

## Interview with Kim Blackwell Fox

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Interview # 1: July 14, 2014

Interviewer: Michael Czaplicki

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Czaplicki: Today is Monday, July 14, 2014. I'm Mike Czaplicki, the Project Historian at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois. But I'm in Champaign, Illinois, today to sit down with Kim Fox and talk to her as part of the Gov. Jim Thompson Oral History Project. So thanks for sitting down with us, Kim. How are you today?

Fox: I'm great, Mike, and I think most people would know me by Kim Blackwell.

Czaplicki: So your maiden name?

Fox: My maiden name.

Czaplicki: Let's begin at the beginning and ask, when and where were you born?

Fox: I was born September 30, 1955, in Pana, Illinois. I was the fifth of six children to Flossie and Norman Blackwell. I have two brothers and there were four girls.

Czaplicki: Four girls. Beleaguered brothers?

Fox: (laughs) Right. Well, they held their own.

Czaplicki: So Flossie and Norman were your parents?

Fox: Yes.

Czaplicki: What did they do?

Fox: My father worked for a trucking company out of East St. Louis. So he was on the road during the week and his route was basically St. Louis to Cicero, Illinois, the Chicago area, back and forth. Pana was kind of a stop-off for the weekend before he went back down to East St. Louis late Sunday night or in the middle of the morning on Monday morning. My mother, homemaker, raising six children, but also for a period of time worked at the Pana Hospital.

Czaplicki: Was she a nurse there? Administrator?

Fox: She was an aide.

Czaplicki: Do you know how your family came to settle in Pana? Was it the trucking route?

Fox: My mother grew up in the area. Her parents were in the area, Assumption and Pana. They moved back and forth to those communities. My father grew up in Shelbyville. So prior to the war, World War II, my parents met in Pana and then married. Because my father was over in Europe serving in the war, my oldest brother was born in Indianapolis at my mother's parents' home. My father came home on leave and got to see his son, and went back to Europe. My sister Cindy was born in Indianapolis too. Then they came to settle in Pana before my brother Jerry was born in '47.

Czaplicki: Would you tease the Hoosier siblings?

Fox: You know, we didn't. Everyone thought they were from Pana because they were so young when they were born in Indiana. They felt they were truly Illinoisans and that they had been raised in Pana, a small community but a lively and vibrant community during the time we were growing up, '50s and '60s, and early '70s. So they really felt their roots were always in Pana.

Czaplicki: Do you know what unit your father was with when he was in Europe?

Fox: He was in the army and he was in the Corps of Engineers. He was stationed in Germany and in France.

Czaplicki: Pana sounds like a nice place, from the way you speak of it.

Fox: It was a wonderful place.

Czaplicki: What was it like to be there in the late '50s and early '60s?

Fox: It was a community of about seven thousand in Christian County, Taylorville being the county seat. And we had a lot of freedom because the town was small. We could ride our bikes up and down. No leash law, so our dog would be right with us all the time. It was a vibrant downtown. We had three

drugstores on four of the corners, jewelry stores, lady fashion stores, department stores, hardware stores, photography, men's store. So it was really an active community and—

Czaplicki: Movie theater?

Fox: Movie theater. And a drive-in theater. Skating rinks. I think we all feel that we benefitted, growing up in a small community during that time. Also, in the '50s and going into the '60s, Pana was the rose capital of the world, I think. Not only the nation but the world. But when it became so expensive to heat greenhouses, that industry died slowly. It also had a Mallory Batteries, which manufactured a small battery. It had Prairie Farms Dairy. So it was a vibrant downtown.

Czaplicki: That's an interesting mix. You wouldn't put roses together with batteries.

Fox: Not usually but we did and it worked. And we all have great memories. I think the girls especially were very active in activities at school. I was a cheerleader for seven years, and in a lot of clubs and sports. Girls' sports just really began about the time I was in high school, which was late '60s to the early '70s. So I was able to play volleyball and play tennis, and that was kind of a new adventure in the beginning. I was even reflecting back with some of my Pana grads who live in the Champaign-Urbana area and gathered at my house last week. My class of 1973 was the largest class to graduate from Pana High School, and just two years before we graduated, the girls were allowed to wear pant suits—they had to be pant suits—to school. So we've come a long way from the dress code of that time until now.<sup>1</sup>

Czaplicki: Did you feel like you were breaking new ground when you would play sports for the school? Is it something you talked about or reflected on at that time, or is it only in hindsight that—

Fox: It's hindsight. I don't think we felt it that way. We thought, Oh, this is great; now we can play. But it wasn't like it was a major groundbreaker. I think because I was so active in other things, with cheerleading and other clubs, that it was just another event, another sport that I was going to be involved in.

Czaplicki: What position did you play in volleyball? Do you remember?

Fox: Oh, my gosh. No, don't ask me that question because I don't remember.  
(laughs)

Czaplicki: I played and coached a lot over the years.

Fox: Oh, so you know.

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to that time, girls wore dresses or skirts with blouses or sweaters. [Ed.]

Czaplicki: Just a personal interest there, yeah. If that's Pana, what's it like growing up in the Blackwell household?

Fox: My mother was very organized to have six children and really my dad being gone during the week and only there on the weekends. When he came home, his idea was not to go out because he had been gone all week. So my mother was very patient and understanding that home was where our entire life revolved around. It was active, but there was a range in our ages. With my oldest brother, by the time I have a memory of—when I'm six or seven years of age—he's going off to college. So there's almost kind of two sets of family. My older brother and my sister and maybe my next brother, and then the three girls after that who were closer. As we grew up, we're a very, very close family. We all stay in touch all the time. But I look at that when growing up. It was more the three younger children and the three older children grow up together

But it was busy, I'm sure, for my mother. I'm not sure—at the beginning we had two cars, so if we wanted to go anywhere it was by walking uptown, which was just a few blocks away. I remember everything was delivered to the house. Milk was delivered every other day, because we went through gallons of milk. Groceries were delivered, dry cleaning was delivered—everything was delivered to the house, and then if we needed anything we would walk there. The major shopping was done on the weekend when my father was home. That was at the very beginning when I was quite young, in the late '50s, early '60s. Then the second car came along, and the big color television eventually came and watching Ed Sullivan and the Beatles and Elvis on the television, all those happenings, and Walt Disney. You know, they're all great memories.

And we played outside. In grade school, the last day of school my shoes came off. Shoes didn't go back on my feet unless I had to go to church on Sunday and/or until school started again. We lived at the swimming pool. We had a beautiful swimming pool in Pana. There weren't many of this type built in Illinois, but it was an all-brick aboveground pool with the bathhouse underneath it.<sup>2</sup> The pool opened at 1:00. We were on our bicycles at ten of 1:00, headed to that swimming pool; came home for supper, and went back if possible until the pool closed at 8:00. It was really unfortunate if we had a day of rain. And we played kickball outside and hide-and-seek. I think you reflect back on those shows, *Dennis the Menace* and *Father Knows Best* and all those, that's kind of how we lived. We played a lot when we were young and did our studies during the school year and our activities and went on vacation maybe once a year in the summertime.

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<sup>2</sup> Pana's aboveground pool was designed by one of the nation's leading pool designers in the 1920s, Wesley Bintz. Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007).

Czaplicki: Where would you go?

Fox: We went down to Florida usually, and in August, but we loved it. We thought that was the greatest thing, to be on the beach in Florida. Why not, for two weeks? And rarely ever ate out. But if we did, in the summertime the big happening would be on a Friday night where we'd go to one of the Dogs 'n Suds or a Toot 'n Tell-Em, which was a root beer stand, and get those mugs of ice cold root beer with our sandwich hanging on the side of the car window, and have a night out. Or go to a local place called Reaban's where they sold seven hamburgers for three dollars.

Czaplicki: How would you spell it? R-i-e—

Fox: It was R-e-a-b-a-n-s. Where I worked when I was in high school.

Czaplicki: Oh, that was going to be my next question for you, if you held down a job while you were growing up.

Fox: I did. It would have been the last two years of high school. Along with cheerleading, on the weekends I worked at Reaban's and in the summer I worked in Reaban's.

Czaplicki: So what would you do there? Were you frying or delivering?

Fox: First of all, I started as wait staff and then they wanted me to work the grill because I could flip those hamburgers and dispense those fries pretty quickly. (Czaplicki laughs)

Czaplicki: You mentioned church. What church did you go to?

Fox: We went to the Methodist church, the Free Methodist Church in Pana. We started at the original church, which during my youth was moved, and we built a new church and we were all, I think, baptized—I know my younger sisters were baptized there. We all were active in youth organizations there. I'm trying to think how many married in the church. One, two, three, four, five of the siblings, I believe, married at the church. So we were active in the church.

Czaplicki: Did you have a broad extended family as well?

Fox: I had my grandparents, my father's parents in Shelbyville. I had my aunt Ora, who lived just south of Pana in Oconee, who lived to be 103...

Czaplicki: Wow.

Fox: ...and outlived her husbands. My mother took care of her in her latter years and she was very close to our family, especially my sister Trudy. My mother's parents were outside of Speedway, Indiana, in New Winchester and we'd go

over there for the summers and spend a couple of weeks. My brother Jerry worked on the farm in the summertime for my grandfather. So we had uncles in the Indianapolis area, and I had an aunt and an uncle in Shelbyville and cousins. So yes.

When we were younger we'd go to my grandmother's in Shelbyville and see cousins on Sunday. We'd have family reunions. Uncles would come over with families from the Indiana area during the summer. We always made homemade ice cream—that was a big thing—the crank style, of course, with the ice. My dad always let us crank it when it was easy to crank and then when it became a little harder he would have to take over. Then we ate it too fast and all got headaches, but we all had fun. We had picnics outside with fried chicken and homemade ice cream. The big event—and it still is today in Pana—is the tri-county fair and parade, which happens over Labor Day. So there were always gatherings of family in Pana over Labor Day to take in the fair and to go to the parade.

Czaplicki: What's your earliest memory?

Fox: Earliest memory would probably be riding a bicycle up and down our street, and training wheels. So I would say maybe four or five. Playing with dollhouses. My brother worked for a kennel that bred and raised poodles. I remember him bringing those little puppies over to our house. Those were some early memories. Again, gathering with family in the backyard. Not clearly *who* was there but remember having these events in the backyard. Going to St. Louis to the zoo or to the top of the Arch or to a game or something. Those would be the early memories.

And Christmas, always Christmas. One year I remember specifically that I wanted a gift, I think it was the Barbie doll, the original. Only one Barbie doll came out when I was young, as did Ken and Midge and all the other dolls. And I wanted the dollhouse. So during the night my sister and I got up and went down to the tree and unwrapped a number of gifts, and I was just very disappointed to think I didn't get this dollhouse. We got up that Christmas and I was going through the gifts that we already knew we had received. (Czaplicki laughs) And then finally my mother said something about, "Go to the closet and go get something," and sure enough the dollhouse was there. I was pretty young when that happened.

Czaplicki: They had your number.

Fox: They had my number. They knew. But we always had a great Christmas. I mean, that's when relatives would come over, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and we worked hard to set the table. We were in charge of the crafts and the place tags for the table, so we did a lot of homemade decorations. We'd sit there for hours and make construction paper chains that go around trees. And,

oh, I can't think of what you call them. But those were fun things to do as a child and to be part of the Christmas holidays.

Czaplicki: Were your parents especially political people?

Fox: No, they weren't. I mean, they paid attention to what was going on in the community, read the newspaper religiously, especially the local paper. We were more apt to go to Decatur than Springfield, so paid attention to Decatur. Paid attention to the politics of the community and probably more nationally what was happening with the president. But not as much statewide. I think with a busy family it was just day-to-day life and local.

Czaplicki: Any idea who they might have voted for? Did your family have a partisan identity?

Fox: Oh, I could tell you, yes, who my dad would have but I'm not going to. (laughter)

Czaplicki: Interesting, okay. What's your earliest political memory then?

Fox: I would have to say it would be associated with the Labor Day parades, because, let's face it, parades are politicians and horses and floats. That was probably the first time I really thought about statewide politicians coming through Pana and shaking hands and throwing out candy and why would they be doing this? As a young person I thought, "Why would this person walk in this parade?" Well, we loved getting the candy, so that was great. But it didn't resonate with me at a young age why that person would be doing that. So I think that's the first time I thought about a politician; I guess local, who the mayor was and what the mayor was doing in our local community more than statewide.

Czaplicki: That sounds like such a wonderful childhood.

Fox: Well, I think with Kennedy's assassination, as we all know, we know what we were doing at that time. Since I was born in '55, I was young and I do remember coming home and my mother telling me about that, and watching television over that time. I believe Thanksgiving was right about that time, too, the time of the assassination. It was just a very mournful time. Even for a young... I was young to realize that this was happening in our country.

Czaplicki: Yeah, that's what I was going to ask you. Even with all the good things that are happening, of course, when you think of a lot of major events in the '60s, Kennedy's assassination being one, or Vietnam or Martin Luther King or Bobby Kennedy, were those kind of things registering with you?

Fox: I think it was. It was just beginning to.

Czaplicki: You were also very young.

- Fox: It was beginning to just prior to Kennedy's assassination, the marches and the protest, and Martin Luther King and all that. I was just beginning to become aware of what was happening nationally. And then my brother serving in Vietnam was very hard on our family and so watch...
- Czaplicki: This was Jerry?
- Fox: This was Jerry. Watching the nightly news was very hard. But he came home, so we're lucky, because he was very young when he went away. He was eighteen.
- Czaplicki: Was he drafted or did he sign-up?<sup>3</sup>
- Fox: He was drafted and had never really been out of Pana other than to the farm in Indiana. Had never been on a plane. Had never really experienced anything but our community and family. So for him to go to Vietnam was very hard.
- Czaplicki: How did that affect you when he left?
- Fox: I think, you know, during training and so forth it was fine, but when we knew he was in Vietnam it was very worrisome. Very worrisome. But he came home. Very thin, and unfortunately his teeth had decayed terribly, but he came home.
- Czaplicki: So you graduated high school in '73?
- Fox: '73, mm-hmm.
- Czaplicki: What were you thinking about in terms of the future as you're moving through high school and heading towards graduation. Did you have any thoughts about...
- Fox: What I wanted to do or what...
- Czaplicki: ...what would come next and what—yeah.
- Fox: I was a little undecided what I wanted to do, what type of career I wanted to have. I think we had instilled in us a really good work ethic from our family background. First I thought maybe I would go into nursing but wasn't sure that that was what I would enjoy doing. So I thought I needed to do something more that would take me towards some type of a business, but not thinking really broad what kind of business. And paralegal work had become kind of a focus in the early '70s. In Springfield there was the Springfield Career College and it was based on stenography court reporting, and I decided to go there for a year. I assume we graduated the first of June of '73, and I started at the college shortly thereafter. I must have started the first of August...

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<sup>3</sup> Jerry Blackwell was born November 24, 1947, making him 18 in late 1965 and most of 1966.



Czaplicki: Oh, wow.

Fox: ...because the college was a different program. You went Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 5:00, and it was a year program. So probably started the first of August and finished the following July. I thought if I had the stenography background then I could work for a lawyer or a law firm, determine if this is what I want to do. Then at that time Lincoln Land was in operation in Springfield and they offered a paralegal.

Czaplicki: That was the community college, right?

