



**Don Eldridge**

**Excerpt from *Don Eldridge: An Oral History*  
Member of the Temporary Redistricting Commission of 1983**

Don Eldridge served the Fortieth District in the House from 1953 until 1970, a witness to the bitter struggles fought over redistricting through the 1960s. After his retirement, he served nine years on the State Liquor Control Board and then pursued his private business interests. In 1983 he was appointed to the Temporary Redistricting Commission, the first attempt to draw the boundaries of congressional districts by a commission. Although very active during his years as a legislator as a leader in the Republican caucus and a two-term Speaker, Don was able to adopt a more tempered approach as a commissioner. His comments mark a new attitude toward redistricting as it was removed from the glare of a sitting Legislature.

The complete oral history will be published in 2004.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Before we talk about the redistricting commission that you served on in 1983, I wanted to back up a bit and just generally situate you, I guess we would say. You had been on the Liquor Control Board until 1979 and then Dixy Lee Ray came on and you retired, although not quite as abruptly as maybe you thought you might. What did you do then?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was involved in a couple of business oriented coalitions that addressed unemployment compensation in one period of time, and then industrial insurance in another.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you a formal “signed-up” lobbyist at this point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. This was kind of an ad hoc committee.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Kind of a discussion group, or more than that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It started out as a discussion group and then there was some legislation that was going to make some major changes in unemployment comp and industrial insurance. We had a regular program that we put together and I made a number of trips around the state talking to business groups, chambers of commerce and some political groups—just talking about the general subject of unemployment comp first and then we were able to put together a report about the concerns of the business community.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was this under the umbrella of the Association for Washington Business or a different kind of group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They were involved but they were just one of many groups that had the people—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this include the Washington Roundtable, that far up the ladder? Or smaller businesses?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No, they weren’t involved. But we had people from Weyerhaeuser and Paccar and Boeing, and there were people from the Association of Washington Business and also the Independent Business Association.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they represent the smaller businesses?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They were a pretty broad based group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess why I was asking is, one of the rules for being on the redistricting commission is that you could not be a lobbyist. So, at this point, you were just—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was not a lobbyist.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What would be the word you would use to describe your activity?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was, I guess, more of a coordinator to bring all these groups together and go over the problems and then put together a presentation that we could use around the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In doing this work, did you keep up your contacts with the Republican Party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not directly.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if you were looked on as some kind of an elder statesman type that people called on for these special Party chores?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’ll tell you, I was more involved. I presided at a couple of county conventions and also was chairman of the state

Republican convention a couple of times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** During this time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. So I was there, but I wasn't involved as a state committeeman or anything like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you involved in any kind of campaign work or in helping to direct Party activities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But I did some work with Duane Berentson's campaign for governor. I can't recall just exactly the time frame there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I believe he ran against John Spellman in the primary in 1980, but didn't make it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Spellman was governor during this period of the redistricting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. He came in in '80. You've got some hand in Republican matters, then. You always served in the House. Did you keep a sort of special interest in what was going on in the House?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. As a matter of fact, once I left the Legislature, I left it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** None of this hanging around in the halls business like sometimes happens?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I just didn't believe in that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was wondering if Speaker Polk talked to you about things, or was your time a little bit too far back for his needs, perhaps.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't have too much

contact with him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But somehow your name rises up as appointee for the commission. Maybe now we should turn to that. After the census in 1980 the Legislature passed a redistricting plan like they were supposed to do. I guess it went through pretty easily.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There didn't seem to be much controversy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The Republicans had the majority in the House. In the Senate the Democrats had a majority of one—until Peter von Reichbauer switched sides of the aisle. And there was a Republican governor. For whatever reason, it didn't seem to be as difficult to accomplish as in previous years. But the congressional portion didn't go quite as smoothly and Governor Spellman vetoed that part of it.

Then in 1982 there was another plan, but it was challenged by a group from Everett who didn't like the congressional district that they had been assigned.

**Mr. Eldridge:** They'd been moved into the First District.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, although in the actual wording of their protest, it was more that they called it 'excessive deviation' in district populations.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Even after the figures and the districts were realigned, the Everett area was still out of whack.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just too big a chunk to swallow? Everett's really grown, hasn't it?

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When was the home port idea initiated? Was that about then or a little later?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That came along later.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So then they're going to have even more population, but they're already pretty big.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That whole western part of Snohomish County really grew. You had Boeing coming along about then.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the character of that area be quite different from Seattle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Because Everett was still kind of considered a mill town and it was—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Less cosmopolitan, that's for sure.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Southern Snohomish County became sort of a bedroom community for Seattle.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder if that was the rationale: thinking that all those people were driving into Seattle to work, so they sort of had Seattle interests.

**Mr. Eldridge:** That may have been the rationale in the '81 session when they worked on this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It didn't fly though with the Everett folks.

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was challenged and the court agreed, and they charged the Legislature to come up with a new redistricting plan for the congressional districts by April 10,

1983. They gave them only ninety days, which in redistricting history, is awfully fast.

Was there an election coming up? Is that why they gave them such a short period of time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I presume, although I just don't recall the background of how it got there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm just surmising. I look at that and I think, wasn't there an election in '84?

