Interview with Mike Lawrence

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, March 4, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm a volunteer with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, and we're here for the very first of the interviews that I will be doing with people from the Jim Edgar administration. Today we're starting with Mike Lawrence, probably Jim Edgar's most valued assistant, aide, confidant—whatever words we want to apply to him—officially the press secretary. Mike, it's a real pleasure for me to talk to you today, and I've been looking forward to this for a long time.

Lawrence: I have as well.

DePue: Okay, let's go ahead and get started with a little bit about your background, or quite a bit, maybe. Tell us when and where you were born.

Lawrence: I was born in Chicago, August 17, 1942.

DePue: And did you grow up in Chicago?

Lawrence: No, my parents moved downstate when I was two, and I grew up in Galesburg, went to Galesburg public schools, and graduated from Galesburg High School in 1960.

DePue: What took your parents to Galesburg?

Lawrence: My dad had an opportunity to go into business as a co-owner of a package liquor store. Dad had been trained to teach history, but the economics for our family were not good at that point. I needed significant surgery when I was two years old, and Dad felt that he could not make an adequate living for our family by teaching. He was offered this opportunity to go into business, and he accepted it.

DePue: Had he been teaching before that time?

Lawrence: No, Dad had an unusual background. He was a high school dropout and then finished high school at the age of twenty-seven while he was working at the Larrabee—L-a-r-a, b as in boy, double-e—YMCA in Chicago. After he got his high school degree, he went to school part time while he was working full time. He attended the University of Chicago and eventually graduated from Northwestern University.

DePue: What year was that?

Lawrence: It would have been either in the late thirties or early forties. In fact, I'm inclined to believe it was the early forties. And he did not get married until he was thirty-eight. (DePue laughs) Mom was younger. She was twenty-four at the time they were married. And they lived for a relatively short period of time in the Hyde Park neighborhood in Chicago, eventually moved to Lincoln Park, and then downstate.

DePue: What was your father's name?

Lawrence: Mark.

DePue: And your mother's name?

Lawrence: Gladys.

DePue: And her maiden name?

Lawrence: Birholtz.

DePue: So we've got them in Galesburg now and [you] growing up there. Can I ask you what the nature of your operation was?

Lawrence: Yes. I was born with a cleft palate, and I had surgery to repair it when I was two. The surgery did not totally repair it. As I grew up in Galesburg and went through high school and college, I had a significant speech problem; and that was ultimately corrected after I got out of college. There was a surgeon in Chicago who was doing an innovative type of cleft palate repair surgery, and I had one of the first surgeries that he performed. Well, I actually had two

surgeries within a couple months after I graduated from Knox College, and after those two surgeries when I was twenty-one and twenty-two years old, the cleft palate was pretty much repaired. I still have a nasal quality to my voice, but it's nowhere near what I had as I was growing up and going to school

DePue: Young boys sometimes can be rather brutal about things like that. Was that tough for you growing up?

Lawrence: I've told a lot of people, when you have a disability—and believe me, there are kids I grew up with who had much more significant disabilities than I had—you're either going to come out of it very tough or very scarred. I think I came out of it pretty tough.

DePue: Did that change or affect the outlook that you had on the rest of your life?

Lawrence: I think it was a factor, because I experienced what it is like to be different from the majority of people that you're around, and I think I've always had a special sensitivity for minorities of one type or another. It can be a racial minority, a religious minority, an ethnic minority, or it can be people who have disabilities and are viewed by other people as being abnormal

DePue: I know that it wasn't just the cleft palate that perhaps set you apart from others you were growing up with, but your religion as well?

Lawrence: I was raised in the Jewish religion. It was in a Reform temple. And where Christianity emphasizes the salvation of the individual, Judaism emphasizes the salvation of the community; so Jewish people tend to be active in community affairs.

DePue: Did that set you apart from some of the other kids you were growing up with?

Lawrence: Yes. There was a relatively small Jewish population in Galesburg, so we were very definitely a minority. We certainly felt that at Christmastime, when most of the kids were talking about the Christmas trees they had at home; when the public school was preparing Christmas plays. So we felt it. I don't think it had any negative impact on me, but again, I think it did increase my sensitivity to what it is like to be part of a minority.

DePue: You're growing up in those years that we tend to romanticize now, idealized years of the fifties, but how would you characterize your youth growing up?

Lawrence: I think I had a good youth. First of all, I had great parents. Dad owned that package liquor store for sixteen years. He worked at it very hard. He spent sixteen hours a day, six days a week, at that store. He was home on Sunday night for dinner. That was the one night of the week he was home, and so Sunday dinners were a big event in our family.

And my parents were very active in the community. Even though Dad worked long hours, he still found time to be chairman of the Galesburg Human Relations Commission. Mom was involved with the League of Women Voters. And from the time my sister and I were still in grade school, there was a lot of conversation around the dinner table about current events. My parents were not people who said, You need to do this, or you need to do that; here's what we expect out of you. But my sister and I—and my sister is two years younger—got the message: we were to be engaged in the community. We were to be good family people, but we were to make a positive difference outside of our families. And they didn't preach about honesty and integrity; they exemplified it. I watched my dad once chase a customer down the street from the liquor store because he had shorted that customer a dime in change. Those are situations that make an imprint on you when you are growing up.

DePue: Growing up, did your parents have any reflections on what had happened in Europe in the 1930s and the Second World War?

Lawrence: Oh yeah. My folks were very impacted by World War II and the genocide in Europe. My dad had been too old to serve in the armed services, but he was very much impacted by that experience and what had happened to millions of Jews under Hitler's reign of terror.

DePue: Was that one of the things, then, that got him involved with civil rights issues?

Lawrence: I don't know, Mark. That's a good question. I'm not sure. It would certainly make sense for that to be a part of it, but I think my folks had a fundamental sense of fairness and justice, and I think that is really what got them involved in civil rights issues.

DePue: Do you recall about the time your father did get involved in civil rights issues? What year would that have been?

Lawrence: It would have been shortly after we moved to Galesburg; we moved there in either 1944 or 1945. I know I was two; I just don't know exactly what year it was. And I would say probably around the early fifties is when they got involved. I mean, I have a vague memory of him being involved when I was ten and eleven years old—that early.

DePue: Of course, 1954 is the landmark Board of Education case, Topeka and the Board of Education. And '57 was the bus boycott.[1]

Lawrence: Right.

[1] *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 347 U.S. 483 (1954). The bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, ran from December 1955 to December 1956. In 1957, civil rights movement leaders formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the wake of the successful bus boycott. The year also witnessed the forced integration of Little Rock Central High School under the protection of the Army's 101st Airborne Division.

DePue: Those would have been two early incidents where the nation began to wake up, but you think he was involved even before that?

Lawrence: I think he was involved before that, but there's no question that the happenings in the South really dramatized the issue and the cause.

DePue: Was there some racial strife involved in Galesburg itself?

Lawrence: There was very little of what I would call racial strife.

DePue: What's the percentage of blacks in Galesburg at the time?

Lawrence: Well, my memory is that there might have been 6 or 7 percent, if that. Galesburg was segregated, not by law, but by fact, and the African Americans lived in a certain part of town.[2]

DePue: Where were they employed, primarily?

Lawrence: Some were employed in factory jobs, some in custodial jobs. I don't remember many African-American teachers or any at all. I believe, at that time, some were in the postal service. There were some in the Galesburg police force, because I remember a couple of them used to be customers of my dad. They enjoyed visiting with my dad when they came into the store, and I was there on occasion. You know, in order to be around my dad, I spent a little time at the store, dusting bottles, things like that. In fact, I joked by the time I was ready to clean the bottles from the inside instead of the outside, Dad had already sold the store.

DePue: Darn it.

Lawrence: Yeah. (laughter)

DePue: How would you characterize Galesburg at the time; a blue-collar town?

Lawrence: No, it wasn't... I mean, there were factory jobs there.

DePue: Was Maytag there at the time?

Lawrence: I think Maytag; Admiral may have been there. You know, we're now talking more than fifty years ago.[3]

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[2] According to U.S. Census figures, in 1950, African Americans over one year of age composed 2.5 percent of the population of Knox County. In 1960, their proportion increased to 2.9 percent. The maximum possible share of Galesburg's population composed by African Americans was 4.2 and 4.8 percent, respectively.

[3] Admiral bought Midwest Manufacturing in 1950, acquiring the latter's Galesburg facility and employing about 500 workers. Admiral merged with Rockwell in 1973 and its appliance division was acquired by Magic Chef. Maytag arrived in Galesburg with its purchase of Magic Chef in 1986, and did not produce its first refrigerator under the Maytag label until 1989.

DePue: Well, I know it was a big rail center, too.

Lawrence: Yeah, it was. We had two depots there, a Santa Fe depot and a Burlington depot, which was pretty unusual. We had a major switchyard there. So it was a big railroad town. It was a nice town. I mean, it was a town of about 35,000–40,000 when I was growing up there. We always thought of it as a small town because our relatives were generally from either Chicago or Detroit, and we were kind of the country part of the family. But as life has gone on, I've begun to look at Galesburg as more than just a real small town at that time, because I've been in a lot of small towns, (laughs) and we have some of them here in southern Illinois. It was a comfortable town to grow up in. I think that's how I would characterize it. It was comfortable.

As far as my youth, I said I'd had a good youth, and maybe good is not the right adjective. It was a fulfilling youth, and it was also... There were important influences, not only my parents. In my neighborhood, we had a lot of kids. Most of them were older than I. There was one kid who taught me to read when I was four years old. He was about three years older and he wanted to become a teacher. His dad was in education. And he taught me to read, essentially, and had the patience to work with me on that.

And then there were other kids. I was very interested in sports, and there was always a basketball game or a baseball game going on in the neighborhood. These other boys were older, some of them several years older, and yet they included us. I and Dick Streedain—S-t-r-e-e, d as in dog, a-i-n—were about the same age, and so we were usually the last to be chosen when the teams were selected. Dick and I were very good friends, but we also developed a very keen competition between the two of us.

And so, first of all, I always appreciated the fact that one of the kids took the time to teach me to read, but beyond that, the older kids didn't have to include us, and they did. Now, I will say that I learned if you had a minor injury or something, you didn't complain about it, because if you complained about it, they'd tell you, Well, then you can't play. I have a pretty good tolerance for pain, and I think I developed it in my childhood, playing with those older kids. You just did not complain when you were hurt.

But those kids did well in school. My parents, of course, were great role models, but so were those kids. And interestingly enough, I heard from one of them not long ago. He sent me an e-mail, (DePue laughs) because he had heard I retired, and he wanted to catch up. It was a good youth. And I think about it now, particularly those kids; there were people at school who made fun of my speech, who mocked my speech, but with those kids, I was totally accepted.

DePue: Who would you say were your biggest influences, then, growing up?

Lawrence: Well, my parents would be the major influences, and there wouldn't be a close second to my parents.

DePue: One more than the other?

Lawrence: No, no. They were different in many respects. I mean, they shared the same values and they were both active in the community. Dad was more methodical; Mom was more mercurial. Mom had a very quick intelligence. Dad was someone who—it took him a little longer to accumulate knowledge, but once he had it, it was there forever. And I will say that one of the great lessons I had growing up occurred at the dinner table. I would come to the table at ten or eleven years old, and I'd have what I thought was some juicy piece of information; you know, gossip in the neighborhood. I would put it out, and Dad would begin questioning me in a very low-key but persistent way: "Where did you hear this? How do you know it's true?" At first, I was very upset at this line of questioning. I mean, I wanted just the reaction of Dad and Mom and my sister Sue saying, "Ooh, really?" And then my dad would lead me through the drill.

I learned in short order that if I was going to put something out at the dinner table, I'd better be prepared to say how I knew it and that I verified it to the best of my ability; and if it wasn't totally verified, to qualify it in some way. And by the time I reached high school, when I would suggest something at the dinner table and put out some piece of news, Dad would not question me because he knew—

DePue: You'd done your homework.

Lawrence: That I had. And, you know, that was excellent training for a future journalist. I don't think that's what caused my dad to conduct those inquiries. He was someone who believed that you ought to be able to verify what you were saying; you ought to be able to document it; you ought to be able to back it up; and that the pursuit and communication of knowledge was an important undertaking.

DePue: It almost sounds like your dad missed his calling. He should have been an investigative reporter.

Lawrence: (laughs) Yeah. I'm not sure Dad had the edge to him to be an investigative reporter. Mom very definitely had the edge to her.

DePue: Now, what do you mean "the edge"?

Lawrence: Dad, he was someone who had strong principles, and he never compromised on those principles, but he was not confrontational. And an investigative reporter who's in reporting; from time to time, you do have to be confrontational. And that was more Mom's nature.

DePue: In those important tabletop conversations, did issues like politics come up quite a bit?

Lawrence: Yes, they did. They were—

DePue: Did you know where your parents were leaning on those [issues]?

Lawrence: Oh yeah, they were Democrats, New Deal Democrats, and they were very much for Adlai Stevenson, Jr., when he was running for president.[4] They were John F. Kennedy supporters. They pretty much voted on the Democrat side. There were some departures. In the [1972] primary, my mother voted for Dan Walker over Paul Simon; my dad voted for Paul Simon. But then in the general election, both parents voted for Ogilvie.[5]

DePue: Did they vote for Ogilvie in '68?

Lawrence: No. No, they voted for Shapiro.[6]

DePue: Well, let's talk a little bit about your jobs that you had as a young kid, because you got started in that pretty early, too.

Lawrence: Yeah, I did. First of all, I started my own newspaper when I was eleven. It was called, not surprisingly, the *Lawrence Weekly*. It was a paper that I distributed around the neighborhood and to relatives, and it was totally on sports. As I said, I had a strong interest in sports, and I decided by the time I was eleven that I was not going to make it as a pro athlete in either baseball or basketball, which were my favorite sports.

I was pretty good in writing. I read the sports pages from the time I was five or six years old, so I decided I wanted to be a sports writer. And it started with this newspaper. I did that for about a year and a half. Now, those were in the days before copying machines—usually it was a two- or three-page edition, eight by eleven, and my circulation was about twenty people—and I did it with carbon paper, and I could make three copies at one time. (DePue laughs) So I would end up typing each page six or seven times to generate the paper.

DePue: Single-spaced?

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: That's a lot of typing.

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[4] Adlai Stevenson II was the governor of Illinois from 1949 to 1953, and the Democratic nominee for president in 1952 and 1956.

[5] Republican Richard B. Ogilvie served as governor of Illinois from 1969 to 1973, losing his 1972 reelection bid to Daniel Walker.

[6] Democrat Samuel Shapiro, who was lieutenant governor under Otto Kerner from 1961-1968, and, following Kerner's elevation to a federal judgeship, served the remainder of Kerner's term as governor of Illinois.

Lawrence: It was.

DePue: At eleven years old.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. That was really what launched my career in journalism, and then—

DePue: What were you selling your papers for?

Lawrence: I was giving it away. Yeah.

DePue: (laughs) Not much future in that, Mike.

Lawrence: Yeah. No, I know; and no advertising either. Then when I was fourteen, I had a night job at the local Little League as the public address announcer and the official scorer.

DePue: Even with your cleft palate?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was kind of amazing they had me doing that, but they did. What I used to do was take the box scores into the daily paper the next morning, and the assistant sports editor knew of my interest in journalism and becoming a writer. He said, "Why don't you just write up the games (DePue laughs) as well as bringing in the box scores?" And I did, and I had my first byline in the *Galesburg Register-Mail*—R-e-g-i-s-t-e-r hyphen M-a-i-l—when I was fourteen. And I was hooked. I kept going down to the paper during the day in the summer, and I would not only write up the Little League games, but I would do whatever they would let me do. Now, they weren't paying me, but it was a great learning experience. I would do everything from writing up the Little League games to getting lunch for the managing editor—every day, going out and getting his lunch and bringing it back.

DePue: I'm sure they appreciated that you were doing all this work for them, and they weren't paying you.

Lawrence: Yeah, they did, but I viewed it, and my parents viewed it, as an education, and it was. That's where I learned journalism, in that newsroom. That was my classroom. And after two or three summers, they did start paying me; when I turned sixteen. I would not only write stories, I would lay out pages, write headlines, and get lunch for the managing editor. (laughter) That continued.

DePue: Did you get some notoriety with your buddies for doing this?

Lawrence: Oh yeah. Yeah. They were impressed that my name was in the Galesburg paper, yeah.

DePue: Well, that's fascinating. You got into this early.

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: I'm wondering if you had the same view of news reporters, newspapermen, that I grew up with; just watching the movies of the period—the crusty old guy with the fedora and the cigarette hanging out of his mouth. Did any of that affect your attitude towards journalism?

Lawrence: There were some real characters in the newsroom.

DePue: In Galesburg's newsroom?

Lawrence: Yeah, there were. There was a religion editor who brought a portable typewriter to work with him every day, and he would walk into the office—his office was right next to the sports section—and he'd take out his portable typewriter and write his copy on that portable. Now, the paper provided standard typewriters. So, at some point, I screwed up the courage to ask him why he brought in a portable every day. Now, he'd been there at that time about twenty-five years or so. It had been a long time. I don't know exactly how long, but he'd been there a long time. And his answer was that he was hired as a temporary employee. (laughter)

I had a sports editor who would cuss a blue streak. He was supportive of me, and I have warm memories of him, but I also have memories of him stomping out of the office one day and leaving me to put out the sports section because somebody had taken his favorite pencil. (laughter) It was a pencil that had an eraser on it, unlike a lot of other pencils at the paper, and he just said he couldn't perform without it, so he stomped out of there.

The managing editor's name was Henry Clay. Quite a name. And Henry had a great shock of white hair that he combed straight back, and I always thought he had the longest index finger that I'd ever seen. It seemed that way to me as a kid because when he would summon me over, he would do it with that index finger, and it just looked like a huge finger at the time. He was a good newspaperman and fundamentally just a sweet man. He had an alcohol problem, and that was not unusual in newsrooms.

I would get lunch for Henry every day—almost every day. And he would motion me over and say, "Son, I'd like a little lunch. Could you get me some?" "Sure, Henry." I went to the same place (laughter) every day for lunch for him, but he would walk me through it. He'd say, "Now, I want you to go over," and he'd name the restaurant—it was like a block and a half away from the paper—and he'd say, "Now, the way you get there, you cross the street, (DePue laughs) you go through this alley, you go in the back door, and then you ask what is their soup of the day. And if it's not such-and-such, then you order this, and then I'll have this sandwich." He ordered basically the same sandwich every day. But you know, he walked me through that every day he

wanted me to get lunch. It was sort of like a ritual in religion. It just had to happen the way it did. And so there were characters.

You know, Henry had an alcohol problem; there were some others who drank quite a bit. The motto of that news operation at the time I was associated with it, particularly later, after I got out of college and went to work there, was we work hard, and we play hard. That was the motto. Virtually everybody smoked, and there was a police reporter, who also covered the courts, and sometimes he'd have two or three cigarettes going at once. (DePue laughs) He had one of those ashtrays that had those grooves in the top. He'd have about three going at one time. His name was Leo Sullivan, and we called him Sully. There were some great characters, and yet, they were very nurturing with me. As I look back on it, they spent a lot of time helping me along.

DePue: When you were getting close to finishing high school, then, what did you have in mind for what you wanted to make of your life?

Lawrence: I had been sports editor of my junior high school paper and I had been sports editor of my high school paper my junior year, and then editor-in-chief my senior year. And as I was leaving high school—really, this would have occurred in my senior year—I had a decision to make about where to go to college. I had been accepted at Northwestern in the Medill School of Journalism, and—

DePue: I know that's a prestigious school of journalism.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. But the advice I got from professionals, and this included people in the Chicago media who I'd gotten to know one way or another, was that I ought to go get a broad-based liberal arts education. They told me that I had really learned journalism and the techniques of journalism in that newsroom from the time I was fourteen, and I knew the techniques of writing, but I ought to develop an educational base for knowing what I was writing about.

Medill did offer me a scholarship, and I also had an Illinois state scholarship, but it was an expensive school. And I was using the admissions director at Knox as kind of my advisor on how to deal with Northwestern, and one day he said to me, "Why don't you just come to Knox?" My parents worked there, so I was eligible for a tuition waiver.

DePue: A complete, 100 percent tuition waver?

Lawrence: Yeah. Well, they augmented the normal waiver. I mean, they felt they wanted me to come to Knox. And I not only had the tuition waiver, I had a job working in the school's public relations department for my first year, and I ended up working there three years. I knew I wanted to be a journalist, and it was a matter of deciding what education would be the best. I never regretted the decision to go to Knox.

DePue: One of the things that surprised me, though, is that you had mentioned earlier, in our previous conversation, that you were boarded at the college itself.

Lawrence: Yeah, and maybe, just for the sake of whoever is following this: My mother was a stay-at-home mother until I was in high school. At that point, she went to work as executive secretary to the president of Knox. My dad had owned that liquor store for sixteen years. He sold that store in 1960, the year I graduated from high school, and he was offered the job as circulation librarian at Knox.

DePue: That's quite a difference in (laughs) professions.

Lawrence: Yeah, but Dad was a voracious reader, and Dad was really—getting back to him—one of the true intellectuals I've known in my life. What I mean by that is, I read a lot, but I tend to read books about things I'm really interested in. Dad would read in areas that he didn't know a lot about, and he wasn't particularly interested in the area, but he felt he needed to know more about it. To me, that really is a true intellectual. He read a lot in areas he was interested in, but the fact that he would devote time and mental energy to learn about things that he didn't particularly care about but he thought were important, really, to me, made him—it was just one more reason why I admired him so much.

But at Knox, yes, I lived on campus all four years, and really stayed there, a lot of times, during the Thanksgiving break or during the winter break. Though my parents and I had a wonderful relationship, I did enjoy the independence of living somewhere else.

DePue: But you haven't explained why you decided to live on campus when it would have been a lot cheaper, I would think, to stay at home.

Lawrence: My parents had set aside money for my college education, and (phone rings) my decision to go to Knox actually meant they could save much of that money and use it toward sending my sister to school. She was two years younger. I wasn't pressured to make the decision for that reason; I don't want to convey that was part of my rationale—it wasn't. I had a job on the campus, so that took care of my spending money, and my parents agreed that living on campus would help me to realize more of the college experience.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about Knox College as an institution.

Lawrence: Knox is a small liberal arts college located in Galesburg. The enrollment there was somewhere around 1,000 when I attended, and it's stayed somewhere in that area. There's a great family atmosphere there. The administrators and faculty at Knox have talked about the Knox family for as long as I can remember, and there is a lot to that. And it's got a good reputation. There are some people who refer to it as the Harvard of the Midwest, but there are a lot of Midwest schools that call themselves the Harvard (laughs) of the Midwest.

The academic standards were high, and it was a rigorous curriculum. I was not a particularly good student. I was easily distracted.

DePue: So it wasn't that you didn't have the ability, but you...?

Lawrence: The best way I can express this is that I had some good semesters and bad semesters. (DePue laughs) But when I went to visit the school's graduate school counselor my senior year, he looked at my record and said, "What happened to you?" Knox did not have a graduate school, but he was in the position of advising students who wanted to go to graduate school. In my freshman year, he had been my freshman advisor. He basically said, "I thought you were going to be a Phi Beta Kappa, based on your test scores when you came in here." And I said, "Well, I goofed off." And he said, "Well, I don't know that I can get you into a good grad school"; but I'd signed up to take my GRE, Graduate Record Exams, and so I went ahead and took the exam. He called me in about three weeks after I took the exam and said, "I can get you into about any graduate school in the country. (DePue laughs) Your scores are tremendous!" And I said, "You know something?" I said, "I'm not ready to go to graduate school. I may never be ready to go to graduate school." And so I did not go.

DePue: When you say you were goofing off, I know that you continued to work at the newspaper.

Lawrence: Yeah, I worked in the school's PR department, and what I did there was to—it would be called a sports information director today. I did the public relations for the athletic teams at Knox. I got very involved in my fraternity. I had not planned to join a fraternity when I went to Knox. I ended up joining the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. It was, in my opinion, an outstanding group of young men. It was a fascinating cross-section of some of the top athletes in the school and some of the top students.

DePue: What was the name of the fraternity again?

Lawrence: Phi Gamma Delta. While I was there, the Knox chapter was rated the number one Phi Gamma chapter in the nation. There were really some top-flight young men there. I got involved. I was president of my pledge class, and then I was elected an officer my sophomore year. I thought I was going to be president of the fraternity—that was my goal—and I took the job of being an officer a little too seriously. One of the jobs of an officer is to administer discipline (DePue laughs) and make sure the rules are followed. The election for president would have occurred in the spring of my junior year, and I knew I would not have the votes to get elected. I was sufficiently unpopular in the fraternity. But I was able to be the campaign manager for the person who did get elected.

That actually turned out to be beneficial because I applied to be editor of the campus newspaper at the end of my junior year. I really hadn't worked on the paper much, but I thought, Well, I'm not going to be president of the fraternity; I need to be doing something. I applied for the editorship, and I got it. I was named the editor. That didn't necessarily help my grades out, but the experience of being editor of the campus paper was a very good experience, and we got very much engaged with some of the campus issues at the time and some of the national issues, including civil rights.

As I look back on it, I didn't have to study very hard in high school, and I was in the National Honor Society my junior year, which was somewhat unusual, and that put me in for my senior year. I was pretty high up in class rank. Even though I would study, I don't really think I learned to study for a long period of time. You know, in high school, the time I did put in, it was beneficial in terms of my grades. That didn't work at Knox. (DePue laughs) And like I said, I had good semesters and bad semesters. But I don't apologize for it; it's just a fact. I didn't do as well at Knox as my freshman advisor who later became the graduate counselor thought I would do. And I didn't do as well as my dad thought I would do.