Fox: Community college. Or if I wanted to go in another direction. So I went ahead, went to Springfield Career College, and had the opportunity to work for a law firm there in Springfield and really realized that this is not what I wanted to do. I didn't want to sit with earphones in my ear taking hours and hours of dictation, looking up all this research, and not communicating and not having a more diverse occupation. So when I finished that summer of '74 with Springfield Career College, the State was hiring. I thought "I'll go to work," and there was a position for an assistant to the legal counsel of the adjutant general for the Military and Naval Department, i.e., the National Guard. It was Les Sims. I interviewed and I went to work for Les Sims, who then reported to General Patton, who was the general for the National Guard at that time. I worked there with the thought that I would stay there a year or so and then decide if this is the type of work I want to do or where this would lead me.

I stayed there a little longer than a year and that's when I got involved with Governor Thompson, right after his election in November of '76. The inaugural was being held in the Illinois State Armory and we were housed in the Armory; it was kind of the official house of the Illinois National Guard. General Patton had said to Les Sims, "We're going to be the agency that will be helping the Thompson administration put together the inaugural, and if any of the staff want to help—this is volunteer—we should start looking towards having people do that." So I was young and I thought, Well, I've got the available time. It sounds fun, it sounds interesting. I had been following Jim Thompson, not so much his campaign, but the last thirty days of the election: this young, vibrant, tall U.S. attorney from the Northern District [of Illinois], and the entourage he traveled with of all the attorneys from the northern district. And I thought, I want to volunteer for this inaugural. So I told Les Sims I would help. Not only my day duties were part of assisting with the inaugural, but I would help on the weekends and after hours.

Czaplicki: And that would be unpaid?

Fox: Unpaid. That would be volunteer, yeah. And that's how my life changed and that's how I spent the next twenty-eight years working for Jim Thompson.

Czaplicki: Didn't realize just what you were saying yes to?

Fox: I didn't realize that at all. I'm so glad, as they say, right place and right time, and it all happened.

Czaplicki: All right. I'm just going to back up very briefly and then come to this inaugural. I asked you about the '60s events but of course there's stuff happening in the s'70s too. Illinois has a big constitutional convention. You were mentioning earlier when we were talking some of the ways you saw Springfield changing. The Equal Rights Amendment: Congress passes that in '72. Were you following those events at all? Did you have any opinions about them one way or the other?

Fox: No, I don't, because I think right then, '72, I was probably a junior in high school and I was more involved with myself than with what was going around me. I think with just what I thought was a full plate of activities at school, with work, and community, and I'm sure there were boyfriends mixed into that mixture, that I wasn't looking at the big picture as much as probably other people were.

Czaplicki: How about Watergate?

Fox: Watergate: remember sitting in front of the television and watching it for hours with my parents, yes, and wondering... And remember President Nixon and Mrs. Nixon getting on that helicopter, turning around and waving goodbye.

Czaplicki: So in '74?

Fox: Mm-hmm.

Czaplicki: How did you feel about that?

Fox: It was hard because I always have respected any president that holds that office. Big responsibility no matter what party, no matter what your belief. But I do have a great deal of respect for them. And I think that it was a big disappointment to think that our president was being impeached to leave office. So that was hard. That was hard.

Czaplicki: But it clearly didn't turn you off to politics because...

Fox: Oh, no, no. Because it wasn't home. It didn't touch me in any direct way, I didn't think. Yeah. It didn't change my views.

Czaplicki: Did you view Thompson at all through that frame?

Fox: Not at all.

Czaplicki: Did he seem like a contrast or...

Fox: No. Again, I wasn't that aware. That's '74. I'm not even aware of Jim Thompson at that time. And I don't even know when the governor began campaigning or when he declared.

Czaplicki: '75 he announced.

Fox: So I wasn't even aware of him and I can't even say I was aware when he announced. It wasn't until the last part, the last thirty days of that election that I started. He was more on the radar and there was a lot in the paper. This was going to be a change.

Czaplicki: So when did you first actually meet him in person?

Fox: I was in charge of the dais at the inauguration in 1977, but I did not meet him at that time. I was just ushering people on and making sure they got into their right seats and making sure people were where they were to be. So the time I probably first met him was after I was hired to come on to the governor's staff as an assistant advance person, and that would have been May of '77 that I went over to his office. The first event I advanced for him was in June of 1977. I don't know if I met him in between that month.

Czaplicki: And that was that picture you showed me?



Fox: That was the picture I showed you. It was in Springfield. The Governor and Mrs. Thompson, and their dog Guv, were going to a girls' softball game. The governor was throwing out the first ball at the softball game and I was advancing that. I was very nervous because I'm not sure that I had met the governor yet, but it was my responsibility to do the advance work and prepare

for that event prior to going to that event. And that's where I first probably met him.

Czaplicki: What would your duties entail? What would you do to prep that event for him, and when would you start doing that?

Fox: Lynn Rainey was the person that I interfaced with during the inauguration. Lynn Rainey had worked with Jim Thompson on the campaign. Lynn was from Bloomington, Illinois, and did advance work in central Illinois for Jim Thompson when he came to the area. Then Lynn was involved with the inauguration, and I was helping him on the inauguration quite a bit for six weeks. Following that, he was one of the appointments the governor made and he was head of advance for the governor in the governor's office. Lynn contacted me to see if I had interest in moving to the governor's office as his assistant, and I said yes. We went through the paperwork and I was hired in May.

So Lynn was in charge, worked with the scheduler on the event. And when we did an event, after the event was placed on the governor's schedule, we had kind of a form we worked from to provide all the information needed for the governor to know as much as he could about the event or the association or the person. There was a lot of time in the office that you would have to go through to prepare for him to go to an event. It's just not: He shows up. And if it was a major event, you went hours or even the day before the event, did your homework. You always provide enough material prior to the event but then also provide even more information when he arrived.

Czaplicki: So would you give him suggestions for remarks to make or little bios of key people, like if the mayor was going to be there? Would you refresh their memory...

Fox: Oh, yes. Well, I guess...

Czaplicki: ...about who they are and what they do?

Fox: ...if we went towards that direction. I was assistant advance so I more or less helped Lynn. Then Lynn moved on and I became the director of advance. Again, there was a whole procedure we had when the governor was going to be on the road, from the point when the scheduler put it on the schedule. And we had different lengths of the schedule: two-week schedule, one-week schedule, and daily schedule. Once it hit the schedule then it was your responsibility as advance to begin the preparation. We had a form: Anything about the association that you could give him; then anything about the location where it was being held; if we had major supporters or contributors in the area that might be at that event, who would that be and their names. We would prepare all that. A lot of the logistics. So there was a lot to go into a preparation. Then that information would be given to the governor, usually in

a briefing packet the night before or the early morning the day of. Then as Advance you would be on site prior to the governor, again, the day before or hours before or an hour before. You would make contact with the person in charge, review the governor's schedule; if there were any last moment changes, if there were any last moment information the governor would need, you would prepare that and usually give it to the governor's aide or to the governor directly as soon as he arrived. You would greet him either at the airport or you would greet him at the door of the event and take a few minutes to update him before you'd introduce him to the contact of the event.

It was a lot of responsibility. I was young. I was twenty-one when I began doing that. Not only were you in the office all day if you weren't on the road, then you were on the road and on the evenings and the weekends. So there was nothing considered a five-day or a six-day—it was a seven-day job. In the office by 7:30, maybe not out until 8:00 or 9:00 or night, or on the road until midnight, and you'd be back in the office at 7:00 in the morning starting all over again.

Czaplicki: Work ethic comes in handy.

Fox: So it does come in handy. Organization and work ethic were a great, great help for me during those days.

Czaplicki: So were you single when you took the job, or did you become single very rapidly?

Fox: I was single. And there were three of us, that I remember, for quite a few years that traveled with the governor: myself, Greg Baise, and Dave Gilbert. I was in advance; Greg and Dave were usually with the governor.<sup>4</sup> So I don't know. Maybe we were considered the Three Stooges traveling with the governor.

Czaplicki: Would the so-called bag boys who were the travel aides be part of the advance office?

Fox: The bag boys. No, they were right with the governor. They usually sat outside the governor's office with the governor's assistant. But I interfaced a lot with them because they were the person traveling with the governor that I could turn to if I couldn't get information to the governor in time. And Security was helpful; Security would be in advance of the governor to either pick him up at the airport or to advance the site from a security standpoint. So most of the time in my travels up and down the state of Illinois in the car, I would be

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<sup>4</sup> Baise was Governor Thompson's second travel aide, and Gilbert was Thompson's Press Secretary from 1975 to 1985. On their travel experiences, see Greg Baise, interview by Mark DePue, August 6, 2013, and Dave Gilbert, interview by Mark DePue, March 14, 2014. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Illinois Statecraft Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

traveling with security. Or even in Chicago, I would hook up with Security and then we'd go to the event together. It was helpful because we worked together. So I was in Advance, and Dave and Greg usually arrived with the governor.

Now, you have to remember there weren't cellphones [like we have today]. The cellphones that we carried were Motorola. The charging unit was the size of a briefcase. The handheld phone itself was about eight inches long, and the only person that really had that, the traveling aide, carried it for the governor and the governor used it. We did not have cellphones. I spent more of my life in telephone booths than you can imagine. My children don't even know what telephone booths are. But if I hit an airport, I was on that phone until I left the airport. As soon as I was in a community and out of the car, I was on the phone to check the office for any update or to give information.

- Czaplicki: Did you have a really sharp memory? Did you just have rows and rows of numbers in your head to make these calls?
- Fox: I had the main numbers, and there were about a half-a-dozen numbers I needed: governor's Aide, Gilbert, and Security and the scheduling office. Those were the main numbers that I needed during the day.
- Czaplicki: Who's in the scheduling office initially? I know Greg Baise moved there later.
- Fox: I'm trying to recall.
- Czaplicki: If you can't, that's fine. Kind of thing we'll just look up later.
- Fox: Yeah. I think you'll have to look it up because I'm not sure I can remember.
- Czaplicki: It's blank on our chart too. I have Baise, then Woelffer, and then you and Reineke.
- Fox: Yeah, I don't know who was there at the beginning.
- Czaplicki: Were those giant cellphones already around at the beginning or did those come in the '80s?
- Fox: You know, I don't think we had them at the very beginning, to tell you the truth.
- Czaplicki: Yeah, I don't think so.
- Fox: In '77 I don't remember them. In '78...but then it might have been the early '80s. About the time the governor thought that his fleet of cars should be a taxi, (Czaplicki laughs) so he gave up a comfortable sedan for a taxi. Well, he soon realized that it wasn't as comfortable as maybe it should be and he went back to a sedan.

Czaplicki: Was just one car a taxi or did he change all the cars to taxis? I hadn't heard of this.

Fox: I don't know how many cars he had, maybe two or three. He had the one in Chicago, the one in Springfield, and maybe a backup, and it was a taxi.<sup>5</sup>

Czaplicki: Like a yellow cab?

Fox: Wasn't yellow. We had another color. I can't remember the color.

Czaplicki: Checkered?

Fox: Wasn't checkered. But he realized it wasn't very comfortable so he went back to the sedan. It was about that time I remember Motorola phone came into existence.

Czaplicki: Would you use CB radios<sup>6</sup> as much? I remember that was really big in the '70s.

Fox: For the security it was very important and it was a good way for us to contact—if I had to get a message to the governor's Aide, I was with Security and they talked on the cuff a lot.

Czaplicki: Little handheld mikes?

Fox: Right, the handheld. But it was very important that we had communication that way.

Czaplicki: So do you still have nightmares about any events that you advanced in those early years? Did anything ever go horribly wrong?

Fox: No, we were lucky. I was just saying, Menachem Begin had come in for an event at Northwestern [University], and for some reason we went through the back way up to the dais because the event had started. I think it had been a busy day. So security and I led the governor into the dais. Security stayed with him. I decided to turn around and go back out the same way through this back entrance. Seemed like a tunnel or a back hallway. As I turned the corner, Menachem Begin and his security were coming down. The security had automatic weapons and I think I frightened them, but they frightened me because they pointed them at me. But everything was fine once they realized

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<sup>5</sup> Dave Gilbert came up with this idea to reinforce Thompson's promotion of fiscal austerity. Dave Gilbert, interview by Mark DePue, March 26, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> CB: Citizen's Band two-way radios for vehicles, operating over short distances, were used especially by truckers, but also by citizens who found them helpful. Call names were used to contact others; this spawned many creative ideas, some on the edge of polite discourse. With the advent of cellular phones they became obsolete. [Ed.]

who I was.<sup>7</sup>

We didn't have any major snafus, I have to really say, with my advance work. It was probably one of the greatest times of meeting people from all over the state. I have the greatest memories of people that I met, from Bernie Burger in Collinsville to Jugs Anthony in Peoria to Jane Rader in Cobden to Lou Mervis in Danville to Cal Covert in Rockford to Bob Malott in Chicago, John Bryant—I mean, it was just an amazing time to meet these people. Because we didn't have cellphones, we weren't as distracted as I believe we are today; when you went to an event and to a community, you took it all in. You didn't have the interruptions that I think many of us have today. You were there for that reason. You would be absorbed—or at least I was absorbed—in the person, the event, the time, the surroundings. And because of that, I still have just great memories of this State, the people in this State, and the events that we did.

Czaplicki: Yeah, you can't just Google it ahead of time.

Fox: No way. We had a road map out, figuring out where we were going down a back highway to a VFW hall. It was not a Google.

Czaplicki: Did you have to ask for directions?

Fox: We'd have to ask for directions. But I think that's one of the greatest opportunities I've had to meet so many people throughout the State.

Czaplicki: How was Thompson at these events? Would he get tense in advance of an event? Was he demanding in terms of what he expected to have? Or if things didn't go precisely as planned, could he adapt well to those.

Fox: I never felt Jim Thompson the governor was ever demanding. He was very understanding. I never saw him, from my eyes, ever get upset. He was always appreciative of whatever anyone, the staff or people, did for him. And he could put on that charm the moment he walked in that door. When he got off the plane or out of the car and it had been a long day, and it was seven o'clock at night and he had to sit through a chicken dinner and then speak, I could see he was tired. But as soon as he hit that room, no one ever knew, because he could do that. He could turn on that personality and genuinely feel engaging with the group.

Czaplicki: And he always had that from the moment you arrived?

Fox: He really did. He really did.

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<sup>7</sup> Begin was Prime Minister of Israel when he traveled to Northwestern to receive an honorary doctor of law degree on May 3, 1978. His guards may have been tense since several hundred demonstrators had greeted his arrival. Ray Moseley, "Cannot Yield Land: Begin," *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 1978.



- Czaplicki: Who were the other key staffers, would you say, who were doing political fieldwork out there for him at this time?
- Fox: We had someone in every county or in every major city in Illinois. It's usually through the Republican Party or a coordinator from the campaign, because we had county coordinators. So when we were going to go into a community or a county, especially if it was for a political event, we would call the GOP chairman and/or the coordinator and let them know that we were coming in, tell them why we were coming in, invite them, if it was appropriate, to join us, and get any help we might need from them. Those were our local point people outside the governor's office.
- Czaplicki: How about internally to his office? Who would you be working with the most?
- Fox: I worked closely with his assistant, and most of that time that was Barbara Bond. And, again, whichever aide it was at the time. And then the press secretary, which was Dave most of the time, or his assistant, Jim Skilbeck, or Dave Fields, who would be covering the event also. So it's kind of on appearances and events and scheduling. I worked closely with the scheduler because we had to coordinate that. So those are the main people.
- Czaplicki: Could you talk a little about what Jim Skilbeck was like? Because he's someone whose name gets referenced a lot, but of course we can't interview him.<sup>8</sup>
- Fox: Yeah. Jim was...
- Czaplicki: And what made him so good at his job?
- Fox: Oh, he was so dedicated to the governor and his mind was always thinking, What would make the governor look good? That was, I think, always in his mind.
- Czaplicki: The prime directive.
- Fox: Prime directive. Jim had so much enthusiasm and would get so excited about whatever he came up with. And he was the instigator of many different things. He was very involved with Farm Aid, the first time we did Farm Aid. He was so excited about the state fairs, and the first year or two we began doing the state fairs. Or when we went on the campaign trail and did these long days and made five or six stops.
- Czaplicki: The whistle stop thing you talked about?