The legislators didn't want to touch this. They'd done well with the other piece and I guess maybe this was just too much. It was a time of recession and they had their hands full figuring out the budget.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were a lot of factors that just kind of pushed it aside.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They didn't want to do this, so they thought up the idea of having a temporary redistricting commission. At the same time period—I haven't got the time exactly lined up—but this was when the legislation established the 1991 redistricting commission. Your commission was going to be a temporary one, but the other one is going to operate every ten years, so it's not temporary, even if it is intermittent.

Maybe that was where the idea of having a commission do the redistricting rather than the Legislature arose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it was kind of a stop-gap.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you paying attention at all to these developments?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I have no idea why or how I was chosen. I don't ever recall anybody coming to me and saying, "Would you like to do this, or would you do it?"

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They just appointed you without talking to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't ever recall any conversation, although I'm sure there must have been some. The fact that I was from the Second Congressional District I think had some bearing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you supposed to already understand the crucial issues?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think whoever made the decision felt that I probably had some knowledge of the problems in that area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think they just got together in a room and were throwing out some names and they said, "Don Eldridge, he's from up there?"

It sounds like you were still visible. You were still doing things. You were active, but not engaged in the Legislature at that time.

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Anyway, you were appointed. Someone, was it Gary Nelson? Did he come to you? He's identified as being the appointer. Senators appointed some people and House members appointed people, and he was the House minority leader at the time, and you're the Republican appointee from the House.

Did you know the other commissioners? Did you know Ron Dunlap?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Ron had been in the House and Pete Francis I knew.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had been a member of the Legislature.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In the Senate. And James Gillespie, I didn't know him. He's from Spo-

kane.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Had he been a legislator?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't believe so. He was a pretty good head.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So all of these people were pretty adept at this?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was really a pretty good group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have any sense of—if you don't know how you yourself were chosen—do you have any sense of how these people were chosen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Just by the Caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Random names. Did anyone allude to any particular qualifications?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's more a matter of disqualifications. When you look at the law, it lines up: you can't be a legislator, you can't be a lobbyist, you can't be actively working on somebody's campaign and a couple of other things. So I guess you were none of those.

**Mr. Eldridge:** None of the above!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was curious about the geographic representation: three West-siders and one East-sider.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It worked out fairly well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think there was an effort to get people from different parts of the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think there probably was. I

was actually from the northwest corner of the state, and Pete and Ron were from King County. But Ron was pretty much from that east side of the lake and there were a couple of areas that were problems, one at the north end and one at the south end that I think they wanted to address and have someone who was from that area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certain areas of the state are always problematical, aren't they? The eastside and the whole suburban ring around Seattle seemed to be real difficult. And Snohomish County. Can you think of some other areas that are hot spots?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a problem in the Camas area. I think that was kind of a slop-over from the Vancouver area because it was growing fast.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So when you shift this one boundary it bunches up against the next.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you know what was wrong with the Congressional districts? There was Everett, but did the congressmen themselves have a problem? Did they come to you and say, "This is no good. It's going to bump me out of my district," or "I'm not going to be re-elected." I know that several congressmen came and testified before your commission.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. In the Second District we had Al Swift. He was from Everett and they had quite a strong local group that attended a number of the meetings and they testified.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There always seemed to be somebody there from Everett. Before you began your deliberations did the

party people come to you and say, "This is our goal. This is what we want here," or were you left alone to figure out what you wanted yourselves?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We were pretty much on our own. I don't know about the other members. Ralph Mackey was one of the leaders of the Everett group and I had known him through not only the Republican Party activities, but also he had been real active in the Boy Scouts in Snohomish County and I had run into him a number of times at meetings. So I knew him and then Connie Niva was another one who had been active in the Republican Party and she was one of the Everett group that appeared. Then Bob Overstreet, I had known him through the Legislature. He had appeared on a number of issues having to do with water rights or something like that, so he was also from Snohomish County.

But to get back to your question as to whether I had been contacted by either Party people or congressional people, I just don't recall any kind of input from those groups.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think once you actually started your deliberations there were pretty strict rules about who you talked to and who met with whom. You were under the Open Meetings Act. So you'd have to be careful about whom you met with, but I imagine that—implicitly—you would understand what was wanted by the Party, so to speak, what the goals of redistricting were—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I remember having a number of conversations with Pete Francis.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who was of course a Democrat.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that ultimately we probably agreed as to what needed to be done and then we did it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was anyone's seat at stake in these deliberations? If you decided one way or the other where the lines went, would somebody lose their congressional seat?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think there were any boundary changes that would have eliminated anybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So the stakes were not that high?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I could be wrong, but I'm just trying to think. I guess the first re-districting effort by the Legislature after the '80 census, that's when they must have moved Everett into the First District.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's the impression I get.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I just don't recall any big fuss about that at the time, but I'm certain there must have been some people who were really concerned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Enough to go to the courts.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that would have eliminated Al Swift. I'm not quite sure what his residence was. He may not have been right in Everett.