DePue: What did you major in? Did they have a journalism program?

Lawrence: No, I majored in literature. What I tried to do was to take as broad-based a curriculum as I possibly could. That was one of the problems. I—

DePue: But that's what people were telling you you should do in the first place.

Lawrence: Yeah, but they did not have an American Studies major at that time. If they would have had an American Studies major, which would have been a combination of political science, sociology, history, and economics, I think I would have been better suited to pursue that. But what happened was I decided to major in lit because I did well in my early lit courses. In fact, I had a little jump on my lit major because my senior year in high school, I took freshman lit and composition at Knox. They gave me time away from the high school to go in and take a course at Knox. And I did well in that.

At any rate, I decided to major in lit because I thought it would be the easiest major, and then I could take all these other courses. I would go to see my advisor, who was my major advisor; I would basically say, "What's the least amount of lit courses I can take and proceed towards a major?" Well, that wasn't the best approach, probably, to the advisor.

Again, I was interested in getting as broad-based an education as I could. My junior year, for example, one of the economics professors said, "I want you to take my 300-level money and banking course," and I said, "Well, I haven't had intro (DePue laughs) to economics, and you're talking about a 300-level course?" He said, "Mike, you're going to be a journalist, and you

really need to understand something about economics." He said, "If you come into my course and you give me effort, I'm not going to penalize you because you may be behind some of the other students as far as having the prerequisite." So I went in there. I got a B in the course. And I learned a lot. I learned a lot about supply and demand functions in economics, and I learned a lot about the Federal Reserve and the role that the Federal Reserve plays in our economic supply. But I wasn't taking a literature course at that point; I was taking an economics course.

By my senior year, Knox had initiated comprehensive examinations in your major by the time you were ready to leave. And I was lacking several literature courses, so, suffice it to say, I didn't do very well on my comprehensive exam. (laughs) I'm not using that as an excuse. I didn't apply myself the way I should have applied myself in school.

DePue: But if your goal is to be a journalist, it sounds to me like it would be better to take those economics classes and the political science classes and the history classes.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's how I felt about it. And it wasn't like my advisor scolded me, but I think it was clear to him that I did not have a passion for majoring in literature. I was majoring in literature, but it wasn't because I had a passion for it.

DePue: Were the literature classes giving you opportunities to write, to polish your writing skills?

Lawrence: Well, yes and no. At Knox, there was properly a considerable amount of writing in classes, and I applaud that.

DePue: And not just in literature, I would assume.

Lawrence: You're right. Your assumption is correct. Knox put a lot of emphasis on writing, no matter what class you were in, unless it was a lab course in chemistry or something like that. But it was a different kind of writing. Academic writing is different. For example, I was taught to write as tightly as you possibly can. Academic writing—

DePue: (laughs) Had to meet deadlines.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. And I can remember some critiques on my writing for classes where they said, "You've written too much like a journalist." And I pled guilty. That was the way I wrote. I was a journalist. So again, I don't regret being a literature major. What I would say, though, is that if Knox had had an American Studies major, it would have been a better major for me.

DePue: But hardly anybody had an American Studies major at the time, I would guess.[7]

Lawrence: One school that did was Grinnell College. And as a matter of fact, I remember writing an editorial for the student paper pointing out that Grinnell had (DePue laughs) interdisciplinary majors—not just American Studies. Grinnell had some other interdisciplinary majors. Knox adopted interdisciplinary majors soon after I left, but there was not such a major available to me.

DePue: My impression is that Knox always has been a fairly progressive institution.

Lawrence: There's no question about that. And the attention that you receive from the faculty really is tremendous. The faculty at Knox takes a personal interest in the students. If you get admitted to Knox, they don't want you to fail; they want you to graduate. That doesn't mean that they go easy on you, but what it does mean is that you will get individual attention if you want it.

DePue: Let's get you on to the next phase of your life: getting a job after graduating. You graduated in what year?

Lawrence: I graduated in June of 1964, and—

DePue: At twenty-two years old.

Lawrence: No, actually, I was twenty-one, just short of twenty-two.

DePue: Let's talk about military service and what comes after graduation.

Lawrence: The Vietnam War was heating up then. It had not reached a high point. And I was draft-eligible. I got married in July of 1966. Let me back up. I had major surgery to repair the cleft palate. We talked about that earlier.

DePue: But how did that come about?

Lawrence: You mean the major surgery?

DePue: Yeah.

Lawrence: That's an interesting story. My sister, who is two years younger, had pursued a degree in speech pathology at the University of Iowa, and in one of her courses, she learned of this doctor, Stuteville was his name, and I think it's S, t as in Tom, u, t as in Tom, e, v as in victory, i-l-l-e. You might Google it just to make sure.

[7] The American Studies Association was ten years young in 1960, while the leading organs for American Studies scholarship, *American Quarterly* and *American Studies*, had been in publication only since 1949 and 1959, respectively.

She learned that he was pioneering what they called a pharyngeal—as in the pharynx—flap procedure, where they take a part of your palate and slice it and then fold it back to cover the opening that was in the palate of a cleft palate person. She read about it, heard about it, in her class, and he was located in Chicago. We went to Chicago—by "we," I mean my parents. I think my sister was there, as well. And he [Stuteville] said I would be a good candidate for it. I got out of Knox in June '64, and I wanted to have the surgery before I started at the Galesburg paper, and so I did. It worked fairly well, and now my memory is that I had to go back right after the first of '65, in other words, early in '65, and he did a little more work on it.

I also had a broken nose, which had occurred when I was a kid and was catching without a mask. Somebody swung at a ball and then threw the bat, and the bat hit me in the nose. But true to my upbringing in the neighborhood, I didn't complain. I didn't even tell my mother. But, you know, I had a broken nose, and that was repaired during the same surgery. Dr. Stuteville said we could do this in two separate surgeries, but I was in a hurry, and I said, "Look, if I'm going to be out on the operating table. Do it in one."

DePue: I have to ask you, are you the inspiration for your sister's major?

Lawrence: I've never asked her that directly, believe it or not, but I think it's pretty clear to both of us that I was, yeah.

DePue: I don't know if we talked about the draft and why you were not drafted.

Lawrence: You were getting to it. Okay, so I had the major surgery. I was not at that point—I mean, it wasn't like I was on the verge of being drafted, but it was a real possibility for somebody my age. I got married, and then for a while, I had that deferment. I got married, though, in July of '66, so, you know, that was a year and a half, two years down the road.

DePue: And you would have had a college deferment while at Knox, obviously.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. I also had an ulcer, and in the end, that was the key thing that kept me out. I had a peptic ulcer.

DePue: This seems very obvious, but what did you end up doing after you graduated from college?

Lawrence: I went back to the Galesburg newspaper. I had a chance to go to work for the *Chicago Tribune*. That was unusual at the time. The *Tribune* typically did not make offers to journalists coming right out of college, but because of my background, the *Tribune* did make me an offer. They wanted to put me in the neighborhood news section. At the time, I thought I wanted to be an editor by the time I was thirty, and it seemed to me to be a long way from the neighborhood news section to becoming a managing editor at the *Chicago Tribune*. And—

DePue: Even with all the prestige that comes with working with the *Chicago Tribune*?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. I'd been editor of my high school paper and editor of my college paper, and I had it in mind that I wanted to be a managing editor by the time I was thirty. I did not see that happening at the *Tribune*. I could see it happening at the Galesburg paper. So I went to work at the Galesburg paper. I covered the courthouse and politics for the Galesburg paper, and one day a week, I was the telegraph editor as well.

DePue: What happened to the desire to be a sports writer?

Lawrence: That's a good question. There were a couple of things. Between my junior and senior year of college, I was working at the Galesburg paper, as I had for several summers, and I covered about seventy baseball games; for most of those, I was the official scorer. And I decided that I wanted to have fun when I went to the ballpark; I didn't want to work when I went to the ballpark. I still enjoy going to the ballpark, and I have fun when I go, and I'm not working.

The other thing that happened was that my—you know, I had an interest in current events. My parents were very interested in current events. I had that interest, and when I was going to Knox the civil rights movement was really kicking up, and I think it's fair to say my interests broadened as well. So by the time I got out of Knox, I decided I didn't want to be a sports writer anymore.

It's not unusual with male journalists to develop the interest in journalism through sports writing; and some stay with it, and others move on. Some of the great political writers in the country began as sports writers, and some would say there are a lot of similarities between sports and politics. And there are some. I mean, the competition is certainly there. But I had decided I wanted to be a managing editor and not a sports writer.

DePue: How long were you working at the Galesburg paper?

Lawrence: I worked at the Galesburg paper full time after college from sometime in June '64 until October of 1966. I thought maybe I would stay at the Galesburg paper and become managing editor, but... I did a series on discrimination in housing in the city of Galesburg, and I actually got builders and lenders to admit that there was discrimination. And I was welcomed—well, I shouldn't say welcomed—I was allowed into the homes of some African-American families in Galesburg who told me about their experiences in trying to buy housing or rent housing outside of the neighborhood that was generally populated by African Americans.

I had this documented. I wrote the series. I wrote several installments, and that was typical at the time, where you would write almost all, if not all, of the series before the first installment ran. I turned it in, and the first

installment ran in the paper, and it was substantially watered down from what I had written. And—

DePue: You didn't know about it until you saw it in the paper?

Lawrence: No, I didn't. So I went to the managing editor, who was not only a professional associate, but had been best man at my wedding in July of 1966. He was, by the way, an outstanding newsman; I had and have a lot of respect for him. But he told me that the editor and the publisher of the newspaper had decided that it would hurt them in the advertising section. I had interviewed realtors, and I wasn't aware of this, but they had called the newspaper and said that if the newspaper ran this series, they would pull out their advertising. I think that was no more than a threat. I don't think it ever would have become reality. In those days, where else would they have advertised?

But anyway, it was watered down, and I told the managing editor that day that I wasn't going to stay at the paper. I said, "Now, I'm telling you I'm going to leave. I don't have a job. I would prefer to stay until I do have a job, but I'm being upfront with you and telling you I'm going to leave, so I'll understand if you want me out of here now." And he said, "No, no, that's fine, Mike, you can..." But within a few months, I had a job at the Davenport paper. And as it turned out, it was a good move. I made the decision because I was upset with what happened on that series, but it also turned out to be a good career move. At the time, I didn't know it would be a good career move except from the standpoint that I was not going to work at a paper that watered down the series like that.

DePue: Now, that was your last day on the job?

Lawrence: No, they let me stay there, and it took me—I think it was about a month later, month and a half later. What I did, I told them I was leaving; I told them that I didn't have a job to go do, but if they wanted to knock me off the payroll, I would understand it. I called that economics professor who talked me into taking (DePue laughs)—he had a contact at the Davenport paper, and I knew that somehow, he called that contact, and I had an interview within a few days, and then was hired.

DePue: We hadn't talked much about getting married and your wife, and I'm really curious whether or not she was involved with your decision to leave the paper. Why don't you tell us a little bit about her?

Lawrence: She had grown up in Galesburg. Janet Webb was her maiden name, W-e-b-b. She was a receptionist at the paper, and we dated for a period of several months. It was a whirlwind courtship. And we got married in July of 1966. This would have been shortly before things blew up (laughs) at the paper over that series.

And I'm going to get back to the marriage and her attitude about the move, but I do want to make a point about the series. It was not only that they'd watered it down and hadn't told me about it before it ran, but the African Americans were reluctant to open up to a white journalist. Ultimately, they did open up to me. I sat in their living rooms. They told me about their experiences.

DePue: Did you name them in the article?

Lawrence: Yeah, some of them agreed to be named. It was, in many ways, painful for them, but I developed a trust with them. And *I* had not violated that trust, but the newspaper had, in my mind, and that was painful for me. Anyway, I just wanted to amplify why I left the paper under those circumstances.

Actually, Jan's attitude was pretty positive, because I got a job almost right away, and she wanted to get out of Galesburg. She thought it a good move for both of us to get out, and it was exciting for her to move somewhere else. We weren't moving that far away, about fifty miles away, but it was... Yeah, she was positive about the move.

DePue: And a little bit bigger town, news-wise, especially.

Lawrence: Yes.

DePue: What did you end up doing, then, when you got to Davenport?

Lawrence: I was hired to cover the Illinois side of the river. The Davenport paper has circulation in both Iowa and Illinois.

DePue: The name of the paper at that time?

Lawrence: The *Times-Democrat*.[8] On the Illinois side, there weren't many of us over there, but we covered a lot of ground. My beat was to cover the county courthouse, the federal courthouse, city hall, and county politics, as well as the Rock Island City Council; plus I covered state politics. So when the legislature was in session, I would go into Springfield from time to time to write about what was going on, with a particular emphasis on what was going on with our local legislators and issues of particular interest in the Quad Cities. I did that for several years, but I—

DePue: This would have been during the Kerner and the Ogilvie administrations?

Lawrence: It was during Kerner—and Ogilvie. You're correct. Just to establish a timeline, let's go back to the... The first Illinois governor I met was William Stratton.[9] I was editor of my high school paper, and he consented to an

[8] Formed in 1964 by the merger of the *Davenport Times* and the *Morning Democrat*.
[9] Republican governor of Illinois from 1953 to 1961.

interview with me. I thought that was a big deal and, even today, I think that's a big deal. (laughs) Then, when I started covering—the first campaign for governor I covered would have been the campaign in '64, when Kerner was running for reelection against Chuck Percy, this boy wonder who had been a young CEO at Bell & Howell.

DePue: And later, the senator.[10]

Lawrence: Yes, exactly. When I started at the Davenport paper in the fall in '66, Kerner was in his second term as governor, and my immediate supervisor had a strong interest in Iowa politics. He had covered the Iowa legislature for UPI before becoming an editor at the Davenport paper, and he always told me about this interview he'd had with Harold Hughes when Harold Hughes was governor, how this was unusual, and he had landed this interview.[11] So I made it a goal to get an interview with Otto Kerner. Otto Kerner did not give one-on-one interviews. The last one he had given was to a guy who became his press secretary later. (DePue laughs) Well, this press secretary was a guy named Chris Vlhapolus, and you may have to look him up, but I'm going to kind of roughly guess on the spelling to get us going. It's V as in victory, l-h-a, P as in Paul, o-l-u-s. We need to double-check that.

Chris, when I first started going to Springfield— "What can I do for you, pal?" you know, "Anything I can do for you?"—was one of these hale and well-met people, a good guy. And I said, "I tell you what, Chris. I want an interview with Governor Kerner, a one-on-one." He said, "Whoo," you know, (DePue laughs) "Wow, whoo, I don't know about that." And I said, "Well, Chris, you said anything you could do for me. That's what you can do for me." He said, "Well, I'll check into it." I called him every week for about a month and a half, and he knew at that point I wasn't going to let go of this. And I ended up with a one-on-one interview with Governor Kerner, which was very unusual at the time. My immediate boss at the Davenport paper, John McCormick was his name, was impressed. He had gotten this interview with Hughes, and I had demonstrated I could get an interview with Kerner.

DePue: McCormick; that's a good journalistic name. Was he connected with the McCormicks of Chicago?

Lawrence: No, not at all. Mac was a taskmaster, but he was a very solid news guy. Probably one of the more notable stories I had during this period also involved Governor Kerner. This would have been towards the end of his governorship, because he left early to accept a position on the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. But this was at a time of turbulence in inner cities across the country, and also in Rock Island, and I want to say it was 1967. It could have been early '68.

[10] Charles Percy served as a Republican U.S. Senator for Illinois from 1967-1985.
[11] Hughes was the Democratic governor of Iowa from 1963 to 1969.

Governor Kerner was in the Quad Cities to do an economic development event, and the event was to go out on a boat in the Mississippi River with economic development people, businesspeople, from both sides of the river to dramatize the potential of the river for economic development. Kerner held a news conference at the dock before he got on the boat, and he was asked about the inner city difficulties and the turbulence there, and then he got on the boat. I went on the boat as well. And some of my fellow journalists from other media were razzing me over this: Oh, well, we're going back to work; you're going on a boat ride.

We went out on the Mississippi River, and after a short period of time I noticed Governor Kerner was not on the boat, so I went up to one of the staff people and said, "Where's the governor?" They said, He got off the boat. And I said, "Well, yeah, I noticed he's not on." And the staff person said, "Just be patient, Mike. You're going to have a story. He'll be back, and you will have a story." Well, he got back on the boat, and he explained to the people on the boat that he was sorry he had to get off the boat, but there was a message from the White House. There had been a small boat trailing us, I thought maybe for security reasons, and maybe it was, but there was a message from the White House. He got off the boat, he explained, and was taken to a volunteer fire station in a place called Andalusia, Illinois. And at that fire station, he took a call from Lyndon Baines Johnson, the president of the United States, to ask him if he would be chairman of a commission to investigate the cause of civil disorders. Governor Kerner related that when he got back on the boat, and, of course, I interviewed him about how he felt about it and the way he saw the commission going.

We went back to the dock, and I heard Kerner say to his security people, "Can I get off...?" Oh, a security person said, "You know, there are media waiting for you here at the dock," (DePue laughs) and I heard Kerner say, "I don't want to talk to them. Can you get me out of this some way?" And the security guy said, "Yeah, yeah, we can." So they whisked Kerner off on some exit I didn't know about, and I went out to where the media were, and they said, Where's the governor? (DePue laughs) And I said, "You know, I don't know. He was just on that boat."

DePue: (laughs) You had a little Cheshire grin on your face at the time?

Lawrence: They said, Well, what'd he say? And I said, "You know, guys, I think you can read about that tomorrow morning."

DePue: (laughs) It's the ultimate scoop for you.

Lawrence: Yeah, it was. And I got back to the office, and John McCormick was just elated. He was getting calls from media all over the country wondering if he had anybody at all with Kerner and could get any comment. And Mac told them, yes, as a matter of fact, there was a reporter on that boat, and the

reporter would be happy to talk to them after he filed his story for his newspaper.

DePue: (laughs) Obviously we're talking about the Kerner Commission, and I guess even though he was governor for close to eight years, that's the thing he's most known for now, isn't it?[12]

Lawrence: On the positive side, that's what he's most known for.

DePue: I was going to ask what your impression of the man was.

Lawrence: It was generally favorable. I didn't think he was an outstanding leader; I would not call him an outstanding leader. He was very much linked to the Chicago Democratic organization, and at that time Mayor Richard J. Daley was very powerful, and he exercised a lot of influence over Governor Kerner. Now, Governor Kerner did some good things. He really reformed the mental health system in Illinois. It's still not where it ought to be by a long shot, but Governor Kerner took some major steps in reforming mental health. But he was not a particularly strong leader, and on the negative side, of course, he was convicted for corruption while he was in office.[13]

DePue: I was going to ask if you were aware of that when you were interviewing him?

Lawrence: No, not at all. Kerner had gone to school in England for higher education, and he had this kind of crisp British accent. He seemed to be somebody who would be straight down the line: he'd had a military background—he'd been in the National Guard in World War II and a high-ranking officer in the Guard; he'd been a judge before he became governor, so I had no reason at all to believe he was corrupt. There are some people who believe he was railroaded and that he wasn't corrupt, but I'm not among that group of people because I talked to aides around him, and they really liked him, but were not surprised by what happened. And I think it's unfortunate in the sense that he did have a good career, came from a very notable Illinois family, but he paid a price he should have paid.

DePue: And of course, all of that came to light after he was out of office.

Lawrence: Right, but it did have to do with what he did while he was in office.

DePue: Getting back on your timeline here, you had mentioned earlier that your goal when you first graduated from college and went into journalism was what again?

[12] Johnson created the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in July 1967.
[13] Kerner was convicted in February 1973, six years after resigning as Illinois governor, for accepting bribes, while governor, in the form of horse racetrack stock from Arlington Park manager Marge Everett.

Lawrence: Be a managing editor. And in my first interview in Davenport with a gentleman named Forrest Kilmer—Forrest with two R's, Kilmer, K-i-l, M as in Mike, e-r.

DePue: You can tell you're a journalist by trade.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. He asked me where I wanted to be in five years. I was interviewing for a job as a reporter covering the Illinois side of the river, and I said, "I want to be where you are." At that time, he was executive editor. There was an editor-in-chief, and he was executive editor. And Kilmer could have taken the view, Here's this smart-alecky guy, but he didn't. He said, "You know, I like your spunk," and he said, "I will move up to editor in a few years, and if you're as good as you say you are"— and that was his way of getting me back—"I'll take you with me and make you my right-hand man."

DePue: Maybe we can take an aside here, and for those who are going to listen to this later and for my own personal benefit—people who don't have ink in their veins, so to speak—walk us through the hierarchy of that newsroom.

Lawrence: As a reporter, which is what I started there, I reported to the night editor, because I wrote for the morning newspaper, and the night editor was John McCormick, to whom I referred earlier. John McCormick reported to the managing editor, and the managing editor reported to both the executive editor and the editor.

Now, the reason that the newspaper had both an executive editor and an editor, at least at that time, was because it had been two separate newspapers at one point—one paper, the *Morning Democrat*, the other one, the *Evening Times*. Kilmer had been the chief editor on the *Morning Democrat*, and when they merged the newspapers, he was named executive editor, and he more or less looked over the morning edition. And then Fred Bills had been editor of the *Times*, and he was made the editor-in-chief. But Fred was getting near retirement, and Forrest was the editor-in-chief-in-waiting at that point. So I... Go ahead.

DePue: Who's then responsible for the actual layout of the paper every day, making the decisions of what goes front page, and polishing the reporters' work?

Lawrence: That would vary from one paper to another. At the Davenport paper, on the morning side, which is where I worked—or the night side, for the morning paper—there were various news desks; there was a regional desk, there was a city desk. The regional desk had an editor, and so the people reporting for the region would submit their copy to the regional editor; it would then go to the night editor, who also operated as a city editor. So you had a regional desk with the copy going to the regional editor and then over to the night editor. My copy went directly to the city editor.

You also had sports and features, and they had separate editors. Their copy did not go through the night editor. Then you had a copy desk, and after the night editor edited the copy, it would then go to a person who was in charge of laying out the news section, determining where the stories went, what the page looked like, and that person had two or three people on what was called the rim, and—

DePue: The whim?

Lawrence: The rim, r-i-m. He [the layout person] was in the slot, and he would then tell the rim people—he was actually, what we call dummying the pages, laying them out and doing an outline or a sketch for the composing room, which would actually put everything together; the mechanical department. But the people on the rim: the slot person would tell them where the story was going, what the headline was in terms of size and space. They would then give the copy a final reading, and they would also write the headline, and they would give the headline back to the slot person to approve the headline. So it was a real process. And I hope I haven't and—

DePue: What's fascinating to me as somebody who's not familiar with it, it strikes me that there's a lot of people who are tinkering with what you've written before it actually appears in the paper.

Lawrence: There are, oh they can tinker with it, yeah.

DePue: And how much are you aware of what's actually going on with that?

Lawrence: It depends on the editor, and they may share it with you, they may not. And some of it depends on how much time they have. A lot of times, they're trying to make a deadline, and they don't have time to go over it with you. But I will say, in most of the news operations that I was involved in, in the latter part of my career, there was a lot of give and take between editors and reporters so that if an editor was making a change, the reporter was brought into it.

DePue: Let's go back to that initial discussion you had, where you basically threw the gauntlet down, saying, "I want your job."

Lawrence: Fortunately for me, he took it the right way. And then I began covering government for the Davenport paper, and I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it thoroughly, but I maintained this goal of being a managing editor by the time I was thirty. I really bugged Forrest Kilmer about this while he was still executive editor.

There were some problems in the night operation, the management and direction of it, so he made me assistant managing editor, and I was twenty-seven. Forrest told me, "You know, you really enjoy reporting; you like reporting. Are you sure you want to do this?" I said, "Oh yeah. Yeah, this is what I want to do." "Okay," he said. "You're the assistant managing editor."

So here I was now managing people to whom I'd reported, including John McCormick, the desk, and I was to oversee those folks. Let's say they did not embrace this situation warmly.

DePue: You're the young upstart, right?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. It was a rough period. When I began, it was on a positive note with them, because there were tensions between the night editor and the slot person. What Kilmer did, he told the night editor I was moving in as assistant ME to oversee the slot person, keep him on the level, and he told the slot person I was being sent in to keep (DePue laughs) McCormick; get him on the right page. When it became clear to each of them that I was really in there to oversee both of them and to change the way each of them operated, there was a rebellion. And I did achieve one major thing: I brought them together (laughter) and put them on the same page.

DePue: They had a common enemy, yeah?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, they did. And, you know, it was a hard learning experience. But then Kilmer became editor, and he made me the news editor initially, which would have been having chief responsibility for the news content for both the morning paper and the afternoon paper.

DePue: Was that 1970?

Lawrence: Yeah, it would have been around there. I think it was '70, yeah. And then shortly after that, he named me the managing editor. I was twenty-nine years old, so, you know, I had achieved my goal. The only problem was I hated the work.

DePue: (laughs) Why did you hate it?

