

Interview with Councilman-At-Large James F. Kenney, Interview 1

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Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Aguilar: My narrator is Councilman-At-Large James Kenney; date is March 14, 2006; location is City Hall Room...

Kenney: 330.

Aguilar: ..330. To begin with, Councilman Kenney, do I have your consent to tape this interview?

Kenney: Yes, you do.

Aguilar: OK. Well to start, I'm going to mention something that I read from the publication of Philadelphia City Council, from the office of Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell;

Kenney: Right.

Aguilar: ...You're described as having been a lifelong resident of South Philadelphia.

Kenney: Right.

Aguilar: ...Why have you chosen to remain in that neighborhood -- in the same neighborhood?

Kenney: Well, I mean, the neighborhood is -- in Philadelphia many people live in specific geographic neighborhoods that have either ethnic -- an ethnic composition, racial composition, and I grew up in, I was born in South Philadelphia; it's comfortable, it's a decent place to live; I like the environment, I like the ethnicity, and decided to stay.

Aguilar: And, I myself am a lifelong resident of Philadelphia -- I don't know what part of South Philadelphia you lived in.

Kenney: I live -- I grew up in the area known as 2<sup>nd</sup> street, down, like in the 300 block of Snyder Avenue; it's got kind of a mummer's -- it's known for the mummer's clubs that are along the street there; and then I lived there for thirty-two years, and then moved out of the house I was born in and moved to Eleventh and Tasker, which is predominantly an Italian-American neighborhood; but it's also changing now: Asian and younger, suburban couples are moving in.

Aguilar: OK, very good. In what year were you born?

Kenney: 1958.

Aguilar: And you characterize the neighborhood you grew up in -- actually, I'll follow up on one thing you said; you said that you like the ethnic composition of it -- I... I suppose being South Philadelphia it's a heavily Italian neighborhood?

Kenney: Well, actually South Philadelphia's got a lot more than just Italian-Americans -- there's a lot of Irish-Americans; there are people of Latin descent; there are African-Americans; there are now many more Asian-Americans from Southeast Asia and from China; so it's... it's diverse.

Aguilar: And, just to pursue that a little longer; since this is Philadelphia, what kind of a block did you grow up on?

Kenney: I grew up on a very small, row house street called Cantrell Street; there is probably about 70, 72 houses on the street, and they were small: 16 foot by 50 foot deep, two-story, brick row.

Aguilar: Did you... did you have a lot of family in the same house?

Kenney: No, it was only our family: my mom, dad, and three other siblings. But my grandmother lived on the same street up the street; and a lot of aunts and uncles lived within blocks of each other.

Aguilar: OK. And I also want to talk a little bit about your parents -- because it interests me, your father was a fire chief?

Kenney: Correct, he was a firefighter for 20... 20 years and then retired when he was 45, and went to work for the Philadelphia Inquirer, in fleet safety; and then he's retired fully about 3, 4 years ago.

Aguilar: Also, has anyone else in your family followed that example, and become a fireman?

Kenney: No -- there are no other firefighters in the family.

Aguilar: OK, regarding... regarding your mother?

Kenney: My mom was basically a stay at home mom who worked part-time -- various jobs at a bank, in offices, and things like that, but was home most of the time.

Aguilar: So, after school when you would come home...?

Kenney: Well, either if my mom was working, my grandmother was there; her house was up the street.

Aguilar: And, which elementary school did you go to?

Kenney: Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

Aguilar: Which is a catholic school.

Kenney: Which is a catholic, parochial school, yeah.

Aguilar: O.K. Moving on to high school, from my research I have learned that you are a graduate of St. Joe's Prep.

Kenney: Right, 1976.

Aguilar: At St. Joe's, did you have a sense of your career goals yet?

Kenney: No, not yet. Although the prep's main mission and... and kind of credo is a person for others; so, public service is not a strange result of that.

Aguilar: Yes, I was going to say – you've been quoted by the Philadelphia Tribune; you told them that, I'll quote: your Jesuit education at St. Joe's Prep "absolutely" influenced your decision.

Kenney: Yeah. They emphasize service to other people, and that's – public service is a natural evolution.