There's always somebody who's going to be affected by these shifts. Of course that was the big one, moving Everett out and then, of course, they ultimately moved it back into the Second District.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which must have bumped the line somewhere else. So, Everett was the most difficult area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just moving the other areas a little bit, whereas Everett, that was a bigger

piece?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A bigger block. And the difference in the population figures was greater in that First and Second District making that shift.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I wonder why they made that move? It's so easily challenged if the numbers are way up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** And while the numbers were greater in that area than any of the other areas that had problems, it really wasn't that great a percentage. It was the greatest, but it still—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So it's all relative?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. But you had to crunch them down even more.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's getting stricter and stricter how you count. It used to be wildly out of whack and now it's getting much more precise.

When you had to redraw the lines, did it end up bumping all the lines all over the place, or were there some areas in the state that were pretty much set and then you just work from that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some districts that really weren't a problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you try to keep the lines on the crest of the mountains, and not have them slide over the Cascades? Something like that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That was a consideration and of course that was one of the guidelines set up that you didn't want to split districts that you couldn't get from one part to another, and there needed to be bridges or ferries or highways or something so that it was contiguous.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Imagine campaigning if you can't get across your district because of the mountains or one thing or another. You must have had a little bit of experience with that yourself with the San Juan Islands tucked into your district.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It was a little difficult.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was, of course, a bipartisan committee. Did you just look at population figures in communities of interest or do you also look at how people vote and try to create some kind of balance there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** If there was any of that it was done on a kind of one-to-one basis. I don't ever remember sitting down with a committee and saying, "Well, we've got to shift this a little bit here to give us a balance Democrat-Republican. But I'm sure it was on everybody's mind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know in the legislative districts you can shift them around and you can make districts Republican dominated or Democratic oriented, or you can shift them a little bit this way and make a swing district. There was some pretty fierce counting up of noses about which way it was going to go back in the old days. But a congressional district is pretty big. It's not street by street, it was whole areas of the country.

**Mr. Eldridge:** County by county.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do areas have a character in that sense?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Some do. But I don't think that it had a lot of bearing on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think, just philosophically, that is healthier for politics, to have lots of swing districts where people really have

to fight it out or to have pretty solid districts where legislators feel more secure, say, and then can maybe take the more risky votes because they're not always looking over their shoulder to the next election?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I presume in reality that's the way it is. I think safer districts as long as they're balanced between districts, not within districts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I know there have been lots of articles written on this issue and there are lots of points of view on that. Some people really favor swing districts. They think it makes politicians work harder. Other people think it's terrible, that it means that nobody will ever stick their neck out and take a hard vote.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. The district I was in, I guess over the years was a swing district. I suspect that if I had continued on, it might not have been the next session or the next election, but maybe the one after that that they would have knocked me off. And you know that's what happens when the longer you're in, the more votes you have to take and there's always somebody that'll put a group together to say, "Well, look, he supported that or he opposed it," and then they'll go out to get you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is there anything you can do about that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I'm not sure that if there were a concerted effort it would get very far if you could do anything about it. Because there are still a lot of people out there that say, "I don't go by the Party, I go by the individual." Party affiliation doesn't mean anything. I've often times thought that's wrong. There were periods of time when there was no Party loyalty at all, and I think that's a bad situation.



**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it fragment so much that each representative has no allegiance to anything?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Goes off on his own, yes. And that's what I see as our problem with the current-day legislators, is that they are one issue people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But meanwhile they have to vote on a wide range of issues. I wonder how they line themselves up?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The people who are in now and who are kind of looking at these situations say, "Well, they're all over the lot and they don't have any loyalty to anybody other than the one issue that they're interested in."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The group that got them in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It must make leadership very difficult.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, districts change because populations move around and jobs come and go with Boeing having its booms and busts and whatnot. Industries change. I imagine districts can change their character depending on changing economics.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. You know, that Second District with the Everett situation, that went from a blue-collar district with the timber industry, the mills and the logging and so on, to a high-tech Boeing oriented area.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Quite a different group of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's a different type of person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think the same would be true down in Vancouver. That's a real high-tech area now with a huge bulge in population that was never there before.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And also the whole suburban phenomena has changed Seattle so much, I think, where once you had Republican members from Seattle and now you don't.

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's get back to the commission. How did you go about choosing your chairperson? You had a couple of people put forward, it looks like from the records. They were both University of Washington professors of one kind or another. Did they come and make presentations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We interviewed them and chose Rieke.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What was impressive about him?

**Mr. Eldridge:** He was, from my memory standpoint, he was fairly soft spoken but firm, and had a good understanding of the problem, and had apparently done quite a little mediation so he knew how to give and take.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He had some skill?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And he was, I think, the front runner from the outset.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he set a tone of compromise and conciliation and civility, say, by his personal qualities?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I notice at the end of all your work one of your last decisions or pronouncements is that you named the commission the Rieke Commission. Is that because you wanted to honor his work?

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it just a convention?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just because he was pretty much, you might say, the leader of the group.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Though a non-voting member. So his skill would be getting people to work together or what would he do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And of course the key person was Schweitzer who was actually the geographer, the cartographer, who actually drew the maps.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And—for the first time—you're using computers?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. But he and Rieke worked very well together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You met quite often at SeaTac, in some meeting room up there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I imagine that's for the convenience of your Spokane person flying in?