Lawrence: There were a couple reasons. First of all, I was in middle management, so I was between the editor and then the sub-editors who reported to me and the reporters who reported to the sub-editors. And I didn't handle it well. I learned some great lessons from this experience, but I tried to appease both the top editors and the people who reported to me instead of making decisions based on what I thought was the best way to go professionally. You know, it had nothing to do with ethics, and it had nothing to do with values, as we think of them. It did have to do with professional judgment: what news was important; what wasn't; how you manage newspeople; how you didn't manage newspeople. It had to do with things like that. I wasn't my own person.

DePue: Do you think your struggles were a matter of immaturity and lack of experience?

Lawrence: I think immaturity was part of it. Yeah, I definitely do. I learned a lot from that experience, and several of the important lessons I've learned from that,

I've carried with me in everything I've done since that time. But suffice it to say that it wouldn't be on the highlight reel (DePue laughs) of my career, my time as managing—

DePue: Well, maybe the lessons you learned are on the highlight reel. Can you boil them down succinctly?

Lawrence: Yeah, I think I can. First of all, be true to your own values and principles. If you're in a work situation, you can't insist on having your own way on everything, but you've got to be clear about what your way is to your superiors and the people who work for you. Also, don't avoid making hard decisions, and make them as soon as you can. Don't put them off.

DePue: Bad news doesn't get better with age?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. I had a tactic when people would come to me and want things or want to do things, and I knew the answer was going to be no. Instead of telling them no, I'd say, "You know, I'll think about it and get back to you," and I was hoping the issue would go away. Well, it rarely goes away. And the longer you delay, the more frustrated they get; and if your answer is ultimately no, the angrier they are because you've put them off that long. So my style since that job has been to determine, Can I make a decision on this right now? Do I know what the decision's going to be? Now, some things you're going to want to think about, but I would say over 90 percent of the decisions I've had to make since leaving that job, I've known what the answer was right away. After I've heard out the requester or I'm aware of the problem, I know what my answer is, and I give it. Then, a person may not like the answer, but the person has an answer. And a week later, maybe that person has another request, and then that one, you can say yes. So I learned that if you know what the answer is, give them the answer; make the decision.

The other thing I took out of that was that if you're in a situation where you have something unpleasant to do—firing someone or giving bad news to an employee who might have wanted a bigger raise than you're going to give the employee—do it as soon as you can in your day. My tendency was if I knew I had to do something unpleasant in a day, I would put it off. What I learned from my experience as managing editor was, to the extent you can control it, do it first thing in the day, and that way, it doesn't hang over you all day. It doesn't make it any more pleasant to do it first thing in the day, but what it does do is it allows you to move on.

DePue: That's quite different from the way these things are sometimes done in the political arena, where you wait until the end of the news cycle, and then you pop it out.

Lawrence: Yeah, and that's kind of a strategic matter. But I'm talking more about your dealings with people you work with and people who are relying on an answer

from you in one way or another, or with whom you have an issue. Marianne became well aware of my technique in that regard—and we might as well identify her now. That's my second wife, Marianne. We didn't cover my divorce from my first wife yet, (laughs) but I'm sure we'll get there.

DePue: Right.

Lawrence: Marianne got me a poster for my office when I was in the governor's office, and it said, essentially, "If you swallow a live frog first thing in the morning, it will be the worst thing that happens to you all day"; so I began referring to these situations as live frogs. If you do have a live frog, swallow it first thing in the morning, if you can control that. That was a major lesson.

The other thing was, you need to be selfish with your own time to a greater extent than I was as managing editor. I was actually pretty well liked as managing editor, because if people wanted to talk to me, and they had a problem—I'm talking about staff people—"Okay, what do you want to talk about?" Well, I wasn't getting my own work done. By the time I'd moved on, if I had something I needed to accomplish in a certain length of time, it would have to be an emergency for me to deal with a staff person on a matter. Now, if it was of an emergency nature or even perhaps an urgent nature, I would stop and deal with it. But people in the governor's office knew that unless I had my feet up on the desk at the end of the day, they didn't just come in and chat with me. They knew that.

DePue: What we've just talked about here seems like a very important training period for what you're going to get into later in life and what the main emphasis of these interviews are going to be, so that's fascinating to hear you talk about that and the things you picked up. I'm also very curious to get your reflections on the difference between Illinois politics and Iowa politics.

Lawrence: They are two different traditions and cultures. Illinois politics are very pragmatic; they're not ideological. Politics in Illinois is business. And in Iowa, it is philosophical, and it's also advocacy of some kind or another. I remember the first time I went over to the Iowa legislature. This was after I had been in Springfield for several years, and I was working out over the House of Representatives, and I said to the paper's correspondent in Des Moines, "Oh, there's so-and-so over talking to so-and-so," and it was a Democrat legislator talking to a Republican. And I said, "Oh, that's good. Do they mix quite a bit across the aisle?" And he said, "There is no aisle here." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, there's no Democrat side of the aisle, and there's no Republican side of the aisle. You know, you can have a Democrat legislator sitting right next to a Republican legislator." Well, that was foreign to me based on my Illinois experience. Also, the legislative staffs, at least at that time, were nonpartisan, so you had the same staff serving both the Democrat legislators and the Republican legislators. That was a marked difference from Illinois.

And I'm not sure when this occurred, but I got a call from Forrest Kilmer. I was in Springfield, and he said, "We have a reporter in Des Moines who has a tip about possible abuse of the National Guard aircraft by the general of the National Guard in Iowa, a guy named Joe May."[14] You may remember that name. He was a legendary guy. And—

DePue: He's the reason I ended up in the Illinois National Guard, because the guys at the University of Iowa said, You don't want to join the Iowa National Guard because of that particular incident.

Lawrence: That was Joe May. He was kind of a legendary guy, for one reason or another. Kilmer said, "You've done a lot of work in Illinois about abuses in the state air fleet by Illinois politicians. Would you go over and help this guy in Iowa? He's just never done anything like this." So I go over there. It wasn't two days, we had May. He had been using a Guard airplane to go down and visit his sweetheart in Florida, and in some ways, it was a poignant story. May's wife had died—he was up there in years by this time—and he met this woman at I think it was a high school reunion. (DePue laughs) She was in Florida, and they had a long-distance romance. The problem was he was using military aircraft to carry on this romance, and the explanation he had given was that the plane was actually going down there for maintenance and repair work.

We were on the phone for a day and a half, a couple of days, and determined that the closest repair operation for that kind of plane was a long way away from where he was going in Florida. So I remember I was on the phone with him—in fact, the other reporter and I were on—and he gave us this explanation about maintenance. I said, "Well, now, wait a minute. This maintenance facility is a long way away. I mean, it's in..."—I think it was in Alabama somewhere or something, which isn't all that far from Florida. But it was, believe me, a detour to go to Pensacola, Florida. This maintenance facility now comes back; it was in Oklahoma. (DePue laughs)

DePue: That's a big detour now.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's right; it was in Oklahoma. He said, "Well, that's in the South." I said, "Well, so is southern California, but that's a long way from Florida." We had him. And with the aviation investigations I'd done in Illinois, you would go to the governor's office, they'd give you some explanation for it, which didn't hold water, and they'd say, We'll look into it, and nothing significant would happen. I was kind of accustomed to that.

Well, this reporter and I go to see—Bob Ray was the governor at the time—Governor Ray's chief of staff, a guy by the name of Wythe Willey. And I just expected we'd get the same thing I got in Illinois: Well, we'll look into it and get back to you. We wrote our story for the next day, I drove back

[14] Joe May was forced to retire from his position as a result of the scandal in 1977.

to Davenport from Des Moines, I got back into the newsroom, and there's a call waiting for me from the Des Moines correspondent I had worked with. He said, "Mike, just so you know, we need to update our story."

DePue: Is this the *Des Moines Register*?

Lawrence: No, this was the Des Moines correspondent for the *Quad City Times*.

And I said, "How come?" He said, "Because the governor has called for May's resignation, (DePue laughs) and he has resigned." Or at least he had called for his resignation, and then soon thereafter... Well, I was surprised. Actually, there had been worse abuses that I'd uncovered in Illinois, and here, the day we uncover it, the guy's gone. I think that was illustrative of the different cultures in the two states. Now, the irony is that May got prosecuted by the United States attorney in Iowa for abuse of government property. And I thought, Wow, you know, this is really moving along. And he was convicted of abuse of government property.[15]

By the time he's ready to be sentenced, I had been recalled from Springfield to be editorial page editor of the Davenport paper, and I wrote an editorial saying, You know, the guy's suffered enough; don't send him to prison. And lo and behold, they sent him to prison. (laughter) So there definitely are two distinct cultures.

DePue: How much of the difference in the cultures was rooted in Chicago and Chicago politics?

Lawrence: I think Chicago politics has a lot to do with Illinois. I don't like the regionalism in Illinois. I think it's counterproductive, and I think a lot of times, downstaters bash Chicago when they should not do so. Chicago is a world-class city. It's a major part of our state. But I do think that the culture, the political culture in Chicago and in this part of the state, the southern part, is different than the culture elsewhere in the state. I think politics in Chicago and in southern Illinois are more of a business than they are in other parts of the state.

DePue: We probably should mention that we're sitting in your home in Carbondale.

Lawrence: Yeah, we are. In Chicago, it's about jobs and contracts, but from the standpoint of the citizens, it's, What does government do to help us cope in a metropolitan area? When it snows—

DePue: By God, you better get the streets cleaned off!

[15] Kerner was convicted in February 1973, six years after resigning as Illinois governor, for accepting bribes, while governor, in the form of horse racetrack stock from Arlington Park manager Marge Everett.

Lawrence: That's right. Did they shovel the streets? Is my garbage going to be picked up when I expect it to be picked up? If I've got a pothole in front of my house, how soon does it get fixed? And as my wife would say, it takes a lot of energy to live in Chicago, so if the government is helping people to live there, just to handle the day-to-day demand of being in the metropolitan area, people tend to overlook some of the corruption, at least at a certain level. The idea is, They're doing for us and if they want to take for themselves, well, maybe that's okay.

Government equates to jobs in southern Illinois. You had a strong coal industry, but it certainly has subsided, pardon the pun, over the years, particularly with the passage of federal environmental legislation. There was a time in Illinois when no other area in the state wanted prisons. That changed later, (DePue laughs) but there was a time when no other area in the state wanted prisons. I'm talking about the forties, the fifties, and the sixties, even into the seventies. They wanted them here because those were jobs. And there were health institutions—those were jobs. And so in this part of the state, government equated to jobs. There is a very practical view of government and politics. And I think that has a lot to do with the culture.

DePue: Let's go back to our timeline, if you will. We're going to take a break here in a few minutes, but I want to have you tell us a little bit about 1974. You moved down to Springfield, to the statehouse beat, and was that also the year you got divorced?

Lawrence: I think technically it was the year I got divorced. We separated, I think, in '73, and it was an agreed divorce. It was a non-confrontational divorce; in fact, we had the same lawyer.

DePue: What took you down to Springfield, then, in '74?

Lawrence: By the way, maybe we should note my son was born, in 1968.

DePue: His name?

Lawrence: Matthew. The divorce occurred when he was five or six years old, and that was the hardest thing I've gone through in my life, that divorce and the separation from my son. Anyway, in May of '74 Forrest Kilmer and I went over to a session in Moline with the then-governor of Illinois, Dan Walker. Walker had gathered editors from the three newspapers in the Quad City area for a briefing on what was going on in state government from his perspective. And on the way back, in the car, Forrest said, "Mike, you know, we have a bureau in Des Moines—I think we ought to have one in Springfield." And I said, "Well, I agree." And he said, "Well, who do you think we should put there?" And I said, "I think I should go." He said, "Are you kidding?" I said, "You know, I don't think I am. Give me a couple of days to think about it. But," I said, "Forrest, let's be honest. I'm not enjoying being a managing

editor, and I don't think you think I'm doing that great a job as managing editor; and I think I could do well opening that bureau in Springfield, and it might be the right move for me." I told him on that day. Two days later, I went in to him, and I said, "I'd like to go to Springfield."

DePue: Was that going to be a pay cut for you?

Lawrence: I said to him, "I can't take a pay cut. I've got support payments." I have to tell you, I wasn't making a whole lot of money at that point. It was more than a reporter's pay, obviously; I was managing editor. But I said, "I can't take a pay cut. I just can't handle it. But if you don't want to give me a pay raise for the next two years, I'd be fine with that."

DePue: Economically, I would think Springfield and the Quad Cities areas were probably on par in terms of housing and expenses.

Lawrence: Yeah, they were comparable. My wife and I had compiled a fair amount of debt. I learned later, by the standard (DePue laughs) of some people, it wasn't all that much debt, but it was more debt than I was comfortable with, and there was some tension with us over spending in the family. I had vowed I was going to pay off that debt in one year, and I was in the process of doing that, trying to get on my feet financially, and I just could not afford to take a pay cut in that scenario. Forrest was agreeable. I went to Springfield, and I started there in June of 1974.

DePue: This might be a good place to stop, and then pick it up after lunch.

Lawrence: Okay, fine.

(end of interview)

Interview with Mike Lawrence
ISG-A-L-2009-005.02
Interview # 2: March 4, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Wednesday, March 4th, in the afternoon. This is our second session with myself, Mark DePue, and Mike Lawrence. Mike, welcome back.

Lawrence: Thank you. Good to be back.

DePue: I think we finally got you down to Springfield in 1974, doing the state house beat. Now, you were the head of the bureau at that time?

Lawrence: It was a one-person bureau. I was at what was then the *Quad City Times*. You may recall that when I went to work for the paper, it was the *Times-Democrat*. That name changed in the early seventies to the *Quad City Times*.

DePue: Did you consolidate with a newspaper on the other side of the river at the same time?

Lawrence: No, the name was changed to reflect that we were covering the entire Quad Cities. We had competition on the Illinois side, but those papers covered only the Illinois side at that time.

DePue: What struck you about going down to Springfield?

Lawrence: I had been in and out of Springfield in the late sixties, and I just thought it was a fascinating place. The politics of Illinois are intriguing. There are usually several different levels to whatever is happening, and for a reporter who is interested in trying to get to the root of something, it's a major challenge. It's an exciting challenge, and it's also an intellectually demanding challenge.

DePue: You arrived there during the time that Dan Walker was governor, and Dan Walker had a prickly relationship with the press, did he not?

Lawrence: Yeah, he definitely did. In the Capitol, the press corps is located within the building, in a suite. Now, when I first got to Springfield in '74, that suite of offices for media from around the state was located on the third floor of the Capitol. It moved in 1976 to where it is today, which is on a mezzanine between the second and third floors of the Capitol. But within that press room, and this was true on the third floor as well as in the current location, there is a room which is known as the Blue Room, and that is where politicians [and] interest groups come in to hold press conferences. It's very convenient, because the media are right there, their offices are right there, and this room is set up for television and radio coverage, as well as to accommodate the print media.

The reason I go into that detail is that after I got there in 1974, I know of only one occasion when Governor Walker came to the Blue Room to hold a press conference, and that had to do with his support for an organized labor initiative; the organized labor people, I think, wanted him there. Otherwise, we went down to his office for news conferences or availabilities. Of course, his office was on the second floor, so it wasn't like it was a long walk, but in

many respects, it could have been miles in terms of the relationship between the media and the governor.

DePue: What were the strains in that relationship?

Lawrence: If you talk to Governor Walker and his people, they would say that the state house press corps was upset because he had beaten Paul Simon for the Democrat nomination in 1972, and then Dick Ogilvie in the general election, and that the state house media had never forgiven him for that because Paul Simon was one of their favorites. That may have been a factor with some people in the press corps, but a larger factor was that Dan Walker, in many respects, was the first modern-era governor in terms of public relations techniques and efforts to manipulate the media with good visuals.

DePue: The whole idea of the walk—

Lawrence: Yeah, exactly.

DePue: —from the south to the north of the state.

Lawrence: Exactly. When he started out running for governor—you're right, Mark—he walked the whole state, and that made for good visuals; it was a good image. He wore blue jeans and a bandana. Here was a guy who'd been a general counsel at Montgomery Ward, if I remember correctly. He was a corporate executive, and he's walking around the state in blue jeans, boots, and a bandana, (DePue laughs) and now he's a man of the people!

But he said a lot of things during that campaign, and even after he was elected, where he was going to cut some huge amount out of the budget. He was going to make his the most ethical administration the state had seen. Where have we heard those words lately? I think from a guy named Blagojevich when he came into office. And I'm not comparing the two of them, but there were some similarities in terms of the rhetoric at the time they came in and during the campaign.

A lot of people in the media did what I think was their job to do—what was our job to do, because I was part of the state house press corps—and that was to measure what the governor had said he was going to do against what he actually did. His administration in many ways was a very competent administration. He himself was a brilliant guy. But there were gaps, pretty significant gaps, between rhetoric and performance. For example, he was going to have the most ethical administration, and yet he had people working in the governor's office who were carried on other payrolls; which kept the governor's office payroll down, but it really was not an honest accounting of how many people he had working for him. On the budget, he didn't cut the budget as he said he was going to.

It had been tradition for the governor to give the media the budget a day ahead of time, before it was announced, so that they could look it over and write about it intelligently and even ask questions of the governor about it. Instead, they didn't get advance copies until the eleventh hour, and then he flew around the state to talk about his budget without letting the Springfield press corps talk to him about it; and those would have been the folks who would have been most knowledgeable about the budget. So the relations were not good. I came there in '74, June of '74, and it wasn't long before I was shut out with him. He would not talk to me when I would see him in the hallway or—

DePue: Is there any specific reason for that?

Lawrence: No, I just did a fair amount of investigative work on the administration. Now, the only time he would address me was during a press conference or availability if I would ask a question, because I think he knew that if he didn't acknowledge me and respond to me, then some other person in the media would ask this same question. There was more than a tension there; it went beyond a tension. I have to say there were people in his administration who I had very good professional relations with—his press secretary, Norton Kay. I'd known Norton beforehand, when Norton was a reporter for the old *Chicago American* and later *Chicago Today*. Norty and I could go at each other during the day, and then we'd go to Butch's Steakhouse and have dinner at night. Norty had a terrific sense of humor. Walker, as far as I could tell, had no sense of humor.

DePue: I think he would even agree to that.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: He also had a very tough time with the legislature, even though it was a Democratic legislature.

Lawrence: He had campaigned in that primary he won as the anti-Daley candidate. He portrayed Paul Simon as a machine candidate because Old Man Daley was supporting Paul for governor. And yet in the general election after that primary, he and Daley did have a détente, and from everything I can tell, Daley supported him in that general election. But it didn't take long for the relationships to go south—and you said relations with the legislature, and I'm going to get to that in about twenty seconds—the root of the problem was that he was antagonistic to Mayor Daley, and there was a bloc in the legislature, a strong bloc, that did Mayor Daley's bidding.

So you had a situation where, particularly after the Watergate election in '74, he had Democrat majorities in both the House and the Senate, but in a real sense, he didn't have a majority because there was a bloc of Daley Democrats who were very resistant to him. And the Republicans would come

over and do business with them, or maybe on another issue, they'd come over and do business with the independent bloc. So, he did have problems. The other thing is, on the day he was inaugurated as governor, he said the free ride is over, and the legislature took that to be a declaration of war on some of their practices.

DePue: I wanted to go back if we could. You had mentioned earlier that you'd be happy to talk about Ogilvie's administration as well. I'm going to hold you to that.

Lawrence: I really regret that I wasn't in Springfield full time during the Ogilvie administration. That was a fantastic era for Illinois government, and, by the way, I think Governor Edgar was greatly influenced by those years. You had the passage of the income tax, the enactment of the income tax, major transportation initiatives, the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, and you also had a shift in power on budgeting from the legislature to the governor. Before Ogilvie, the legislature and legislative commission used to pretty well put together the budget, and Governor Ogilvie established the Bureau of the Budget and really took the initiative in proposing the budget to the legislature. Now, the legislature still worked its will on that budget—there still had to be negotiation and consideration for legislative interest—but it really did shift a lot of the power to the governor's office.

Beyond that, Ogilvie himself was someone who I greatly respected. He wasn't perfect, he didn't have the perfect administration, but he was someone who wanted to solve problems and who could see problems, and he would do his best to solve them even if the solutions would not be popular at the moment they were developed.

DePue: Income tax is the main example of that.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. And he did what he thought was right. Again, he wasn't perfect—there were scandals in his administration; there have been in every state administration in Illinois. He was a practical politician in a lot of ways. But he was a courageous public official, and he was someone who, as I say, wanted to be a problem solver and not a posturer.

DePue: Did you have the opportunity to interview him?

Lawrence: Oh yeah. I covered his '68 campaign. That was right before I went into management. The first time we met was in a place called Oquawka, Illinois. You may know where it is, Mark. It's in Henderson County, Illinois, on the Mississippi River. The Republican County chairman there, a guy named Clarence Neff, used to hold a fish fry every year, and it was the kind of gathering that politicians—Republican politicians—would come to from all over Illinois.

Ogilvie had been elected president of the Cook County board and was making it known that he was interested in running for governor. He was standing at the side of the fish line, so as people went through to get their fish, he would shake their hand and say, "Hi, I'm Dick Ogilvie. I'm president of the Cook County board, and I'm thinking of running for governor." I got in that line, and I said, "Hi," and I introduced myself, a reporter for the *Quad City Times*, and we started into a little chat. And the lady behind me said, "I don't care who either one of you is; I want to eat fish. Let's get this line moving!" (DePue laughs) That was the first time Ogilvie and I met, and fourteen years later, when I interviewed him ten years after he had lost reelection for governor, he and I were laughing about it. We laughed about that many times through the years.

I traveled with him during the '68 campaign as a reporter. Because of his war injury—he was a tank commander, and he had an injury to his face—he couldn't smile the way most people smile, and people thought he was a very stern, rigid kind of person. And he really wasn't that way at all. He was very down-to-earth, very straightforward. Unlike a lot of other politicians, he kind of liked the hardball questions, because he knew a lot about government, and he felt confident in answering them.

DePue: Would he be called a policy wonk today?

Lawrence: In some respects, yes. He was a policy wonk in the respect that you got problems, what's the best way to solve them. Yeah. We'll get into this probably a little later with Governor Edgar, but Governor Edgar often has said, "Some people run for office so they can govern; other people govern so they can campaign." Ogilvie would have been in the group that ran for office to govern. He really liked governing, he knew a lot about government, and he was really, in my opinion, one of the greatest governors this state has had; some would argue he was the greatest.

DePue: There are an awful lot of parallels we'll obviously get into when we get into Governor Edgar's career. But I want to ask you about one other person who was crucial during that very important time period, and that would be Russell Arrington. Did you know him, have a chance to interview him?

Lawrence: I knew him. I did not have a chance to interview him at any length. When he was at the height of his power in Springfield, I was truly a rookie reporter coming in and out of Springfield, so I would have been part of press conferences, events like that. I did not have an opportunity to interview him one-on-one or in any kind of depth. I will say he was a very impressive individual. I didn't need to interview him to witness his intellectual prowess, his work ethic, his discipline, and the power that he wielded over legislative matters.

DePue: Was he intimidating?

Lawrence: Yes, he could be intimidating.

DePue: Did he understand that?

Lawrence: I will say, I didn't feel intimidated by him. I tried to train myself not to be intimidated by people. (DePue laughs) As a journalist, it's not a good thing to be intimidated. But he could be intimidating. He had a certain air about him of authority, but the other thing was, he was very smart and he did his homework, so he had a lot of ammunition when he came into any situation.

DePue: I'm going to ask you a question here that maybe you don't want to answer, but I'll ask it anyway. During this time period—and we're talking about when you came back to Springfield, those years—how would you describe your own political views and your own political leanings?

Lawrence: Well, my folks were New Deal Democrats, as I told you. When I was in college, I joined the Young Democrats my freshman year. But the more I covered government, the more I became aware that no party had a monopoly on the good politicians, and no party had all the bad politicians. I began to look at people in public life in a way that was based more on how candid they were, how sincere they were, and also whether they had convictions at all, and if they had convictions, did they have the courage (phone rings) of their convictions. I may have voted a straight ticket the first time I voted, which would have been 1964, but I think that was the last election that I voted a straight ticket. I have voted a split ticket ever since then, including when I worked for Governor Edgar. I voted for Democrats while I was working for a Republican governor.

DePue: But you were in a position, being a journalist and covering the political beat, where you can much more closely analyze those kinds of things as well, I would think.

Lawrence: Yes. I did have the benefit of knowing the leading politicians well and being able to observe them at close range, but I also believe that average citizens have the capability to make judgments. I make judgments now on people in Washington, and I do it based on reading about them, looking at their websites. There is a great deal of information available to people today, but you have to take the time to avail yourself of that information, and also to look at more than one source for that information; look at a variety of sources. But there's no question that I was in a position to make judgments based on the individual rather than the party.

DePue: I know that in October of '77, you moved back up to Davenport; but before we go there, any highlights, anything else you want to mention about your time in Springfield?

Lawrence: In that particular period, most of the reporting that I did that some would consider notable was investigative work. I did quite a bit on the Walker

administration, and a lot of it had to do with the abuse of state aircraft. Among other things, I wrote about how the spouses of Walker administration people were using state aircraft to go from Springfield to Chicago on shopping trips. That was just one example. I also disclosed that a candidate for governor in 1976 actually lived in Indiana most of the year, and I did that by looking at logs of the state air fleet; he was basically commuting from a home in Indiana to his offices in either Chicago or Springfield. I broke that story during his primary.

DePue: And that would be?

Lawrence: Michael Howlett, who in many ways was a very good public official and an honorable public official, but there were certainly questions raised about where he lived and his use of the state aircraft to commute. Mike Howlett won that primary. He beat Walker. Walker was running for renomination.