Aguilar: OK. Beyond that, what else did you gain from your experiences at St. Joe's Prep?

Kenney: Hard work, study hard, subject matter was difficult; I played some sports there: football and ice hockey. Was very – it was a smaller school, so people were more – you knew everybody in the school, and it was a very intimate setting.

Aguilar: Regarding college, were you among the first in your family to go, or...?

Kenney: Yeah, I was the first person in my family to go. There were, I think, one other cousin who had been a college graduate, and was a college professor; but everybody else had gone just to secondary school.

Aguilar: And, of course, you chose to go to La Salle...

Kenney: Well actually, my – La Salle was not my first choice.

Aguilar: OK.

Kenney: My first choice was the University of Scranton, which is a Jesuit university in Scranton, Pennsylvania; but because of money issues, I had to go to a school and commute -- we couldn't afford to stay...to stay at a college away -- so, I commuted for two years at La Salle. I enjoyed La Salle immensely, though.

Aguilar: Well that's good. I myself am a graduate student at La Salle and I was a high school student at Central; I have a little bit of experience...

Kenney: Mm-hmm.

Aguilar: ...going by La Salle. I am aware that you graduated in 1980; so, when you began La Salle, it was 1976?

Kenney: Correct.

Aguilar: I want to just talk about a couple subjects about that era to see what it was like at that time -- regarding 1976, was also the year Jimmy Carter was elected to the White House. Do you have any recollection of how this election was received, or perceived in the La Salle community?

Kenney: I really wasn't all that political then. I didn't start -- I volunteered for a state senator in 1978, while I was a junior there; didn't really, wasn't -- didn't follow politics as closely as obviously I do now; so I can't really recall what that whole atmosphere was like relative to the presidency.

Aguilar: Well, let me ask you this: would you say that La Salle at that time was a conservative institution, or..?

Kenney: Well, I think Catholic schools generally are conservative institutions. I think that there's varying degrees of political views. I think that La Salle allows people to

Kenney: express their political views fairly, and Christian Brothers can be strict; but I've met a lot of people, both lay and non-lay – lay and cleric teachers who, were varying degrees of political spectrum.

Aguilar: OK. Let me ask you about your particular classes you may have liked or disliked; or professors you may have been impressed by, or were..

Kenney: I like, I remember an accounting -- no, a business, or marketing teacher that we had, Dr. Halpin -- I think he is passed away; but he was a pretty cool guy. I liked all of my political -- I was a political science major; I enjoyed all of my political science courses. Dr. Hill, I think, may still be there. He was someone I remembered. Trying to think; I enjoyed the experience there for the most part -- yeah.

Aguilar: And...

Kenney: Oh -- Dr. Courtney was a special teacher also, and he was a political science teacher.

Aguilar: I'm going to ask you a little bit about your major also, but I want to ask you about the role of the Brothers at La Salle. You said your first choice would have been to go to a Jesuit school, but at La Salle, the Brothers, in the past, have played an important role at La Salle -- can you describe that role?

Kenney: I'm trying to think, I remember what the Brother, what the president looked like at the time, I just can't think of his name -- he was a heavy set, round-faced Brother, actively involved in the community, and had kind of a political bent himself -- I can't think of his name though; do you know?

Aguilar: No, I didn't... I didn't look into that.

Kenney: Brother McGuinness now I know, have worked with; he's a terrific person. He's not as -- I don't think he is as outgoing as the president that was there when I was there, but they have different personalities, not that -- it doesn't mean one's better than the other; but Brother McGuinness has been effective and very helpful and responsive to issues. And then -- I just can't, I can see his face, I just can't think of the man's name. But, I didn't have as many Brothers for teachers -- most of my teachers were lay teachers.

Aguilar: OK. But -- so you didn't mention any of the brothers, as -- well, as you said, you didn't have that many.

Kenney: I didn't have that many in a classroom setting, but, you know -- I don't think there were all that many there in 1976, to tell you the truth. I mean, there were some.

Aguilar: Well, over the years the role of the brothers has been gradually diminishing in the opinion of some.

Kenney: Well, there's less of them; so, I guess that's almost a....