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would people come and give presentations to you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. We had both written and oral presentations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Can you describe a typical

hearing? That's what it would be called, a hearing?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Rieke would set the agenda. I recall at one point Al Swift had some commitments, I don't know whether they were in Washington, D.C. or in the District, or whatever, but he asked if he could be on first on the agenda. And Rieke brought that to the attention of the committee and we agreed to accommodate him, so he made his presentation and then passed out hard copies of the testimony.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When Congressman Swift presented, what would he tell you, the nature of his district or what he wanted? What exactly would a person tell you? What the difficulties were with the present lines?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. They'd usually start out with: the way this is, we've got problems, and then he'd outline what those problems were.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He'd say, "Over in this corner here, there's this kind of...?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was more general than that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And would they say, "I wish you'd put the line here."

**Mr. Eldridge:** In many instances they'd have a map saying this is the way we think it ought to be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they just draw their area? What about the rest of the state? Every line would jostle every other line.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Most of them would be concerned primarily just with their own little area of the state.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And your job is to put it together.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. To figure out if we do this what's going to happen all the way around.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. I know that there was a sort of magic number that you were supposed to reach that was mathematically arrived at, I suppose. So would they draw districts that had that number or would their districts have some problems in them, too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd have that, but there were a number of proposals and all of them came fairly close to the ideal population figure, but shifting different areas, different census tracts. Of course that was another problem. That we shifted from precinct designation to the census tract.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which aren't the same thing at all, are they?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you have overlays or something? How would you physically know what you were dealing with?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. There were maps and copies of maps floating around and it was a hodgepodge. It's just a good thing that it wasn't any more serious than it was.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How many congressional seats are there?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We had eight, I think.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Imagine doing statewide redistricting for the Legislature. I just don't know how they could do it. You at least had smaller numbers of districts. You would have your meetings then, and there

would be the four of you. You're at some kind of table, I assume and then people come up and give their presentations and the chairperson is sitting up there. Then there are some staff people. Would they all present and then you'd go somewhere and study the maps, or how did that work?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They might not even appear at the same meeting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you wouldn't necessarily start with all the information?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would go piece by piece. Would you do it regionally at least? Have all the people from the Everett area give their spiels, or would that trickle in?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Ordinarily, you'd have groups of people who would testify.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All the interested parties from one area?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And that was one of the things that Rieke laid down, was that everybody was going to be heard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you have some strange kind of presentations? Some people who were a little wacky?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall. I think everybody was pretty objective and straight forward and sincere.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Certain issues attract people. Was this well publicized? How did people know to come?

**Mr. Eldridge:** The staff notified interest groups that had at the outset indicated that they

wanted to be included.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All the congressional offices—

**Mr. Eldridge:** The political parties and—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Like the different jurisdictions within the city of Everett or—

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think they covered the ground pretty well.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you feel you were successful? That people did feel that they were heard and that their issues were considered, because that's a part of keeping people happy too?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. And while there probably could have been an expansion of the groups that came in to testify, because I'm sure there were groups out there that weren't heard. Not because we closed the door on them, but just because they didn't get into the mix.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you think it would have made a difference?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably not.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the end it has to come down to somewhere, the lines.

In your deliberations, the areas are supposed to be contiguous, which means the lines are supposed to be somewhat straight, not zig-zaggy all over the place, right?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're supposed to follow natural boundaries like rivers or mountain chains or whatever. What were some of the other criteria?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I just mentioned briefly earlier, the matter of how do you get from one part of the district to another.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Right. Roads.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Bridges and ferries and whatever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** All the links. What about economic groups? Would you have—I'm not sure how this would work. Parts of the state would be more farming and rural. Other parts—wouldn't they all be kind of a mixture though? Everett includes both pretty sizeable towns and even cities, plus the outlying area which would be pretty rural? How do you figure out if that makes a community?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think that that was a major factor because I think if you look at every congressional district in the state you're going to find a mix. It may be it wouldn't be equally balanced but you'd have both rural and urban.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would the rural areas be economically somehow related to the metropolitan areas? Is that where people come in and do their shopping or that kind of thing? Would you be thinking about how do people really live here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think community of interest would be—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How would you define that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it's sort of a natural phenomenon that it isn't too difficult to figure out community of interest.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's a great sounding phrase, but I'm just wondering in practice how it actually came down to you're in this commu-

nity or you're in—I'm drawing the line and you're actually in this community. How would you do that?

**Mr. Eldridge:** For instance, I can't speak with any great authority on a congressional district, but for instance, in my legislative district you had Mount Vernon as probably the commercial center of the district, and yet the people of the San Juan Islands gravitated more to Anacortes because that was the ferry landing and you had to go through there. There were some of us who felt that eventually Island County ought to be in that district because Whidbey Island pretty much gravitates toward Mount Vernon. And Camano Island, more towards Everett.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Just the way things line up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. And so, I suppose, sometime somebody is going to suggest that Camano Island be in the Everett legislative district and Whidbey Island be in the Fortieth or the Mount Vernon legislative district. But then, you see, you've split a county and that's not particularly good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So county commissioners would be not in any kind of relationship to legislators?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right. There are a lot of factors on those legislative districts that are pretty tough.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's almost paralyzing to think about.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just as an aside, when we had legislative redistricting in '57, the League of Women Voters got an initiative and then the next session the Legislature threw it out and started over again. That was when Bob Greive came into his own.