DePue: And that speaks volumes as well; that the sitting governor loses his party primary.

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: How did that come to happen?

Lawrence: Let me say first, I think that [the Howlett residency story] tends to respond to Walker's assertions about the media being against him, because there was a story that was certainly favorable to his primary campaign and unfavorable to his opponent. On a personal level, I had a lot better relationship with Mike Howlett (DePue laughs) than I ever had with Dan Walker.

But getting back to that primary, the main reason why Dan Walker was not renominated was that he could never reach some sort of working relationship with Mayor Richard J. Daley. Now, from Daley's standpoint, Walker was antagonistic, would not come to the table, and would be opposed to something just because Daley was for it. That was Daley's perception; Walker may have another perception of it. But the fact of the matter is, they didn't get along at all. Two Democrats didn't get along. So Daley basically told Mike Howlett to run. Mike had wanted to run for governor in 1968; he had wanted to run for governor in 1972. Mayor Daley had told him, "No, I'm not going to support you for that."

DePue: Was that the classic slatemakers' meetings?

Lawrence: Yeah, exactly. In many ways, Mike was a good public servant, but he was also subservient to Mayor Daley. Well, Daley told Howlett, "You're going to run in this primary." And by this time, Howlett did not want to run. (DePue laughs) That's one of the great ironies of Illinois history: you had a guy who wanted to run in '68, wanted to run in '72, and did not want to run in'76 because he knew it would be a very vicious campaign against Walker; and,

even if he won, he would come out of it bloodied and then have the general election. But Daley told Howlett, "You're running," so he ran; I think that was the main reason.

The fact that Daley fielded a candidate against Walker was a decisive factor, not only because Daley could still deliver votes in a Democrat primary, but [because] Walker arguably had been one of the best governors organized labor had ever had in Illinois. He signed sweeping workers' comp and unemployment insurance legislation, legislation that a lot of people felt went too far, yet the leaders of organized labor did not support him in that primary, most of the major leaders, because Mayor Daley was on the other side. So I think Daley was the central reason why Walker did not get renominated.

DePue: Can you speak to any of Walker's personal issues?

Lawrence: There were rumors about relationships while he was governor, but I don't think that really came out in any kind of documented way until years later. I don't know whether that's what you're referring to.

DePue: That's fine. Nineteen seventy-six, am I right? Is that when you got remarried?

Lawrence: I got remarried in '77. Marianne and I started dating in '76, and then we got married in November of 1977.

DePue: And that's roughly the same time that you went back to Davenport?

Lawrence: Yeah. Marianne and I were both in the newsroom of what was then the *Times-Democrat* in 1966, when I went to work there. Marianne had actually been at the paper for several years. We were married to other people, and, you know, we were cordial with each other in the newsroom, but there was certainly not any spark of any romantic relationship. I mean, we were married to other people. That was in 1966. In 1976, I was still based in Springfield, but Forrest Kilmer asked me to come back to Davenport for the general election to run the coverage on election night. I had done that regularly, even though I was based in Springfield, because Kilmer just liked the way I ran the election coverage.

I was back for that, and, you know, it had been ten years since I had started at the paper, and it had been, you know, a couple of years since I had left the newsroom. Marianne had actually not been in the newsroom when I left in '74; she had left to have a baby. But I got back, and there was Marianne. I was divorced by that time, and I asked her out, and she told me no because (laughs) she had plans for that night. It really wasn't very gallant of me to ask her out at four o'clock for a dinner at 6:00. She said no, but I could tell it wasn't a "No, no." And she was divorced by that time. I asked her again, with a little more advance notice, for another time, she accepted, and we began a courtship that was done on a long-distance basis for about a year.

And then, about the time that we were planning to be married, in November of '77, Forrest Kilmer—his name comes up a lot; he was my mentor and tormentor through the years—asked me to come back and be editorial page editor. It was a good job, but I wasn't real excited about it because I'd been the managing editor, and I'd had the experience of being inside rather than outside. But in some ways, it was a step up professionally. Marianne had a daughter, by a previous marriage, who was seven when we got married, and I felt, all things considered, it would be better for me to move to Davenport and move into that job than to have them come down to Springfield. So I took the job.

I was editorial page editor from October of 1977 until October of 1979. I had a rather unusual position in that I was actually called an associate editor, and, in addition to the editorial pages and overseeing the editorial pages, I also supervised both of the state house bureaus, in Des Moines and Springfield. Forrest wanted me doing that because he liked the way I ran the Springfield operation when I was there. And I think professionals would look at that and say, That's a built-in conflict.

DePue: Oh?

Lawrence: Yeah. You're supervising news coverage at the same time you're writing editorials. You know what? It was [a conflict of interest]. I mean, on paper. But I had confidence that I could separate the two, and I think I did. Certainly, I would not recommend that as a model.

DePue: Were you a columnist at the same time?

Lawrence: Yeah. Actually, before I went to Springfield, I had started writing a column on Illinois politics, and I continued to write the column.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about the difference between that traditional hard political reporter versus the columnist, and how you walked that line.

Lawrence: It is a tight line to walk if you're going to continue being involved in news coverage while you're writing an opinion column. It's done by a lot of opinion writers who also write news, or news writers who also write opinion. A classic example is David Broder of the *Washington Post*. David Broder will publish some news stories, but he also writes a regular column. So it's not rare in the news business.

I think you write a different kind of column if you're real engaged in news coverage, though. My columns back at that time were more analytical. Some of them were taking rather rigid or hard positions on issues, but most of them were more analytical. I write a column now where I am much more opinionated than I was back then, but I don't cover news now. I'm in semi-retirement. It is hard, because you don't want to hurt the credibility of your news reporting by what you're writing in your column. Also, sources may

understand you writing a news story where somebody makes a charge against them, you run what the charge is, and then you get their response. They may not be happy you're writing that kind of story, but they kind of understand it. But if you write a column where you're critical of them, that's your opinion.

DePue: Now it's personal?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and they take it differently. So it's tricky.

DePue: What do you say to those who would suggest that if you're a columnist and also writing hard news, just the process of selecting what stories to write about and what stories end up in the paper is an editorial opinion?

Lawrence: I understand what your question is, and I guess my response would be that you try as a professional to have standards for what's news, what isn't news; and, frankly, there is a lot of judgment in the news business: what you cover, what you don't cover, what elements out of a meeting that you cover you use in your story, which ones you emphasize. You do have those kinds of judgments.

Even news reporting is not objective, which is a common word used; that, really, news writers should be objective. There's no such thing as objectivity; we all bring our background and experiences into whatever we do. What you strive for, and what I tell my journalism students, is fairness and thoroughness, and that's different than objectivity. You try to be aware of your own biases and not let them affect what you're doing, but it is not realistic to believe that anybody comes into any situation totally unbiased.

DePue: Well, I almost hear Mark Lawrence talking in there someplace. (laughter)

Lawrence: I take that as a compliment, and I don't think there is any question that Dad believed strongly in being thorough, in documenting what you were writing, and in being fair. Dad definitely, and Mom as well, emphasized that you need to have respect for views that are different from your views, and you need to be open. You should never be so set in your views that you aren't open to new information that might affect those views.

DePue: I think we're at 1979, so another change in your life.

Lawrence: The company that owned the *Quad City Times* purchased a group of newspapers in Illinois that were part of what was known as the Lindsay-Schaub chain. And the company that owned the *Quad City Times,* and still owns the *Quad City Times*, is known as Lee Enterprises. Lee wanted to establish a corporate bureau in Springfield. The *Quad City Times* was there, but they wanted a corporate bureau that would subsume the *Quad City Times* bureau and some of the other papers in one bureau.

The vice president of Lee, a gentleman by the name of Jim Burgess, called Forrest Kilmer and asked him if I would head up the bureau in Springfield. And Forrest was not happy about me leaving as editorial page editor. I remember I was taking a week off, and he called me, and said, "Now, Jim Burgess called, and he wants to set up this corporate bureau in Springfield, and he'd like you to head it up. I told him I didn't think you'd be all that interested." I said, "Well, actually, Forrest, I am." (laughs) And I said, "It's just a major challenge, and I miss being where the action is; and you've been great to me in this job, but I think I'm going to do it." We'd [Marianne and Mike] been married a couple years, and I felt differently about moving the family to Springfield.

So I went there, I was the chief; then there was Mike Briggs, who was the *Quad City Times* person. In fact, I had put him there. He later went on to be the Springfield bureau chief for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and then went to the Washington bureau. The other person was Don Sevener, and he had been covering Springfield for the Lindsay-Schaub operation. I didn't know Don, and I wasn't totally happy about having one-third of my bureau being someone who I had not put there, but he turned out to be fantastic. We had what I considered to be a very, very good bureau.

DePue: What were some of the other papers served [by the bureau]?

Lawrence: Lee had owned the Kewanee paper for a long, long time, so we served the Kewanee paper, which had not had that kind of coverage from Springfield, and we served the Decatur paper and the Carbondale paper. We had the *Quad City Times*, Decatur, Kewanee, and Carbondale.

DePue: That's quite a geographical spread there.

Lawrence: Yeah, it was. And the current bureau, I believe, serves even more papers, because Lee has purchased additional papers.

DePue: But it gets you back to what you really like to do, it sounds like.

Lawrence: Yeah. Those were my most fulfilling years professionally; the years from 1979 to 1986.

DePue: If I can speculate, it sounds like you liked being the opinion page editor better than being managing editor?

Lawrence: Yeah, that's correct.

DePue: What was it about the experience that was different?

Lawrence: There were a couple of things. First of all, I didn't have to manage an entire newsroom. And before I went back into that job, I reached a meeting of the minds with Forrest. Forrest had really been all over me when I was managing

editor. It was one of those deals where we had a love-hate relationship in those years. I mean, we definitely had a kinship between the two of us, but as I've told people, that was the period where my name became a four-letter word. "Mike"—four letters. "Mike" would be bellowed out of his office, which was off the newsroom. That name would be yelled, and usually not in a way [like], "Come on in and talk; we're going to have a pleasant conversation." It was usually not going to be a pleasant conversation.

Before I went back as editorial page editor—associate editor, actually, was the title—I said to him, "The way it was before, it can't be that way now. I'm not coming back under those conditions." Forrest was a terrific newsperson, one of the best newspersons I've ever known. To the extent I was successful as a newsperson, Forrest had a lot to do with it; I loved the guy, and I'm very grateful to him for helping develop me as a newsperson. But he wasn't a good manager. They'd send Forrest to management school, like they did [with] a lot of the Lee executives, and they'd teach them about management by agreement; where you'd sit down, you'd work out goals together. That would last for about a day or two after he got back, and then it would resort to the old standard, management through fear. You know, he'd just yell, and intimidate.

So I said, "If it's going to be that, I'm not coming back. You know, you and I get along fine with me in Springfield." And he said he would change with respect to me, and he did. He kept his word. I did like it better. There was less pressure for a lot of reasons, and it was an opportunity to express opinions on a number of topics other than state government and state politics. But I did find after two years that I'd expressed most of my opinions (laughter) at least one way or another about many issues, and I did miss being where the action was.

Going back to Springfield as a bureau chief really was an exciting prospect, and it turned out to be a tremendous experience. I did enjoy managing people, but I also like to be at the scene of the action. I had both in that job. I was more like a quarterback in that bureau than I was a coach. I was playing the game—I was out there running some plays, doing some passes myself—but at the same time, I was directing the team, the unit. And I had good players to direct, outstanding professionals to direct. It was really a wonderful time.

DePue: Those were the Jim Thompson years as well. Tell us a little bit about your impressions of Jim Thompson. You left in '77, so you caught the very beginning of his tenure.

Lawrence: I had a long relationship with Governor Thompson, as you might imagine. He was governor for a long time. I covered his first campaign in 1976. And what a lot of people don't realize is that he was a terrible campaigner when he started running for governor. Now, he became, arguably, the best campaigner

Illinois has seen at the state level. (phone rings) He had been the U.S. attorney, and he had been very effective in that job in dealing with the media. In fact, his record as U.S. attorney, plus the way he dealt with the media, helped catapult him into that governor's race.

DePue: He had a couple significant scalps on his belt, did he not?

Lawrence: Yeah, that's right; including Governor Kerner. But when he first started running, he'd walk into a reception and go off in a corner somewhere. This was not the gregarious Jim Thompson that people saw afterward. He could give a long, boring speech. (DePue laughs) And this was a guy who turned out to be a very effective speech maker; although sometimes he still went too long, at least they weren't boring.

I covered that campaign, then I went back up to Davenport, then I picked up again in '79 when I went down there [to Springfield]. It was interesting with Governor Thompson, because I not only covered his '76 campaign but I was there for most of the first year he was governor. And you talk about a contrast with Walker in terms of media relations. I told you earlier that Walker rarely came to the state house press room. Thompson, in the early months of his governorship, and really, throughout his governorship, would come by the press room frequently, and not just to do news conferences, but to stop in and talk to reporters.

I didn't know quite how to deal with that early on. I'd be in my office, writing a critical piece on Thompson—by "critical," I don't mean negative; I mean analyzing what he was doing as governor—and here he'd come in my office; he'd plop down on the couch in my office, put his feet up, you know, and we'd chat. On the one hand, it was a welcome development to have a governor who would talk to you and deal with you and answer your questions, but on the other hand, you didn't want to get too close to him because you were trying to cover him as you would any other public official. In other words, you didn't want the two of you to become friends. And he was an engaging guy. I mean, he was the kind of guy that you would like to have for a friend, but he was the governor, and you couldn't be his friend if you were going to be a reporter. So we had, you know, an interesting relationship through the years.

DePue: What were his motives, do you think, for stopping by with these surprise visits to the office? I assume you're not the only one he's doing this to.

Lawrence: No, no. I wasn't the only one, no. He was trying to cultivate us. We were trying to cultivate him, and that's kind of the way it works, you know? (laughter) I think he was working us, but on the other hand, a lot of the times, we were working him. I used to be on panels about Is the press being manipulated by a politician? And I'd say, "Yes, we are being manipulated, but we're also manipulating them." Some may say, Well, that's a cynical view. I

don't think it is; it's a pragmatic view. You have certain things you need to accomplish as a journalist; that politician would like to accomplish certain things. In the end, if you're a reporter and you're manipulated into something that you don't think is right, then that's on you. You have to understand, they are trying to manipulate you. You have the final say in what you're going to write, what you're going to put in the newspaper in the end, or what you're going to put on the air.

DePue: Let's hear about some of those incidents [with Thompson], if you can.

Lawrence: (laughs) I had written a story about expenditures at the mansion for food and liquor and other commodities. I wasn't the one to initially get into this subject with Thompson. There'd been a reporter—I think it was Bill Lambrecht, who is now in Washington with the *Post-Dispatch*—and Thompson said he was going to do something about it. About a year later, I went back to see if he had done anything about it. And what it showed was expenditures; and if they had gone down, it was not in a major way. In fact, if I remember correctly, they'd gone up. So I write this story.

The wire services picked up my story, and Thompson was interviewed a day after my story ran; he was asked about it, and he said, "Mike Lawrence doesn't know what he's talking about." (DePue laughs) "He doesn't know a line item from" and he named some other budget term. So first thing Monday morning, I go down to see Dave Gilbert, Thompson's press secretary, and I say, "You know, David, I understand the governor may want to defend himself, but I came to you guys with my numbers. You didn't dispute any of them, and now the governor's out there indicating that my numbers aren't right or I misinterpreted them." And I said, "If he's saying I don't have my numbers right, he's really full of it." And Gilbert said, "Well, he thinks you're full of it, too." That was not an unusual conversation between a reporter and a press secretary. He had his say, I had my say, and I went upstairs to the press room.

While we were in Davenport, we had established a friendship with somebody in our neighborhood. This guy was in Springfield on business. And this was a guy who, during the time I was in Davenport, for whatever reason, was fascinated with Jim Thompson. He was an Iowan, but he would always ask me about Jim Thompson.

He was in Springfield on business, and he had arranged to come to the Capitol, to my office, and then we were going to go to lunch. Well, my former neighbor comes in, we're sitting there talking, and who walks in but Governor Thompson. (laughter) This guy's eyes just grow enormously. And Thompson says, "I understand you think I'm full of it," and I said, "Well, yeah, I do"; and I said, "I hear you think I'm full of it, too."That was kind of the relationship Thompson and I had. Then he said, "You know, Jayne," the first lady, "she really oversees those purchases, and she gets very sensitive about

those kinds of stories." And I said, "I understand that. It's in print. I had my say about your reaction to it, and you had your reaction. We'll move on." Then he plopped down on the couch and engaged in conversation with me and my neighbor. That was certainly one memorable experience.

Another one was; he called me up one day, and said, "I'd like to take you to lunch." Now, I had been to lunch with Thompson several times, and I had bought the lunches and put them on my expense account for the paper.

DePue: Had you initiated the other lunches?

Lawrence: Some I did; some I didn't. I found these valuable because I would get background information from him. Sometimes I'd get stories. I felt if I was paying for the lunches, then certainly I wasn't being compromised in that way. And Thompson tells me, "I would like to have lunch, and you have bought before; I'm buying today." So I said, "Okay, that's fine." I had bought enough lunches to be out of his debt big time; (laughter) there was never a question. I did check, before I left the bureau—I had to go over to the mansion to meet him there—to make sure I had my credit cards with me, because I was not 100 percent sure he would buy this lunch.

I get to the mansion, and we leave the mansion, get into a car driven by the state troopers, and they started driving out of Springfield toward Chandlerville. I said, "Where are we going?" He said, "We're going to Chandlerville," which is a small town outside of Springfield. He said, "There's a little diner there I think you're really going to like." And on the way out, he starts telling me he's on a diet. His weight would go up and down, and this is one of those times he's telling me he's on a diet. We get into Chandlerville, pull up to this diner, and the name of the diner was Mel and Alice's Diner. I'm pretty confident on that.

DePue: Mel and Alice's? (laughs)

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, I'm pretty confident on that. You know, I'm not going to swear that was the name, but my best recollection is that was the name. As time goes by, my mind could be playing tricks and... But it was a place like Mel's Diner.

DePue: In other words, it's got a lot of its own personality.

Lawrence: It did. Let me give you an example. The sign on the cash register was a play on the Burger King commercial. It basically said, "You take it our way or you don't get it at all." (DePue laughs) That kind of gives you the idea. It's probably a diner that would hold twenty, twenty-five people at a time. They would call it comfort food; it's a greasy spoon more than anything.

So we sit down, and Thompson orders a cheeseburger, chili, and fries. I said, "You're on some diet here." He laughed and said, "Okay, I'll get on it tomorrow." We get done eating, and Thompson says, "You know what, Mike?

I know I said I was going to buy, but I'm going to let you pick this up." (DePue laughs) And then about that time, I turn to the register, and I see, "No credit cards accepted."

DePue: That's what I was waiting for.

Lawrence: I had no idea how much cash I had. The bill came—this won't be exact, but let's say somewhere around $12.61. I go to the register, I reach in my pocket; I have twelve dollars in bills. And I was just about ready to turn to him and say, "Governor, do you have sixty-one cents?" I reached in my pocket, and I pulled out the change. I had the exact change. (DePue laughs) So I was able to pay the bill, but then we had the tip to deal with. I said, "Governor, I am out of money. I'm out of cash. They don't take credit cards here." His security guys were over there, and he motions to them, and he says, "I need to borrow some money for the tip here."

And then, not surprisingly, we leave the diner; and about a block down the street is an antique store. That is why we went to Chandlerville, the truth be told, because he went down to the antique store. He'd been there before, obviously, because he was talking to the owner about, "Oh, this is new; this isn't new." We got back to Springfield, I go back in the press room, and I get a call from one of his staff people. They were curious whether he made any policy with me; in other words, whether (laughs) he said he was going to do something. And that was not unusual. Occasionally they would call me, because sometimes, that's how they'd find out (laughter) about some new initiative. Chances are, they had talked about it, but he might not have told them he was going ahead with it.

That experience really stands out in my mind, being in this small diner with the governor and not knowing whether, between the two of us, we had enough to pay for lunch.

DePue: Apparently you kind of suspected that you were going to get stuck with the bill?

Lawrence: Yeah, I did.

DePue: Because...?

Lawrence: That was kind of his way. There were other times when he did not have cash available for whatever he was doing, and some people don't carry a lot of cash.

DePue: Do you think it was because he was cheap, or just because he got out of the practice of having money with him?

Lawrence: I would prefer to believe he got out of the practice of having money with him, but he could have been cheap. It was probably just more of not having—when

you're governor, there are a lot of details that you don't have to worry about. I'm going to digress for a second to a conversation Jim Edgar and I had once. This is shortly after I went to work for him. He was telling me he had mown his yard that day. At that point, he was secretary of state. He lived down in the Hyde Park subdivision in Springfield. But he was kind of conveying to me that this kept him being a regular guy.

I said, "Well, when was the last time you scraped off a windshield in the winter? When was the last time that you got into a hot car in July, or you got into a cold car in January? When was the last time you got rained on when you had a suit?" I mean, he had been secretary of state; there were security people. They warm up the car in the winter; they cool it off in the summer. He smiled, and he said, "Okay, I get it."

The thing is, Governor Thompson or other governors, they do get accustomed to having that. It'll be interesting with Governor Quinn, because he has tended to shrug off those kinds of things; security people and others. Well, he's got security as governor, and he ought to have security as governor. It will be interesting to see whether he becomes accustomed to some of those benefits of being governor.

DePue: I can't imagine the reaction he [Thompson] gets from the folks at the diner and the antique shop. Here's the governor of the state coming in.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, there was always that kind of a bustle. And we had other experiences. One time he called me up, and said, "You know, it's a beautiful night for baseball." He said, "I was flying over Busch Stadium today, and I decided it was a beautiful day for baseball." And he said, "Would you like to go to the baseball game with me tonight?"

In my mind, I rapidly went through this situation. I would fly with him on assignments when I was covering him, but my paper would pay for the flight expenditure. I insisted we be billed, and we paid for it. So what's racing through my mind is, How can I justify on my expense account flying down to St. Louis for a baseball game, even with the governor? You know, unless I got one whale of a story, and there was certainly no guarantee that would happen. I expressed this to him.

I said, "Governor, I got to tell you, I appreciate the invitation, but I'm not going to fly down there on the state's dime; my paper would have to pay for it, and I can't justify it." "Mike," he said, "I'm not talking about the St. Louis Cardinals; I'm talking about the Springfield Cardinals. (DePue laughs) I flew over Busch Stadium, but I'm talking about going to the Springfield Cardinals game tonight." And he said, "You can buy your own damn ticket into the game." (DePue laughs) I said, "Fine. That'd be fine."

We go to the game, and this is so typical of Governor Thompson; and Clinton was a lot like this. We're sitting there at the Springfield Cardinal game, and there's a woman about eight or nine rows up who says, "Thompson, what are you doing here? You're a Cub fan." And he turned around. Well, a few minutes later, I look over, and Thompson's seat is empty. I look up, and there he is sitting right next to this woman, trying to win her over. (DePue laughs) He never let anything like that go by. Then he came back down, and I said, "Well, what do you think?" And then she yelled down, "I still don't like having a Cub fan here, but you're all right, Thompson," so (DePue laughs) he got his mission accomplished.

Now, some people may say, You're getting too close to him. I wrote critically and negatively about Governor Thompson. I think some of the hardest investigative pieces that were done during my time in Springfield were things I did. I wrote columns that were sharply critical, but I also wrote columns when I thought he was doing the right thing. When you're a beat reporter, on the one hand, you want to get people to talk to you; you want access to them. How do you get there without compromising your ability to be critical or to write negative stories if you feel like you have to? I had a rule of thumb. You can go through all sorts of ethical processes. My rule of thumb was if I ever got to the point where I figured I couldn't pull the trigger on a source, then I ought to go do something else. I did not reach that point, but that was really my rule of thumb.

We kind of digressed.

DePue: No, that's great. It sounds like Thompson was fairly thick-skinned.

Lawrence: He was. He had an ability to let stuff roll off of him, probably more than just about any politician I've dealt with. I'm sure that he was hurt by criticism, but he was also capable of moving on. I remember I wrote a column about a rally on the east lawn of the state house. It was a rally of organized labor folks. He got up, and I can't even remember the term he used, but it was kind of like, "If they don't like it, they know where they can put it." It was something in that (buzzing sound) nature. And I wrote a column which basically said, "This is beneath the dignity of somebody who's a governor of Illinois." I said, "You are pandering..." He was pandering to the audience, but he was also disrespecting them. He wouldn't talk that way to other groups. And I pointed out that Paul Douglas, who was a champion of organized labor, former United States senator, would never have talked that way to a union audience.[16]

A few days later, my phone rings, and it's Thompson. And he said, "You're right, you're right, you're right, you're right, you're right." That's how the conversation started out. (DePue laughs) And then he said, "Yeah, I was out of order." That was something I could respect. But we had a long

[16] Douglas was a Democratic U.S. Senator from Illinois from 1949 to 1967.

relationship because, you know, he was governor fourteen years, and I was pretty much engaged one way or another all through that entire period.[17]

DePue: Do you remember any of the political issues or incidents that you had a voice in reporting?

Lawrence: You mean writing about or...? There were a lot of them. In 1982, he was running for the first time against Adlai Stevenson III, and they had a debate where they just went at each other. It was the first debate of the campaign, and they really got nasty with each other. And I remember talking to one of Thompson's people afterwards who said, "You know, we emphasized and emphasized, Don't get personal; don't get nasty, but, you know, he can't help himself." He and Stevenson really disliked each other, and it came through in that debate. They were not capable, at least in the first debate, of not stooping in their rhetoric and in the points they were making.