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<sup>8</sup> For Skilbeck's ability as a promoter, see Gilbert, March 14, 2014, and March 27, 2014; Sherry Struck, interview by Mark DePue, November 3, 2010; James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, June 12, 2014, and August 9, 2016. Skilbeck died May 21, 2002.

- Fox: The whistle stop. I mean, that was Jim Skilbeck's wonderful forte. He could imagine what people would expect of the governor coming into their community and what he had to do to make the right signs, the right balloons, and get the right message for the governor's arrival.
- Czaplicki: Do you know what his background was?
- Fox: You know, I don't.
- Czaplicki: I wonder what he did that gave him that knack.
- Fox: I don't know if he was a political junkie or if it was Jim Thompson that really motivated him to have that personality. But he was always ready to go and first one up in the morning drinking that coffee and the last one to go to bed at night.
- Czaplicki: Was he part of your generation or was he older?
- Fox: Everyone was just a few years older than me.
- Czaplicki: Were you self-conscious of that?
- Fox: No.
- Czaplicki: Being the young one on the block.
- Fox: No, it didn't bother me.
- Czaplicki: You said you could talk to the county chairmen or you could talk to your campaign staff. So when we're talking about the campaign staff, are we talking about Citizens for Thompson or is there a different set of people?
- Fox: Different set of people.
- Czaplicki: When I think campaign, that's who I think of.
- Fox: Different set of people. When I'm talking about when I was director of advance, and then when I went on to be director of scheduling, and I'm referring to events outside of the office, that was not so much Citizens for Thompson that we were interfacing with. We were interfacing with the local political organization. Now, at times Citizens for Thompson was involved, especially if it had to do with our own fundraiser. If the governor was going to be at his own fundraiser then, of course, we'd have to interface with Citizens for Thompson. But all the other public events we were doing, it was more local politicians and political organizations.
- Czaplicki: Through the State GOP.
- Fox: Through the State.

Czaplicki: So when did Citizens for Thompson start? Was that around from the very beginning?

Fox: I would say yes.

Czaplicki: I thought I saw an ad from them in '76.

Fox: And I probably have the papers that we filed with the State Board of Elections. But I want to say it was filed in 1975. Did the governor announce in '75 or '76?

Czaplicki: I think it was sometime in July of '75 he announced.

Fox: He would have had to have a political party at that time because of the State Board of Elections. And to my knowledge we never did change the name.

Czaplicki: I was going to ask you what was in a name. It's always "citizens of" or "citizens for"; it's "friends of."

Fox: Officially, Citizens for Jim Thompson. I would say it was formed in 1975 because Jim Thompson would have had to form it at that time to run for office.

Czaplicki: Do you know who started it? Who the first director would have been?

Fox: Who was his campaign manager in '75?

Czaplicki: Fletcher, I believe, right? So Fletch started all that in motion?

Fox: He had a very good legal team behind him. I'm sure they thoroughly went through the process of setting up the political committee and just carrying it on. I know it was in existence once I came aboard.

Czaplicki: And I noticed in the folder you were showing me that you moved to Citizens for Jim Thompson in '79, briefly?

Fox: I did. I did in '79. So director of advance and then we went through our '78 campaign, which was unusual, as I'm sure you've heard in other interviews. His first term was only two years instead of four because of the 1970 constitutional change.

Czaplicki: Right, they were trying to reset the calendar.

Fox: Exactly. So our governor comes into office in '77, has two years, and runs in '78. Then in '79, after the inaugural, the governor asked that I go over to Citizens for Thompson in Springfield that following fall to start it up again—it had become somewhat inactive after the campaign—just to start fundraising

again and have it more active. So I did that. It was a short period of time. And then I came back to staff, back to state government, the office of the governor.

Czaplicki: In the same role? Director of advance?

Fox: Yes, director of advance.

Czaplicki: And this still would have been '79?

Fox: I went over there in October of '79. It would have been in '80 that I went back. Because I know that was a national election year and we were on the campaign trail with Governor Reagan, doing campaigning in Illinois for him. I remember being on the road quite a bit with the governor during that time.

Czaplicki: My impression was initially Thompson was somewhat cool towards Reagan. He wasn't first on the bandwagon, as it were. Is that your recollection of things? I thought he was a Ford man maybe or being very neutral, because weren't Connolly and Bush running?

Fox: They were, they were.

Czaplicki: (unintelligible) in the primary process.

Fox: I wouldn't say we were the first to endorse him; I think you'd have to ask the governor that question.<sup>9</sup>

Czaplicki: Did you have a favorite in the race as far as your own personal views?

Fox: No, not at the time.

Czaplicki: No?

Fox: Not at the early stage.

Czaplicki: When did you start advancing for Reagan then?

Fox: I just advanced when the governor was involved in Reagan appearances.

Czaplicki: In Illinois?

Fox: In Illinois. And we had the day in Peoria where we had Reagan and Ford; it seems like we had Bush there also.

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<sup>9</sup> On the 1980 Republican presidential primary, see James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, October 20, 2014.

Czaplicki: In the photos you were showing me, I think you had one of Bush.



Fox: And then from Peoria we went to Chicago. I was involved from a standpoint of helping with the national advance team because they also rely on our staff and our security to help them when they come into the state. So we were involved. And that day when we were doing a rally—I think it was a rally and a parade—but a rally in Chicago with Governor Reagan, there was a picture taken of Governor Reagan. I'm in the picture, and we hit the *New York Times*. But Jim Thompson's not in the picture and I don't think the governor thought that is probably the way it should have been.

Czaplicki: (laughs) I hope we can get this photo in the interview. It's quite a sight. And apparently he would razz you for it, yes?

Fox: Oh, I think he probably did.

Czaplicki: And that wasn't the end of your association, though, helping the...

Fox: No. Shortly after Governor Reagan was elected, the Reagan administration called Governor Thompson and asked if he would send a staff person out to work on the inaugural committee. The election was November. He [Thompson] called me in the office shortly thereafter and said he would like me to go to Washington and work on the inaugural. There were



seven balls that year at the inaugural, and one of the balls was the Governor's Ball. They wanted someone to assist with that. So I went to Washington, I think just shortly after Thanksgiving, and stayed there through the inauguration and represented, I guess, Jim Thompson on this Governor's Ball that was part of the three-day affair. It was exciting. And I still remember, everyone was moving in different directions to be placed in positions and nominated for positions with the Reagan administration. So there were a lot of Californians that had come out to help with the inaugural with the hopes that they would then receive a job in the White House.

Czaplicki: So behind all the celebrations...

Fox: There was a lot of maneuvering. A few of the young people that I worked with kept on saying to me, "What position are you going towards?" And I thought, These people just don't understand. There's no more would I stay in Washington, DC, because I had such a better position back in the State of Illinois with our governor. Why would I want to even consider coming to Washington, DC? So I just kind of laughed and I said, "No, I'm going back to the State of Illinois." (laughs)

Czaplicki: You had reached the big time. You're in the *New York Times*, you're in DC, and you didn't have any interest in it?

Fox: I had no interest because I knew that the experience and my involvement with Jim Thompson as governor of the State of Illinois was much more exciting than I would have ever had in the White House or in Washington, DC.

Czaplicki: What was exciting about Illinois? Was it the kind of events or was it just being able to go all over the state like you had talked...—

Fox: Well, I think you have to say that differently. Maybe not what was so exciting about Illinois, though it is a great State. What was exciting about working for Jim Thompson? And that's what it was. He made it exciting. When I came back after being out in Washington, DC, the governor wanted me to be director of scheduling. So Art Quern and I sat down and talked about that, and I took over director of scheduling, and that was different. That was different. That was being in the office—this is now '81—and gearing up for an '82 campaign. So I knew life was going to be busy and hectic. And we didn't receive fifty invites or a hundred invites a week, we received 350 or 400 invites a week wanting the governor present at their event. That all landed on my desk, and from there I would have to sort through that. Remember, computers were not a thing back then. A lot of typing on a typewriter and big boards and looking forward. So I would have to plan a month out and then plan two weeks out, a week out, and then the daily schedule. It was not easy.

It was not easy because every single invitation, I feel, that came across my desk warranted the governor's attendance. But that wasn't going to

be possible. So I had to weed through and then propose to the governor what events he should appear. We had weekly scheduling meetings. Now, the governor tried his very best to delay those meetings or cancel those meetings because it was really hard to go through those scheduling meetings. But we would go in and present what we thought he should be doing for the next two weeks. "I can't do all this. What are you expecting of me? I can't do seven events, turn around and get up and do seven more." And we'd go through that and he'd talk about that. At the end he'd say, "All right, I sign off on it."  
(Czaplicki laughs)

That's how our weeks would go because this is '81 and the economy isn't very good and we're going into even a more difficult economy in '82, so the race is going to be tough. It was not easy going through those scheduling meetings. It was not easy to decipher where he should be from a standpoint. And I was not the only one making those decisions. Once those invitations came in, I'd have to sort through them, not only by dates, but by where the location is. It seemed like we met as a staff to narrow it down, then we brought it to the governor.

Czaplicki: I was going to ask you how you make that cut.

Fox: I was trying to remember who was part of that. I don't know if the Chief of Staff was always part of that, but it seemed like Dave Gilbert, the Press Secretary, was a part of that because of course that was important, the strategy of where the governor should be. And the governor's aide. I just don't recall if the Chief of Staff was always involved in that. But there were three or four of us involved in that meeting. Then once we more or less outlined what events and where he should be and where he needed to be, then I took it from there and we'd have to propose it to the governor.

Czaplicki: Would the pollster be involved in that meeting? Thinking about areas where maybe he'd want to do some maintenance?

Fox: Not the pollster, but the Campaign Manager in '82 might have been involved in some of those decisions. I think the Campaign Manager would probably bring forth, "I know this event's happening and the governor should try to attend that." That would be probably brought to our attention and then it would be considered for the schedule.

Czaplicki: So plenty of excitement on the horizon?

Fox: Yeah. And some of it's a blur because it was so much happening. First of all, it was some time ago. But there was a lot going on. Just going through those invitations – a lot. It was always difficult. Another thing I didn't talk about on advance: it was always difficult because it was hard for the governor to stay on schedule. That's one thing I think we always worried about. When you're out there representing him in advance and he's now forty-five minutes to an

hour late and they are waiting for him, that was the hard part. And he didn't do it for any other reason than whatever he was doing before, he got so involved and couldn't break away that it would make him late for the next event, and the next event, and the next event. So that was tough knowing that.

I think that was to my advantage when I became scheduler, because I knew how much he physically could do and always tried to wiggle in another twenty or thirty minutes into an event even though it said he could not be there for the dinner and speak and then leave afterwards. I knew that wasn't going to be that quick. I knew the twenty-minute speech was not going to be a twenty-minute speech. He was going to have to be there for at least forty-five minutes. So it was nice that I had that foresight from having the position before to know what it was really like when he was out in the field, that it was almost impossible for him to keep on a schedule.

Czaplicki: You sound like the budget director of time.

Fox: Yeah.

Czaplicki: We're going to find some here and there.

Fox: You know, I guess all of us would have to look at that. How would you like someone to walk in your office and tell you, "Now, this is where you have to be for the next two weeks and you have to do this many events." I don't think any of us would be that pleased with it. So overall he was a trooper when it came to scheduling his time. It's not easy, but he understood why he needed to be in all those locations.

Czaplicki: Were there times where he would just have you clear a schedule that had been made? Like if he needed some family time or he hit a limit or something?

Fox: We always tried to do that every week. We always tried to leave time open. He was into racquetball at the beginning, to get some physical exercise, to have some quiet time, to have family time. Especially with Samantha. She was so young. She was born during the beginning of the second campaign.

Czaplicki: Yes, '78.

Fox: Yeah, '78, the second campaign. So it was important that he had some downtime. We did take that into consideration. But it was hard during the last ninety days of the campaign, the last three months. Everybody wanting him in their community. And he felt the need to be out on the road. So the campaigns are wearing and hard and not easy to go through.

Czaplicki: Bob Kjellander was running the '82 campaign, correct?

Fox: Yes.



- Czaplicki: What was he like? Did you have any interactions with him?
- Fox: Just speaking to him and attending meetings with him. They were the strategists on the campaign. I think my position was just to make sure the governor was able to be where they needed him to be. So really enjoyed working with Bob. Bob had a good sense of humor. Got along well with the governor. Got along well with the staff. He had been originally with the governor from the very beginning, when the governor came into office. I think that was the nice thing. We were all familiar with each other in personnel, and I think Bob was a good campaign manager. Just more interfacing with him on scheduling needs and everything. Not strategy because that was not my responsibility; I was in the governor's office and they were the campaign, but interfacing where we needed to interface.
- Czaplicki: Who would you say was in the kitchen cabinet, if there was such a thing in these early years and in '78 and '79? Then once you take over the scheduler's job, that's partly also what you see, right? You see who's getting access and gets to come and talk to him.
- Fox: Are you saying kitchen cabinet as far as—
- Czaplicki: I guess two senses. One, the inner circle of his actual official governor's staff, but then did he have a kitchen cabinet of outside advisors? I know Sam Skinner's name is someone you see pop-up a lot.
- Fox: But Sam was there from the beginning. When you take in Sam—and Dan Webb was part of that group, and Tony Valukas.
- Czaplicki: Attorney's office crowd?
- Fox: Right. And I believe Gayle Franzen was at the beginning. Julian D'Esposito - I don't know if he was at the very beginning. But Julian, Fletcher. That was his group when he was in the state's attorney's office. I think at the very beginning he turned to them for a lot of advice. As time went along, he looked towards leaders of the business community more so as his kitchen cabinet. Bob Malott, who was CEO of FMC Corporation, played a vital role in being part of the kitchen cabinet group, and there were a number of CEOs.
- Czaplicki: Was Phil O'Connor a part of that group?
- Fox: Phil O'Connor, Mike Coldike. I want to say John Bryan of Sara Lee was involved. I'm trying to recall the CEOs that were involved. He had a strong group of CEOs that he would have breakfast with on a regular basis to let them provide their advice and feedback and hear from outside, just other people than close friends, administration-type people.
- Czaplicki: Do you think that broadened his perspective, bringing them into the circle?

Fox: Oh, I think it did. I think in many ways it was very helpful. Those people wanted to have access to the governor so that they had the ear of the governor in many ways. But they also felt it was important that they have the input so that he would know the economy of the State and what the feeling was out there from a different perspective in government, from a business perspective.

Czaplicki: So x-policy action...

Fox: Exactly.

Czaplicki: ...might lead to this reaction or consequence?

Fox: Right. And the governor was very good at that. His memory is just beyond anyone's I can imagine and he's highly intelligent. So to be able to work with the CEOs, they were at the same level. There was never a question. He could relate or know as much, if not more, about the industry they were talking about and how it would affect the economy or the state. And I think the CEOs really appreciated being able to be a part of that and having him listen.

