's race against-- then it's Senator Sweeney's race against Senator Zane. So I chaired that race, which got me back-- totally back in the frying pan. And he was successful. But since then I've pretty much, you know, I'm not involved politically anymore. And that's fine. That's fine.

Rick Sinding: I was going to say. And seems to make you happy.

Dan Dalton: Yes. Yes. I enjoy being busy but I don't need to be running around with my hair on fire anymore.

Rick Sinding: Understood.

Dan Dalton: Yes, so.

Rick Sinding: Well, we've enjoyed having you here.

Dan Dalton: Yes, thanks.

Rick Sinding: Anything that I should have asked you that I didn't?

Dan Dalton: No. No. I think the one thing that the point that I was thinking of on my way here that I wanted to make is that there's a generation of people in south

Jersey that became involved politically because of Jim Florio. And I often think about that also is part of his legacy because he-- you know, you take a look at Joe Roberts, and you take a look at myself, and you take a look at a host of other people in our era that were-- got involved and got the opportunity to serve publicly because of Jim Florio. He really deserves a lot of credit for that because of the example that he set and because of the type of leader he was. He inspired people to get involved in it. And certainly myself so I think that should be recognized as well.

Rick Sinding: So a piece of the Florio legacy that we didn't have before we interviewed you. So thank you very much for that and for your time today.

Dan Dalton: You're welcome. Thank you.