Of course, in '86 there was a question whether Thompson was going to run in '86. It would have been his fourth term. Now, one of those terms was abbreviated.

DePue: The first two years [1977-1979].

Lawrence: Yeah, because of a switch dictated by the state constitution. But there was a question whether he was going to run again in '86. Dave Fields, who was then Governor Thompson's press secretary—Dave Gilbert had moved on—called me. It was on a Sunday afternoon. Thompson was scheduled to announce his decision on that Monday. I had written a Sunday piece which basically said, If Thompson doesn't announce for a fourth, his close associates are going to reach for the fifth. And that was my way of saying you may expect that he was going to run. But I get this call from Dave Fields, and Dave said, "The governor would like you to come over to the mansion this afternoon."

The first reaction I had was, He's not running. And the reason I had that reaction was I thought maybe he wants to get nostalgic. He's not running, I'm one of those folks who've been around during the whole run, and maybe he just wanted to be nostalgic about it. I voiced to Dave, "He's not running?" But it was with a question mark after it, and Dave said, "Well, if he's not running, I prepared some stuff, (laughs) you know, that won't be very useful." My in-laws were visiting, and I said, "You know, Dave, I'd like to come over, but my in-laws are here." But then I caught myself; Wait a minute, my in-laws will understand. They were fantastic people.

DePue: Well, their daughter worked in a newspaper all those years.

Lawrence: Exactly. And I said, "Okay, I'll come over." I go over, and I can tell immediately. I walk onto the patio at the mansion, and there are staff people

[17] Thompson was the longest serving governor in Illinois history, serving from 1977 to 1991.

with big smiles on their face, laughing. I knew this was not a wake. I sit down with Governor Thompson, and he gives me an interview, exclusive interview, on why he has decided to run; an interview that I can have in the Monday morning newspapers before he does the official announcement. So he's giving me a break. Now, it wasn't a huge break, because it would have been a much bigger story if he weren't running, but it was a break.

Then Jayne Thompson, who's sitting there, says, "How do you think we're going to do?" That's a legitimate question. I could have ducked it, I suppose. But I said, "I think you're going to lose." And I said, "You know, fourth term, Adlai Stevenson. You had a very close run the first time. You got a lot of baggage, as any governor would have after this time." I'm sure that wasn't the answer they wanted to hear, but part of my relationship with the governor and Jayne Thompson was built on candor. And (laughs) so they didn't get mad, but I knew that wasn't the answer they wanted to hear.

That was the year of the Democrat primary where these goofy LaRouchies ended up getting nominated; followers of Lyndon LaRouche, who is a wacko. Because they had better ballot names than the chosen candidates who the Democrat leadership wanted, they ended up getting nominated. And Thompson won the election. About a month later, after the election, I go to the mansion where the Thompsons were hosting their annual Christmas party for the media, and Jayne calls me aside. She said, "You thought we were going to lose." (DePue laughs) She hadn't forgotten, of course. But that was fine. I smiled and said, "Well, I was wrong. I didn't see the LaRouchies coming, but I was wrong; you won." Those are some pretty distinct and vivid memories, those kinds of occasions.

DePue: I want to take you back towards the beginning of the Thompson administration and ask you about the Cutback Amendment. How did the Cutback Amendment come to pass in the first place?

Lawrence: The Cutback Amendment was a direct result of some hocus-pocus in the General Assembly, and it involved Governor Thompson. I'm not going to say hocus-pocus; that's the wrong word. I'm going to say flim-flam.

DePue: (laughs) I thought maybe you were looking for a gentler term.

Lawrence: No.

DePue: Should we describe what the Cutback Amendment was about?

Lawrence: The Cutback Amendment was a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 1980, which reduced the size of the Illinois House from 177 members to 118. At the same time, it eliminated a system of voting called cumulative voting, which was a very complicated system; but let me see if I can simplify it.

There are 59 legislative districts, and, today, each one of those districts is divided into two House districts; that's how you get to 118. At that time, there were 59 legislative districts, Senate districts, and three House members were elected from each legislative district. So you had 59 times three or 177. Now, going in the voting booth, you're electing three representatives. There would be four candidates in the general election for three positions, so three out of the four are going to get elected. The individual voter could give three votes to one of those candidates, one and a half votes to each of two candidates, or one vote to each of three candidates. The idea was that in every district in Illinois, you would have at least one member of the party that was not dominant in the district. In a heavily Republican district, you'd still have one Democrat legislator from that district; in a heavily Democrat district, you'd have one Republican legislator.

DePue: *I.e.*, some of those wards in Chicago.

Lawrence: Yeah. We had Republicans from Chicago in the legislature, and that was a direct result of cumulative voting. A very complex system. But what happened was that in 1978, in Thompson's campaign for reelection, he pledged that he would veto any lame-duck legislative pay raise. In other words, if the legislature approved a pay raise after the '78 election but before the new legislative session, he would veto it, and he took that as an absolute pledge.

Early in '79, before the old legislature was ready to go out of existence and the new legislature was scheduled to come in, the legislature passed a pay raise. It came up quickly, it was whisked through, and then Governor Thompson, who was in the South at the time—and I don't mean southern Illinois—vetoes this legislation right away using the autopen. In other words, there's a machine in the governor's office which affixes the governor's signature. He doesn't have to do it himself.

DePue: Normally you use that for your standard congratulatory letters and things like that.

Lawrence: Yeah, exactly. He did it quickly because his veto would have stood if the old legislature went out of session and the new one came in. They could not override his veto. So what happened was he did it quickly, and the legislature came right back (DePue laughs) in lightning speed and overrode it. This was, as I say, flim-flam. Thompson technically kept his promise to veto the pay raise, but he did it in a way that could be overridden quickly, and he did it in concert with the legislators.

There was a great public uprising. In fact, I don't think I've seen anything quite like it [since]. There may have been after the income tax was enacted, but even there, people were mad about the income tax; here, it was deception, it was flim-flammery all the way. There was a big reaction, and Pat

Quinn, who is now governor of Illinois, seized on that and said that we should amend the constitution to reduce the size of the House to save money; and, by the way, also eliminate the cumulative voting system, which is complicated and diminishes accountability. The amendment passed overwhelmingly.

I supported this proposal, and when I say I supported it, I may have been writing editorials even at that point, or I may have been a columnist back in Springfield. I also made the point it wasn't going to save money. This is not a reason to vote for this; it will not save money. Even reducing the size of the legislature by a third will not save money because they're probably going to need more staff. There will be fewer members, but they're going to need more staff, and by the nature of things, we can't count on there being less money spent. But I was for it because I didn't like the cumulative voting system. That's why I was for it.

It passed, and there are a lot of people who believe that it has changed state government adversely. People talk about unintended consequences, and they say the leaders, the legislative leaders, now have as much power as they do because of the cutback and the elimination of cumulative voting, which, they say, made legislators more dependent on leaders. I don't agree with that viewpoint. I think this may be something that Governor Edgar and I disagree on.

DePue: I'd like to hear your explanation of why the Four Tops have such overwhelming power in the legislature [nickname for the Speaker of the House, Senate President, and the minority party leaders of each house in the Illinois legislature].

Lawrence: There are people I respect very much who disagree with me on this. And I don't think there's a right or wrong to this argument, but here's my argument. I believe the leaders accumulated the power they did because the political parties had become weaker. You don't have the strong political parties—and by "political parties," I mean the party operations that you had.

DePue: And party discipline.

Lawrence: And the party discipline. They'd become weaker. In one era, a Republican governor could exercise a lot of influence over the legislature and individual legislators because if he was having trouble with a Republican legislator, he could call the county chairman and say, "Get on this guy to get with my program, and, by the way, you have X number of patronage jobs with my administration. If you want to see them go away, tell this guy to keep bucking me." So governors, because of patronage, had a great deal of influence. Today, the governor does not have the patronage power that governors enjoyed until the RUTAN decision.[18]

[18] *Rutan v. Republican Party of Illinois*, 497 U.S. 62 (1990).

DePue: And RUTAN was 1990.

Lawrence: Yes. And I really think, in some respects, this is the most telling development, and this is why I argue it's not the cutback. Here's what I think is a more telling development. When I first started covering the Illinois General Assembly, it met every other year, and the vast majority of legislators were not full-time legislators. They were grocers; they were farmers; they were lawyers who practiced law most of the time; they were businesspeople: they were citizen legislators. Today, most Illinois legislators are full-time legislators. I'm pretty confident more than half, which would be most. Even if it's not most, and I think it is most, I do think that many are full-time legislators.

But also, the pension benefits have increased substantially for legislators over the years. They've gone from being what I would call modest to being very generous. If a legislator is in office for twenty years, that legislator can retire at the age of fifty-five and receive 85 percent of his or her pay as an annuity, and collect 3 percent increases every year and have his or her health insurance paid. And if that legislator happens to go on and win a statewide office, the statewide officers are in the legislative retirement system, so it's 85 percent of their salary as a statewide officer. There's a lot of incentive to get twenty years, a lot of incentive. They can buy in, or they can use time that they spent in local government as a city council member or park board member or as mayor.

I think legislators get elected believing that they want to accomplish certain things. There are some who run for office just because they want to be in the office, but I think the vast majority run because there are certain things they believe in and are trying to accomplish. But I think after they're there a while, there's a tendency on the part of the typical legislator to start looking at that pension. And you don't get the pension unless you get reelected, and you don't get reelected in many districts of this state unless you can buy television advertising and do direct mail. Those cost money. Where are you going to get the money? The political parties aren't as influential as they once were. Where do you get the money? You get the money from the legislative leaders. They accumulate money, the legislative leaders do, and part of it is a circle. Interest groups contribute to the legislative leaders because they believe the legislative leaders have the ultimate power that rank and file legislators don't necessarily have.

DePue: They control the agenda.

Lawrence: Yeah, very much power. They contribute to the leaders, which makes the leaders more powerful. The more money they get from the interest groups, the more powerful they are. I think that comes a lot closer to explaining why the legislative leaders are so important. I think that you have a lot of members now who don't stand for anything but reelection. And to the extent they have

that attitude; the leaders are going to be powerful because they are the enablers.

DePue: Would it be fair also to say that after the Cutback Amendment took place, some of the House's more colorful, flamboyant members no longer were sitting there?

Lawrence: Yes, I agree with that. These would have been people like a Democrat in an overly Republican district, predominantly Republican district, who might be a character. I will say that. At the same time, journalists say that the characters are no longer in the newsroom. Journalists my age and somewhat younger will tell you, You know, we don't have the characters in the newsroom that we had.

I think there's an element of that, but here was my problem with cumulative voting. I'll break it down to what I think is the simplest level. There are four candidates running for three seats. Now, I would say I'm more sophisticated than the average voter; not because I'm smarter, but I just pay more attention than the average person does to this stuff. I don't like one of these guys. This is the incumbent; I want the incumbent out. I think the incumbent's done a bad job. I want the incumbent out—that's my mindset about this election. How do I best express that with cumulative voting? Do I try to guess who's the person closest in the ultimate vote count to this incumbent and vote three votes for that person? (DePue laughs) Well, yeah, I can do that; and if I'm smart enough, and if polling tells me, I can do that.

But what if, in this kind of system, the polling is a little off, and here's another person running who I think does a good job? I want that person in. Now, if I vote three votes for this one over here, who I need to vote for to keep this other one out—because I've got this figured out; I'm going to give three to the other one—what happens if other people are thinking exactly the way I am? Guess who gets locked out? The person we all kind of like.

My point is, there's no way to really figure out the full impact of your vote in that system. When it's one-on-one, you got a choice; and if you don't like one, you know exactly how to vote, don't you? In cumulative voting, you really didn't know exactly how to vote.

DePue: It sounds like the process took you from making a choice to developing a strategy.

Lawrence: Yeah. You had to have a strategy. There was a lot of hypocrisy, by the way, in this system, and I'll tell you how it manifested itself. Typically, there were four candidates for the three spots. Now, you have a predominantly Republican district. You have these two Democrat candidates, and they're campaigning. At Democrat rallies, there they are together, arm in arm, (DePue laughs) telling the crowd how much they want both of them to go and how

much they think of the other guy. Then they got their supporters on the phone a week before the election saying, "Joe's in trouble. You got to pull it for him. You got to give him three votes. Don't split your vote with the other Democrat; pull it for Joe." So there was hypocrisy in it as well.

DePue: Let's move on here. (laughs) This has been fascinating to hear this from—I would consider you an insider; you probably didn't consider yourself an insider—somebody who understood the process in much more concrete ways than most.

Lawrence: Well, I was in the arena as a journalist and then later as a member of Governor Edgar's staff.

DePue: I wanted to go to the subject of this whole project, (laughter) Jim Edgar. When was the first time you met him?

Lawrence: To the best of my recollection, it would have been in 1977. He was elected to the legislature for the first time in 1976, and I don't believe I met him before then, even though the two of us would have been in Springfield many days at the same time. My first memory of him was 1977, when he was a newly elected legislator.

DePue: Very brief encounter, or did you get to know him a little bit?

Lawrence: We talked to each other. We had some conversations, but nothing in any real depth, and I would not say I knew him well during his time as a legislator.

DePue: Were you surprised when you heard that Thompson had selected him to be a legislative liaison?[19]

Lawrence: I was surprised that Edgar was leaving the legislature. I was not surprised that Governor Thompson would choose Edgar as his liaison. Jim Edgar had a reputation as a bright young man. He had been a top aide to Senator Arrington and then later to House Speaker Bob Blair. He had a tremendous understanding of the legislature, so I was not surprised when he was chosen. I was surprised that he left the legislature.

DePue: Why?

Lawrence: He had just gotten elected in 1976, and he left in '79. And I thought he had a future in the legislature. I've come to understand why he left, but at the time, I was surprised that he left.

DePue: Did you see that as a step down?

[19] *Rutan v. Republican Party of Illinois*, 497 U.S. 62 (1990)

Lawrence: No, I was surprised because I thought he was on the path of moving towards being in the House leadership.

DePue: You thought he had the legislative skills?

Lawrence: Yeah. He was regarded as a bright young legislator, and he had really spent his time in state government in the legislative branch. He had not been in the executive branch. So it was one of those things where I thought he wanted to be a leader in the legislative branch. There was speculation at the time that Thompson had discussed appointing him to a major position at some point, or helping his political career in some way. And those conversations may have occurred. If Governor Edgar and I have talked about it, I don't recall the details.

But I think that Jim Edgar saw this as a positive step in several ways. I did not realize this at the time; I've come to understand that he was commuting between Charleston and Springfield, and Brenda did not regard that as a positive situation for their family. After being a key staff person in the legislature, I think he was frustrated by being a back bencher, even though he was regarded as a rising star. Key staff members know more about what's going on than the average member knows.

DePue: It's fair to say at this time, again, "key staff member" being Arrington's staff aide.

Lawrence: Yeah, he was Arrington's staff guy and then he was chief of staff to Speaker Blair in the House. He knew more of what was going on than the vast majority of House members when he was Blair's chief of staff. Now, I didn't know all the factors. I came to know at least some of those factors, personal factors. Also, he got a pay raise. He was going to make more money. It's interesting. There was also some talk at the time that Edgar was worried about getting reelected in 1980 because he had voted for that pay raise, and he had voted to override Governor Thompson's veto. In other words, he was part of that flim-flammery. But there needs to be a huge asterisk here. Edgar was one of the few legislators who told voters before the '78 election that he favored a pay raise for legislators. He had shared before the election that he supported the pay raise. Most of these folks did not do that, and Governor Thompson certainly misled voters.

DePue: What was his rationale?

Lawrence: He thought they needed to make more money; and if you want a good quality legislator, you need to pay for it.

DePue: What was his profession other than being a legislator?

Lawrence: If he was doing anything else, it wasn't significant. I'll let him talk about his days as a life insurance salesman. Let me just say briefly; he told me that he

(laughs) discovered that life insurance salesmen might be actually more unpopular (DePue laughs) than some politicians. He lost in '74 when he first ran for the legislature, and I think that was the period when he got into selling life insurance. He said he'd see people walking towards him on the street, and they'd actually cross over to the other side of the street.

DePue: (laughs) In his new job as legislative liaison, though, he still had at least one foot in the legislature and the other foot on the executive side.

Lawrence: Yeah, and it was a good move for him. I don't know that he had any ironclad agreement with Governor Thompson about the future, but he did a good job as the governor's legislative liaison, and when the position of secretary of state opened up, Governor Thompson appointed him.[20]

DePue: Did you have more or fewer dealings with him while he was a legislative liaison?

Lawrence: That's where I really got to know him. Again, I was a journalist at the time, and I worked the governor's staff regularly. I would go talk to staff members; and sometimes I would get news tips from them, sometimes it was just conversation, and sometimes it was background material. Talking to the staff people was very helpful to me as a journalist. I had lunch with staff people. I didn't count on Governor Thompson to give me everything that was going on in the governor's office. And I was somewhat unusual in that respect. I think as a journalist, I worked the governor's staff harder than any journalist I knew about. There was one exception at one point. Bob Hillman of the *Sun-Times* worked the governor's staff hard, but I think he had moved on by the time Edgar had become the liaison.

I would talk to Edgar. He laughs when I say this, and I've said it in front of many people: he was not a leaker. Fortunately, there were other leakers (DePue laughs) on the governor's staff. But if I was writing an analysis or working on something, and he knew I had the basics of it, he was good at helping me have context for what I was doing or some of the nuances of why a strategy was established. So I talked to him fairly regularly, and in those conversations you're not only talking about specific items but about what's going on governmentally; you talk about family matters. I concluded that he was a bright guy—and I already had that impression from his time in the House—but I also concluded that he was someone genuinely interested in doing a good job. So he and I developed a relationship, a professional relationship, in those years, and that really was the foundation for what occurred after that.

DePue: How much did you cover some of the other constitutional officers—secretary of state, attorney general, comptroller, treasurer...?

[20] Edgar was appointed Secretary of State in 1981, when Alan Dixon joined the U.S. Senate.

Lawrence: I covered all of them. I talked about having lunch with Governor Thompson. I would get together with other constitutional officers as well, and I worked with their staffs.

DePue: Could you put a percentage on how much time you spent on the governor, the legislature and the other constitutional officers?

Lawrence: That's a good question. There were some journalists, state house journalists, who devoted 80 percent to 90 percent of their time in the legislature and about 10 percent in the executive branch. I was not one of those. Even though the legislative branch was fascinating and important, I came to the conclusion that most of the real action was in the governor's office. I decided that a lot of what happened in the legislature was posturing and that the governor had a lot more to do with the day-to-day lives of Illinoisans. So I focused not only on the governor's office but on the agencies under the governor. I personally—and the people in my bureau—did a lot of stories on issues in the agencies. What was in Public Aid, the Department of Public Health, Department of Revenue; all these agencies. Journalists generally did not cover those agencies. We did. And I developed sources in those agencies that were invaluable to me.

DePue: But that's not the same as the secretary of state's office, which is autonomous to a large extent, isn't it?

Lawrence: Yeah, and I covered the secretary of state's office as well, but the governor's office is the most powerful office and the most influential, and the governor is the chief executive officer. I devoted, I would say, 50 percent to the governor, 35 percent to the legislature, and maybe 15 percent to the other constitutional officers.

We've also left out the supreme court, and I did cover supreme court cases, but that would be a small percentage.

DePue: What would be your reflections, then, on the nature of the political relationship between the governor's office and some of these other constitutional officers, and how that affected governance?

Lawrence: It depends on the players in any particular time.

DePue: It's been fascinating to watch the last two years, at least.

Lawrence: To have the contentiousness among the constitutional officers, particularly officers of the same political party, is unusual, but it's not unique. It may be unique in the sense to have this much contentiousness, but, for example, when Ogilvie was governor, a fellow Republican, Bill Scott, was the attorney general. Ogilvie and Scott had been in Young Republicans together, and they had grown up together politically in Illinois, yet there was contentiousness between Ogilvie and Scott over some issues. There will be some of that.

During the Walker years, you had a relationship between the governor and the lieutenant governor (DePue laughs), Neil Hartigan, that was hostile. The one and only time you had a governor and lieutenant governor of different parties elected in Illinois, the one and only time, was in 1968 when Dick Ogilvie was elected governor and Paul Simon was elected lieutenant governor. The constitutional convention met in 1970 and decided that was not a good situation, even though Ogilvie and Simon, by both of their accounts, had a pretty good professional relationship. What the constitutional convention decided was that a party's candidates for governor and lieutenant governor had to run together as a team in the general election, so you would no longer have a governor from one party and lieutenant governor from the other. The first election after that constitution went into effect was 1972. In the primary, Neil Hartigan supported Paul Simon for governor.

DePue: As did every other power brokers in the state.

Lawrence: Right. Dan Walker chose the mayor of Carbondale to be his lieutenant governor. I mean, he supported him. In the primary, they did not run as a team, but Walker indicated he was for Neil Eckert; and Paul Simon was for Neil Hartigan. Walker got nominated; Hartigan, who was a Daley organization guy, got nominated. They ran together in the fall. On election night, Walker says to Hartigan, "We ran together; we'll govern together."

In the next few days, Hartigan finds out that the lieutenant governor's office, which had been in the suite of the governor's offices, was not going to be available to him; in fact, no office in the Capitol was going to be available (DePue laughs) to him if Walker had anything to do with it. Mike Howlett had been elected secretary of state in 1972, and Howlett made part of his office space available to Hartigan so he could have an office in the Capitol. So the irony is that the first election that was supposed to guarantee a harmonious relationship between the governor and lieutenant governor produced exactly the opposite.

DePue: Let's jump ahead just a very little bit to 1981, when Edgar is handpicked by Thompson to be the secretary of state. Were you surprised at that development?

Lawrence: I was one of those who broke the story that it was going to happen, and I did not get it from Edgar, because he was not a leaker. I got it from people around Thompson. (DePue laughs) To a lot of people, he was a surprise choice. By that time, I had gotten to know him, and I knew he had a good relationship with Governor Thompson and that he had done a good job for Governor Thompson. I also knew that he was a very capable political strategist and had a good grasp of government and the major issues facing the state. I think there were a lot of people who were surprised; I was not among them. That's not the same as me saying I predicted it would happen. When I say I broke the story, I

broke the story after Thompson made the decision; it wasn't ready to be announced, but I got it out there.

DePue: Some were saying at the time, I believe, that George Ryan was the obvious selection.

Lawrence: Yeah, George wanted it very badly, and the story I got out of the Thompson people was that Thompson really did a very amazing job of finessing the situation. I wasn't in the room when he was talking to George Ryan, so Ryan may have a different account; Thompson might. But people close to Thompson, the same ones who told me it would be Edgar, and they proved to be right, told me that Thompson had called George and said, "George, if you want to be secretary of state, I'll name you, but I really need you as speaker of the House." George was speaker of the House at that time. "You're very important to me there. I really need you there, and maybe down the road, there will be something else, but I really need you there. But if you want it, you know, I'll give it to you." (DePue laughs) If that's true—and I'm going to emphasize, I was told that by several people around Thompson who I think knew a lot about that situation—it would have been interesting to see what would have happened if George had said, "No, I think I'll take it." I don't know (laughs) what Thompson would have done at that point. But the fact of the matter is, George Ryan did want it; but so did Pate Philip, so did Ed Madigan, who was then an influential congressman.

DePue: No relation to Mike Madigan?

Lawrence: No. He's a Republican. He was an influential member of Congress from Lincoln, Illinois. Tom Corcoran, another member of Congress, was interested. There were a lot of big names interested in that spot.

DePue: But the way you've described this, Thompson truly did want to keep Ryan in that crucial position of speaker of the House?

Lawrence: I think he was finessing this. Ryan was speaker, and he didn't want to tick him off. Ryan was speaker, and he wanted to be secretary of state. I think Thompson did not want the Republican speaker of the House to be angry at him because he had picked somebody else. I think he finessed it. He sort of offered it to Ryan. We don't know what would have happened if Ryan would have said yes, but he offered it to him, at least on the surface. So he was able to have Ryan as speaker of the House.

DePue: I'm putting you on the spot here, I guess, but was there some reason that Thompson would not have wanted Ryan to be the secretary of state; or he just thought that Edgar was better suited for that position?

Lawrence: Ryan had been in the legislature and a leader for several years, and looking towards the 1982 election, when Thompson's choice would be on the ballot, at least in the primary, I think George Ryan had more baggage than Edgar. I

don't want that to be misunderstood in the context of what happened later with George Ryan. Thompson and Ryan had not had the smoothest relationship at that point, and I think there were people around Thompson who felt strongly that George Ryan should not be chosen.

DePue: But I've also heard that Ryan was an effective legislator. He knew how to make the legislature work to get things done.

Lawrence: Yeah, he was an effective legislator. I agree with that. I think it was more a decision of not wanting Ryan in the secretary of state's office than it was of wanting Ryan as the speaker. Now, that is not the way Thompson handled it with Ryan; at least according to what people shared with me at the time.

DePue: What you're describing is he burned no bridges in making that decision.

Lawrence: Yeah, he essentially said, "You know, if you want it, I'll appoint you." But we don't know for sure that that happened. I want to emphasize—and this is going back to Mark Lawrence at the dinner table—I don't know this for a fact. I'm telling you that that's my understanding from people who I trust who were very close to that decision. They could have been wrong; they could have been misleading me, but what they told me was that the governor said in effect to Ryan, "If you want it, I'll appoint you, but I need you as speaker," and it never came to a point where Ryan tested that proposal.