Czaplicki: I also know in that '82 campaign, Fletcher comes back in the summer, somewhere midstream. But I was a little bit fuzzy on what his role was and whether there was a perception that the campaign wasn't doing all it could. I wasn't sure why that happened and if you were privy to any of the thinking behind it.<sup>10</sup>

Fox: No, I wasn't. I think Greg Baise and Dave Gilbert would probably know better than I do. I know Jim was involved, and as we said, the 1982 economy was tough. Citizens always think that the politician that's in office is going to make the difference, or that's why some politicians are elected and some aren't. Based on that economy it was a very tough time. The margin was slight on our victory in '82. We had a recount. We didn't know whether or not we had officially won until December or January.

Czaplicki: I think it was January, almost right to the...

Fox: Right up to the inaugural. And I'm going to say we won by 5,087 votes.

Czaplicki: I think that's on the button. 5034 or 5,087, something like that.<sup>11</sup>

Fox: So I know Jim got back involved but I don't know how.

Czaplicki: Was the scheduling very different in that period? Were you seeing a lot more lawyers and campaign attorneys because of the recount fight?

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<sup>10</sup> On his role advising the campaign, see Jim Fletcher, interview by Mike Czaplicki, April 27, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson beat Adlai Stevenson III by 5,074 votes. On the razor thin margin and the recount process in general, see James Thompson, December 18, 2014; Adlai Stevenson III, August 5, 2014; Gene Reineke, December 7, 2009; Dave Gilbert, April 22, 2014; Greg Baise, August 7, 2013; and Robert Kjellander, February 26, 2014. All interviews by Mark DePue.

- Fox: Yeah, it was a tense time and we had to spend time on it. It was tough on the staff because we felt we had won this election; then to go through the recount, it was not an easy time for anyone. You're on top of the holidays and almost on top of the inaugural, and you're waiting to hear whether or not you officially won office. So it was not an easy time, no.
- Czaplicki: Would you still help plan those events even though you were doing the scheduling job? Because of your past experience, did you do things for the '83 inaugural?
- Fox: Oh, sure. Yeah. I did the '83 inaugural. The governor had me assist with his appearance on that. And I helped the staff with that. And come the '87 inaugural, I was with the political office and I ran the inaugural for him.
- Czaplicki: A few more names just to run by you, what they're like people-wise. Fletcher as a personality?
- Fox: Fletcher. Funny, funny. He had a good sense of humor. Very bright but he always had a smile on his face. Was always friendly. Never seemed to let things, from what I saw, bother him. And he was smart but he was just a funny per—I don't know if funny is the right word—but just jovial and didn't let things get to him. Now, maybe there was another side but always was upbeat. I guess upbeat would be the word.
- Czaplicki: Art Quern was his successor?
- Fox: Yes. Art was a great leader. Serious and astute, and I think well-liked by the business community and the staff. Just a really good Chief of Staff.
- Czaplicki: When does he come in? '80? '81?
- Fox: '80 or '81.
- Czaplicki: Did he play an important role in bringing in that business circle that you were just talking about? Was Art key to that, or did that happen independently of him?
- Fox: Seemed like the business circle did start after '81. I don't know if it started before the '82 campaign or shortly after the '82 campaign. So he would have been a part of that.
- Czaplicki: Jim Reilly?
- Fox: Jim Reilly...
- Czaplicki: He follows Art Quern.

Fox: Yes, he does. I can't say I interfaced as much with Jim because I left the office of the governor in '83. I met him at events, always helpful. But I did not have as much contact with Jim Reilly as I did Art Quern.

Czaplicki: How about Paula Wolff?

Fox: Paula and I traveled some together because she was very good to help with briefings and information when it came to any of the human services events that we did. So I would stop by her office and say, "Paula, we're going to be doing this." She was always helpful. She'd do the briefing. She'd give the governor an update on it. If she could, and we were in the Chicago area, she'd come over to the event and travel and be with us. A very bright person. She's very helpful.

Czaplicki: And I always hear that she was somebody who was certainly in that inner administrative circle because she's there throughout, just like Mandeville.

Fox: She was there throughout. She had information in her head that no one else had and was needed for the governor to know about, whether it was public aid or public health or any of... She could tell him or give him a one-page brief on something that could explain it all, or explain a lot of whatever the subject was or the event we were going to. And she was out in the public a lot on behalf of the governor at events herself.

Czaplicki: Media appearances, things like that?

Fox: Not media, but if there was an annual meeting with one of the departments she worked closely with, and the governor was not able to come, she would be the surrogate and would go on his behalf.

Czaplicki: I see.

Fox: She did a lot of appearances on behalf of the governor.

Czaplicki: Did you interact with Bob Mandeville much?

Fox: Just seeing him coming in and out of the governor's office a lot at budget time. He'd be there and I'd always have to put him on the schedule for a certain length of time, and what was going to be a two-hour meeting sometimes was a six-hour meeting. He would be invited over to the mansion quite a bit around budget time.

Czaplicki: So when you say scheduling, you're scheduling everything, right? Whether he's at the Capitol office, whether he's in the mansion? All of that?

Fox: Sometimes, but knowing that some of his office time is scheduled directly by his assistant and the chief of staff. But I had to block that time; when I

blocked that time, at times I knew exactly who it was blocked for. like this is blocked for Bob Mandeville to go over the budget.

Czaplicki: I was talking to him [Mandeville] and he mentioned his process. His fail safe. He seemed to exercise a lot of control over the agencies, but he said the one fallback is that all of them, if they wanted, could go appeal directly to Thompson. So he said he had a lot of meetings where he and the director...

Fox: I'm sure.

Czaplicki: Things like that. You never saw him come back from his runs? Apparently he, Fletcher, and John Block would go running.<sup>12</sup>

Fox: I'm sure they did, yeah. I guess I was just kind of focused in my world a lot of times, in my office or out on the road, that I didn't always get to see everything happening around me in the office.

Czaplicki: Gary Starkman was in one of the photos you showed. Did you deal with him much? Because he's the first counsel, I think.

Fox: Yes. And again, he goes way back. Gary was great to have with us when we would be going—I think he traveled with us to the Republican convention in Detroit. We decided it was easier, since there were so many of us going, that we'd rent an RV<sup>13</sup>. Or someone had an RV, I believe. J.J. Moppett's RV. We all went in that RV up to Detroit. Gary would appear in Chicago when the governor was at different events. Gary was practicing law so he was doing his own thing. He wasn't on our staff, but he was definitely available and around

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Mandeville, December 12, 2013, and February 11, 2014. Both interviews by Mike Czaplicki.

<sup>13</sup> RV: recreational vehicle. Usually either a specially outfitted large bus, or trailer pulled by a personal vehicle.

if he was needed.



Czaplicki: Two more names. Greg Baise; mentioned him several times.

Fox: Greg was great to work with. I think he and Dave probably were...

Czaplicki: That's the other name. So if you want to think of them together as a unit.

Fox: When I came on staff in May of '77, I believe Greg is there, and Greg stays there through '82 as assistant to the governor.

Czaplicki: Oh, as the assistant? I have him down as scheduler in '79, '80.

Fox: Then I must have worked with him at the beginning in scheduling. So I first started with him in scheduling and then he became assistant to the governor. And with Dave, because of the two of them traveling on the road, that's who I interfaced with most of the time; they stayed with the administration a length of time.

Czaplicki: But personality-wise, what were they like on the road?

Fox: Oh, they were great to work with. Greg was very affable, so people enjoyed him traveling with the governor, and he knew a lot of people, having been involved with the campaign. I think he started with the Young Republicans in Jacksonville or the College Republicans?

Czaplicki: I think that's correct.

Fox: He is really enjoying politics and involved in politics and then becomes the governor's scheduler, and he's young and the governor is this vibrant leader, and Jayne Thompson... It was a really exciting time. Greg was great to work with. People liked him out on the road and he was good to listen to you and understand. Again, having been scheduler, when I came to him as scheduler he understood what I was talking about. He had been in my shoes. He knew what it was like, we traveled all the time together.

Dave, too. Dave had a handle with the media, having come from the Chicago press. And the governor was good with the press, but I think Dave helped guide the governor on how to react to the press. The governor was not one to avoid the press. Some politicians do their best to avoid the press whenever they can; the governor never did. I give a lot of credit to Dave Gilbert in giving him those skills. Some of it is Jim Thompson's own personality, but Dave was excellent with the press and Dave would brief him in the beginning about whatever the issue was. The governor would come on, or the governor would have to leave, and Dave would then go through it with the press. Dave's door was always open to any press person, as far as I know, or staff person that had a concern.

I just have to tell a funny story. We're in the office one day and there was kind of a loud scream. I'm thinking, Oh, my gosh, what happened? Dave Fields, assistant press secretary at that time. We all ran into his office. Well, he had a subscription to the Illinois lottery. He won, and it was not a small amount of money. It was seven million dollars. So Dave Fields became the seven million dollar man. It was just fun; it was an exciting happening in the office that day. Just one more thing to celebrate, I guess. So it was good. (Czaplicki laughs)

Czaplicki: I know what I was thinking about. Thompson's willingness to give young people...—

Fox: ...an opportunity?

Czaplicki: ...a significant chunk of responsibility. I'm thinking about you, I'm thinking about Baise, Mike Dunn—wasn't he twenty-something, twenty-three, twenty-four?

Fox: I think twenty-three or twenty-four.

Czaplicki: And he was Winnebago County, is that right?

Fox: Yes.

Czaplicki: I guess doing similar things, advance work and things like that.

Fox: Bob Kjellander was young. That's one thing I have to say with Jim Thompson. He took and mentored young people. He had twenty-five plus

assistants, aides, and we had another name for them: we called them bag boys. But they were all young and he could see that they had potential. He gave them an opportunity to go on and succeed on their own, as he did for many staff people and directors that he put in different departments.

I will have to toot my husband's own horn because he was one of those people. My husband, Peter Fox, met the governor back in probably '79 and agreed to do a fundraiser here in Champaign for him. Peter didn't live here. He lived in California, but Peter's parents were here. I remember the governor telling me to contact Peter. I went to Citizens for Thompson in '79. So I contacted Peter, and we came over and did a fundraiser and went to an Illinois game. When I went back on staff we came back to Champaign months later. Peter had started the Wendy's here in Champaign and Urbana, and out at Decatur and Charleston, so the governor came to an opening of one of Peter's Wendy's. At that time we were just starting the Illinois lottery, and the governor turned to Peter and asked him to be the chairman of the Illinois State Lottery. So Peter was the first chairman of the Illinois State Lottery, and then from there Thompson wanted him to become director of the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs prior to the '82 campaign. Peter came in as assistant director under John Castle, and by the starting of the campaign in '82 Peter was the director. I think he saw great potential in Peter. So I can tell you from that experience.

There's not many people that give credit to other people, and the governor was always very good about giving credit to his directors or his administration. I think that's what we all kind of thrived on. We were all putting in a number of hours and working long; for those who were married and had families, I know it was not easy. But we were not just dedicated to the governor of the State of Illinois, we were dedicated to Jim Thompson because we know he appreciated the work we did.

Czaplicki: So a lot of thank you notes in your collection.

Fox: A lot of thank you notes. He was very good about sending me thank you notes. Especially when I was executive director of Citizens for Thompson,



raising the money. (Czaplicki laughs)



*In Kim - one of the world's great ladies & friends! (1/85)*

Czaplicki: Yes, I imagine.

Fox: He sent me thank you notes, so that was even more helpful. I think Greg would tell you that, Dave would tell you that, Paula Wolff would tell you that, my husband Peter would tell you that. We would go to a function and whether it was something that Paula—he would recognize her. If it was something in public aid that Kathy Kustra, the director of public aid at the time, was doing, and Kathy was there, he would recognize her for her achievement. Sharon Sharp, when she became director of the lottery. It goes on and on.

Czaplicki: I know Director Mandeville got an award from the Governor's Association, which Thompson recommended him for.

Fox: That's exactly right.

Czaplicki: Very appreciative. Just to back up though: in that story, you talked about the governor seeing potential in Peter. When did you start seeing potential in him?

Fox: (laughs) Well, I met him in '79 when we were here.

Czaplicki: Was that the first time you met him?

Fox: Mm-hmm. A few months later, so it must have been in '80; we were back here. Then the governor appointed him as assistant director. That must have been '81. He was coming to Springfield and we connected. We were engaged just months later. We decided to marry in September. We married September

11, 1982, and we had a big campaign in November. I was in the governor's office—it must have been that summer—and I said to him after the meeting finishes, "Governor, I just wanted to tell you that Peter and I are marrying." He was very pleased. And I said, "Could we have our wedding reception at the mansion?" There had never been a wedding reception at the mansion under his administration. I can't speak for other administrations. If they had been for other administrations they might have been for family members. So he said yes. He always accuses me of starting something. We had our wedding at the First Presbyterian Church there in Springfield and the reception at the mansion, and the governor and Jayne came to the reception. Then we had a thirty-six hour honeymoon because we were back in our office on Monday morning (laughs) because we had a campaign. But we've made up for it since then.

Czaplicki: (laughs) So you got a lot out of this job, right?

Fox: I got much more than I ever thought I would. Yeah, I did.

Czaplicki: Would you trade it for the lottery ticket?

Fox: I didn't, I didn't think of it. (laughs) I got the million, million, billion dollar lottery ticket when I got Peter.

Czaplicki: Two other names actually. I wanted to just check if you interacted with them much, maybe later on when you were at Citizens for Thompson. But did you ever interact with Doug Bailey or Bob Teeter?

Fox: Yes.

Czaplicki: Doug Bailey was, of course, the political consultant.

Fox: Yes.

Czaplicki: And Teeter was the pollster.

Fox: Yes. Didn't as much as, of course, the campaign manager. But sat in on meetings where they were present, telephone conversations where they were present, saw briefings where they proposed different things, and paid bills that they presented. They were very good and the campaign relied on them and met them half-a-dozen, dozen times during the campaign.

Czaplicki: And their presence, of course, always goes to this larger question of Jim Thompson's ambition and looking beyond Illinois. Was that something that you talked about much or thought about either just personally or with the staff or programmatically?

Fox: Well, there was a lot of speculation out there at the time. And the governor never talked about it to—I was never aware of it being talked about directly.

Now, he could have talked about it to other people in confidence. I'm sure he did at one point, or maybe did at one point. There was a lot of speculation out there at one time. Remember, we were going to these governor conferences, whether it be the winter conference that's always held in Washington or the summer conference that rotates. Especially the winter conference, because you're in DC. We had Lamar Alexander, Tennessee governor; we had Bill Clinton, governor of Arkansas; we had John Sununu, New Hampshire; we had—oh, later on Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin and the Bush administration; Pete du Pont of Delaware. We had some high-powered governors during the time of our administration. I always think, though, when we had the national convention in Washington and all these governors from the states together, I really have to say that there was a lot of respect and a lot of eyes on Jim Thompson.

Czaplicki: You mentioned your garden earlier, to use that metaphor. He's certainly tending to the beds, right? Teeter is not just any pollster. Nationally respected or nationally experienced.

Fox: And you could tell. You could tell when he walked in a room. There was a presence. There was some with Bill Clinton at that time, but I would say the two of them were probably being watched very closely.<sup>14</sup>

Czaplicki: Was it something you thought about much, just personally? When they asked you this question about Reagan you said, "No, I want to go back to Illinois. I want to work for Thompson." Was that something you thought about, potentially moving to Washington?