Aguilar: You've touched on that I guess. Regarding housing, you spoke of commuting to La Salle?

Kenney: I commuted for two years, and then I lived in an off-campus apartment not affiliated with the school for two years called Ogontz Manor, at the corner of Ogontz and Olney.

Aguilar: OK...

Kenney: I think the school may control that now, but it didn't at the time I was there.

Aguilar: When you moved into an apartment, did you room with other students?

Kenney: Yeah, I roomed with members, I think, four members of the soccer team, who were -- one of them happened to be a friend of mine from St. Joe's Prep; that's how I first made the connection; and then I met the other guys; and there was -- spot became available, and I moved in.

Aguilar: And, did you... did you enjoy those experiences with...

Kenney: Yeah, it was great.

Aguilar: ...soccer players? I actually have, I have read a quote from you that says that the soccer players enjoyed partying?

Kenney: Oh yeah, they were -- most of the athlete's up there were, it was a...it was a controlled party atmosphere; but it wasn't out of hand.

Aguilar: OK. You also worked while you were going to La Salle?

Kenney: Yes, I worked at a hospital at 5<sup>th</sup> and Reed in South Philadelphia, as an information clerk -- person who was at the front desk when you walked into the hospital; and, I worked in a restaurant, Luigi's Restaurant, in Olde -- in South Street area, as a busboy and bartender.

Aguilar: And, of course, you mentioned you also did volunteer work for State Senator Fumo?

Kenney: Correct, I volunteered from '78 to '80, when I graduated there was a position that became available; and I was offered the job and took it.

Aguilar: That's... that's obviously an important component of your career as you went on to become active in local politics, and I'll return to that; but, regarding La Salle's



Aguilar: relationship with the community -- this is something which I think is a topic for all urban universities -- were relations between La Salle students and the surrounding neighborhood at all tense...?

Kenney: We lived.... we lived in an apartment with mostly non-students. We had some issues. I wouldn't call -- I wouldn't term any of it tense; there's always that town and gown stuff that goes on, but I don't remember any specific incidents that were any problems.

Aguilar: And, were you involved in student organizations at La Salle, or...?

Kenney: Not really, no, I -- no, I really wasn't involved in any... any clubs or anything like that.

Aguilar: OK. Well, I'll let you answer this: in light of your later success in politics, I'm curious, if you ever -- were you ever involved in student government?

Kenney: No, I wasn't.

Aguilar: So, it took some time for you to develop a political consciousness.

Kenney: I think that the -- my volunteer days with Fumo opened up my eyes to some of the issues relative to politics, local politics, which were very interesting and kept my interest enough to make me take a job there and spend fourteen years there; so -- yeah, I think it was that; going into that office was the reason why I got into the.. the elected office.

Aguilar: Well then regarding political science, you said you were a political science major; is that when you chose to major in political science, after you...?

Kenney: To tell you the truth, I was probably intending on going to law school, and was

Kenney: recommended that political science would be... would be a good vehicle for that – did not go to law school in the end; probably was interested in politics and history and... and went in that direction for that reason.

Aguilar: And how popular was political science as a major at La Salle?

Kenney: Well, it was -- I can't, it's hard for me to judge based that other people were in other -- were other avenues of study, so it was, I guess, popular with the people who chose it, but -- there were science majors and math majors and accounting majors; so, it's a pretty diverse curricula.

Aguilar: So, would you say the La Salle students were opinionated regarding politics?  
Were...

Kenney: I said that?

Aguilar: *Would* you say -- I'm sorry.

Kenney: Oh, would I say?

Aguilar: Would you say La Salle...?

Kenney: There were elements of the campus that were politically involved, and had political – I remember Bill Gray, when he first ran, was first running for Congress when he lost, appearing in the quad, and there were some active students out there, and, you know -- it's... it's like any other college campus you have people who are involved in politics and they consider it a hobby and a pastime for them, and there are others who are just teenagers and young adults and aren't engaged in anything at that point.

Aguilar: OK. I'm also going to ask you about how your work with Fumo might have

Aguilar: contrasted with other students -- but, I also want to ask you: do you know of any professors who particularly inspired you with regard to your eventual entrance in politics?