DePue: Going back to your analogy you just made, I guess I'll ask Governor Thompson if he's willing to be interviewed for this.

Lawrence: Yeah, and I don't know what he'll say. His relationship with George Ryan improved markedly after they served together as governor and lieutenant governor. The angriest I ever saw Thompson was the morning that the *Sun-Times* published a story based on a letter that Lieutenant Governor Ryan had leaked to the media. This was in 1983. Governor Thompson had proposed a tax increase, the lieutenant governor wrote a letter to the governor telling him that his strategy was wrong on this, and then the letter showed up in the *Sun-Times*. (DePue laughs)

Thompson was angry for a couple of reasons. First of all, if the lieutenant governor wanted to communicate with him, he could have done something without sending a letter. And the letter had some of the basics of the legislative process in the letter. That part was written more for the edification of other people than the governor. The governor knew what the legislative process was. And, of course, he was upset that it was leaked to the *Sun-Times*. But he believed that the letter was written to be leaked. (DePue laughs) He was very angry. I happened to be in his office that morning to interview him on another matter, and I've never seen him that steamed.

So their relationship was not smooth, but it improved markedly and obviously. They developed a very warm relationship. Governor Thompson

and his law firm defended Governor Ryan, and Governor Thompson continues to be an advocate for Governor Ryan. But there were times when Ryan was speaker of the House and when Ryan was lieutenant governor when their relationship was rocky.

DePue: How much did you stay in touch with Jim Edgar when he was secretary of state?

Lawrence: After he was appointed, he asked for my suggestions on some matters related to the office. He had asked me a general question: "Is there any advice you'd give me?" And I gave him some advice. It wasn't political advice. The main piece of advice I gave him was that the secretary of state's office is one that has a history of corruption; that in offices all over the state of Illinois, people are seeking driver's licenses. There is money that is paid legitimately, that is handled by employees, but there also has been a history where there is money that is paid that is not legitimate in connection with those driver's licenses. My advice to him was that you're going to have that corruption, but if you act on it and act forcefully, you will dramatically reduce it and maybe move to eliminating it. You cannot tolerate it, and when you get a whiff of that corruption, no matter how it comes to your office, your people have to get on it. That was the primary advice I gave him, and the other advice was on a far different matter.

During the Arab oil embargo in the seventies, Mike Howlett turned the dome light off (DePue laughs) on the state capitol as a sign of saving energy, and it had remained off. I said to Jim Edgar, who was going to become the custodian of the state capitol by virtue of his office, that I thought when people came into Springfield, they ought to be able to look up in the air and see the dome of their state capitol. And he said, "How much does it cost?" I said, "Well, I don't think it costs that much. You can check into the cost, and if it's oppressive, that's one thing," but I said, "I really doubt that it's going to be more than a few thousand dollars a year at most"; and it turned out to be pretty much that amount of money.

I didn't push him. He asked for my advice; those were the two pieces of advice that I gave him. And then a few months later, I got a call about five o'clock in the afternoon saying that Secretary Edgar would like to meet with me around seven o'clock or 7:30 in his office, and I thought, Oh, wow, he's going to give me a scoop. I met him in his office, then he said, "Follow me," and we walked down onto the east lawn of the capitol; and a few seconds after we got there, the light went on in the dome.

DePue: (laughs) Oh, he timed it even to that extent, huh?

Lawrence: Yeah. And as you know, it's still on in the dome. I have a picture in my office at home, a very special picture—it wasn't taken that night—of a lighted dome. And then we would have lunch from time to time, which was something we

did when he was working for Governor Thompson. But we also had at least a couple of moments that were somewhat contentious, at least on my part.

DePue: Do you remember what those moments were?

Lawrence: I remember one very directly, yeah. I'm going to tell you one I remember and then one he remembers; only in his case, it was not a contentious moment. The one I remember, I was writing for the *Sun-Times*. A notice went up on the bulletin board in the capital that Secretary Edgar was going to make an announcement the next day. I was pretty busy doing other things, but I called down to his press office, and I basically said, "Look, can you tell me what he's going to announce." "No, no, he's announcing it tomorrow." I had a relationship with this guy in the press office. We had talked, and he also knew that I had a decent professional relationship with Secretary Edgar. I said, "Well, is it something I should worry about? Is it a big deal? Because," I said, "if you can't tell me, I'll try to get it somewhere else." (DePue laughs) And he said, "Nah, it's not a big deal." This was not Edgar talking; this was his press guy. So I let it go.

The next morning in the *Tribune*, there's a big story about Edgar's new measures to combat drunk driving; page one. I didn't call the press guy, I didn't call that office; I called Edgar's executive secretary, Penny Clifford, who I knew well. I said, "Penny, I need to see the secretary." And I said, "I have not called the press office; I'm calling you. I need to see the secretary." She said, "Okay, he'll be in."

I went down there, and he said, "What's up?" I said, "Well," and I walked through what had happened the day before and then pointed out the story in the *Tribune*. I said, "You know, I wouldn't be upset if I hadn't called down here. If I'd just kind of ignored it, I wouldn't be upset, but I did call. I was essentially misled." I said, "So I've got to write a story for tomorrow's paper. What do you think my lede's going to be?" And he kind of smiled. He said, "You're going to talk to Senator Rock." I said, "Yeah, you're right about that." I said, "That's what I've got to do. You and your people have put me in that position." Senator Phil Rock was an opponent of a lot of the drunk driving measures. If he wasn't absolutely opposed, he was skeptical of some of them. And I said, "The *Tribune* had the story and all the good things you were talking about. If it's going to be news, I have to come back, at least emphasize the other side of this. And your side will be in, but the news will be, for my readers, what Rock has to say." And Edgar just said, "I understand." So that was one moment.

The one thing he remembers is when, right after he was named secretary of state, there was a lot of talk that he wouldn't win the Republican primary, that he was an unknown downstater. And I wrote an analysis which basically said, "He is unknown, and there may be some strong opponents in the primary and in the general election, but don't discount him because this

guy's got a very good political mind, is a very good strategist, and knows a lot about government."

DePue: You were writing that?

Lawrence: Yeah, I wrote it as an analysis. And it was basically a piece saying, "Don't get too far down the road, folks, in believing this guy is an unknown who can't win this office. He may not hold the office, but don't discount him just because he's from Charleston, Illinois." (DePue laughs) I wrote that he would be a good TV candidate because he's handsome. But I said one of his problems was that he had a high-pitched voice and that would not be good for radio and, to some extent, for TV. About four years later—this is after I go to work for him—we're flying back from Chicago. The subject of his voice came up, and he said, "Yeah, I remember when you wrote about my high-pitched voice." (laughter)

DePue: Was he smiling when he said that?

Lawrence: He was not smiling, but he was not scowling either; he was just letting me know he remembered that. And I said, "Well, do you remember anything else I wrote in there?"

DePue: (laughs) Did he?

Lawrence: Yeah, he knew.

DePue: He had to appreciate the rest of the message.

Lawrence: Yeah, it wasn't a puff piece on him, because it did lay out his challenges in running, and it pointed out that he may not be able to win the primary or the general election. But the reason I wrote it was because among a lot of the other political writers in the state, there seemed to be a tide building that There's no way he could hold it; who was this guy? Thompson made this big mistake.

DePue: And there's only about a year between the time he's appointed and he has to run for reelection.

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: Let's go back to your personal career. November of 1986, is that the next move that you make?

Lawrence: From Lee? Yeah. I was with Lee, either with the *Quad City Times* or the corporate bureau, until November 1986. At that time, I went to work for the *Chicago Sun-Times* as the bureau chief in the state house. So I made a major move in a lot of ways, but in a physical way, it was just right down the hall from the Lee bureau to the *Sun-Times* bureau.

DePue: Why did you make that move?

Lawrence: I had had some great years as the Lee bureau chief, but I had the feeling that some of the papers we served were putting less emphasis on government than they had been. It was what I call the *USA Today* era in regional journalism. I think *USA Today* has proved to be a very good newspaper at what it does. In other words, for people who travel, for people who want a quick read, *USA Today* does a great job. But a regional newspaper (phone rings) or a state newspaper, I think, (phone rings) has an obligation to keep readers well informed (phone rings) on issues that concern them. And I think some of our papers had decided that they didn't need so much government news, and they wanted shorter stories, a breezier kind of news. That's not what we did in our bureau. We did analysis. We didn't write tomes, but we were not the kind of bureau that was going to write an eight-inch story on the state budget.

And I was at a point where I was making pretty good money. It wasn't great money, but it was pretty good. In fact, I was making more than a lot of the editors in the Lee group were making. I don't want to build this out of proportion. I think I was making about $44,000 a year. And that was in 1986. It was decent money, but I wasn't getting rich, either. What I foresaw was that Lee would come to me and say, "You know, Mike, we think you've done a great job here. You've had a wonderful run with Lee; we appreciate all the hard work you put in, but government news is not as important to us as it once was, and so we have a paper in Montana and we would like you to be editor."

DePue: This is what you foresaw?

Lawrence: Yeah, I foresaw.

DePue: But did not happen.

Lawrence: No. I saw it coming around the bend, and I wanted to leave on my own terms. I did not want to be an editor of a newspaper. With all due respect to Montana or wherever else they might want me to go, except for, maybe, Madison, Wisconsin, I didn't want to go to those places. So I decided I was going to leave on my own terms. Around that time, Mike Briggs, who had been in the Lee bureau and had moved on to be the state house bureau chief for the *Sun-Times*, was moving to either Chicago or to Washington. He ended up in the Washington bureau. The *Sun-Times* wanted me to become the bureau chief.

I talked to the people at the *Sun-Times*, and I told them that I had a philosophy on how you covered state government: You have wire services that cover the news that's happening in front of the eyes of people in government and elsewhere. In other words, you have wire services that cover the governor's press conferences, but what I wanted to do, and what we had been doing at Lee, was analysis, investigation. And the *Sun-Times* said, "Well, that's what we're looking for."

DePue: That's why they came to you in the first place, I would think.

Lawrence: Yeah. It really didn't work out that way. I took the job, and the *Sun-Times* was not looking to change much of how it covered; it felt an obligation to cover the governor's press conferences and have a *Sun-Times* byline on those stories. And at that point in my career, I was not excited about covering stories that other people were covering and that the wire services were covering. What the wire services do is very valuable, so I'm not demeaning the wire.

DePue: And hadn't they always been part of the mix as well?

Lawrence: Yeah. I'm not demeaning the wire services. They performed an important function, but I couldn't see why it made any difference to the readers of the *Sun-Times* whether the story was written by a wire service or somebody in the Springfield bureau of the *Sun-Times*. What I thought would make a difference to *Sun-Times* readers was whether that bureau in Springfield was developing stories that wouldn't have been available to them unless you had somebody in that bureau. If I'd have been in my twenties or even thirties, I probably could have adjusted to the situation. When I was in my twenties and thirties, if I got a byline on page one, I would get a fix that would last me for two or three days, and it would carry me through other issues of the paper.

DePue: Through having the editor screaming your name out.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it would carry me through. At forty-five, I would get an immediate fix when my byline was on page one of the *Sun-Times*; it didn't last very long. So Edgar had talked to me in 1985 about coming to work for him, and I had said, "I'm not ready to leave journalism." In the summer of 1987, I called him, and I said, "If you're still interested, I'm interested now." And he said, "Yeah, come on in." He was surprised. He said, "Gosh, I just thought you were going to be a journalist forever," and I said, "Well, so did I, but, you know, I'm not." We talked for a couple days and then came to an agreement that I would work for him.

I don't want to be too negative here about the *Sun-Times*. The *Sun-Times* gave me an opportunity to work for a very good newspaper. There are people who were at the *Sun-Times*, including Bernie Judge, who I have a great deal of respect for, but it was not the right fit for me at that time. It could have been where I was in my career, or it could have been the *Sun-Times* management, or it could have been a combination of both, but it was not a good fit. When I gave notice to the *Sun-Times*, there was a significant effort to try to keep me there. I was offered more money, and they had my friends at the *Sun-Times* calling me, but I had made up my mind.

DePue: But what you're talking about aren't these changes in your career you had gone through before. It had always been in journalism. Now you're going to the other side of the fence. That's a bigger move, I would think.

Lawrence: It was a huge move, and some journalists move over into the public relations side and really enjoy it more than they did being a journalist. I was not among those people. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked for Jim Edgar, and I'm proud of what he accomplished as secretary of state and as governor. I think he was an extraordinary public servant. I don't think I could have worked for any other politician that I have known while that person was in elected office. Paul Simon and I developed a very close professional and personal relationship at the institute he founded here at SIU, but I'm not sure we could have worked together as well while he was in office, even though he was an extraordinary public servant. Under Edgar, I was allowed to operate the way I thought a press secretary ought to operate in government, and it wasn't always easy. But it worked out largely because of him.

DePue: What was it in September of 1987 about Jim Edgar that made you willing to take that huge step?

Lawrence: I had gotten to know him well when he was Governor Thompson's legislative liaison, and there was nothing that happened between that period and September of 1987 that made me feel any differently about him. We had our moments, and I described one of them to you, but I felt he was truly interested in doing a good job. He wasn't perfect—I'm not perfect; nobody is perfect—but I really felt that he was sincere about doing a good job. He and I fundamentally agreed on the approach to government and on the major issues. We didn't agree on 100 percent of the issues—I don't know that any two people are going to agree on 100 percent of the issues—but he was a moderate Republican. His views on the social issues were, I would call them, liberal. And I was very comfortable working for him.

My dad had died in 1981. I remember calling my mom; she was still alive—and remember, I told you they were New Deal Democrats. I told Mom I was going to leave journalism and go work for Jim Edgar. And Mom, in her own inimitable way, put it as a question, "Mike, is he a Democrat?" (DePue laughs) And I said, "No, Mom, but you like Nelson Rockefeller; you'd like this guy." She didn't live long after that, and (laughs) I'm not relating my going to work for Governor Edgar with her death. But I think she would have been very comfortable with the Edgar administration.

DePue: How about Marianne? What did she think about making that move?

Lawrence: Marianne thought it was a good move. I was really not happy at the *Sun-Times*, and, you know, I was unhappier professionally than I had been during our marriage.

DePue: We've been at it close to three hours here. It might be a good time to—

Lawrence: Get you on the road and break it. Yeah, it probably is.

DePue: And then we can spend some really quality time next time talking about the Edgar years.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's fine. I hope we didn't spend too much time on me today, because this is really, to my mind, more about the Edgar years.

DePue: It's about Illinois politics, and I think, overwhelmingly, we've been talking about Illinois politics.

Lawrence: We've talked a lot about that, and I've enjoyed it. The thing with Ryan and that offer, Thompson's offer to Ryan; I wasn't in the room, but the same people who helped me break that story didn't tell me that day, but later told me what had happened.

DePue: This has been fascinating for me as well, so thank you very much.

Lawrence: Thank you.

(End of interview)

Interview with Mike Lawrence
ISG-A-L-2009-005.03
Interview # 3: April 1, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is April 1, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, and I'm a volunteer with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, and I'm here today with Mike Lawrence. Good morning, Mike.

Lawrence: Good morning.

DePue: We're sitting in your home in a very bright sun shining on the table here, but it promises to be a beautiful spring day after a little bit of snow, at least in Springfield, just a few days ago.

Lawrence: Yeah, this is nice weather here. Carbondale has an early spring, which is always welcome.

DePue: By the time I got down here, it was several degrees warmer than where I started yesterday. Last time, we were talking about your experiences as a journalist, which were fascinating for me to hear, and also how you joined the Edgar administration when he was secretary of state. That was 1987, correct?

Lawrence: That is correct. I joined Jim Edgar when he was secretary of state, and it was the day after Labor Day in 1987.

DePue: What we want to talk about today is his election campaign in 1990, and then especially focus on his years as governor. Before we get into that, I'd like to have you describe, as best you can, his personality and his leadership and management style.

Lawrence: While I worked for Jim Edgar, I was impressed that he was someone who was very interested and sincere about doing a good job and had a real commitment to public service. As I may have mentioned in our last discussion, that was one of the things that attracted me to him when I was a journalist and then making the move to join him. He's a very intelligent person. He's an excellent listener. And many times, when attributes of leaders are discussed, the ability to listen is not highlighted. There are some leaders who don't listen very well, and I think in general, people who look towards leadership qualities often overlook the ability to listen.

He was someone who really took a great deal out of conversations that he had. When groups came to see him, he was more interested in hearing what members of the group had to say than he was in telling the group how much he knew about the subject matter that they were there to talk to him about. That quality was consistent throughout my time with him, and I think it was an outstanding quality. We had a decent staff, and we kept him well-briefed when he was going to be meeting with interest groups of one kind or another, but the ability to sit down and listen to the group and take out of the conversation things that were not necessarily highlighted in the staff briefings served him well, and I think served the people of Illinois well.

He also was a good questioner. He would grill the staff people about proposals that they brought to him, and he was a terrific strategist. It wasn't enough for him to sign on to a concept or to sign on to the idea of proposing a major piece of legislation. He wanted to be clear in his own mind how he would go about accomplishing what he had proposed. So to put it in perhaps clearer terms, when he was determining whether or not he was going to make a proposal, such as a major piece of legislation, he also wanted to look forward and anticipate what the obstacles might be and have a good idea of how he could overcome those obstacles to be successful in getting the legislation approved. That is, I think, another very worthwhile attribute for leadership to have. There are some leaders, or some officials, I should say, who are more into making the proposal than in trying to figure out how to actually get it done. Governor Edgar is a goal-oriented individual, and as a staff member, if you brought a proposal to him, you had to be prepared to field questions on the merits of the proposal, the details of the proposal; but also, you had to be prepared to offer him some ideas as to how you think you could get a proposal to actually become a reality.

DePue: How was he when there were dissenting voices in the room?

Lawrence: He liked dissent. He liked to have a lively discussion. And like all of us, he could initially be defensive if he was proposing something and someone disagreed with him, but he did listen. He listened well. Occasionally, he would change his mind as a result of a discussion that he had had. Sometimes he didn't, but it was always clear that he listened and that he was interested in hearing the arguments on all sides of an issue. And some staff people were more aggressive than others about dissenting from him in the internal discussions. I was one of those who was probably more aggressive than most. We had our moments where there was not yelling but pretty sharp disagreement. But I always knew that he would listen, he would consider what I was saying, and that he would factor what I was saying into his ultimate decision. That didn't mean he would end up agreeing with me in the final analysis, but I knew he would give it thoughtful consideration, even if his initial response was perhaps to rear up on it.

DePue: Was he the kind of person who would internalize or take those disagreements personally?

Lawrence: I never got the sense that he did take it personally. Like I say, it's a natural human reaction, when you think you have a good idea and someone is raising some questions about it, to be defensive. But I never felt he took it personally, and I always felt that he valued having people around him who would speak their minds, even if they disagreed with him.

DePue: And others would say you're the prime example of that. Who would some others be?

Lawrence: I certainly would have been the "prime example." There were others, and I'm trying to think about who they might have been. He had chief counsels, Jim Montana comes to mind, who would disagree with him or sometimes say, you know, "There are legal problems." (laughs) And by that, I don't mean that the governor was proposing anything improper, but it might be a matter where he wanted to do something in a certain way, and the chief counsel just said, "Well, there might be constitutional issues there." So Jim was someone like that; and Joan Walters, the budget director, I think. Now, we all had our own styles internally on how we would disagree. But Joan was someone who was very good at making her arguments and sometimes pointing out where she thought that there were problems with what the governor or somebody else on his staff was proposing.

I'm not sure I'm going to come up with a lot of other names. And I don't want that to be misinterpreted. Some of us were in almost all the meetings on major issues; some weren't. I think because of my background as a journalist, I was a little more comfortable in confronting the governor. I think what he realized was that I would not hesitate to disagree with him if I thought he was headed in the wrong direction, but I would not carry that disagreement into the public realm. During the time I worked for him, there

was only one time when anybody outside the administration and anyone in the general public knew I had had a disagreement with the governor on an issue; and the governor was the one who decided to share that (laughs) with the State House press corps and, therefore, the rest of the people of Illinois.

DePue: I'm a little bit ahead of the schedule here, but I want to set the stage with a little bit of his personality and style. Before he made that momentous decision to decide to run for the governor, were you involved with that discussion? Do you recall when he announced that to you?

Lawrence: It was clear to me that he was interested in being governor of Illinois from the time he was appointed secretary of state. Actually, he was interested in becoming governor of Illinois since the age of eleven or so. He had shared that publicly. But I had a strong sense, particularly after he won election as secretary of state in 1982, that he was determined to run for governor. He had planned to run for governor in 1986, but Governor Thompson decided to seek a fourth term, and so Edgar put his campaign on the back burner. Before I went to work for him, there was no doubt in my mind he would run for governor at some point, and after going to work for him and working for him for several months, it was clear to me he would run for governor when Governor Thompson decided it was time to step aside.

DePue: Was that part of your reasoning for joining him in the first place?

Lawrence: Yes, it was. I felt he would be a very good governor, and that was based primarily on my observations of him as a member of Governor Thompson's staff and as secretary of state. The qualities I alluded to earlier—the commitment to public service, the intelligence, the strategic ability, the ability to listen, the fact that he was goal-oriented, wanted to accomplish things and really was more interested in managing an office than in seeking an office—convinced me that he would be a very competent and good chief executive.

DePue: What happened to your political philosophy, because as I recall, you had started out in life more in line with Democratic principles than Republican ones?

Lawrence: My parents were New Deal Democrats, and I was a member of the Young Democrats when I was a freshman at Knox, but the more I got into reporting on government and covering state politics, the more I realized that one party did not have a monopoly on either the good people in public office or the bad people in public office; and I probably also developed a little more skepticism about the ability of government to solve all problems than my parents had. At the same time, though, I was liberal on many social issues. It was a good fit with Jim Edgar, because Jim Edgar was not anti-government, but he also thought government had some limitations as to what it could and should be doing.

DePue: And of course, those years we're talking about are the years that Ronald Reagan was at the federal level, and the core of his message was that government isn't the answer; it's the problem.

Lawrence: Yeah. I don't think that either Governor Edgar or I would have described government as the problem. I think both of us felt that government wasn't always the answer. And Governor Edgar was pro-choice; he was pro–gay rights; he was someone who believed strongly in diversity, so I was very comfortable with him. What a lot of people may not remember is that in the 1990 campaign for governor, Jim Edgar was viewed as the pro-tax candidate, and his opponent, who was a Democrat, was viewed as the anti-tax candidate. So I remember when I decided to go to work for Jim Edgar, I called my mother, and I said, "Mom, I'm going to be leaving journalism and going to work for Jim Edgar." And in her own inimitable way, she said, "Mike, is he a Democrat?" (DePue laughs) She knew he wasn't. And I said, "No, Mom, but he's a good, moderate Republican. He's a Nelson Rockefeller Republican." I knew she liked and respected Nelson Rockefeller, so that was my way of reassuring her that I (laughs) was joining someone that she could be comfortable with.

DePue: Do you remember the time, sometime in the summer of 1989, when Governor Thompson decided his long run as governor was over, and apparently picked up the phone and called Jim Edgar and said, "It's your turn now"?

Lawrence: Yeah, I remember it well. Governor Edgar and I had prepared for that moment. We had worked on a statement that would be issued when Governor Thompson made his announcement. The statement dealt with Governor Edgar's assessment of the Thompson administration and what had been accomplished. And I had that statement on my computer. And then he and I had also worked out (a strategy)—because he was leaving for an out-of-state trip. And we weren't sure that Thompson would make an announcement during that time, but we had discussed the possibility that he would.

We had decided that when I was asked whether Jim Edgar would run for governor, I was not going to be coy about it; I was going to say, "Yes, he is going to run for governor, and we will be making a formal announcement in the near future." The reason we had decided on that tack was that there were other people being mentioned, other Republicans being mentioned, as possible candidates for governor if Governor Thompson stepped aside. Among them were Governor Thompson's lieutenant governor, George Ryan; and Donald Rumsfeld, who had been a congressman on the North Shore and a former secretary of defense, former White House aide, and was, at that time, I believe, a corporate CEO. And so Governor Edgar and I felt that we should make it clear that Governor Edgar was going to run in order to try to discourage others from getting in. The polls had shown that Governor Edgar was the most popular.

DePue: More so than George Ryan?

Lawrence: Yes. Oh yeah. George Ryan was more popular in the Capitol building itself. In fact, I said to Governor Edgar on one occasion, "If you do get into a primary for governor with George Ryan, it's a good thing that a couple million other people other than those in this building will be voting in this primary." George was an insider's insider, and Jim Edgar was someone who was not one of the boys in the Capitol building but had a broad appeal to rank-and-file Republicans throughout the state, and to independents and some Democrats as well.

DePue: Was it your thought, though, and Jim Edgar's thought, that if George Ryan had run in the primary, that he would have had the strong backing of the Republican Party machineries?

Lawrence: I don't think that either Governor Edgar or I felt that George Ryan would have the strong backing of the Republican machinery. There may have been divisions, certainly, in the Republican ranks. I think that was very likely, that there would be people who would go for George, party leaders who would go for George, and some other party leaders who would go for Governor Edgar. And maybe to make it clear for the people reading the transcript or listening to me, I should be saying "Secretary Edgar" at this point. It's hard to break a habit of many years and refer to him as anything other than "Governor Edgar." But the fact of the matter is, there would have been, I'm convinced, party people who might have really wanted George to be governor but would have felt that Jim Edgar had a better chance of winning the election against the Democrats, so they could well have sided with Jim Edgar in the primary.