Fox: Having been recently married in '82, the speculations started coming about after that. To my husband I said, "Well, you never know. We might be moving to Washington." I just assumed that if Jim Thompson went to Washington we would be packing our bags. By then my husband was in the private sector, but we'd be going that direction also. I would have at that time because I would have been going to Washington with Jim Thompson, not going to work for another president.

Czaplicki: Right. Very different.

Fox: Very different.

Czaplicki: Was your husband in New York at this time or was that just the headquarters of the firm and he was here?

Fox: No, the firm that he was with. He was manager of the Midwest for the firm. We married in September of '82, had the election in November of '82, and as we said, it was a tight election. When we went into the spring of '83, the governor called me in the office, or I think after a scheduling meeting he said,

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<sup>14</sup> For a comparison of the two governors' charisma, see Mandeville, February 11, 2014.

“Kim, I want you to take over as executive director of Citizens for Thompson.” Because we had just come through the campaign, we just kind of breathed a sigh of relief; you don’t think much about money and campaigning for a few months afterward. But we had one slight thing. We had a debt, and that debt had to be recovered.

Czaplicki: Do you recall how much that debt was?

Fox: I want to say it was \$375,000. Now, that doesn’t sound like a lot of money but I had really never raised money before.

Czaplicki: No?

Fox: I had been at all these fundraisers. And \$375,000 of debt seemed like kind of a large sum of money for me to have to raise right after a campaign. It wasn’t that you were raising money for a campaign, but you’ve just gone through a campaign and drained all your supporters and now I, new to this, have to go ask them. So he said, “I’d like you to be executive director of Citizens for Thompson. And, oh, by the way, that means you need to go to Chicago.” I think somehow Chicago came into the question. I went home that night and explained to my husband that I probably needed to go to Chicago. It was perfect timing because Peter was thinking it was the time for him to leave state government and go into the private sector. So that’s what we did. We both left state government and by June of ’83 we were in Chicago. I think I transferred over to the Citizens for Thompson office late spring but we had moved up there by June of ’83.

Czaplicki: Any idea why the office is in Chicago? Is it like Willie Sutton robbing banks? Is that where the money is?

Fox: Yeah, you do it based on population and I think raising money. During a campaign you had a Chicago location and a Springfield. But we were going to first get rid of this deficit and most likely would be going to the Chicago market and the business community, then maybe looking towards an ’86 campaign down the road.

Czaplicki: Or ’84? (laughs)

Fox: Here we’re ’83, but we’re going to wipe out this deficit and then when we get done with that we would be into ’84, and ’86 is really just right around the corner.

Czaplicki: Do you think he still had any national ambitions at that point? I know he always said he wouldn’t have left mid-term but...

Fox: You mean after being elected in ’86?

- Czaplicki: No, I mean back when he asked you to take over CFT in '83. Do you think part of him was also thinking, We're going to need to raise money potentially for a primary cycle starting in '87 for a national campaign?
- Fox: I don't know what his thought was at that time. I think any good, smart politician will always be prepared and ready for whatever comes around the corner and I think that's what he was going to prepare for, whether it was going to be another state election or something else. So we were first going to alleviate, just get rid of the debt, which we did. We did it pretty quickly, and then we began fundraisers.
- Czaplicki: And you had no prior experience?
- Fox: I had no prior experience. I have a lot of files to show how many fundraisers we did. We alleviated the debt, then we started just fundraising in small amounts, but then we really took it on in '85. Fundraising was so different than it is today in the amount of money to be raised. I have an article that Baise gave me, because Baise was the campaign chairman, which made it very easy for me to be the executive director. Now, we officed out of different offices. The campaign was located out in Rosemont and we were downtown at 18 South Michigan Avenue. Ours was just the finance office. The finance staff was there. When Greg or any of the staff members came down for events they could come in the office and work out of the office. By then we did have computers. That was helpful.
- Czaplicki: I was going to ask you about when computers came online for you.
- Fox: That was helpful in keeping track of your donor base and thank you letters. Not email, I'll remind you; that's not even a question. But just more for tracking and compiling lists and donors.
- Czaplicki: Do you remember what you were using back then? Would it have been like Lotus Works or one of those old, old software suites?
- Fox: Oh, I don't know what it was but the machines were large and the software was large and the printers were large.
- Czaplicki: Floppy discs.
- Fox: Floppy discs, yes. But still no cellphones. But going back to fundraising, it was so different. The amount of money being raised at a small event could have been twenty or thirty thousand. And then in a large event, hundreds of thousands maybe. But now most politicians don't even look at the small amount of monies that are being raised. It was more—I don't know if you'd call it grassroots, but I'd pick up the phone, I'd call one of our supporters in a county or say to Lou Mervis in Danville, "Lou, we'd really like to do a fundraiser in Danville. Can you put one together?" "Sure, when?" We'd work it out. We'd coordinate it together. He would work on names and provide, or

he'd send out the guest list or provide one. I'd provide names. We'd work together and we'd have the fundraiser. Now I don't even know how it's done.

Czaplicki: When you mention the names that you would call, was Lou Mervis somebody who was in the State Republican Committee or was this just a private citizen who's a strong Thompson supporter who's going to help you organize this?

Fox: Lou I think has been involved. He's very well-known in Vermilion County and in Danville.

Czaplicki: But not necessarily an actual Republican State Committee operative?

Fox: No, but a very strong GOP person. I don't know nationwide or what he does. But very strong in the community, very strong in the state, and has served on state boards. You just wouldn't go to Vermilion County or Danville without calling Lou Mervis, because Lou Mervis...

Czaplicki: But he's not the chairman of Vermilion County?

Fox: He could have been at that time. I don't remember if he was the GOP Vermilion County chairman. He's a successful businessman and he's a GOP person too. So we made all these calls to these people in every county, in every city, small or large, and put together fundraisers. We did fifty or sixty or seventy fundraisers from, as I said, a few thousand to a hundred thousand. Again, I think fundraising is done so differently. We did direct mail and that was done professionally, but it was probably so much more simple back then than it is today.

Czaplicki: You've been addressing this all along, the state of the technology at the time. What do you think changed the most between then and now in terms of the process?

Fox: I would think fundraising would be a large change with technology today and media. What I see with politicians now, three words can be taken out of a speech or content of what they're saying, and it hits instantly onto Facebook or some other type of social media. Three words out of content. That didn't happen [before]. Usually a reporter picked up a whole story. There was something before those three words and after those three words that made sense. This is entirely different, the way media plays and the way anyone plays in a race today, what can be said and how it can go viral in just seconds. I mean, seconds after it's said. And the implication might not be anything like what's being put on social media.

Czaplicki: Would most of your money be going to TV back then?

Fox: TV.

Czaplicki: And direct mail would be a much smaller chunk?

Fox: Oh, a small amount. TV, yes. TV, especially the last thirty days.

Czaplicki: I know one thing technology's changed. The Obama campaign, for instance. They were interested in small donations.

Fox: They were or were not?

Czaplicki: They were. But it's what they're doing with the information they're getting out of these small donations.<sup>15</sup> That's really what's more valuable to them. The mailing list has always been a staple. Was then, is today. So how did you put your mailing list together back then? I read one story, I think it was '85, where you mentioned that you had twenty-five thousand people.

Fox: We would just take it from past and present contributors and we would start building on it and building on it and building on it. No one ever went off the list unless they were deceased or moved. Even if they moved out of state they were still on the list. But we just built on it and came up with names. And if we did an appearance and someone hadn't been on the list but they seemed enthusiastic and wanted to support him or wanted to help, they went on the list. So not only past and present contributors but anyone we thought would have an interest in supporting the governor for the next race or the next...

Czaplicki: But were you relying much on private marketing consultants to build lists of potential supporters or likely people to cold call and maybe add to the list? Did that happen much then?

Fox: I don't think we did as much. I think our staff, who had been around long enough, knew who to call on. Even today, I would guess for a statewide race that seventy-five percent or more of the money is from their present contributors already. You know, who has already contributed to them. But they might be adding a few here or there. I know we did some random phone solicitation. But how successful? I would say it would be a very small percentage of adding new names. You could add new names on the road when you met someone and put them into the data. You would have a better chance of getting support from that person than just calling someone randomly.

Czaplicki: How widely would you share your list? Is that something that's closely held by the campaign? Is that something that's distributed to other candidates in the state party?

Fox: We were more likely to help another candidate. Jack O'Malley was one of those candidates that we helped.

Czaplicki: State's attorney in Cook County?

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<sup>15</sup> In the wake of the 2012 election, the Obama campaign's integration of data received significant press attention. For example, see Alexis Madrigal, "When the Nerds Go Marching In," *The Atlantic*, November 16, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/11/when-the-nerds-go-marching-in/265325/>.

Fox: And we gave his staff office space and we helped him raise money. What we would do, instead of giving him maybe our supporters from Cook County, we would do a mailing for him, on his behalf from the governor, or we would sponsor a fundraiser for him. I always liked to protect that list somewhat.

Czaplicki: Why is that?

Fox: You feel as if it's the candidate's list. And it is, remember, open to the public. All anyone has to do is go to the State Board of Elections and get every name that's on that list of donors and input it into their own system. So there's (unintelligible).

Czaplicki: As long as they contributed directly.

Fox: If they contributed directly.

Czaplicki: Not through a 501(c) or those...

Fox: Right.

Czaplicki: ...weird exemptions.

Fox: No, through a PAC. But no, the names are there. I just feel that it's the candidate's contributors and sometimes a lot of those contributors give based on the candidates, not always the office or not always the party that the candidate represents. So aren't you better having the candidate do a mailing for you or do the fundraiser versus going out on your own? And we felt that that was the case. That's the reason. We just felt that it was better. That's how we could best assist a candidate that the governor wanted to support that way. And that's one of the reasons we set up the America 2000 Fund.

Czaplicki: After Thompson leaves office?

Fox: Set it up in...

Czaplicki: 1990. Oh, he's still in office, right.

Fox: He's still in office. It's August.

Czaplicki: Right. He decided not to run.

Fox: It's August of 1990. And in August of 1990 he's not running again. Jim Edgar is running. Citizens for Thompson was there and it could help support state-wide candidates, but he also wanted to do it at a federal level, to be able to support candidates and federal PACs. So we set-up that fund to be able to do that. And that way if a federal politician came to Illinois or if the governor wanted to support a federal politician, we could do that through that fund.



Czaplicki: Were you able to transfer all of the funds over?

Fox: Not all, no.

Czaplicki: Did they say how much you could move?

Fox: I know when I was executive director—and I assume prior to whoever was prior to me—we always had legal counsel outside of the campaign. So when we decided to form the America 2000 Fund, we sought the advice of our legal counsel to be able to know what percentage of the Citizens for Thompson funds...

Czaplicki: Yeah, I think you had one and a half million left.

Fox: ...we could transfer over.

Czaplicki: But not all of it.

Fox: No. Nor did we want to do that. We still wanted to keep the state fund too. So we went through and did the filing that we needed to file and transferred those funds so we could do both.

Czaplicki: You mentioned some of the amounts that you might ask for back then compared to now and how much that's changed. I noticed in '85 you had both ends of the spectrum. You had an event in Marion, which I think was attended by 1,800 people at twenty-five bucks a head. So what's that raise, about forty thousand? Then you had an event in New York City at a fancy hotel where it was sixty or seventy people and I think you were charging five hundred a head. So I was curious about how you decided where to set the ask-for at different events, how you would do the pricing and decide what to charge.

Fox: Sure. We did that based on our contact. Because when we went into a county, when we went into Marion or anywhere, we had someone we contacted in that county that would really help host that event. We just wouldn't go in and set it up on our own; we always worked with them on the price of tickets. Now, would we have liked to have, instead of maybe a fifty dollar ticket, a hundred? But if we knew it wasn't feasible we would have to go with that fifty dollar ticket. And that's the reason we did a lot of fundraising. I'm sure it's probably not done that much anymore. But we did do that back then. We reached out to a lot of people that way and I still think that was the right way to do it, and I think Jim Thompson would say that was the right way to raise money. It's not always the large dollars that make the difference. It's the small dollars also.

Czaplicki: Is there much of a relationship between the size of the attendance and the ticket price you can charge? Do people want to pay five hundred a plate if they're going to be one of a thousand people? I know the amounts are different today so it's almost silly to talk about that, because thinking...

Fox: Yeah, it is. Very silly. But of course.

Czaplicki: ...back then.

Fox: If you can have a small gathering with the governor you're much more apt to pay a larger ticket price than a smaller ticket price. I have hanging on my wall going downstairs [a story] Greg cut out; this was just prior to the November '86 election. The campaign raises six million dollars. Six million dollars. Now, I don't know what Governor Quinn raised last campaign, but I would think most gubernatorial elections are five to ten-fold that amount today.<sup>16</sup> We had money in the bank before we just raised that six million, so we might have spent near seven million on the campaign. I don't remember. I can get the file out and look. but the headline says six million dollars.

Czaplicki: Wasn't Jon Corzine in New Jersey, wasn't his senate race—I think he alone spent fifty-seven million or something like that—just dwarfs what was being spent in your time.

Fox: So I'm just saying most races now for gubernatorial or U.S. senator are probably five to ten-fold what we raised in '86. But '86 is quite a few years ago. I have to say that it made my job a lot easier, I'm sure, raising that sum of money. But it gave contact to a lot of different folk that I don't know how many politicians now can reach out to if they have to raise that sum of money.

Czaplicki: I guess that's where the technology plays in these days. With modern databases you can take the ten dollar contribution but then...

Fox: ...you have to look for the very large contribution.

Czaplicki: How do you settle on some of these targets? How did you determine that six million was the goal?

Fox: Greg was tracking what we needed to run a campaign and we had to track it monthly. As I said, especially the last three months and thirty days, because we'd spend more money on media if we could. He was tracking that. We were in contact all the time, and I was telling him this is how much we have, this is how much we have. Then he could budget that. We had to work closely. We didn't want to have a debt after this campaign. We wanted to be able to stay within the limits but also try to raise as much as we possibly could.

Czaplicki: Were there any hard numbers behind some of these spending decisions? Was there a notion that, Look, if we can spend \$500,000 in these markets we will

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<sup>16</sup> From January 1, 2013, through November 2, 2014, Quinn raised \$31.4 million while Bruce Rauner raised \$65.9 million. Rauner's total included \$27.6 million of his own money. Paul Merrion, "Cost of a Vote for Governor, \$23.90," *Crain's Chicago Business*, November 4, 2014, <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20141104/NEWS02/141109937/cost-of-a-vote-for-governor-23-90-winning-the-election-priceless>.

move the polling needle this many points? Do you know if there were calculations like that, or is it just more of an arms race? We don't want to be outspent.

Fox: The pollsters might have been telling Greg that, but they might say, "If we can inject more media money over the Labor Day weekend into one of the counties, we think it would make a difference because, yes, our numbers show we're on the edge there." And Greg would take that into consideration to decide whether or not to take more money from the campaign and allocate it to a news blitz or an advertising blitz in that particular county or that station in that area.

Czaplicki: Would you be part of those discussions as well?

Fox: No, I would not. I'm just raising the money. I had my hands full doing just that.

Czaplicki: Keep the tank full?

Fox: Yeah.

Czaplicki: This machine going.

Fox: I wouldn't have had time to be a part of that and that was not my responsibility. Greg and his staff were more than capable of handling that.

Czaplicki: So your primary link was always Greg? Greg would come to you and say, "I need  $x$  to do this"?

Fox: Or he more or less said, "What's the budget? Where do we stand?" He would make those decisions. He never was demanding. Never demanded that we needed more. He would ask where we stood and, "What do you project ahead? What do you think's coming in?" And then he worked with whatever we felt we could raise.