Kenney: I think Dr. Courtney was pretty -- he was a decent, regular guy who was very interested in his students' welfare; but I don't think anyone in particular inspired me to become involved in politics..

Aguilar: So you... you gained your interest from the community?

Kenney: That, and -- yeah, that and, I think, going back to my high school days as, you know -- with the Jesuit message.

Aguilar: Mm-hmm. OK. And, how you identified politically in college -- I suppose, you were always a Democrat?

Kenney: My family was always a Democrat -- were always Democrats. I mean, I was a Democrat but not a -- at the time, I don't remember being all that politically motivated at the time -- had an interest, but not something that I was doing all the time.

Aguilar: And, therefore, it took your volunteer work to excite that which you began at the age of nineteen?

Kenney: Correct.

Aguilar: What year was that? You say it was...?

Kenney: 1978.

Aguilar: ...'78. And about Fumo specifically, what attracted you to..?

Kenney: I had a friend who was an acquaintance of his; so, when I was interested in

Kenney: volunteering, I talked to the friend of mine, and he said he knew Vince from teaching with him in high school; and he was the entre, so that's the place I went; so I had somebody to get me into the door.

Aguilar: OK. So, would you say that degree of political awareness that that represents, on your part, was unusual at La Salle?

Kenney: No – I'll tell you, when your nineteen, most 19 year-olds did not really know what they want to do in life. I knew I was interested in kinda local politics, and sought out a friend of mine who had an acquaintance who was a state senator who just got elected, and I wound up volunteering there and liked it, and stayed on; and was offered a position when... when one became available, and it happened to be – coincide with my graduation from La Salle.

Aguilar: OK. And you said you stayed with him for...?

Kenney: Fourteen years, well two years volunteer and 14 on the payroll.

Aguilar: Ahh..

Kenney: I'm sorry -- twelve on the payroll: two volunteer, fourteen total.

Aguilar: When you graduated in 1980, there was of course a presidential election...

Kenney: Mm-hmm.

Aguilar: I'm curious if Ronald Reagan was well-known at that point among the La Salle student population?

Kenney: No, he wasn't. Actually, the '80 election I was more involved in because I was a delegate to the National Convention, the Democratic Convention; and we were Kennedy delegates who were trying to unseat Carter; we did not, were obviously

Kenney: were not successful, Carter won -- I mean, Carter won the nomination; but we were Kennedy people at the time, and that was in New York City, and that was a lot of fun; that was a great experience.

Aguilar: Oh, that's interesting, did you go with other people from La Salle.

Kenney: No, it was actually more from Senator Fumo and his organization -- got elected as, a member of the Democratic National Committee and, as a delegate -- and went to New York, as a Kennedy delegate.

Aguilar: Alright. Well, before I move onto the period beyond your time at La Salle, do you have anything you would like to add about that period?

Kenney: No, that's pretty much it.

Aguilar: I want to mention a local event, which was quite, perhaps, critical: in 1983 there was a -- this city experienced a quite divisive mayoral election, that of Rizzo vs. Goode...

Kenney: Mmm-hm.

Aguilar: ...I'm going to check this tape just to make sure...

Kenney: Yeah, sure.

Aguilar: ...excuse me -- of Rizzo vs. Goode. Did that election reveal anything important about the city's race relations?

Kenney: Well I think the city's race relations are always difficult, race relations in general are. It's natural for people to support those who have a similar background than they do; and there are people who can find it in their ability to vote for a candidate based on their qualifications as opposed to their color, but I was a Street -- I mean,

Kenney: Street -- a Goode supporter: I voted for Wilson Goode against Frank Rizzo both times, even though I was at -- lived in South Philadelphia.

Aguilar: OK. Pursuing that, did the election itself reveal anything about the political climate that would be to come over the next...?

Kenney: Well, I mean -- obviously MOVE and that... that tragedy had a lasting impact on the city's history and psyche. It had a lasting impact on the legacy of Wilson Goode -- for the negative. And, well, in the second election with Rizzo, the year that he died: I don't think it would have been that close as it was the first time out.