DePue: Any idea why Ryan did not elect to run in the primary, then?

Lawrence: I think that George Ryan made the assessment that he could not beat Jim Edgar in a primary. And he was interested in becoming secretary of state. As I am told, he and Secretary Edgar had discussions in which Secretary Edgar said that he would support George Ryan for secretary of state if he ran for that office.

DePue: And if you're a believer in the old rules of patronage as the path to political power, then what better place to go than secretary of state for George Ryan, I would guess.

Lawrence: He certainly may have looked at it that way. I think the main reason he didn't run for governor is he did not think he could beat Jim Edgar in a primary, and I think that was the correct assessment.

DePue: Edgar did have a primary candidate, though, in Steven Baer, especially. That was his main challenge. Tell us a little bit about Steve Baer.

Lawrence: Steve Baer was someone who I think saw a possible opening because he was pro-life and anti-tax. And if I'm remembering correctly, by the time Steve Baer decided to run in that primary, Secretary Edgar had already taken a position in favor of keeping the income tax surcharge that had been approved in 1989. That surcharge was set to expire on July 1, 1991, and it was a half percent on the income tax. The income tax had been raised for individuals from 2.5 to 3 percent in 1989. So—

DePue: And there is a corresponding increase in the corporate?

Lawrence: Corporate tax as well. I think it was from 4 to—

DePue: Four point eight.

Lawrence: To 4.8, right. Jim Edgar took that position early in his campaign for governor, and I think Steve Baer was emboldened by the fact that in a Republican primary where pro-life, anti-tax conservatives had a disproportionate influence, he might stand a chance of winning, or at least running a close enough race against a popular secretary of state that it would advance his political career in some way.

DePue: During the primary election campaign, was the dialogue primarily focused on taxes or also on the abortion issue?

Lawrence: Baer focused it primarily on the tax issue, but I think the vote ultimately reflected the abortion issue more than the tax issue. It was interesting because the media widely felt that Edgar was going to win that primary, with Baer getting maybe 15–20 percent of the vote, and the media were basing that on polls. It's very difficult to poll a primary because the turnout is more unpredictable than the general election—not only the size of the turnout but who actually will turn out. I had been telling the media that I thought that Baer could get a third of the vote, and I think they thought I was just lowering expectations, but I said the same thing internally.

And when Baer did get a third of the vote, the initial reaction from the media was that this was an anti-tax message; but I felt it was really more the abortion issue that drove it. Charlie Wheeler, actually a very respected journalist, did an analysis of that vote later and came up with strong evidence that it was an abortion vote. The Sunday before that primary, in many Catholic churches throughout the state, the cars in the parking lots were leafleted, saying, This is your only chance to vote for a pro-life candidate for governor; because you had Edgar as pro-choice and Neil Hartigan, who did not have a primary opponent, was pro-choice. Now, Hartigan had been pro-life, but he changed to pro-choice, I believe, in order to avoid a Democratic primary.

At any rate, there were leaflets at Catholic churches all over the state, and anecdotally, on election day, we were told by our poll watchers in

Effingham County that there were people taking Republican ballots in Effingham County who had never taken Republican ballots. Effingham County is a very strong pro-life area. It has a substantial Catholic population, German Catholic, largely. And as Charlie Wheeler analyzed the vote statewide, he found those kind of patterns, where there was unusually high turnout in areas where there were Catholic populations—either Catholic populations or fundamentalist populations. Tazewell County would be another example of that. So even though Baer talked about the tax issue publicly, I believe his numbers were driven primarily by the abortion issue.

The other thing to keep in mind is that if you look at Republican primaries through the years, there were candidates who were actually less enterprising than Steve Baer. I mean, he was a pretty enterprising candidate. He had a gift for getting attention. But there had been less enterprising candidates who got more than 30 percent of the Republican vote in the primary.

DePue: I know he was very young, I think something like thirty years old. Did he have any legislative experience or governmental experience?

Lawrence: No. As I recall, he did not. He had been involved in some party activities, but he had not been a public official.

DePue: How seriously did Edgar take Baer?

Lawrence: I don't think that Secretary Edgar ever felt that Steve Baer was going to win the primary; however, there was concern that if Baer did well, that that would be interpreted as an indication that Secretary Edgar's candidacy was not as strong as many believed it was. He wanted to have momentum going into the general election against Attorney General Hartigan, and the fact that Baer exceeded the expectations in the media did cost us some momentum going into the general election.

DePue: We've already mentioned that Neil Hartigan is his opponent in the general election. Tell us a little bit about Neil Hartigan.

Lawrence: Neil Hartigan had been regarded as a rising star in the Democrat Party for many years. He was elected lieutenant governor in 1972 and then became part of what might be viewed as a very extraordinary relationship. He was elected with Dan Walker. Walker had wanted someone else as his lieutenant governor, but then, as now, in the primary, the candidates for lieutenant governor are not tethered to the candidates for governor; the successful nominees are then tethered for the general election. In the primary, Hartigan had been coupled—not officially, but in terms of the Democrat regular organization—with Paul Simon, who was the choice of the regular organization for governor.

DePue: Let me just say that in those days, that meant that Simon and Hartigan had Richard Daley's nod.

Lawrence: Yeah, slatemaking was done, and Paul Simon was selected as a candidate for governor. He had been independent of Mayor Daley on many issues, but Mayor Daley became convinced, because of the support that Simon had built up throughout the state, that he would be the party's candidate for governor; Neil Hartigan was slated for lieutenant governor. On the Walker side of things, Walker chose the mayor of Carbondale, a guy by the name of Neil Eckert, to be his running mate. The voters in the primary chose Walker over Simon in what was widely regarded as a major upset; but also, they chose Hartigan over Eckert. So you had Walker and Hartigan teamed up in the primary, and they actually accomplished a détente through the primary where they campaigned as a team.

Hartigan used to enjoy telling the story that on election night, Walker told him, "We ran together; now we'll govern together"; but then it wasn't long thereafter that Walker decided that the lieutenant governor would not have an office in the governor's suite (DePue laughs) in the Capitol building. And Hartigan did end up with an office in the Capitol building, but it was through the courtesy of Michael Howlett, the Democrat secretary of state, who shared part of his office space with the lieutenant governor. And things went downhill from there in their relationship. They had a very combative relationship during Walker's term.

Hartigan had some interest in running for governor in '76. So did Alan Dixon. But the slatemakers decided—well, really, Mayor Daley decided (DePue laughs)—that the Democrat candidate would be Michael Howlett, who had been elected secretary of state in 1972 and had been a statewide official for many years. Hartigan was again slated for lieutenant governor, and he and Howlett were nominated in the primary. Daniel Walker was defeated for renomination. But then in the general election campaign, Howlett and Hartigan were defeated by Jim Thompson and David O'Neal, his candidate for lieutenant governor on the Republican side.

That wasn't the end of Hartigan's career, of course, and in 1982, he came back and was elected attorney general of Illinois. He then was interested in running for governor in 1986, but he got knocked out of the race by Adlai Stevenson III, who had decided to make a second run for governor after losing narrowly to Governor Thompson in 1982. Hartigan ran for reelection as attorney general instead, and won. So as we came into 1990, you had a popular secretary of state, Jim Edgar, as the Republican nominee, and a popular, proven vote-getter, Neil Hartigan, as the Democrat nominee, and it was really a classic race for the governorship of Illinois.

DePue: How close was Hartigan aligned with the Chicago Democratic machine?

Lawrence: He was pretty closely aligned. He wasn't widely liked among some of the Democrat regulars for various reasons, but he had been a ward committeeman, part of the Democrat organization in Chicago; and the Democrat organization, as we said a few minutes ago, had supported him clear back in 1972 for lieutenant governor, giving this young man a shot at rising to statewide office, and had consistently supported him through the years.

DePue: Could he rely on the Democratic machine to turn out the vote like they used to in the sixties and seventies? Daley had died December of 1976, so...

Lawrence: Right. By the time Edgar and Hartigan were seeking the governorship, the Democrat organization in Chicago was not as strong as it had been. It was still a significant factor, though; I don't think there's any question about that. We may be getting a little ahead of where you want to be right now, but one of the reasons that Edgar was able to triumph in the fall was that the Democrat organization, particularly the African Americans, did not turn out the way they typically had turned out in a gubernatorial election.

DePue: Let's go ahead and develop that a little bit, because I certainly do want to touch on Edgar's ability to draw a minority vote. What was the basis of that?

Lawrence: He decided early on in the campaign that he would campaign in every part of Illinois, every neighborhood in Illinois, every community. There were Republicans who advised him that there was really no reason to go into the African-American community and ask for votes, because the African Americans had voted overwhelmingly for Democrats through the years. But he felt if he were going to be governor of the state, he was going to be governor for all Illinoisans, and he should ask for the votes of Illinoisans in every community of the state. Not only that, but as secretary of state, he had good relations with the minority community, not only the African-American community but Hispanics [and] Asians as well.

Governor Edgar was someone who believed in diversity, and he believed in broad outreach. And that was consistent during his time as secretary of state and his time as governor. One of the things I'm proudest of is the fact that Governor Edgar had the most diverse administration as governor of any governor of Illinois, at least up to his time, and that included Democrat governors as well as Republican governors. He campaigned in every community.

Now, with respect to the African-American community, he developed some support there among leaders such as Nancy Jefferson, who had been a community organizer, and that gave him additional credibility in the African-American community. As a Republican candidate for governor he had the support of Nancy Jefferson, he had the support of Lu Palmer—L-u P-a-l-m-e-r—who had been a leader in the African-American community for many years. So that was important; and in the general election, it became a factor. It

wasn't so much that African Americans turned out in large numbers for Secretary Edgar, but they didn't turn out in large numbers for General Hartigan.

A major reason for that is that when Harold Washington was running for reelection as mayor of Chicago in 1987, he was challenged by Tom Hynes; and Tom Hynes was supported in that challenge by Neil Hartigan. And there were many leaders in the African-American community who held that against Hartigan. They felt it was one thing, when Washington was running the first time for mayor and won in 1983, if people supported his opponents for the Democrat nomination. It was another when Mayor Washington was the incumbent mayor and was being challenged, by Democrats, for Democrats to support Mayor Washington's opponent.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about the strategy that the team put together. I would guess that this is the appropriate time to mention Carter Hendren's name as well.

Lawrence: Carter Hendren, in my opinion, is the top political operative in the state. He knows Illinois very well; his instincts are excellent; he is very strong in the area of campaign organization, and it was a major development for the Edgar campaign when Carter agreed to become the campaign manager. Now, he and Jim Edgar went back a long way. Carter worked in Edgar's campaign when Edgar was running for state representative (DePue laughs) and Carter was a student at Eastern Illinois University.

And Carter was Edgar's campaign manager in 1982, when Edgar ran for secretary of state after he had been appointed by Governor Thompson. There were real questions as to whether Edgar could win the Republican primary, let alone the general election, and Carter ran that campaign. He certainly doesn't get sole credit for Edgar's victory in 1982, but I think he gets a lot of credit (laughs) for that victory.

And there was a question as to whether Carter would run the 1990 campaign. He was chief of staff to the Senate Republican leader, Senator Philip, and there were several state Senate seats up for election in 1990, but the decision was made, and Senator Philip was part of it, that the governorship would be very important to the Republicans in 1990 and that Carter could be better utilized as Edgar's campaign manager.

I'm sure that Secretary Edgar was very persuasive in his own right, there, but it was also recognized by Senator Philip and other Republican senators that in 1991, redistricting would be done, legislative redistricting. It appeared as if Democrats would have control of both the House and Senate in 1991, and so the Republicans' major hope for redistricting was to have the governorship and to have a governor who would either be able to compromise with the Democrats in the legislature or veto a map that was sent to him. And as it turned out, Governor Edgar did veto a map that was sent to him by the Democrat majorities in 1991. But the point here is, it was not just a typical race for governor in 1990.

On the Democrat side of things, Speaker Madigan was very engaged in Hartigan's campaign. The two of them had not had a particularly warm relationship; but Speaker Madigan saw the importance of the governorship in terms of redistricting in 1991, so one of his top aides, a very capable person, Bill Filan, became Hartigan's campaign manager in the gubernatorial campaign.

DePue: Did that also bring some financial support as well, since a lot of money was funneled through the speaker's position?

Lawrence: I think it did get him financial support, although I think the Democrat candidate would have been capable of generating considerable financial support on his own. But there was a lot of support in the way of staff support, issue development support; things like that. But again, Speaker Madigan's support was there largely because he recognized the importance of having a Democrat governor during the redistricting process or avoiding having a Republican governor (DePue laughs) during that process.

DePue: Well, that's a fascinating twist to it. The importance of that redistricting issue is fundamental to the politics. What was the strategy, then, that Hendren, and I would think the governor and yourself, developed?

Lawrence: Again, it was to reach out into communities throughout Illinois, but it was a strategy that involved several different facets. One was, of course, message. But a very important part of the strategy was to identify and turn out Edgar voters. A lot of times in a gubernatorial campaign, the nuts and bolts get overlooked, but in this campaign, it proved to be critical, in my opinion. We tended to get out our votes, and Hartigan I think would agree that he did not turn out the potential Democrat votes. It was an extremely close election; it was a long election night. You can point to any number of factors that might have tipped it one way or another, but I certainly think we were superior in organization and in getting our turnout. But there were other elements, too: message and raising money.

DePue: I do want to go there, but let me ask about Edgar's style, his personality on the campaign stump.

Lawrence: He went into the race as a popular secretary of state. The polls showed that he was popular. I think there were a lot of people who felt he was going to win rather easily. I know that Carter Hendren and I never felt that way.

DePue: Because?

Lawrence: Jim Thompson had been governor for fourteen years, so there'd been a Republican governor for fourteen years. And Thompson had been a good governor. By the time he left office, though, his poll numbers were not good. There was probably what might be called a lot of Thompson fatigue at that point. Republicans had also held the presidency. Reagan had been elected in 1980, and then George Bush, the first, had succeeded him as president, so

Republicans had been in the White House for ten years. If people were unhappy, it was not necessarily a positive thing to be a Republican running for governor. And there was some unhappiness in 1990. The economy was not going great guns. Also, decisions that George Bush made in Washington were going to reflect on the governor's race in Illinois.

DePue: Raising taxes?

Lawrence: Yeah, that was a big one. George Bush had promised not to raise taxes, and then he raised taxes, and that didn't go over particularly well in Illinois, (laughs) or anywhere else in the country, for that matter. But the point is Neil Hartigan could run a campaign all about change: if you've got any beef right now, here's a way to help deal with it.

Edgar, in many ways, was running as an incumbent, and he was running as an incumbent with some advantages of incumbency—he'd been secretary of state; he had the support of a Republican establishment that had been empowered by all those years when Thompson was governor—but he also was in a position where he was being blamed, rightly or wrongly, for everything that people didn't like about the way the country was going or the way the state was going. And the poll numbers showed unhappiness about the direction of the nation and the state as Edgar was running for governor. Now, it wasn't as dramatic a displeasure as the right-track, wrong-track numbers showed in the recent presidential campaign between McCain and Obama, where the Republicans were really in the hole from the standpoint of people being very unhappy about the direction of the nation. But they were not the kind of numbers, in terms of whether people were happy about the direction of the state and the nation, that you would want as a Republican with Republicans in the White House and in the governorship.

DePue: Did you and Hendren have some concerns about the image Edgar projected on the campaign trail; that he didn't come across in a charismatic way like Thompson certainly did?

Lawrence: It wasn't so much that, because Jim Thompson was probably the best campaigner we've seen in Illinois. He wasn't always the best campaigner. I remember when he started running in 1976, he was in many ways a wallflower. It's hard to imagine that now, but I remember very distinctly him going off into a corner of a room at a reception, instead of mixing with the crowd, when he first started running for governor.

Edgar did have a couple of [problems]. First of all, the media got onto, Well, what is the difference going to be between Thompson and Edgar? It's going to be more of the same. How are you different? They would ask Edgar, How are you different than Jim Thompson? And then, of course, the Hartigan people played to that, as you might expect. They talked about Big Jim and Little Jim. Instead of the media focusing on some of the issues in the

campaign, at least early on, there was a lot of focus on how you're going to be different than Jim Thompson, which is an easy question to ask. So there was that.

The other problem he had, and I say it's a problem—Hartigan was attacking him regularly, and Jim Edgar is just not that kind of a candidate. He was not comfortable firing back or initiating that kind of dialogue. So there was some unrest among the Republican troops around the state that Edgar was not being aggressive enough, and I would say there was some concern even on the campaign team that he was not being aggressive enough publicly.

DePue: Were you or Hendren giving him advice to be a bit more aggressive, to respond to some of the attacks?

Lawrence: I'll go to one specific situation, which I think was pretty revealing, but before I do that, if you'll allow me—

DePue: Sure.

Lawrence: There was a third factor here, and it just can't be overlooked; it's the elephant in the room, and that was that Jim Edgar was telling people, If I'm elected, that surcharge you're paying on the income tax, I'm going to keep it on. And Neil Hartigan was telling people, "I'm going to take it off, and, not only that, I'm going to be able to spend money: more money for education, more money for mental health, more money in this area, more money in that area. And I'll be able to do that because we're really going to tighten the belt of government." So Hartigan was taking a position that was much more to the liking of voters than Edgar's position. I mean, you know, he was saying, "We can remove this tax, and nothing major's going to be hurt; in fact, we'll be able to increase funding in vital areas of government"; and here is Edgar saying, "I think we need to keep this tax on in order to fund the essentials and the vital areas of government." Now, let's go to the style issue. And I'm sorry for the diversion, but I think that's a major factor.

The two camps had agreed there would be two debates; but before the first debate, there was going to be a joint appearance, which was not billed as a debate, in Springfield. The format was that the two candidates would make opening statements and then take questions from the audience—not from each other. So it was not being billed as a full debate, and it really didn't have the format of a full debate, but we felt it was an important moment in the campaign. Edgar was in Chicago. We were in Springfield on the day I was to get him a draft of his opening statement. And early in the morning, Hendren and I were on the phone with our media consultant and other key people in the campaign, and the decision was made that Edgar in this statement needed to take it to Hartigan; that Hartigan had been out there attacking Edgar, and this was a time for Edgar to lay out his case but also point out some things about Hartigan that we thought were very relevant.

DePue: Like, how can you not raise taxes and still spend more money?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. And not only that, his changes in positions through the years on issues like abortion, seatbelt use—and there were others. So I drafted an opening statement, and then, oddly enough, Hendren and I were going to Chicago that night while Edgar was going to be flying back to Springfield; we had a meeting in Chicago with the Kitchen Cabinet for the campaign, a group of advisors who would act as a sounding board from time to time. So I left a copy of the statement for Edgar that he would be handed when he landed back in Springfield.

In the middle of the meeting, the phone rings in the room—you know, it's about 7:00, 7:30—and it's Edgar, and he wanted to talk to me. He said, "Mike, I read this statement. This isn't what we talked about." I said, "Well, it's what I and Carter and your campaign advisors think you ought to give." And he said, "Well, I'm not going to do it." (DePue laughs) And I said, "Well, we think you should." And he said, "Well, I'm not." Well, then I just paused. I didn't respond. And then he said, "When are you going to be back in Springfield?" I said, "Carter and I are flying back first thing tomorrow morning." He said, "I want to see you as soon as you get back in my office."

So Carter and I fly back to Springfield and head into Edgar's office, fully expecting that there's going to be a spirited discussion over this; and also knowing that it was going to be the secretary's statement in the end, and if he didn't want to go the route we were suggesting, he certainly had every right not to do it. We were continuing to marshal our arguments on the flight down as to why (DePue laughs) he ought to do this. So we walked in, and he was sitting in his office, and he had this draft of his speech in hand. He said, "Do you still think I should give this?" and we said, "Yes." He said, "Okay." He had taken it home, he had shown it to his family—Brenda; Brad, his son; and Elizabeth—and Brad said, "Dad, it's about time you took the gloves off." And Brenda agreed.

We got to this joint appearance, and the repeated motif in this was, You can't have it both ways. Neil, you cannot have it both ways. You can't say you're for taking this tax off and then talk about increasing spending in these areas. You can't have it both ways. You tried to have it both ways on abortion and on seat belts... If I remember this correctly, and I may not, I think Edgar went first. Whether he went first or second, Hartigan was clearly taken aback. He was not expecting this. And the next day, the media played up the fact that Edgar had taken the gloves off, and by explaining how they came to that conclusion, they got out a lot of the points we made about Hartigan.

So when we go back and talk about Edgar's style, his style was not to be combative or on the attack; but I think he recognized that if he was going to win the election, he had to make some adjustments in his style.

DePue: The criticism that's often levied against Governor Edgar, though, was that he was rather stilted and formal and structured, and that Edgar was quite the opposite in terms of style from Thompson.

Lawrence: He's shy, for one thing. He's reserved. I have to say that those are two attributes that drew me to him, among many others. He wasn't one of the boys in the Capitol building. He is someone who can be perfectly content taking a three- or four-hour hike during the afternoon, where it's just him and the dogs. He does not need people around him all the time. In many ways, he doesn't have the personality of the typical politician. But I also think, even though the media and some of the party people and some of the political insiders saw this as a negative to him as a campaigner, the people of Illinois liked that about him; not so much the formality or the being stilted, but I think they sensed in him somebody who was not a backslapper, not a panderer, not someone who would say just anything to get their votes. I don't think there's any question that he needed to change his style for the campaign and become more aggressive, but I also think that the essential Jim Edgar is what connected with the voters of Illinois.

And the election was very close, and you could point to a lot of factors that tipped the balance. I talked about the organization and getting our vote out, but I also think another factor was that Jim Edgar had more credibility than Neil Hartigan; that people might have liked what Neil Hartigan was saying, but they didn't necessarily believe him. People didn't particularly like what Jim Edgar was saying about taxes, but they came to the belief that he was leveling with them. Even though they didn't like the message and didn't like what he was saying, they trusted him. And I have been convinced for most of my time of covering government, being involved in government, and since leaving government, that when it comes to governors and voting for governors, people vote based on what they perceive to be the character of the candidate more than they do a particular issue or set of issues.

I'm giving a long answer here, but I think there's a basis for what I'm saying; it's not just opinion, because I watched a focus group towards the end of the campaign, in September or October, I think it was, and to me it was very revealing. I came out of this experience with a more positive feeling about Edgar's prospects than I had had going into it. By then, the race was nip and tuck. In this focus group, and the group was gathered in Chicago; it was done scientifically, randomly, about twenty-five people. And we were able to observe it through a two-way mirror. They also had a computer device where if they reacted positively to something, they could turn it to the right, and negatively, turn it the other way, and we could watch the reaction on a computer screen in the room. In the beginning, they were asked whether they favored Edgar or Hartigan, and the group was narrowly divided, which was no surprise. (laughs) We were seeing that in the polls.

Then they were shown clips of Edgar talking about the income tax surcharge and why it had to stay on; and Hartigan talking about how he could take it off and run government like a business, and so be able to afford everything he was talking about funding without having this tax on. And what we could see was as Edgar was talking about the need to keep this tax on, people didn't like what he was saying. This group did not like it, and the line went down. (laughs) When Hartigan was talking about running government like a business, the line went up. They loved what he was saying. And when he said, "We don't need this tax; we're already taxed too much," the line went up.

But then they were asked by the moderator, "Which candidate do you think is telling you the truth?" and Edgar's line goes up, and Hartigan's line goes down. And at the end of the session, they took another poll of the group, and Edgar won clearly among that group. As I said, I felt better leaving that session than I had felt going into it. I'm not saying Edgar won the election because he came out for keeping an income tax surcharge on, but I do think a key factor in his winning that election was he was viewed as more credible and trustworthy than his opponent.

DePue: So the distasteful medicine that he's delivering is matching his personality he's projecting on the campaign trail, to develop a certain amount of trust in the public?

Lawrence: Yeah. He was not someone who was a great orator; his rhetoric was not soaring, but he talked in a meat-and-potatoes way that I think connected with voters. Hartigan was a considerably better orator; but on the other hand, most people view candidates over television, and in some ways, Edgar's reserved coolness was easier for people to relate to over television than Hartigan's pounding the table kind of oratory. So again, when you have an election that turned out to be that close, there can be any number of factors that can be pointed to, but I think in the end, people just decided they had more confidence in Jim Edgar.

DePue: This might sound like a silly question, but it's the campaign season, so how much of a factor would it have been that he's a good-looking guy?

Lawrence: Again, most people observe the candidates over television, and he is telegenic, and I think it helped a great deal. Now, Neil Hartigan certainly was not an unattractive candidate at all. And I think Edgar's being handsome did help him—I don't think there's much of a question about that—but it wasn't like he was running against some ugly guy. Neil Hartigan is certainly attractive. When I talk about Hartigan coming across on television "hot," I don't mean I thought he looked okay, but that he would get fired up. And when you're talking to a rally in a gymnasium, that comes across one way; when you're coming up over television, it can come across as too hot. I think he was a little too hot for TV.

DePue: Oftentimes people will say that Jim Edgar is not a charismatic personality, but he's the kind of person who, when he comes in the room, dominates the room?

Lawrence: I think he's noticed. I don't know about "dominate," but he certainly is noticed, and people pay attention to him. And again—I hate to keep repeating myself—but I think Jim Edgar is credible. That is not a minor quality in a candidate for governor. He is credible. People might not want to drink a beer with him, but they'd trust him with their money.