Czaplicki: As Illinois election law stood at the time, who had to sign the checks? The director and the treasurer?

Fox: For...

Czaplicki: Citizens for Thompson.

Fox: Citizens for Thompson.

Czaplicki: You're supposed to have two positions.

Fox: We did.

Czaplicki: It could be the same person, too.

- Fox: The treasurer. The treasurer of Citizens for Thompson.
- Czaplicki: Did you also serve that role?
- Fox: No, I did not. My mind's blank right now. Can I tell you that at another time?
- Czaplicki: That's fine. Yeah.
- Fox: But no, the treasurer had to sign and then I think I signed. I did enough checks, I should know. But we were always very careful, and I think Greg believed in it too: I don't know if the governor was aware of it, but I always had the books audited. I always wanted them audited every year.
- Czaplicki: Really?
- Fox: We had Citizens for Thompson audited every year.
- Czaplicki: So you'd go with an outside firm or a state auditor?
- Fox: Always an outside firm. If I *ever* had a question I went to our legal counsel. I never, ever, ever—if there was anything in my mind whether or not this was legal to do this, I went to outside counsel. I think Greg would say that that's just the way we operated. I just wanted to always have an audit done every year. I have all those audits still stored away somewhere. If we did an event, whether we raised money separately for the National Governors Association Conference when it was held [in Chicago] or the Midwest Governors Conference, I always had an audit done afterwards. I wanted every penny tracked that filtered through.
- Czaplicki: I'll come back to that in a minute, but I wanted to go back to the five-hundred-dollar-a-plate function...
- Fox: Yes.
- Czaplicki: ...for a second. Because sometimes I look at these fundraisers and in a way they're forms of political communication. The candidate's sending signals through some events. I would think the New York event—Thompson's ability to leave the State, to go right to New York City, to get sixty or seventy people to come and pay five hundred dollars a head to see him—that sends a message. But I'm curious if you would agree with that. Who would that message be aimed at?
- Fox: I think being governor of the State of Illinois, having Chicago, a large metropolitan city, we could reach out to other people in metropolitan cities around the nation because of the firms and the offices and the businesses that are located in Illinois and are either second offices or headquarters of firms that are located nationwide. So they very much had an interest in what was happening in the State of Illinois. They wanted to see growth, they wanted to

see progress, they wanted to see a good, strong economic climate. When we'd reach out to New York, most of the people that attended would have a relationship or a business in Illinois and had an interest in Illinois, so it made it so much easier to raise the money because they cared. They cared about what was happening in the State. They cared about who was the governor and that's the reason they would give and support Jim Thompson.

Czaplicki: Did you do many functions in other cities?

Fox: We did.

Czaplicki: Outside Illinois, I mean.

Fox: We did some. We did some in Florida. We did one in California. We did one in Wisconsin; as we did one here in Illinois for Tommy Thompson, he did one for us in Wisconsin. We did, I think, a couple in New York. We might have done one in DC. Ninety-five percent of them were done in Illinois. There were always just a few that were done outside of the State.

Czaplicki: I guess in my mind it seems that it's another way to keep—whatever the office is, president, vice-president, heck, a Senate run someday—those national embers burning.

Fox: It does.

Czaplicki: I can raise funds everywhere.

Fox: Especially if there's speculation out there. Then it's much easier to go into another state, another city and do a fundraiser.

Czaplicki: Is that something you would talk about at all as a possibility?

Fox: We didn't really talk about that, but I know there was interest out there and so because of interest, if someone said, "Hey, I'm willing to host a fundraiser in New York," it made it a lot easier to have people attend.

Czaplicki: Was it unusual for an Illinois official to do that?

Fox: No.

Czaplicki: Was this common prior to Thompson?

Fox: Prior to Thompson I can't say it was, but when we were in office many other state governors were doing the very same thing. They were reaching out beyond their own state.

Czaplicki: Process-wise, when you put an event together, what...

Fox: A fundraising event?

Czaplicki: A fundraising event, right, as opposed to a campaign appearance. What kinds of things are you thinking about as you're developing an event?

Fox: First of all, you are thinking about, how much money can I raise at this event? If it's a first-time event and you know the area, you know the region of the state, you know the demographics of the people attending, you have an idea. Then when you reach out to that host or hostess or co-chairs, you either go and meet them in person or you talk to them over the phone and say, "This is really our goal. We'd really like to make this much money on this fundraising event. Is this feasible, is this possible?" You work together and you come up with that number. Then you say, "Okay, how are we going to do it? Your list, our list, combined list?" And you work together. It's all a process. It's just not a stamped formula for every single fundraiser; it all varies. At least it was for us.

Of course you have guidelines and you have what you kind of go through. But it depends on the audience, it depends on your function. We handle them differently. Some co-chairs or hostesses would handle the guest list completely and they'd say, "I have a great guest list. I know who will support Jim Thompson. Why don't I try to raise this  $x$  amount of dollars," or we'd set that and they would handle it. We always approved the invitation because we wanted to make sure—there's certain information you have to have on any political invitation as far as state election laws—so we would approve the invitation, we would know. But they would send it to their guest lists or their friends and at the end of the night a sum of money would be raised and made payable to Citizens for Thompson. They did the work on it. That was one type of event. Or we'd combine both lists if it was a larger regional. Or we'd go into an area and it would mean maybe our past donors. So it would vary with each event. But we would go in and plan an event with a goal, because you'd have to have a goal.

Czaplicki: In terms of ability to pay, or how much could you earn from an area, I presume you're not trying to max it out in case you have to return to the well?

Fox: Oh, I'd be happy to max it out and return to the well anyway. (laughter) We might go in and do a fundraiser, let's say, down in southern Illinois, where it was a small event. We were down in the area where'd it be a small dinner party. It would be a higher ticket number. But we might be turning around, coming down there four months later to do an event with three or four hundred people. Now, the small dinner party would be fifty people or less, maybe twenty-five or less. Those same twenty-five would be at the three hundred party but they would give both times at a whole different level. But the three hundred would not be giving at the level that the twenty-five or fifty would be giving. So you could go back to counties or communities and maybe do two, three, four different-level fundraisers in one campaign. Would depend on the community.

- Czaplicki: How would you decide between doing something at the Field Museum versus a private home?
- Fox: Depends on the host. Some of the hosts would love to have it in their home, to have the governor come to their home. There's nothing better than to have a fundraiser in someone's home if it works. I remember many we've done in homes.
- Czaplicki: So it's a very donor-driven process in some ways?
- Fox: It is. It's not only donor. Remember, it's whoever's hosting it. It's their friendships, and they're asking, many times, because it's their name on the invitation. And a lot of times they're doing the follow-up calls too, or they're making all the calls, just depending on the event. So it's very driven by the host and hostesses, as with anything political or non-political. I mean, that's the key in fundraising, whose name is behind the invitation.
- Czaplicki: Would hosts generally donate as well, or would you have a split where...
- Fox: Always. Yes, they always donated.
- Czaplicki: Do even mundane decisions, whether you're planning an event for fundraising or whether it's one of these other events, have political implications? You know, do people get hurt feelings if you don't take the caterer that somebody influential suggested, or somebody wants you to have this at their friend's restaurant and you don't? Are there potential minefields there that you have to watch out for?
- Fox: Let's say you have to be very politically tactful in some situations because, of course, if someone has agreed to host a fundraiser with you and they want to do it just their way, sometimes you have to alter the event a little bit so that it works a little better for the candidate or maybe for the GOP. You just have to be very, very careful on how you handle it sometimes with people. At the whole we didn't have those problems.
- Czaplicki: Any of those situations stand out in your mind? Can you recall any?
- Fox: I think the thing would be, they would want the governor there for like, "We're going to start the party at 6:00 and we're going to sit down for dinner at 7:30, then we'd like him to speak and we'd like to have pictures taken." And I'm thinking, The governor said he could be at that fundraiser for forty-five minutes. Now, how are we going to tactfully tell this person who's raising the money, who's invited the guests, that the governor is not going to be at their house or the fundraiser for three and a half hours; he's going to be there for forty-five minutes? I think that was probably the biggest...
- Czaplicki: Adjusting expectations?

Fox: Yes, adjusting expectations. The biggest hurdle, his time. I mean, people aren't thinking, because they're just thinking of their one event. It's a campaign year. And we might be in southern Illinois, but we might have campaigned all day long and we might have to leave after that event and end up in Chicago to start campaigning at 7:00 a.m. the next morning. And he's been on the road for seven days. So their expectations and our expectations of that event, that's where I think it was most difficult. The timeframe and his commitment at some of the events. It was hard to explain to the host and hostess who were raising money for you that he couldn't stay those three hours but he could be there for forty-five minutes.

Czaplicki: In terms of scheduling these events, are there better or worse times to hold them? Is there a fundraising cycle?

Fox: The fall before a campaign is always the best time and that's when everything kicks in. That's when people, and I think voters, become more interested in the campaign. You go through the summer and voters are thinking about their summer vacation and their kids are out of school; they're not thinking about it. Come Labor Day, you're hearing more about campaigning and you're in that ninety-day period. Of course, you do as much as you possibly can up to that time. But those last three months are really very vital, in not only making appearances, but fundraising.

Czaplicki: So a voter's enthusiasm directly translates to more...

Fox: And I would think that holds true today.

Czaplicki: Yeah. I think in the '86 cycle your goal was six million, as you said.

Fox: Yes.

Czaplicki: I think by October you had raised five of that, or a little less. But you still hit it.

Fox: Yeah. And we hit...

Czaplicki: In a month you raised a million dollars.

Fox: Right, we did. And that's typical. I would say that's typical, and probably right now, just not a million but millions, in the last month of the campaign. But I think that will never change no matter what happens in the future with politics, media, or the strategy of campaigns. You will always be raising more dollars toward the last days of the campaign.

Czaplicki: Since you and your husband are active philanthropists, you're aware that institutions are very careful about when they make their ask or how they coordinate their ask or what they ask for. Would the same thing happen in



politics? Would you have to coordinate with other candidates or be careful about when you were going to hit up an area?

Fox: Yeah. Especially if you were in a smaller community. If you have two GOP candidates going there the same week asking in a small community, or a smaller community, it's going to be the same crowd at both events. You had to be aware. So we always tried to get on the books first. (Czaplicki laughs) I would look out about six months and call my contact and say, "Would you be willing to host a fundraiser in October? Those would be the last days of the campaign. We'll really need you then." And get the commitment early enough, in advance, and have them talk about it in the community so that people were aware, so when the next politician would be calling six weeks out they'd say, "Oh, this has been planned for months. Jim Thompson's coming to town. We can't do your fundraiser." The key was just strategically planning back then and having the fundraisers on the books early so that they were already committed.

Czaplicki: Would you ever get any blowback? Would candidates complain that you were...

Fox: I'm sure there were some disenchanted or unhappy candidates, but you can't look at it that way. You just keep on going.

Czaplicki: Would you do many joint events?

Fox: Mm-hmm.

Czaplicki: Share the wealth?

Fox: Sometimes we did. It was outlined clearly if we were doing a joint event and how it was—because checks would have to be made payable to those candidates separately. That's not as frequently happening as you might think. It does complicate matters. But there probably were a few where we might go in for a local candidate and monies would be raised for him or her, and then monies would be raised for us too.

Czaplicki: Is it something that would be more common to have? Say a joint appearance for a party fundraiser, so all checks will go to the state party who will then pay it out?

Fox: We usually didn't do many that way because we just had more control if we were doing our own fundraiser. I'm not saying the governor didn't do a state party fundraiser and that those monies would not come back through Citizens for Thompson. Those monies would be used in some way, media or promotion, that the party would pay for. But the dollars physically didn't come back to Citizens for Thompson.

Czaplicki: Right, because you have to write those checks.

Fox: Right.

Czaplicki: It all gets tracked.

Fox: So they would help support our budget in some way, the campaign budget.

Czaplicki: One more question about price. Does it vary by official? Can a governor ask for more than, say—I assume the comptroller couldn't get five hundred dollars?

Fox: I'd like to think that. I think it does a little bit. Not always. If the official's from that part of the state and he's got good friends, he's going to raise as much if not more than we will. But I do think a gubernatorial candidate...

Czaplicki: If we did a median plate, taking the state as a whole, right?

Fox: Right. I think a U.S. senator or a governor usually is top ticket on fundraisers in a state, other than a national, because I see that still today when someone comes through Champaign. It seems like a U.S. senator or governor might have more than a comptroller or treasurer, another state officeholder, or even maybe a representative, congressman.

Czaplicki: Given your expertise in that area and the contacts that you're building around the State, does that also mean that you're the campaign's ears on the ground? Are you the ones that are keeping tabs on what the other candidates are raising and where they're raising it from?

Fox: Not as much. I think you could do that today because you have the technology to do that. Ears, yes. You'd be finding out who's coming into the community either just prior to you or after you. But you really don't have the time to do that, nor the resources. We didn't have the resources because it just wasn't computerized that way. We couldn't just pick it up immediately and find out who had come in and how much they raised.

Czaplicki: Six-month lag in some cases?

Fox: Right. And I think you said it best. You use your ears and your contacts to find that out: Who was in last month? How much did they raise? Do you think it's a problem with us coming in a month, four weeks later, and trying to raise this much? So it was more verbal versus...

Czaplicki: You don't have a spreadsheet with...

Fox: No, no. There just wasn't that time. You're so busy reaching out, and just one more fundraiser, and securing and confirming a fundraiser, then putting it together, and having it be successful and bringing in the dollars. You have to record all that and you have to then file the reports. It's a very busy time because that's all coming out of the finance office.

Czaplicki: Filing the reports, dealing with the state election board, what percentage of your time would you say was occupied sort of doing those kinds of tasks?

Fox: I think we had another four people in the office. So they were all doing the administrative work. It was time consuming because, as I said, we just didn't have the electronic capabilities and the computer capabilities that exist today. You've got to input all that data, not only for your personal records and follow-up and thank you notes. We were very good about sending thank you notes to every contributor, no matter if it was a five dollar contribution or a five hundred dollar contribution, because it's just the way it should be. Most of it was postage; it wasn't email.

Czaplicki: Stuffing envelopes.

Fox: Stuffing envelopes and then just having all that information put into the database to file the report. So there was a lot of work. It wasn't just, you take the money and run. (laughter)

Czaplicki: Everybody seems to be different, although one universal that you hear when you talk to candidates is that they all claim they hate fundraising. They don't like to make the ask, they don't like to call people. It's the one part of the job they wish they didn't have to do. Did Thompson feel the same way about that?

Fox: I don't remember him making those calls.

Czaplicki: How about even appearing at events? Was that something that he liked to do?

Fox: Well, let's face it, all the people that were doing fundraisers were friends of the governor. He was tired. It was long days. And did he really want to go to a fundraiser? Probably not. But he got there and once he got there he was fine. It all went well. Fundraising's probably one of the last things—would he have preferred being in a parade? Yes. He just liked the excitement of the more casual events—parades, state fairs, outings—instead of having to give a long speech and then the sit-down dinners, as any candidate would be. I'd be the very same way. But he was always very gracious to the host and knew that it was very important that he do these fundraisers. So when they were put on a schedule he realized that that was part of running for office.

Czaplicki: So you don't remember him making any calls?

Fox: He will have to tell me if he did.

Czaplicki: Fair enough. In terms of events that you may have organized, where the donors were not setting up an event, was there much pressure to keep it fresh? Come up with new ideas, different types of things? Or is there pretty much a set format that these things would always follow?