Aguilar: Now, that does bring up another interesting point: since you were a Goode supporter, how was Goode's victory, or how was Goode himself perceived, in South Philadelphia?

Kenney: Not very well, he didn't get many votes in South Philadelphia. I mean, my votes for Wilson Goode were as much against Frank Rizzo as it was for Wilson Goode -  
- so...

Aguilar: And, I suppose then your support of Goode was parallel to Fumo's support, I assume, of Goode?

Kenney: Fumo supported Goode, also; I just didn't -- I was not impressed with Frank Rizzo's style. I mean, a lot of people worshipped him, a lot of people thought he was a... a terrific mayor. I did not like the brash style and... and kind of in your face way; so, I never really was impressed by it -- and one of the reasons why I voted for Goode twice.

Aguilar: OK. One thing which is coincidental I suppose: you are a member of City Council

Aguilar: and you now serve with the sons of the two former two mayors...

Kenney: Mm-hmm.

Aguilar: ... Rizzo Jr., Wilson Goode, Jr.

Kenney: Right.

Aguilar: They are both mentioned occasionally as contenders for the mayors office. How would you expect such a mayoral contest between the Rizzo... Rizzo's son Rizzo Jr. And Goode's son Goode Jr. of 2007, say...

Kenney: I don't think you'll ever see it.

Aguilar: ...to be different from...? – OK.

Kenney: I don't think you'll ever see it – I don't think Wilson Goode is running in 2007; Rizzo's made some noise, but I don't think he's serious. Part of the issue relative to being a council member and running for mayor is you have to resign as a council member, and I don't think either one of them is willing to do that; so I don't anticipate that that's going to be an inevitability.

Aguilar: OK. Well, any... any thoughts on Wilson Goode, Jr. as... as a candidate?

Kenney: He's a thoughtful guy -- he works hard, he's involved in serious issues. He's a bit enigmatic, its difficult to know just what he's like – he kinda keeps his cards close to his chest, and that's his style. I've supported and tried to support the issues that he's brought forward, and he's... he's a hard working council member.

Aguilar: Well, let me mention a quote from a book you may or may not have read:

*Philadelphia* written by Larry Kane. Kane has written of you "City Councilman Jim Kenney of Philadelphia will someday be mayor..."

Kenney: I think he might be wrong.

(Laughter)

Aguilar: "...Kenney has a mixture of street savvy and brilliant intuition." Do his comments surprise you?

Kenney: Yeah, I mean I don't think of myself as brilliant; I'm flattered that someone like Larry Kane had that opinion of me -- I like Larry; I respect him. I, at one point in time, considered being mayor -- I don't think its for me. I enjoy being a council member, probably will run again for another term in 2007, which would give me 20 years at the end of that term. I 'll have to see where my kids are at that point in their lives, what's going on and -- we'll see; I doubt it, though. I would have probably answered that question differently five years ago.

Aguilar: OK, yeah, I expect -- especially with the speculation that was present back then. Let me ask you about your -- the beginning of your interest in running for office: when you first ran in 1991, there must have been some factors which coalesced, or made you choose that decision?

Kenney: It actually came together quite quickly. I got to a point in my career where either I was going to wind up staying with Senator Fumo for my career, or doing something different. I was 31, 32 at the time -- was I? Yeah, I was -- what was I then? I was 31, I think, and was looking for something different to do with my career, and it came together quite quickly, as a matter of fact. I suggested that I might have a shot at an at-large spot -- Senator initially was against it, he didn't think we could do it; and then went and talked to a couple other supporters of



Kenney: mine who convinced him that it was the right thing to do, and it got put together pretty good – pretty quickly.

Aguilar: I'm going to do something just because we have a...a format issue with this tape.

Kenney: OK.

End Tape 1./ Begin Tape 2, Side 1.

Aguilar: OK, since this is starting a new tape I'm going to just mention: my narrator is Councilman-At-Large James Kenney; date is March 14, 2006; and I'm in his office: City Hall Room 330. So, we were discussing more recent events; so I'm going to ask you to repeat one... one thing: you mentioned that events coalesced very quickly in 1991?