But, you see, we kind of lucked out. We were one of the legislative districts that had three seats, and Jim Ovenell just came to Ralph Rickdall and me and said, "You know, I'm just not going to run again, so why don't we let them eliminate one seat without any fuss and we'll zip through this and not have any problems," and that's what happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So there was no pain there.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. It worked out fine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They must have been very happy to have one problem solved at least without knocking out a sitting legislator.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But I'll tell you, that Bob Greive was a genius in that situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He must have been able to hold so much detail in his mind.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'll tell you, you get Greive and Gorton in the same room with all their maps, and I'll tell you it was a circus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Those were two good minds.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy! I'll say. You can say that both of them had it all up here, and I think either one of them could tell you how many blocks you'd have to move the line in order to swing it from a Republican to a Democrat district.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it was right down to that, too, wasn't it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just a pencil thickness there on the map.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was pretty fierce, I know. I wondered if the '80s redistricting was more, I don't know if it was amicable, but it was

certainly less fierce, partly because people were exhausted from the earlier battles and never wanted to go back to that street by street thing again. As if you had all had it with the wrangling.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It almost came to the point where it was “put something in front of us and we’ll sign it!”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** “Who cares? Just don’t make me do it.” It was all consuming when it was happening, that’s for sure. So you were not looking at things in that kind of detail at all I am assuming?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. I think that the members of the commission were pretty responsible in looking at the big picture and not trying to disrupt everything and everybody, but adhere to the criterion that were set up and try to fit everything in.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But you were partisan in the sense that you were representing your party. Did you have areas where you could not agree? Where it did mean somebody coming out ahead in a way that was difficult for the other party?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I’m not sure that the disagreements were primarily of a partisan political nature. I think they were more maybe rural/urban or different interests rather than partisan political.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I’m interested in how you actually did it. You got all this data, you’ve got all these maps, and you’ve got this geographer, who, if you read the minutes carefully, you commissioners go off and have lunch and he has to sit there through lunch and pound away on his keyboard. I was wondering if you brought him a sandwich or something? Did you and your Republican colleague, Ron

Dunlap, go off and figure out stuff or did you all four keep talking together? Did it ever split up that way where you had party strategies?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t know. I probably had more discussions with Pete Francis than I did with Ron Dunlap.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you two former legislators the more experienced ones in the group?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don’t know about that, but we seemed to be pretty compatible and we could sit down and discuss things without getting mad or waving our arms around or trying to maneuver.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was more of a personality issue?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you both look at redistricting with the same perspective?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we both wanted to carry out the mandate from the courts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were the other members not quite as solid, shall we say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** We really didn’t choose up sides or anything like that; it’s just that that’s sort of the way it evolved.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The chairperson could not vote. Was that ever a problem? Did you ever deadlock? Did you ever wish somebody could come along and tilt it one way or the other?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. And I think that there really weren’t a lot of disagreements. I think we relied quite heavily on the professional experts. If they said, “You’ve got to move so many people out of this district and you’ve

got to adjust this line,” and they would give good, reliable reasons, that seemed to be good enough for everybody.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they have a map and say, “How about drawing it here?” and draw a line for you and say, “And this makes X number of people, and then over here, this will fork this way.” Would you just kind of look at things like that, and say okay? Or “No, I don’t want that bump over there.” How would you physically say “this line” or “that line?”

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, I think everybody had their opportunity to make comments and to make suggestions.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did it presuppose that you knew a great deal about the geography and population of the state? That you were experienced with the different interest groups?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I can recall that on occasion we’d be looking at an area and one of the other committee members from say, Spokane or Seattle, would say, “Don, that’s in your area. What do you think about this,” or “what can you add?” So I don’t think anyone was trying to mastermind the whole thing.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then, say, the person from Spokane would be expected to have a handle on that area, and you would perhaps defer a little bit to their views from their end of the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Sure. I think that’s a safe statement.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It all sounds so civilized. I have read about how redistricting happened in the past and it certainly wasn’t like that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that the legislative redistricting probably caused more fireworks

than congressional lines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There are more people involved, more seats affected. Was the chairperson completely impartial? He was just interested in process, or did he have an idea of how redistricting should work himself? Did he come in neutral?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I would think that he was pretty objective and pretty neutral.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It comes down to definition: communities of interest or whatever. I can see how there might be areas where he might say, “Well, no, I think this particular criteria is more important,” or not. I don’t know.