Fox: I think for the bigger events you had to, because those were big events, the big Chicago splash events.

Czaplicki: Like the Navy Pier event and...

Fox: Right. Those had to be something new and different and attractive. You might bring in a guest who could have been the president of the United States or an outstanding senator or a celebrity in their own right. So you had to come up with venues and new and fresh ideas for the big fundraisers. The average fundraiser, not as much. Maybe a different venue, maybe a different location but not as much.

Czaplicki: For the big ones that you were just talking about, would Thompson take much of a role in the details of that?

Fox: No.

Czaplicki: Because he's known for his love of entertaining and his creative eye. So no?

Fox: Yeah. The governor just didn't have time. There's a lot of work that goes into those big ones. A lot of work.

Czaplicki: Yeah. How long were you planning for the National Governors Association convention that we hosted in '89?

Fox: That was a lot of work.

Czaplicki: How long did you plan that for?

Fox: Oh, I think your site is chosen two years out.

Czaplicki: So '87?

Fox: First of all, we have to secure the locations. I always had great help from Pat Hurley. Patricia Hurley & Associates. Pat Hurley and I bonded way back in '79. She had come on as the executive director of the Republican Party for the State of Illinois in either '78 or '79, and we worked closely together because it would be her office and the governor deciding where the delegates would stay for a convention and what our activities would be as far as the state activities around it. Or on other major events I had to have, Pat was a fantastic fundraiser and is today. By the time we got to '89 and were doing the National Governors Convention, she had her own business. So we hired her firm to assist with all the events because there's a lot of planning that goes into a national convention. We had done the Midwest Governors Convention back in '83. I'm trying to recall if Pat was in private business by then. Again, the Midwest is smaller than the national but it's a lot of effort. It's a two-year process to do that National Governors Association meeting. So outside of advance work and scheduling and executive director of Citizen for Thompson,

I had the good fortune of doing these events and going to the Republican conventions. Since the governor was the lead delegate, we had a lot of say in what Illinois would do at those conventions, and also at the national conference that we had here.

At the Illinois Executive Mansion Association, the governor had very strong feelings about the mansion and the preservation of the mansion because it's one of the few mansions in the country that's lived in and preserved. And having Lincoln's bed in there and other historical artifacts. He took great pride in the mansion, as he should, because it's not only the governor's living quarters; the part of the mansion that a governor lives in is a very small part. The rest of it is the people of Illinois's home. And what people don't realize, that mansion is used daily for tours and for people to come through and for events, which have nothing to do with the governor because the governor is not going to be in attendance at any of those events, whatever governor is in office at that time. The mansion is constantly being used. He wanted to see the preservation of that mansion, so there was the Illinois Executive Mansion Association that he was really very active in and oversaw, and which Dave Bourland is still overseeing. The governor still chairs the association, I believe.

Czaplicki: Really?

Fox: He had me actively start fundraising for the association maybe around '85, '86. I know at one time we stopped to raise money for the Dana-Thomas House so that we could get those items that were coming up at the Christie auction.<sup>17</sup>

Czaplicki: Right, to furnish that house.

Fox: Back to the house. But we really fundraised for the mansion so that we could restore it or do the needs that the State could not cover. That would be furnishings. He takes great pride in the mansion. The mansion, unfortunately, is in disrepair right now and I hope that can be recovered.

Czaplicki: Yes. Austerity hurts, right?

Fox: Mm-hmm.

Czaplicki: What would you say makes a good fundraiser? What traits? Because presumably not everybody can do it or do it well.

Fox: Yeah. There's a lot of different personalities in a fundraiser. Someone can be really tenacious and be hardnosed and go after the money and be successful. Other people are just very organized and persistent and continuing down the

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<sup>17</sup> Thompson was very invested in acquiring and furnishing the Dana-Thomas House; see James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, June 9, 2015.

path and are successful. I think it depends on who you're representing and what organization you are and what you think you can do. But that's one person that I don't think you completely mold. I think it takes different personalities. Organization, though, would be one of the key things that any fundraiser would need.

Czaplicki: Even though you hadn't done that before, you ended up doing it very successfully for a long period of time. Did you feel you developed any traits that you hadn't had before?

Fox: I never thought I would be asking people for money. I just never thought that would be in me. I knew I could organize and schedule out and predict, but not to ask for money. So I guess I had never seen myself as raising funds. But again, I'll go back to, it's the product and you have to believe in the product. I still feel that way today. I do fundraising for not-for-profit or other organizations, but I have to truly believe in the product or the association if I'm going to be involved in the fundraising effort.

Czaplicki: I understand it took an enormous amount of labor and time. But just in terms of people's willingness to give, was it hard to raise money for Jim Thompson?

Fox: No, it was not. We were very fortunate, and everybody associated with Jim Thompson realizes when I say this, because we had the Jugs Anthony's and the Jim Archeropolises and the Bernie Berger's around the state that would do anything if we called. And then we had John Bryant and Tom Donovan at the Board of Trade or Bill Brodsky at the Merc [Mercantile Exchange], or Bob Malott or Ed Brennan who would also be helpful. So he had it across the board.

Czaplicki: You were mentioning the mansion. It reminded me of Thompson loving to entertain there and the parties he would throw for his staff. You had a few invitations in your book. Did you attend many of these functions that he would have?

Fox: Wouldn't miss a one.

Czaplicki: Wouldn't miss a one?

Fox: No, at holiday time we had the parties at the mansion, and we'd have not one but a couple. They were for different groups. We'd have a staff party or we'd have a party for our donors.

Czaplicki: All happening simultaneously?

Fox: No, different nights, different days. He always wanted to be able to thank people. And one of the great things, we had Seder dinners every year. I would imagine we had maybe twelve. I don't know if we had fourteen Seder dinners, but we had quite a few Seder dinners at the mansion. Again, he was very

generous in the use of the mansion and hosting special interest groups. When Labor Day, meaning labor, union labor day, happened at the State Fair, the party continued on the lawn at the mansion after hours. So he'd have labor come to the mansion. Usually union labor officials don't always have an opportunity or get invited to the executive mansion. The governor always opened his doors to them and many other special interest groups too.

Czaplicki: At some of the parties, I know there was this tradition, if that's not too strong a word. I don't know what to call them. I call them the Thompson Follies, where you do skits and little musical numbers lampooning people, just kind of having fun with what happened over the year with the staff and things like that.

Fox: Oh, yeah. Well, you have to. There's too many things that you can share amongst yourself that no one else understands but this circle. And Skilbeck was probably the instigator of most of those because he would be able to put those together.

Czaplicki: Did you ever participate in any of the sketches?

Fox: I don't remember being in those—but a lot of that was the press corps dinner too. It's like the one that they do in Washington.

Czaplicki: Is that the one that gives out the pickle?<sup>18</sup>

Fox: Yes, that's the one that gives out some award and I don't know exactly what it is. You have to have an invite to that one. The press corps, I think, generally liked Jim Thompson. They reported what they needed to report, but off the record they enjoyed having him around. They enjoyed interviewing him. They enjoyed sitting down off the record afterwards and talking to him and/or the staff. They enjoyed when he went to the press corps annual dinner because he participated. He could laugh and be laughed at and didn't mind. Didn't take it personally.<sup>19</sup>

Czaplicki: Just outside of the office, outside of work, what was social life like in Springfield? Did you socialize with many of your fellow administrative people?

Fox: We did at the beginning because there were quite a few of the staff members that had moved down from Chicago. They didn't know a lot of people, so people would have gatherings at their home. I know Dave [Gilbert] had a couple of gatherings at his home. I believe the Fletchers did. The Franzens had gatherings at their home. But there were, especially at the beginning. When I left in '83, I lost a little bit of contact with [those who were] in

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<sup>18</sup> Illinois statehouse reporters held an annual Gridiron show lampooning the year's events. They also awarded a giant pickle to the state official they felt made the biggest blunder.

<sup>19</sup> A view shared by the governor's daughter. Sam Thompson, interview by Mike Czaplicki, April 4, 2014.

Springfield all the time since I was in Chicago. But I think at the beginning, especially, a lot of the staff members were still single. And they didn't have families, young families, so that made a difference.

Czaplicki: Where would people hang out?

Fox: Oh, let's see.

Czaplicki: I know we're going way back here.

Fox: I know. Oh, my. That's kind of hard for me to say. I'm not the best one to ask. I just remember more home gatherings, going to someone's home versus going out. People's schedules were pretty busy. The only time you'd hang out would be on a Friday or Saturday night, and maybe you'd gather someplace for a drink afterwards. But if anything, somebody would have a cocktail party at their house over the weekend. I would think that would be more the happening.

Czaplicki: I wanted to go back to something you said. You mentioned that you would always have your books audited and were very careful to make sure nothing illegal would be happening. But just to think more about that time and read into the record for people who might not be familiar with it: what was Illinois' campaign finance regulatory environment like at this time period? Illinois was fairly unusual, right?

Fox: Yeah. You could give an unlimited amount to a statewide candidate. So I could give an unlimited amount to a statewide candidate. I just wanted to make sure that everything was recorded as it should be and that all dollars that were recorded were taken in, all expenditures were appropriate under campaign guidelines. As I said, if I ever thought, "Does that make sense for the campaign to pay that?" before we paid it I would call our legal counsel and ask him and get approval and get it in writing so that that was all documented. I just thought that was best, first for the governor and also for the administration and the campaign.

Czaplicki: Because Illinois is unusual on that.

Fox: It is very unusual.

Czaplicki: Did not have any restrictions.

Fox: No restrictions.

Czaplicki: And that was on a variety of groups. Corporations could give as well as labor unions.

Fox: That's right.



- Czaplicki: Because a lot of states had restrictions on groups like that.
- Fox: And individuals.
- Czaplicki: Right. And I think that one of the most unusual features was that candidates were allowed to keep their campaign funds. I think in '98 they changed that, but prior to that, if you had money left over in your fund, you could use it for personal expenses if you wanted.
- Fox: As long as you paid taxes on it.
- Czaplicki: Federal income tax. You were allowed...
- Fox: Is that not the case anymore?
- Czaplicki: No, I think they rolled that back. There's some loopholes they've left intact about paying for services to yourself and things like that. That was one of the changes. Did you ever have discussions about not just what was necessarily illegal, but in terms of public perception? Sometimes the public can still see things as ethically challenging even if it's not outright illegal. Was that ever something that you talked about or discussed?
- Fox: I don't remember having any specific issues where the governor said that he thought that this needed to be paid for but shouldn't be. Again, if something came across and I questioned it, I'd send it to them; if there was any question, they'd come back to me or go right to the governor with it. But I don't remember anything particular.
- Czaplicki: I know '82 was a rough year. There were a bunch of little snippy things appearing in the press. There's something about Christmas gifts. Thompson had given some antiques to the staff, to other people around there, and I guess the campaign funds paid for that. That got challenged, that this wasn't an appropriate use of the money. So did that ever spark? You weren't doing the job then?
- Fox: I wasn't doing it at the time, but I'm sure they did get an opinion and whatever the opinion was, that they went with the appropriate documentation.
- Czaplicki: What did you make of criticisms of things—and I'm not sure if this is what you were talking about earlier when you talked about the businessman circle—but in '81, Citizens for Thompson organizes a very specific group called the Governor's Club, which was...
- Fox: A thousand dollars per person.
- Czaplicki: ...a thousand dollars per person to get the chance occasionally to meet with the governor, whether at a formal meeting or whether in an informal setting.

They could give their input. Was this what you were referring to earlier or is this something different?

Fox: When you said kitchen cabinet, that's a little different. We reached out to a number of people to be in the Governor's Club. It was considered a club. For a thousand dollars annually you could be a part of the club, and in doing so you were invited to certain events. That was separate from this think tank, the kitchen cabinet.

Czaplicki: Okay, good. I wanted to make sure that was clear.

Fox: But many of those members were part of the Governor's Club.

Czaplicki: So initially I think it's 425 members, something in that range, and in '87...

Fox: Yes.

Czaplicki: ...Citizens for Thompson hired Jayne Thompson to come in and lead a membership drive to push it to a thousand members.

Fox: Right.

Czaplicki: That was something a lot of people saw as controversial, right? The idea being that it's not quite pay-to-play but it's like a soft form of that, that wealthy elites are buying special access. They're paying a fee and they get to come in and directly get the ear to try to bend it on certain policy issues. Was that something that you worried about?

Fox: We thought these were people who really supported the governor, who wanted to see him often, and that they had a choice to become a member or they didn't have to become a member. And Jayne was going to follow up on that and ask people or solicit people through a letter to see if they wanted to be a member. If they didn't, they didn't. But most of these people were already a supporter. It was just a way to still be getting an annual contribution from those people, the supporters, when we weren't campaigning.

Czaplicki: Did you meet your goal? Did you get to a thousand?

Fox: I believe we did.

Czaplicki: It was set-up in '81, so it was before you moved over.

Fox: It was, it was.

Czaplicki: But do you know who came up with that?

Fox: It was just prior to that.

- Czaplicki: Because I only saw a couple references in the press so I don't actually see how it develops and who puts it into...
- Fox: Yeah. I'm not sure who implemented that. Tom Morsch was executive director prior to...
- Czaplicki: You?
- Fox: Uh-huh. And Tom might have implemented that.
- Czaplicki: Morsch, of course, raises this question of Tollway appointments—your predecessor, Thomas Morsch. Thompson appointed him executive director of the Tollway board. He's on the Tollway board, then you were also on the board, and there was somebody named [Frank] Gesualdo, who was unpaid but supposedly also helped...
- Fox: I don't remember Gesualdo.
- Czaplicki: ...to raise funds now and then.
- Fox: I didn't remember Tom being on. He was not on the Tollway when I was on the Tollway. He must have been on it prior to me. Or maybe there was a crossover.
- Czaplicki: Yeah. I thought when you initially went there he was still there as the executive director. He replaced Gayle Franzen.
- Fox: That's right. That's right. I take that back.
- Czaplicki: The *Tribune* made a lot about this and criticized it, because there were firms who were doing business with the Tollway who were also donating to Thompson. At the same time, you have people who had been part of his fundraising apparatus sitting on the board. Did you ever worry about how that was perceived by the public?
- Fox: Well, it was the governor's choice.
- Czaplicki: Should that be allowed?
- Fox: With boards and commissions, most of them are appointees by the governor and it was the governor's choice to make this appointment. That was his choice. Perception is in the eyes of that person, but it was his choice.
- Czaplicki: But in terms of making the governor look good—this prime directive—does something like that make the governor look good, do you think?
- Fox: (pauses) I think a lot of boards and commissions are filled by people who a governor knows and feels are competent to be represented on a board or

commission, whether it's the Tollway or another board. Tom and I both were in the Chicagoland area and the Tollway is in the Chicagoland area. I can't tell you what other people think and perceive it as.

Czaplicki: As far as Citizens for Thompson, you're primarily fundraising, but did you do other things in your time there as far as helping the Thompson organization? Did you do campaign-type work or was that...

Fox: There wasn't a lot of time to do that coming in. In '83, you're alleviating the debt; you come into '84, you're starting to soft fundraise; it becomes '85 and then you're in full mode. You are campaigning every day for him, but your responsibility is raising the money for the campaign. You're part of the campaign team. I reported to Greg Baise, who was the campaign chairman. So you are campaigning, just in a different way. I went to most of those fundraisers; if I didn't, someone tried to go. You're out there shaking hands, and you're meeting and you're talking and you're with the contributors and donors. So you are campaigning along the side of the governor at the same time.