Kenney: Yeah. I was making a career decision on whether or not to stay with the senator or to do something different, and there was a lot of people who were talking about running for council and thought we'd have a good shot; initially he was not in favor of it, but I talked to a number of his supporters who convinced him that it could be done; and we put it together quickly, and we were successful.

Aguilar: And, of course, you have been... you have been winning with handsome margins; was that first election a close one?

Kenney: I did well in the first election, but I didn't attribute it to anything I did, because really I was an unknown. I came in first in the Democratic primary, but I would think it was more organization and party-backing and money raised and well-

Kenney: spent that caused that. I really wouldn't attribute it to my own popularity because no one knew who I was at that time.

Aguilar: Coincidentally, do you recollect the consumer activist Max Weiner?

Kenney: Do I remember him? Yeah.

Aguilar: ...Because I was involved within a limited degree in volunteering, I believe, in his controller campaign in, I guess -- or, maybe I was not involved in that campaign specifically, because I went to college in '89...

Kenney: Right.

Aguilar: ...but, he was running in that year, was he not -- in that he died?

Kenney: Yeah, in the year he died he was running, yes;

Aguilar: Any..

Kenney: ...and his wife, I think, took over his spot for the Consumer Party.

Aguilar: He didn't win, though.

Kenney: No.

Aguilar: Any feelings about his legacy?

Kenney: Max was... Max was an honest guy who told you what he thought -- he was for the little person and there was no games played with him. He just -- he had his beliefs and he...and he did his best to support and represent poor people working people, and he was an interesting guy to talk to, and he created his own legacy here in the city -- and it's a good one.

Aguilar: And someone I met at that time connected to his campaign was Lance Haver.

Kenney: Correct. Lance is a good -- Lance has followed in his footsteps, and he's done

Kenney: good job also, Lance. He's a good person.

Aguilar: This is something which I'm somewhat interested in: do you happen to remember who you replaced on council?

Kenney: It's hard when you're at-large, because you're really not running head-to-head against someone -- but for most of the people believe that Franny Rafferty was the one I replaced.

Aguilar: And he was running in the race?

Kenney: Yes, he lost -- he came in sixth, I believe.

Aguilar: Let me mention something about Rafferty. Of course, let me ask a little about that line -- that topic: Rafferty was sort of an infamous councilman for a number of reasons, I suppose.

Kenney: Yeah, well he had his opinions, and he expressed them.

Aguilar: Do you have any feelings about replacing him on council? Was that viewed at the time as a... as a positive development?

Kenney: Well, Franny basically had a lot of the gay and liberal community against him because of things that he had said about them, and positions he had taken vis-a-vis gay rights and -- that kind of stuff; so he had a kind of a base of opposition that supported me, because I didn't share his views, so -- no, I mean, it was maybe time for him to go. He was angry about a lot of things and expressed that anger publicly, and I think people got a little tired of it.

Aguilar: Now was Rafferty also from the South Philadelphia area?

Kenney: Yeah, Rafferty...Franny's from Gray's Ferry which is the 30<sup>th</sup> -- it's the western

Kenney: side of South Philadelphia. Very troubled neighborhood from time to time -- it's where the march was gonna happen with Farrakhan and the Muslims and the Nation of Islam; and there's been racial tension out there for years.

Aguilar: OK. Regarding being a councilman-at-large, is it a difficult job? Obviously...

Kenney: It's a job like anything else, it has its good times and bad times and has its obstacles, and has its things that you do well and you're happy with. It's not -- I think the most important thing is that people don't -- people in office don't think that they're important, they shouldn't think that they're more important than the average person they represent. I think that what happens is a lot of elected officials on every level is that they get so full of themselves that they don't have the ability to represent their constituents anymore; so, I try to keep myself a little centered and not look at this as I'm some important, famous person; that I'm just doing a job that need to be done, and respect other working people who are doing their jobs.

Aguilar: And when you came to office was Ed Rendell the mayor?

Kenney: Ed Rendell came in to office in '92 with us.

Aguilar: So, obviously you've had a long <sup>working</sup> relationship with him.