**Mr. Eldridge:** He may have been a master at steering the group, but if so, I think it was virtually impossible to detect, which makes him a good chair.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In the end, were you able to please most people? Were there groups that felt unsatisfied?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I didn’t hear a lot of grumbling. I’m sure that every group kind of shook their heads and said, “Well, I wish they’d done it this way.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The armchair redistricters are probably legion. But it wasn’t challenged in any way, was it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Once we signed off on it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had some really late nights. There was one where there’s a notation that something was said or done at 4:00 a.m. Is that because you just kept at it until you resolved certain things?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall on this particular project any early morning sessions, but I'm sure there probably were some and I just have an idea that a lot of the extended time was due to letting everybody have a chance to say something. If we had twenty-five people who wanted to testify and we got to midnight and there were still five of them, we'd keep going.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Also, if you were close to some kind of decision on some line? It still takes time even though you used a computer, to crunch the numbers. For that poor geographer guy—it sounds like he never slept—to be able to show you, okay, here is what this means.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I guess I was picturing that you might just be hanging out and drinking coffee and waiting a while for certain things to jell.

**Mr. Eldridge:** There were some times that happened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you always meet at SeaTac, or did you meet in different places around the state?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As I recall we had all of our meetings there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there a lounge area? What kind of facilities did you have?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was in an office building. I think the state had leased space there so that it was available.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, you'd have like a hearing space. Would you have a place where you could go to relax a bit while you were waiting for the numbers? Did you have to sit in those

chairs at the table the whole time, or what would you do?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that there was any kind of a lounge area, but there may have been other office space that—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You could leave and go to a restaurant, I suppose.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Around there I suppose everything is twenty-four hours a day. I'm just trying to picture exactly what this service entailed. Fairly intense, while you were doing it, by the sound of it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I'm imagining while you're doing this you're not doing much else. You're just really thinking redistricting. Is that true?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that it took up a lot of the thinking capacity of everybody. But, you know, as I look back, I think it went pretty smooth.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It seemed to.

**Mr. Eldridge:** We didn't have any big conflicts over decisions that were made and everybody was pretty responsible and objective and trying to do the job that we were assigned to do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have been unprecedented.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the members were pretty dedicated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were paid, weren't you? A per diem?



**Mr. Eldridge:** A per diem and mileage, something like that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I don't think you were lavishly paid. How did you feel doing this work? Was this something you just saw as an honor or a way to serve?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I was interested and I thought that it was a plus to be kind of on the inside of what was going on in the area of redistricting. I didn't really consider it an honor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A duty?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was a labor of love.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You are, it's fair to say, a fairly political person. You've been pretty deeply involved for a long time in politics. Did you have a feeling of wanting to take care of how this was done? That this would be a good process in that you could maybe improve on how it had been done in the past?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that was kind of—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you going to be a model redistricter?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I never felt that. I just figured that reasonable people can come together and do a reasonable job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would this just be a very interesting intellectual problem to solve? Would that be part of the challenge? This would be that you could learn a lot?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think, yes, there's some of that, and then I think just the mechanics of putting the thing together is an interesting process.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do you like jigsaw puzzles?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As a matter of fact, I do.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It strikes me that this is kind of like a big puzzle. When you were doing it, did you occasionally reflect back on how re-districting had happened in Senator Greive's era and Slade Gorton?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This was a whole new ballgame?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. Just a different situation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There were pretty strict rules on who could talk to whom. Caucus people could not talk to the staff people and all that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Why was it laid out like that? Just to keep it completely above board?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that they didn't want any partisan political influence. I think probably that was an area where Rieke was pretty strong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that part of setting this tone?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure that it did set the tone, but I'm not sure that it was actually plotted out that way, but that was the ultimate result.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's a real departure from the old days when everybody got in there and had a hand in drawing the lines. So, about the only time that people could have input would be at these hearings and then that would be completely open and public and on the record?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And then there'd be no other lines of communication, is what I've been reading in the meeting minutes.

Did you have enough staff? Did you have an adequate budget? I noticed that there was a proposed number for the commission and then the actual appropriation appeared to be quite a bit less than that. Did you feel like you had enough resources to do the job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. They may have been working overtime, but I think that the staff did a commendable job.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you feel that you had enough time?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so. You know, you can stretch a project like this out forever.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's true. Maybe it's better if you only have a short time. Really, you had a very short amount of time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that's good.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did that put the pressure on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. I think that it resulted in the expedient process. Get in and get out.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It keeps the concentration focused.

And information? You felt that you had clear and reliable information to make the decisions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think we did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The information, which way did it flow? You had the geographer. Did he give you information and then you made

policy decisions, or did you say, "These are our policy objectives, what information supports this?"

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think at the outset that was the thrust, and then as we got more and more into the thing, it became a little more technical and it kind of turned around in the other direction.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You started out with some general principles of how you wanted things to look and then he would sketch out the lines and numbers and you would gradually meet somewhere in the middle?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's pretty much the way it operated.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What if you had not had computer support for this? How do you imagine it would have gone had you been back in the pencil and paper days?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would have been six months.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So technology really makes a huge difference here?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, yes. I think this is one area where a computer can really speed things up and probably be a lot more accurate than past efforts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Were you kind of a computer *aficionado*?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Never have been and never will be.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was it kind of marvelous? Your geographer would hit the keyboard and these maps and calculations would come up.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. I wasn't impressed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were probably pretty happy not to be doing it on an adding machine?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's true. And the fact that they could go overnight and come back the next day with this whole thing revised. That, of course, was the marvel of it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** As long as you weren't the one having to actually do it.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that the legislators previously did a lot of the actual drawing and coloring. They had staff people, but they were right in there too, by the sounds of it.