Czaplicki: It seems that the mission of the organization might have changed a little bit, because I was struck that in '78, Citizens for Thompson spearheads the petition drive to put the Thompson Proposition, the advisory ballot proposal on tax rates, on the ballot. I think it was Citizens for Thompson that was doing much of the work for that.<sup>20</sup> So it's interesting that later on you guys don't seem to do things like that. I'm wondering if that was a conscious decision to just focus strictly on fundraising, and if there had been an earlier idea that maybe this organization might do other things.

Fox: I think we did. I think I pointed out that we did assist quite a bit with the fundraising in a different matter. Not the Thompson Proposition, which is something else, but the Illinois Executive Mansion Association. We lent a hand to the association, who had its own board and fundraising efforts. And then again with the Dana-Thomas House. We lent a hand in our fundraising efforts to raise the money for the Dana-Thomas furniture to come back to the house. Let me think if there were any other causes like that.

Czaplicki: So you could leverage yourself in these ways?

Fox: We raised the money for the National Governors Association conference. We raised the money for the Midwest Governors Association conference. Monies had to be raised to put all those on. It's not like you get a budget and you get to put those on. No. You have to raise the money for the budget. So we raised the money for that budget; we were raising that money for those events. We

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<sup>20</sup> On the Thompson Proposition, see James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, August 28, 2014; Julian D'Esposito, interview by Mike Czaplicki, September 2, 2014, 74-76 and 77-78; Jim Fletcher, interview by Mike Czaplicki, March 9, 2015; Tyrone Fahner, interview by Mike Czaplicki, April 29, 2015; David Gilbert, interview by Mark DePue, March 27, 2014; and Gregory Baise, interview by Mark DePue, August 6, 2013.

helped raise money for Governor Reagan when he was running. We helped raise money for George Bush when he was raising money. So you are raising money for causes other than just the candidate, for Citizens for Thompson, because all those monies went directly to whatever that cause was.

Czaplicki: Is this the moment when individual candidates start to displace the party of some of its role that it would have been doing historically? As you said, these donors are very much donating to the candidate. You wanted to maintain control of your donor list. You're raising a lot of funds for all these other groups in addition to the candidate, putting yourself out there instead of, say, the Republican committee or somebody like that.

Fox: Well, each event was different. The Illinois Executive Mansion Association is a not-for-profit organization. It's not a political organization. So we lent our expertise and the governor's passion for the mansion to that. The Dana-Thomas House, same thing. Not-for-profit. His passion to get that furniture back where it belonged and our expertise. Now, that's where the governor made some personal calls, to raise the money for the furniture. Because he wanted that furniture back in Illinois and it went directly to the Dana-Thomas House.

Czaplicki: I guess I'm thinking how once upon a time, the state party structure was critically important, both organizationally, getting votes, but also financing and directing these things. But here when Thompson's running and creating Citizens for Thompson, just so far less dependent on that party; that's why I was curious about who you would be calling sometimes in these counties. In some cases it seems like you have Mike Dunn. He's not the county chairman.

Fox: No.

Czaplicki: But for Citizens for Thompson he's the county guy for Winnebago. So you seem to have a parallel structure that you're setting up.

Fox: But I think that started happening, again, not only in this state but other states. Maybe in Indiana it's different because the Indiana Republican Party was so very strong. Our party was maybe less strong at the time. We felt that probably we might have better contacts than the Republican Party had and a different group of contacts and contributors than the Republican Party had. So we felt we could do it in conjunction with and/or solo based on our own contributors and supporters, versus having the party try to raise the money for us.

Czaplicki: Did ideology play into it at all? One of the things that sort of keeps coming up is that Thompson is a moderate, and nationally that certainly had important repercussions as the party shifted right. Was the same thing happening in Illinois? Was the state party moving right in a way that made it make more sense for Thompson to...

Fox: I'm not sure the party was moving right. As you said, the governor was more moderate. Not that the party was going more to the right. It was already right where it was, but he might have been just not right in the same direction that the party was.

Czaplicki: Would you either donate staff or just outright lose staff to other candidates' fundraising organizations? Does Edgar pick off any of your people?

Fox: When he's running for governor?

Czaplicki: Even before, as you're being continuously successful. I would expect that...

Fox: See, our staff was so small. Our finance staff was very small.

Czaplicki: How many people roughly?

Fox: It was just basically three people: administrative, myself, and I had a couple of assistants during the major part of the campaign. So there wasn't many people to pick up. (laughs)

Czaplicki: Plus the treasurer?

Fox: And the treasurer is not a real staff member, it's just...

Czaplicki: A legal role?

Fox: It's a citizen and he's not a paid staff member. He's not playing an active day-to-day role in the campaign. He's the treasurer. So our finance office was very small. Greg could answer that, as far as the campaign, were there some campaign members who had certain positions with the campaign that another politician came in and hired away from us? There might have been. We just didn't have a big office.

Czaplicki: But after, when you're wrapping up, did anybody go on to work for Edgar?

Fox: I was asked, but I didn't go on.

Czaplicki: How come?

Fox: That's 1990. I was going to continue with Jim Thompson and keep his committees—we had two committees at that time. I was not sure after that many years I wanted to go through another campaign. I think they approached me knowing that Jim Thompson was not going to run for the '90 campaign, and I just said that I probably would be retiring after the '90 campaign. But we did keep the campaign fund going and still did Illinois Executive Mansion Association work and some other fundraisers for other candidates. That's when we really supported the other candidates, after we were out of office.

Czaplicki: August 8, 1985, Jim Thompson met at a Chicago hotel with his family to talk about whether or not he would run in '86. Apparently there were also advisors at this meeting. Were you a part of that meeting?

Fox: No, I was not.

Czaplicki: And in 1989, again, he announced that he's not going to run. But as someone who had been with him from the beginning, how did you feel about that decision?

Fox: I think we all felt that that was going to be his decision. It was the right decision to make for his family and for himself. He was still young enough to go on to have a legal career and do boards that he wanted to sit on, travel, which I think was important for him, and still be with his family, be with Jayne. So it was the right decision. Not that it wasn't bittersweet, but it was still the right decision.

Czaplicki: Going all the way back to the beginning—even though here we are talking about the end—was there anyone in particular that was an important mentor to you when you came into government? Someone that helped show you the ropes?

Fox: I think Lynn Rainey when I first came on, because he had campaigned. This was all so new to me. Lynn had been on the campaign trail with the governor in that first campaign. Lynn was just very supportive of Jim Thompson, and when he came on as the director of advance and asked me to come on, he guided me through that process so that I knew what to do as far as advance work and going through that. And I really think working with Greg and Dave hand-in-hand was a great benefit. I would say those were probably my closest allies through that time. What better mentor could you have than Jim Thompson? Because he did enjoy seeing people succeed on their own and gave them that opportunity to succeed on their own. I remember a few times when we would have fundraisers and we would be at major fundraisers with important people, CEOs, and he would recognize me. That was embarrassing, I thought. Why he would recognize me, because I thought that was my job to do the fundraising. But that's just what he believed he should do.

Czaplicki: Once you wrapped things up, where did you go?

Fox: I closed the office at 18 South Michigan in '90, shortly after he left office. It must have been in the spring. Pat Hurley, who was my good friend, was over on Wells at the time and she gave me an office there. We rented a small office there, because I was doing fundraising for the governor for other people. So I worked out of there. A week before my daughter was born in October of '92, I moved the office to our carriage house in Chicago on Oakdale Avenue and worked out of there. I was involved in the Illinois Executive Mansion quite a bit, almost doing all their fundraising, because I think at that time I had taken

over as the president of the association along with the other two: Citizens for Thompson and America 2000. After Alison was born we weren't going to do a holiday party that year, and the governor called in November and said, "We're going to do a holiday party." Or like a week after my daughter was born. So I had to work on the holiday party, and that took into '93. '93 rolled around and I continued to do fundraising. In '95 we did a tribute party, a twenty-fifth anniversary party that we organized.

I had my son and our family moved down to Champaign. I really didn't work that much; I was getting involved in other things. But I kept the books going and did whatever the governor needed. Still helped with the Illinois Executive Mansion Association. Kept the two committees, did the administrative work on that. If he wanted to do a fundraiser, helped with that. Coordinated some of his political appearances. But it was just very much on a part-time basis. Then we decided that the funds were dwindling and we should dissolve both of the accounts. We dissolved the accounts—you might have the records better than I do—but I believe we dissolved the America 2000 Fund in 2004 and probably the Citizens for Thompson about the same time.

But today I still get to work with Jim Thompson. He is now chairman of the Illinois Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission, and I've been on the board since its creation. I was appointed by Justice Burke. The governor, I believe, has been on the board since the creation but has become chairman in the last couple of years. So I just attended the meeting this past June with him, and we are working on the rededication of the Illinois Supreme Court building. That will take place in October because it's been closed for renovation. We're working on that. And I have a call with Justice Burke tomorrow to see how the plans are beginning to be staged on that. I guess I keep my fingers involved in a few things. It's great because I still get to see the governor and Jayne now and keep up with familiar faces that were around when he was in office. So it's all good.

Czaplicki: You going to go to Sam's wedding?

Fox: I don't know. We'll see. I think it's so exciting. It's really just very exciting to have her marrying. And I know the governor and Jayne are very pleased with her fiancée and just very happy for her. So it's an exciting time in their life too.

Czaplicki: Do you keep in touch with a lot of the other former staffers?

Fox: I try to. Have to think of my years because it's hard. I have to do it by campaign to know where I am. But back in the mid-'80s, as I said, Pat Hurley and I bonded much before that. And Kathy Kustra, who was director of public aid under Jim Thompson, and Sharon Sharp, who was director of the lottery, we formed a great friendship and we called ourselves the boopies. There's a long story behind that. But we formed this great friendship and for...



Czaplicki: As in Betty Boop-ies?

Fox: Well, no, it has to do with Kathy's son's girlfriend's last name. It's kind of a funny story how we got the name. But for thirteen years, once a month we went out to dinner. Since we had been with Jim Thompson or around Jim Thompson for a number of years and all the administration, we knew who everyone was. So when each of us would start a sentence, the other one could complete it because we just bonded so close. To this day, I stay in touch with Pat and I see her regularly. We went out to Kathy's. Her husband is Bob Kustra, who was lieutenant governor. He is now president of Boise State and we went out to visit them last summer about this time. We see Kathy a couple of times a year. Unfortunately Sharon's no longer with us. That was a great loss for our friendship.<sup>21</sup> I talk to Baise once in a while. I don't see Dave as much. There's others that float in and out, our paths crossing, that I try to stay in touch with. It's always fun to see someone from the administration.

Czaplicki: I know you and your husband are very active as philanthropists in this area, and it seems that you give to clusters of causes. A lot goes to education, a lot in science and entrepreneurship, and environmental causes and the arts. And I was wondering how you divide your resources. Do they reflect different interests of yours? Is it something that you decide together?

Fox: We definitely talk about it. We think education—we're talking about elementary education—is so important to our community. First, if we have a good strong education system it only benefits us in the long run, then we can keep those young people in our community and be the next generation to carry on the businesses here. But it's also a great attraction to have good education when they're looking for professors to transfer into the community and for start-up companies to come into the community. One of the first things someone will say if they're transferring is, "How are the schools in Champaign-Urbana?" We feel strongly a need, and just a passion too, that education start at an early age. So the sooner that we can help support those needs. Peter finds that a great passion. He's gone to read at schools on a regular basis. We redid a computer room for one school and donated all the computers and renovation, and individually we've chosen different schools to go into and help. On a bigger picture we've endowed a chair at the University of Illinois and just had an investiture on that with the department of engineering this past spring.<sup>22</sup>

I enjoy the arts, and Peter does too. I think we have, between Krannert Performing Arts and Krannert Art Museum, two outstanding institutions here. We have artists as in musical artists, and artists as in graphic artists, and

<sup>21</sup> In addition to serving as the state's lottery director from 1987 to 1991, Sharon Sharp mounted an unsuccessful run against Alan Dixon in the 1978 race for secretary of state. She died July 5, 2009. Trevor Jensen, "Sharon Sharp: 1939-2009," *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> On May 6, 2014, the university invested Dr. Andrew Singer as a Fox Family Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering.

shows and exhibits put on at both of those locations that we like to see the community enjoy. It just enriches your community in so many ways. We're very fortunate with the University of Illinois; it's a highly respected university with strong ties, and we just think if we all work together it makes a better, stronger community. The townie versus the university is...

Czaplicki: Town and gown?

Fox: Town and gown is a little less strong, and we believe that the more you're involved with the university the stronger it makes the community. When we decided to come back, Peter already had a business here. It was commercial development, and he continued to grow that commercial development business and build more buildings. Twelve years ago, went out for bid to do the first phase of the research park for the University of Illinois. We completed that ten-year phase. Now we're on the second phase of the research park for the University of Illinois. In that first phase of the research park, we decided that we would take on building a hotel and a restaurant, and the university built a conference center that joins the two. Clint Atkins and Peter are partners, so we own the I Hotel and Houlihan's. The university owns the conference center, but we manage it for them. That is at the research park. We're right now in the process of building a building for Yahoo. Yahoo is already at the research park but they're expanding, and we have ADM and John Deere and Anheuser Busch and a number of small technology companies represented.

Czaplicki: Bustling little center.

Fox: It is a bustling center. I think where it's come in the last fifteen years or less, and it's grown a lot. It's so important to have this research center for professors and for the university. One of the companies that grew out of here was iCyt. Gary Durack started the company in his garage and went on to sell the company to Sony. So I think there's a lot of small success stories at the research park.

Czaplicki: In closing, I usually wrap up with these two questions. One, what is the legacy of the Thompson administration? If you think there is such an easily definable thing. Or if that's too broad I could just ask you more simply what within the Thompson administration are you most proud of? Not necessarily for you but that the administration did. The second one is what are you most proud of?

Fox: I think that the governor governed at a time where some years were tough times economically, though we have those today too. But I would say that the administration would be proud that he was a visionary and that he looked ahead to know what was best for the state of Illinois, not what was best for him to be reelected.

Czaplicki: And how about yourself? What are you most proud of in your time in state government?

Fox: I think this week before your interview was good. It kind of made me stop and reflect on all those years, because our life goes by so fast every day and we don't even stop to reflect on where we've been and what we've done. I have to say, I'm here today because Jim Thompson gave me the opportunity to be here. Would I have ever in my life imagined I would have had a career or the experience I had when I was young, before I knew Jim Thompson? There's no way. I could have never written a script for what I've been able to do, and I would not change one moment.

Czaplicki: No regrets? Didn't really ask you much about policy and those sorts of things. I thought we'd tap your expertise.

Fox: I wasn't that involved in that part of it. There were plenty of people competent to handle that. I was involved in just one side of it. But it takes, I think, both sides of that for a good administration.

Czaplicki: Anything you'd like to add that we haven't talked about today? Something we're leaving out?

Fox: No. I just think one of the greatest gifts I got from all my positions was meeting so many Illinoisans.

Czaplicki: You never had the desire to run?

Fox: No.

Czaplicki: You got to know the State, you got to know the donors, you got to meet all these people.

Fox: I don't know if I'd be a good speaker and a good politician. But I just am so grateful to every person that our path crossed.

Czaplicki: You've been a trooper. We're at three hours and twenty-two minutes.

Fox: (laughs) And the sun's now glaring in our eyes.

Czaplicki: Thanks for having me over, and thanks for sitting down and doing this and sharing your experiences.

Fox: It's been a pleasure. Thank you.

(End of interview)