Kenney: Yeah, it was a very positive experience working with him -- they were very inclusive, they were thoughtful, they had good ideas; they included everybody in the process. They didn't always tell you what you wanted to hear, but they were always smart about what they did and... and they did a good job for the city.

Aguilar: OK. Ed Rendell of course is a very popular mayor and now governor. About being

Aguilar: councilman -- is there anything you like most, or least, about the job?

Kenney: I like helping people and knowing that I helped them on really serious stuff that maybe I know and the person I've helped knows -- that's rewarding. Being involved I guess in what's going on in the city, being in the forefront of it is exciting. I'm not real happy, I'll tell you, with the way people view us, the way they view the job -- politicians in general. I think I get disappointed sometimes at the way people don't want to contribute to making the city a better place, but expect elected officials to magically fix things for them. I get frustrated with that; but, other than that, it's pretty much like any other job.

Aguilar: And, can you describe ways in your daily routine which is different from other jobs? Do you have very long hours here?

Kenney: Well, you have long hours at certain periods of the year, at certain times of the year: the budget, and the end of the -- right before the summer break. Difficulties of the job is the public notoriety of it: people's feeling that somehow because you are an elected official that somehow they have some ownership rights over you as far as when they talk to you and what they say to you; but, it's just -- as you get older and more mature and more experienced in it you just let things -- you don't try to get too upset about everything.

Aguilar: Well, do you think your doing a very good job as a councilman?

Kenney: Well, I think I'm doing a good job. It's hard to judge yourself as very good or what; but I -- I'm serious about what I do. I think about it all the time. I try to come up with innovative solutions to issues and put them forward -- sometimes

Kenney: they're successful and sometimes they're not; but, you know, I take it serious, and I try to do my best everyday.

Aguilar: And there are a couple of things which you are well-known for introducing on council which I want to represent -- I'm sorry, want to touch upon -- in a moment. However, during your tenure in council -- you've been here for I guess fifteen years?

Kenney: Going on into my 15th, yeah.

Aguilar: You've had the opportunity to work with many councilmen and councilwomen, including people with diverse personalities; for example, I'll mention Angel Ortiz...

Kenney: mm-hmm.

Aguilar: Thatcher Longstreth,

Kenney: Mm-hmm.

Aguilar: Rick Mariano;

Kenney: Right.

Aguilar: ...get some idea of that. Is there a person you can point to who you have had a particularly, or, exceptionally good relationship with?

Kenney: Well, Frank DiCicco's my friend and my neighbor and he represents the district I live in, which is the first district; so I think we've probably been the closest working together. I thought Thatcher was a tremendous person and a true icon -- political icon of the city. I think they took advantage of him at the end when he became more feeble, and had some dementia and physical problems. I think that

Kenney: this administration took advantage of him, in certain areas. Angel is a great guy, worked hard; he got caught up in an issue relative to his drivers's license and that kinda ended his career -- or at least put it on hold. Council President Verna is a nice person, good friend I work hard with; I like Marian Tasco, Michael Nutter, I mean -- most of my colleagues, we have our political differences and you have to try to put them aside when it comes to your personal relationships; so that took, for me, a little time to get used to that; buut I -- some of the people I came in with in '92, that I was not friends with, I am very good friends now. Some of the people I came in with in '92, that are not very good friends with anymore. It's -- people are people and you just have to try to learn to adjust.

Aguilar: OK well, we've spoken a bit about your success in elections. In the last election you garnered more votes than any other candidates. Because of that, I'm going to ask if there is a base in the city which perhaps you depend upon.

Kenney: Well, certainly my South Philadelphia base is important to me. A lot of people, because of my ethnicity, think that I'm from Northeast Philly; but I happen to talk about things and support issues that I think are important to a lot of the residents of Northeast Philadelphia, like the police department and the fire department. I have though, however, been very successful in Center City: the gay community is still very supportive of me; Center City people are very supportive. I've reached out and done well -- better than I've done in the past in areas like Northwest Philadelphia, out in Mt. Airy and East Falls, and up in Roxborough and Chestnut Hill. I think that my -- probably my biggest strength is telling people what I think,

Kenney: and not trying to sugarcoat it and try to lie to them. I think that I tell them where I'm at, and sometimes people find that refreshing; and so I think I've done better in expanding my base of people from South Philadelphia to other places of the city.