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Actually drawing the lines. So this was a little more one step removed in the sense that you're not actually having to get out the paper yourself.

**Mr. Eldridge:** No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Because it was under the open meetings law, did that make it easier or harder to come to decisions?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it was any more difficult than if we'd been off in a room that was locked.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you actually deliberate in front of people, or just hear testimony in front of people?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There'd be some general dis-

cussion among the members of the committee. But basically I think most of the people who attended were either testifying themselves or were interested in the testimony.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Under the Open Meetings Act, are you allowed to have what I think are called executive sessions where you just talk to each other? At some point can you just talk to each other or do you always have to be in front of everybody?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact I think that the copies of minutes here indicate that the chairman called for an executive session and then called the meeting back to order as an open meeting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So then you would go somewhere and figure out something and then come back with the decision?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Either that or we'd clear the room.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The audience would leave, not you?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Just depending.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And the press stayed with you pretty much through the whole thing. Did they cover this pretty fairly? Did they understand it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There wasn't a lot of press. I think it would have required a lot of study on the part of the reporters and I'm not sure they would want to get into it that much.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would they just come for the highlights? Just to keep up a bit?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When they did write about it, did they do a very good job? Did they understand it?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** One of the issues that I found really interesting was how to count the military personnel. Can you explain what the problem was there? Is it because they're so transitory?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And because they're not actually from the state half the time? They come in from everywhere.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that most of them probably voted in their home state by absentee ballot. So I'm not sure how much influence military votes would have. But just from the numbers of military, for instance in Pierce County, could be quite a difference.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Does it fluctuate? Do you have big groups come in and then they're trained and then they go somewhere else? Is it because the numbers are always changing and the people are always moving around?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There's a lot of that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Or Bremerton where they're in the ship or they're on land or they're back and forth? Swell the numbers and then they go down all at once?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure there's a lot of fluctuation in military populations.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That seems to be one of the problems, just trying to count them. I don't know if you had a formula in the end, or what

you did there.

What was the difference between a "transient person" and a "non-resident person?" Is that, say, a person from Texas who's going to vote absentee in Texas, but they're stationed in Washington? I'm not clear about that.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know. It was a muddle. We finally just decided that we'd consider the two terms the same.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I certainly got tangled up in it. It came up several times and it was almost indistinguishable. But the commission finally did come to some kind of decision.

Then there was an odd little thing where there was a boat counted or not counted in a district and I couldn't figure out if that was a houseboat or why it made such a difference? There were some funny little things that you had to deal with.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think the houseboats on Lake Union, there was some discussion as to which direction they—

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Where did they disembark?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I was just wondering how many people could that possibly be?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It wouldn't be too many in the overall picture.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had your different issues and then you came up with different plans. One of them was the Morrill plan. Was that named for the geographer from the earlier days of redistricting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. From the University of Washington.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I couldn't quite make out where he fit in this. Is this a plan that he came up with on his own or is this his old plan?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think when they referred to it they were referring to the plan that he put together prior to this.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Back in the 1970s. And then Commissioner Gillespie came up with a plan and so did Commissioner Francis. And I think you did, too, for that matter.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I may have made some comments about somebody else's plan and had some changes involved, but I don't think I ever came up with a map and said, "Here it is." No.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** There was a period there where it was pretty fluid. There were several plans and you were favoring one or the other, I guess. Then eventually you settled on the final plan.

There were some comments that you were trying to arrive at what you would call perfect numbers, which simply means that the districts would be—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Zero deviation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, close to very much the same numbers. Was that possible?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to get to zero, but I tell you, they're pretty close.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So if you aim for perfect you're going to get a lot closer than if you aim for some deviation?

In the end, you finally came down to one plan. What was your process then and what happened? You gave it to the Legislature?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It went back to the Leg-

islature and they had to approve it and then it went to the Governor for signature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was there any kind of hitch in the process anywhere after that point?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as I can remember, it sailed right through.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The courts, the people who had brought the suit for Everett, they were happy?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know if they were happy, but they accepted it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What happens to the court case then? It's over and it's resolved?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it just went away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** This plan lasts for not quite a decade because in 1991 the state has to start all over again with the next census. As far as you know, how did this work out?

**Mr. Eldridge:** As far as I know, it did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Nobody lost their seat? Everybody carried on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't think it had any effect on the makeup of the delegation.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And that would be considered success, wouldn't it? You didn't go in trying to unseat anybody?

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel when it was all done?

**Mr. Eldridge:** A sigh of relief!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you meet at all afterwards? Or you were just feeling you were done and you went home?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that was it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Who was it who would take it to the Legislature? Would the commissioners come before the Legislature and give it to them? How, physically, does that happen?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think that Rieke, probably with the staff people, put the thing together.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And made some kind of presentation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably distributed it to all the members in the House and the Senate.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you commissioners didn't then come to the Legislature and make any kind of presentation?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall of ever even going to the caucus.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did anyone come and thank you for your service?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't recall that anybody did.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** When it's over, it's over, then? Do you maintain an interest in redistricting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Not to the point of doing anything about it!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Once was enough?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** How did you feel about the redistricting that just occurred? Did you have

a sort of fellow feeling for them as they went through their deliberations?

**Mr. Eldridge:** They apparently had no problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They might have had some because they didn't make the deadline.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Let's see now, they did the legislative redistricting but they still had the congressional. Or did they get rid of it too?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think they did them both at the same time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, but I mean I think that they must have had two separate plans, one for legislative and one for congressional

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You'd think that the congressional redistricting would be easier.

**Mr. Eldridge:** You'd think so.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Do congressional lines follow legislative lines in any way? Is that one of the lines you take into consideration?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes, because otherwise you'd get into splitting counties. Legislative lines split counties considerably.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I just wondered if there was a relationship where if you've got the congressional lines lined up you'd at least have those as starter lines for the legislative districts, or the other way around. At least some of those lines would be the very same ones, I would hope.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You wouldn't have totally different lines. You wouldn't have to keep

coming up with brand new lines.

**Mr. Eldridge:** But in order to meet the population requirement—there's almost no way you can avoid having a shift in lines.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Let's see. You were on this temporary commission and then the first time that the law creating the commission came into play would be 1991. Yours was a sort of expedient commission just to take care of the congressional lines. Did you pay attention in 1991 to what was going on?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I really didn't.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** By then you were off doing other things? I was just wondering if commissioners who came after your group ever talked to you or studied your records to see how you did it, because you were pretty successful. You came in on time and you did re-district.

**Mr. Eldridge:** I don't know about the other members, but I didn't have any of the current people that were involved contact me.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It wasn't that much later. I was just wondering if maybe they studied your records to better understand what procedures you had used and perhaps adopt some of your methods. I guess I was just hoping that somebody would learn from each redistricting how to do this so you wouldn't have to start fresh each time with inventing a methodology.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Unless you have a permanent staff it's pretty difficult to do that.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** In your mind, does it come down to the actual people, the commissioners, the chair, the staff people? The chemistry that they have? So that can't be replicated?

**Mr. Eldridge:** It's pretty hard.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose each decade there are slightly different issues. The population—

**Mr. Eldridge:** The population shifts.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Which would bring in a whole new—

**Mr. Eldridge:** Set of circumstances.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it would be a whole new group of congressmen by then. I don't think that—I'd have to look it up, but I don't know if the congressmen who you were dealing with were still in office in the '90s. Maybe some of them but not the whole delegation.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Probably Norm Dicks would be the only one.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He's been there for a long time. I notice he came before your commission.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did he have a particular need?

**Mr. Eldridge:** There was a shift in the Bremerton area. I can't remember just what it was, but I remember there was a problem there.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** These ships going in and out or something? Is there anything else you'd like to say about redistricting?

**Mr. Eldridge:** No. Just to wish the future commissioners good luck!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Any pieces of wisdom? What made your redistricting experience suc-

cessful?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think one of the key factors was the fact that we had a good group and we got along real well. I just think that the political implications were very minimal.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Is that unusual?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think it probably is.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Other redistricting attempts were highly political. No bones about it. Your group did seem to be different. Would that be a piece of advice to the parties when they're choosing the commissioners? To look for people of a certain cast of mind, shall we say?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I think if you pick people who are responsible and objective and maybe a little bit on the low-key side, it shouldn't be a real difficult assignment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I can imagine that if you pick a certain type of commissioner this whole thing could just go south pretty fast.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, boy! I'll say. If there's just one in the group, that could really cause some problems.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Would you say you were an older style of politician where you were still in the "compromise is the way to go" mode? Is that still a political value?

**Mr. Eldridge:** I'm sure it is. I think that unfortunately in the past few sessions that's been lacking.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Earlier I called you an elder statesman of the Republican Party. Do you have any concerns that in future years there might be a shortage of your type of politician for this sort of job?

**Mr. Eldridge:** Oh, I think so. It seems to me that there are too many 'one issue' people. I think that's a real tragedy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You were in the Legislature for quite a while and then you had the Liquor Control Board job for nine years. You saw a huge stretch of legislation. I wondered if that gave you a perspective that a legislator who cycles in and out pretty rapidly just can't possibly have?

**Mr. Eldridge:** That's right. And that's why I question term limits. It sounds good, but you need a little training period of time in there and you just don't get it in one session.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No. I can't imagine. You also came in in an era when freshmen were not supposed to jump to their feet immediately and know everything.

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

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's somewhat gone away, but still, I can't imagine how a legislator who's only been there a few terms can have the long perspective that you would have gained in your time.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It would be most difficult. It would take an exception, a different type of person.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So we'll have to see how redistricting goes in the future.

**Mr. Eldridge:** Yes. It will be interesting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I hope that there always are people of your caliber in charge because it's very important to get it right.

**Mr. Eldridge:** It was an interesting exercise in government.