Aguilar: And what are... what are, you think, perhaps the most pressing issues at this point in the city's..?

Kenney: I think the tax structure of the city is terrible. It is a absolute negative when it comes to the establishment of business, or the retention of jobs. I think were losing -- were still losing population, although in some areas of the city were gaining. I think overall were still at -- a negative. I think that the violence in the city is a serious problem: we have too many people getting shot and killed; and I think our schools are doing much better, but have a long way to go and we're gonna have to continue to support them so we can have an educated workforce that can be employed when they graduate.

Aguilar: O.K. You mentioned the population issue -- you seem to work very hard to gain attention for the cause of attracting immigration.

Kenney: Correct.

Aguilar: You have a proposal, which I've read; and part of that proposal: you wish to create an Office of New Philadelphians?

Kenney: Correct. Boston has done it, New York has done it; and cities like Boston, New York and Chicago, Houston, Miami, Los Angeles, have all stemmed the tide of their loss of population with legal immigrants. Its been a tradition that's happened



Kenney: in this country for generations now and the city of Philadelphia is not getting its — the share of immigration that it could be getting if it made an effort to do so.

Aguilar: Well Philadelphia been losing people for a long time. I actually was just reading this morning that Philadelphia had almost as many people in 1900, I think, as it has today.

Kenney: Correct. And that was the loss of industry and jobs and people moved out to the suburbs, and, unlike New York or Boston or Chicago, those people weren't replaced with newcomers to this country and to the city; and we have not, kind of, replenished our population stock as we've lost people.

Aguilar: There are a lot of interesting issues on immigration -- let me pause on that, and ask you about something you've done outside of politics. You've chosen to teach;

Kenney: Yes.

Aguilar: ..I believe it's is at the...

Kenney: Fels Center of Government, University of Pennsylvania.

Aguilar: When did you begin doing that and...?

Kenney: I think I'm...I think I'm in my seventh year. I think I'm in my fourteenth semester.

Aguilar: And that must be quite an experience.

Kenney: Oh I love it -- I think it's one of the better things I do in life. I run into a lot of intelligent people, a lot of people from around the country, students from around the world; they're very smart or they wouldn't be at Penn. And I learn as much from them as they do from me; and I really do enjoy it.

Aguilar: And how long would you...

Kenney: Well, right now I'm not -- I'm still excited about it, so -- if I start getting stale or disinterested it's time for me to move on; but right now it's something that I still enjoy tremendously.

Aguilar: And it's something that Ed Rendell also does?

Kenney: Yeah, he gets paid a lot more than I do, but he does that also. There's a number: Congressman Brady teaches at Fels -- Congressman Brady teaches at *Wharton*, our former controller Jonathan Sidel teaches at Fels. There's a number of current and ex-politicians who are teaching there.

Aguilar: OK. How would you like your... your tenure in council to be remembered?

Kenney: That I worked hard that I took... took the job seriously. That I came up with or tried to come up with innovative solutions to problems facing the city and that I was honest and hard-working.

Aguilar: And, you really... you really see yourself leaving this job? You don't...?

Kenney: Well I don't want to do it forever, I mean -- if I run another term and complete that term it'll be twenty years, and that's pretty much a career for most.. for most people; so that's not to say, I'm not ruling out that I wouldn't run another term, but -- twenty years is something to reassess where you're at and what you're doing.

Aguilar: I see; so that reassessment might involve another position in politics?

Kenney: Could involve another position in politics, could involve the private sector, could involve -- who knows? I've found in life that overly planning your life is not necessarily going to be successful because fate and then the lord have other things in mind for you, and if you plan too far out in advance you may be disappointed;

Kenney: so, you plan relatively into the future, but not that far.

Aguilar: O.K. Well, I'm gonna end it there for this session.

Kenney: OK.

Aguilar: Thank you very much, Councilman Kenney.

Kenney: My pleasure.

Aguilar: I hope we can do it again.

Kenney: Yeah.

End of Interview.