DePue: Very well stated. Let's get to the issue of money, since you brought it up. Was that a challenge for Edgar?

Lawrence: It's a challenge for any candidate who's going to run for a major office statewide. And I think he was aware from the time he was appointed secretary of state that he was going to have to raise major dollars in order to be competitive, not only in running for secretary of state in 1982, but in a future run for governor.

DePue: Before we get too far into this, can you lay out the ground rules for raising money at that time, to include the secretary of state runs and the governorship?

Lawrence: I don't know what you mean by ground rules, but Illinois is the Wild West when it comes to campaign financing. There are no limits on contributions.

DePue: That's what I'm talking about.

Lawrence: And at that time, there were even fewer limits than there are now—and there aren't many now. There are some limits today that were not in existence then, but Illinois, as we sit here talking in April of 2009, is still the Wild West.

DePue: What was the strategy for fundraising?

Lawrence: One of the key strategies was to raise money consistently. Of course, when he was appointed in 1981, he was going to be running in 1982; and even though that may sound like a long way away, it really was not because—and at the time, I was a reporter writing about this stuff, not helping to shape strategy—I'm aware that part of his strategy was to go out and start raising money in order to try to discourage primary opposition; to show that he was capable of raising enough money to run a good campaign in 1982. The other thing to keep in mind was that the primary in 1982 was in March, and the filing was the previous December, so we're talking about December of '81. Edgar had a window of about ten months to demonstrate that he was a strong enough candidate that Republicans wouldn't be inclined to take him on in the primary—and he did that. And I think he followed that strategy throughout his time as secretary of state and governor. He would not wait until the campaign

season to go out and try to raise the money for the campaign; he raised it consistently.

DePue: Did he have problems with touching folks and asking for campaign funds?

Lawrence: To show what a master strategist he was, he didn't make those calls and ask himself; he got other people to do it. And that is very unusual. I remember telling Paul Simon that when Edgar was running for governor, he made one phone call to a potential donor. And Simon was just stunned, because one of the reasons that Paul retired from the Senate in January of 1997 was he was just tired of the constant fundraising, which included him picking up the phone and asking people for money. Edgar had a campaign committee; he had a finance committee; he had people in the administration who made those calls and raised the money.

DePue: Any names in particular?

Lawrence: There's one name, and he became a factor later, the chief internal guy, particularly, I think during the secretary of state days, but then in the 1990 run, was Bob Hickman. Bob had been mayor of Charleston when Edgar ran unsuccessfully for state representative back in 1974 and lost. So Bob went back with him a long way, and Bob was a major part of the fundraising apparatus. And where that became particularly significant was that after Edgar was elected, he named Bob as executive director of the Illinois Toll Highway Authority. Bob got into trouble, and Edgar was faced with not only having to remove Bob from that position but having the matter referred to the state police; and Bob was later convicted. That was a very tough moment for Jim Edgar, because this was someone who had been with him in that losing campaign back in 1974—and Edgar always had a special feeling for the people who had stood with him in that campaign—but had also then gone on and raised millions of dollars for him, or at least been involved in raising millions of dollars for him.

DePue: What was it about Bob Hickman that made him so good at making those phone calls?

Lawrence: First of all, Bob didn't make all the phone calls. He made some. But again, there were people on the finance committee for the campaign—these were CEOs in Chicago, people like that—who were also engaged in raising money, and then there were major fundraising events in Springfield or in Chicago, around the state. So it wasn't all a matter of one or two people picking up the phone and calling; it was really more a matter of organizing a comprehensive fundraising effort.

DePue: And who gets credit for that; Carter Hendren; Jim Edgar; yourself? A combination?

Lawrence: Oh, I was not involved in the fundraising part of it. Throughout my life, I've been more involved in spending the money (DePue laughs) than raising it. As a newspaper guy, the ad department raised the money; I spent it. And during the campaign, I was far more a part of how we spent the money than how we raised the money; and that continued. But there would have been several people who would get credit for that. Hickman was one of them, and Hendren was certainly a part of that. He really oversaw everything, but fundraising was certainly a big part of it. Edgar himself, in terms of strategy and understanding that he needed to raise a considerable sum of money to be competitive, and helping to determine in terms of broad strokes how that money would be raised. I think one of the key decisions he made was to raise the money consistently rather than try to raise it all when you're in the heat of the campaign.

DePue: Is this another example, then, where Edgar's management style, his ability to organize and think through problems was at play?

Lawrence: Yeah, it's a definite example of that.

DePue: You mentioned the other two debates. Anything that sticks out to you on those other two debates in the end?

Lawrence: Well yeah, quite a bit. The first debate was in Chicago at the studios of WLS-TV, and we over-prepared Edgar for that debate. We had one debate rehearsal session in Springfield where there were probably thirty to forty people in the room, giving him advice of one kind or another, responding to whatever questions were being raised. It was just way too much.

Then a poll came out. Edgar had had a double-digit lead, and this would have been sometime around Labor Day. Hendren and I were firmly convinced that there would be polls by the end of the campaign that would show Edgar behind. We saw Edgar's double-digit lead shrink on our internal polls; over a one-week period, it dwindled. That had a lot to do with George Bush in Washington and some things he was doing; and it was kind of a helpless feeling because we couldn't control what was being done in Washington, but we were being impacted by it. Right before this debate, there was a public poll that showed nip and tuck, and that affected Edgar. It was one thing to have the internal polls, but here was a public poll showing that it was really a neck-and-neck race.

We had over-prepared him in Springfield, and he came into Chicago. He was just shaken by the poll, which is a perfectly human reaction. You think things are going along fairly well, and then you're jolted into the fact that you might actually lose this race. He didn't sleep real well the night before the debate, and then he came into the debate preparation the day of the debate, and it was clear he was tired.

When we went over to the studio that night, I watched the debate from within the studio. The media and a lot of our staff people watched the debate; they were at the station, but they watched the debate on monitors. I thought Edgar did fine during the debate. I didn't think there was a knockout punch by either candidate; it wasn't anything like that. I thought Edgar did all right. We left the station, and I was walking back to the Hyatt where I was staying, the Hyatt on Wacker, and I was walking with Tom Hardy, who was then the chief political writer for the *Chicago Tribune*. He was going back to the *Tribune* to write his story. And I said, "Well, how do you think it went?" And Hardy said something like, Well, your guy lost. (DePue laughs) I said, "Really?" I said, "I didn't think that. I didn't think it was particularly a knockout punch or anything." He said, "No, no; he didn't come across as confident, and he didn't get his message through really as well as he could have."

I went back to my room, and they were replaying the debate on television. And what I saw was that Edgar, when he would answer questions, was looking at the person who asked the question on the media panel, which was off to the side; he wasn't looking straight into the camera. Now, again, the human reaction, if somebody asks you a question, is to look at that person when you're answering the question; but for a debate, and to come across on television, you need to look straight into the camera. The other thing was, he had not worn his glasses, and he was blinking a lot. So, now, someone might ask, "What does that have to do with the issues or the substance of the issues?" Well, not a whole lot, but it has to do with how you're perceived. Television is a visual medium, and that is the way most people saw that debate; they didn't see it like I saw it, inside the studio.

And we made a decision for the second debate that, first of all, there weren't going to be forty, fifty people preparing him; there were going to be about five. He didn't need a lot of preparation—he knew the issues—and it was just too much before. But the more important decision was that he would wear his glasses, and he was going to look right into that camera. He said, "I don't care if a bomb goes off somewhere, I'm looking (DePue laughs) right into that camera"; because he saw the replay, the tape of the debate, and he saw for himself. Now, we failed him before that first debate because we over-prepared him, and our media consultant—who did a great job during the campaign, a fantastic job—should have prepared him a little better for dealing with the format, in terms of looking at the camera.

The second debate went well—in fact, very well. And one of the interesting aspects was that during this debate, Hartigan thought he had a huge gotcha. He was talking about how he was going to save money. He didn't need to keep that surcharge on because he was going to save money, and one example of Edgar not saving money— in fact, spending money needlessly for a bad, bad reason—was a brochure put out by the secretary of state's office that Edgar insisted be reprinted because his picture in it was not big enough.

For this debate, I decided not to watch it in the state Senate chambers, which is where the debate was; I decided to go to the room where the media would be watching it on the monitors. So I was sitting in there with reporters and watching it, and as soon as Hartigan raised this brochure, there was a rustle in the room. And I didn't want to get up and leave right away, but I knew that Hartigan had just really messed up. (laughter)

What had happened was the brochure he was talking about was prepared by—(watch beeps) an outside consultant, I guess, would be the word. In other words, we had contracted to have this brochure prepared. It was on a governmental issue—I don't even remember what the issue was. It wasn't related to the campaign; it was governmental. This contractor, I guess in order to impress Edgar, had put a huge picture of Edgar in the brochure, and when Edgar saw the draft of it, he said, I'm not putting out a brochure with a huge picture of me in it. That picture needs to be downsized considerably. He didn't say it in exactly those words, but that was what he did. So—they had been printed—we had to tear off the page, and we did have to re-staple it, and the cost was minimal to do it. But the point of this was not that Edgar was being vain; it was the opposite: he was just absolutely upset over the size of his picture in this thing.

Now, how could I get this home to the media and have the proof? Because this had happened about a year before. I didn't want to get up and leave the room right away, but I waited about a minute or two; and I actually looked at my watch, because I really wanted to get going on this, but decided, You got to have the discipline of not darting out of here. So I waited, watched my watch, and after about two minutes, I just slowly got up and sashayed out the door like maybe I was going to the bathroom; but then I darted down to the secretary of state's office.

This brochure had been overseen by our department of communications, and the director of that department was a woman named Ellen Feldhausen. Ellen was a very, very good, competent director, and she kept everything for documentation purposes, so I was confident she had the original (laughs) brochure and then the one that went out. I was pretty confident she had that, but the question was, Would she be home? I called her. She answered the phone, and I said, "Ellen, are you watching the debate?" "Yeah," she said, "and he's talking about that brochure." And I said, "Do you have a copy of it?" She said, "Yeah, I do." And I said, "Where is it?" She said, "It's in my files." I said, "Well, beat it down here and get it to me; I need it in about twenty minutes."

So she did that, and after the debate was over—and this had happened [previously] in Chicago—there was a period where each candidate then met with the media to talk about the debate. What I wanted, of course, was to have the media people armed with the proof that Edgar had downsized the picture, not upsized it. I wanted them to be armed with that by the time Hartigan came

in. And we got that done by distributing copies to them. So almost all of Hartigan's post-debate session was devoted to him trying to defend this mistake he had made. That was, to me, one of the more interesting moments in the campaign. It turned out that Edgar was given good marks on the second debate.

DePue: Can you recall who the handful of people were who prepped Governor Edgar for that second debate?

Lawrence: Hendren would have been there; I would have been there. I think the media consultant, Don Sipple, would have been there. He handled all our advertising as well. I think Don was there—I can't even be 100 percent sure. And I don't remember the others. Oh, someone who probably would have been there would have been Jim Reilly, the chief of staff—R-e-i-l-l-y.

DePue: I like you journalists spelling things out for me. That's helpful. Let's bring you up to the eve of the election, then. What's the mood among the campaign staff?

Lawrence: It was tight. The Sunday before the election, I got a call somewhere around 3:00, 3:30 in the afternoon from a radio reporter saying that Channel 3 in Champaign was going to come out with a poll on the evening news that showed Edgar behind by something like seventeen points.

DePue: Seventeen?

Lawrence: Yeah. And I said, "Well, our internal polls don't show anything like that; they show it nip and tuck." And I said, "There are polls out of Chicago"—statewide polls, but taken by the Chicago media—"that show it nip and tuck." I said, "I just don't buy that we're seventeen points down." This particular poll, Channel 3 poll, had a lot of credibility, because in 1982, Thompson was viewed as a shoo-in for reelection. This was one poll taken right before the election, on the weekend before, that showed a lot of movement to Stevenson, and of course, that election ended up with Thompson winning in a highly disputed election by 5,074 votes. So the Channel 3 poll had been viewed as a really credible poll, and it had gotten a lot of plaudits because of what had happened in 1982.

I had developed a professional relationship with the poll director for Channel 3, and I called her after getting the call from the radio reporter. I said, "I just can't believe this poll unless there's a tremendous surge here at the end." And so I said, "Do you mind if I ask you some questions about your sample?" I'd built a good relationship with her, and she said no. First of all, I asked, "When were you in the field?" In other words, When were you polling? It was the same time as these other polls that were nip and tuck. But then her sample showed a disproportionate number of people being polled from Chicago and a disproportionate number of Democrats. The reason I say that is

when you do polls, you poll for party preference among the people you're sampling, and then geographically; I knew what percentages needed to come from Chicago, what from downstate, what from central Illinois, so that you had an accurate reflection of the state. Well, she had a heavily Democrat sample. And I said, "Jan, you got a bad sample," and I detailed for her why I believed that. And I said, "I wish you wouldn't go ahead and put that on the air." And she said, "Mike, I'm sorry. We're committed. We're going with it; we have confidence in it."

So here we are on the Sunday before the Tuesday [of the election] and this highly credible poll comes out showing Edgar getting shellacked. The problem not only involved the candidate's psyche; (laughs) our staff morale, but our troops out in the field. If they thought that we were going to get shellacked, they might abate their turnout efforts. They may just decide it's over with. So on the Monday morning, Hendren and others were on the phone just talking to people in the field, trying to convince—particularly the downstaters, who were influenced by the Champaign poll and did not necessarily have access to the Chicago poll numbers—them it was a race.

But I remember there was one guy, George Fleischli, who had been a key ally and worker for Governor Edgar—Secretary Edgar, I should say, at that point. All during the campaign, George had been by far the most optimistic of any of us; "Oh, he's going to win." Well, he walked in that morning, and he said, "We're going to lose!" (laughter) because he was so affected by that Channel 3 poll.

So anyway, flying up to Chicago on Monday, because we were going to await the results on that Tuesday, it was up in the air. It was up for grabs. And the one sleepless night I had on the campaign had been that Sunday night, because I knew intellectually that that sample was defective, and I knew what the other polls were showing, but I'm sitting there thinking, Okay, let's say it's fifteen points off—which would be a huge amount to be off—we still lose. And it was a tough night.

I woke up Tuesday morning—I'm a runner—and I ran along the lakefront. It was a beautiful day, perfect running weather. I got back, and somehow I felt that we were going to win. That night, then, we were at the Hyatt on Wacker. There was a suite up there, and several of the campaign staff had rooms near the suite, and then there was a place where contributors and supporters could gather, and the Edgars, Secretary Edgar and Brenda, were in and out of there. The early returns showed Edgar getting really shellacked, to use that term again, but I'd watched enough election nights, and I knew the early returns didn't mean much.

Our pollster was with us; Fred Steeper, who is a national pollster, highly regarded, has been involved in presidential campaigns and was involved in several other campaigns that year, but he chose to be with us

election night. And our pollster was crunching numbers based on the returns coming in; in other words, comparing what our targets were in certain areas—the percentages that Edgar had to get or that Hartigan had to get—against what the returns were showing. And I don't remember exactly what time it was, but it was about a couple hours, I would say—maybe longer—after the polls closed, and Steeper told Hendren that Edgar was going to win with something like a little over 50 percent of the vote; somewhere between 50 and 51 percent. And he had the exact percentage to the tenth, but I don't remember what it was. Hendren told me, and we decided (laughs) whether we were going to share this with the candidate. (DePue laughs) We didn't want to lift him up to have him let down in an hour or so.

And Fred said he was confident, but he'd be more confident in about an hour. So Hendren and I decided not to tell Edgar. I don't know that Edgar knows this, and when you talk to Edgar, I think Edgar's going to tell you that he was confident at some point early on; but he didn't share that with us, and we did not share the first report from Fred with him. But in an hour or so, Fred said, "I'm confident," and that's when we told Edgar that Fred was projecting he would win.

DePue: Were any of the news media projecting by that time?

Lawrence: Oh, no; they were saying that it was going to be close, and it looked like Hartigan. And Edgar said to me, "You need to go down there. We've got people all over the state watching these guys, and you need to go down there and let them know, send them some kind of message, that we're going to win." So I went down. I'd been in the campaign area. I had not been down where the media... I had some deputies down there who were not necessarily going on the air, but they were working with the media. I went down, and I said, "I'm prepared to say something." I went up, and I just said, "I am confident..." or "I have a good feeling," something like that. I think I said, "I have a good feeling about this." There were people who told me later that they knew Edgar had won, because they knew I would never say that unless I knew. And they said, You were smiling, and I didn't smile all that much (laughter) during the campaign. So that was the signal.

And then two more distinct memories I have of that election night. One was that Marianne was there. We had a room. And she was so uptight—I couldn't be with her; I was doing other things—she had her sister come in. Her sister lived northwest of the city. I walked into their room, and I remember on the television, they had the numbers, and it was showing Edgar getting beat solidly by their numbers. I just said, "Don't look at those; we're going to win," and I sat down. A few seconds later, Marianne said, "What'd you say?" I said, "Marianne, we're going to win." So I remember that moment, because we had a lot invested in that campaign.

But the other moment was that I went into the suite where the supporters were, and somebody came up to me and said, "You've got a phone call from Bill Griffin; he's on the line." Bill Griffin had been a top advisor to Neil Hartigan, and I had known Bill for many years; he was a former reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. And Bill said, "The attorney general is ready to concede, but he would like the courtesy of doing that before the secretary declares victory." And I said, "Well, yeah, there's no problem there. Yeah." And then he said, "Well, would you go get the secretary? I'm prepared to put the attorney general on the phone." So I went into the suite, and Secretary Edgar and Brenda were embracing, and I said, "Look, I hate to interrupt this, but I think you're going to want to take this phone call." And so I accompanied him into the room, he picked up the phone, and then I heard him have the conversation with the attorney general. That was a very memorable moment. And then, of course, we let the attorney general go first, as we should have, and he made his speech, and then we went down and made our speech. That was very exciting.

DePue: Sense of euphoria among the staff and everybody with the campaign at that time?

Lawrence: Oh, yeah. Yeah, "euphoria" is a good word. Yeah, it was. It had been a long, hard campaign, and I personally had never been through an experience where you work so hard on something for so long, and then it comes down to one day; and it's out of your hands. In many respects, it's out of your hands. It's not totally out of your hands because your people are getting the vote out, and they're doing those kinds of things, but in a lot of ways, it is out of your hands. And to work that long and that hard...

And I remember the next morning, I was walking into the State of Illinois Center in Chicago when Neil Hartigan was walking out, and here was a guy who had been our opponent all those months. I had been a point person—when he would attack Edgar, generally I was the one attacking back. I'd known him at that time for eighteen years. But, you know, during the campaign, he was the opposition, and you just build up a dislike for your opponent. It's that way. And it's not—(laughs) it sounds funny to say—personal, but it's just, There's the enemy. But I felt bad for him when I saw him that morning. I did. And I was a little surprised at my emotion, but I did; I felt bad for him. Now, I didn't feel bad enough to hope he'd won instead of us, but I felt bad for him. He'd run a very good campaign, a tough campaign, and he'd had a very good run in public office; and he had lost by a narrow margin.

DePue: Did he acknowledge seeing you that morning?

Lawrence: No, he didn't. He was going to his car, and I don't even know that he saw me; I saw him.

DePue: I want to go back. Do you recall Edgar's response to hearing that poll a couple days out from the election?

Lawrence: For some reason, I don't. I have to believe that he was shaken by it. I was shaken by it, like I told you. Even though I knew intellectually the poll was flawed, it was so large a margin that it was almost incomprehensible it could be as far off as it turned out to be.

DePue: Weren't there other polls that were saying the opposite, though?

Lawrence: They weren't saying the opposite; they were saying it was nip and tuck. So there were no polls that showed us with a double-digit lead going into the election.

DePue: Were there some polls that showed you winning?

Lawrence: There were polls that showed us narrowly ahead, and there were some polls that showed us narrowly behind. There were some that showed us in a dead heat. Most of the polls showed us within the margin of error; in other words, deadlocked within the margin of error, where either candidate could win. And this was an outlier, but as I said, it was a poll that had a lot of credibility. And Edgar is a downstater, and he didn't grow up that far away from Champaign and Channel 3, so again, I think he probably went through the same process that I did, where intellectually he felt the poll was flawed, but it was a jolt.

DePue: We spent quite a bit of time talking about the election campaign, so now we're finally at the time to move him into the administration itself. Let's start with a little bit of discussion about what Edgar and the team of advisors that he had at that time thought were the most significant challenges that they'd face going into the office?

Lawrence: It wasn't long after the election that we found out how significant the deficit was, the budget deficit.

DePue: Did you not know that in the campaign itself?

Lawrence: No, no. We had been briefed by Thompson's budget advisors, who are excellent people, but... And we knew it was going to be tight. That reinforced with Edgar that he had taken the right position, that we needed to keep that surcharge on. (laughs) We were going to need every dollar we could get. But we did not know that it was as significant as it turned out to be after we won the election.

DePue: That suggests that they were hiding those numbers.

Lawrence: I don't know whether they were hiding them or trying to put them in the best light or... I will say this: the person who briefed us—one of them, I remember specifically—is as honorable a guy as I've interacted with in state

government. So I don't know whether he didn't have the full picture. It wasn't like we were getting daily briefings on it either, so...

DePue: Who was the gentleman who briefed you?

Lawrence: Dick Kohlhauser. Dick's a totally honorable guy, one of the best people I've interacted with, so I don't think there was any deception on his part. It may also have been that the briefing occurred several months before the election, and things can go south in a hurry (laughs) in state government. But the staff; some of us were briefed after the election. And I fully expected that Edgar would be down in the mouth after he received the same briefing. He was scheduled to get the briefing, and it wasn't within a few hours; it would have been the next day. And I figured, Here's a guy who just went through this long, hard campaign; he becomes governor and finds out not only is there no money, but he's going to have to really make cuts.

DePue: What was the size of the deficit he was facing?

Lawrence: About $1.5 billion, which sounds small compared to the deficit the state has right now, but we didn't think it was small, particularly since Edgar had promised during the campaign not to raise taxes any higher. He said, "We will keep the surcharge on, but we won't raise them any higher." So I was fully expecting for him to be a little depressed after hearing this. I went to the briefing where he got the news, and he came out and said, "You know, this is okay." He said, "The state government has gotten excessive. This is our opportunity to change things. This is our opportunity to figure out better ways to manage it." And I was pleasantly surprised, and maybe I shouldn't have been surprised, because he really did enjoy managing government; but I just thought human nature would dictate that he'd be a little down about having to make these kind of cuts so soon after becoming governor.

DePue: You've mentioned the word a couple of times. This is the perfect opportunity to ask you about his management and leadership style as the governor.

Lawrence: Again, you're talking about someone who's very intelligent, and I think there are a lot of people who did not realize that, because he had kind of a meat-and-potatoes vocabulary. He's a voracious reader, and he reads history; I mean, reads. He's really an intellectual in a lot of ways, but for whatever reason, that didn't translate into him having a wide vocabulary. Very what I call meat-and-potatoes vocabulary. But you begin with the fact that he's very smart. He's disciplined.

He is also someone who wants to have the facts in front of him. And if he's not getting his questions answered, or there are questions after he's seen the information he has in front of him, he insists on getting the answers. And he really wants to make decisions based on information and not hunch or emotion. So he demands that he have the information in front of him; he

wants it to be accurate; if he has questions, he wants answers within a reasonable length of time; and then he wants to hear the viewpoints of those around him and sometimes those outside of the inner circle and even outside of state government; and he will weigh all of that and make a decision.

Now, he had this reputation of being cautious. Well, he was cautious. (laughs) Somehow that, in the minds of some, turned into a negative adjective to describe him. I don't think it's negative at all; it's positive. It wasn't that he was afraid to make decisions; it wasn't that he didn't make decisions: he wanted to make informed decisions. And that was his style. And once he made a decision, he was fully prepared to live with the consequences of it.

DePue: Those decisions that he's making throughout his tenure as governor, were they based on his philosophical underpinnings or on pragmatic realities?

Lawrence: I think it's a mix, and it has to be a mix if you're governor because there are very few things you can do as governor that you do unilaterally. It's not like being president and sending troops into a country (laughs). And, yeah, we'll ask Congress later or something. There are some decisions as governor that are unilateral, and we'll probably get a little bit into the 1993 flood.

DePue: Absolutely.

Lawrence: That would be an example where he did. That was the equivalent, in some ways, of being able to exercise foreign policy decisions. But he did have principles that he wouldn't move from, and among them—let's talk about the fiscal side. He really believed that you should not spend money that you don't have. That sounds simple, except I think we've seen in other administrations that was not exactly an inviolable principle. He really believed it. So it was not only a matter of what are we going to do with the $1.5 billion deficit—in other words, cutting government—but he also felt strongly that you should not add programs unless you had a means to pay for them; either by cutting somewhere else or by creating a revenue source or identifying a revenue source. That was a very definite principle. There was no doubt—and much of what I'm going to say deals with the budget side of it—budgets are not just numbers. Budgets really are about priorities, and they also are about your attitudes about managing government. So—

DePue: Before you get into that—I do want to spend quite a bit of time talking about the budget struggles—you used the word "priorities." Maybe that's the perfect thing to emphasize here.

Lawrence: One of the decisions he could have made on the budget, when you're trying to figure out where to cut it, is you go across the board. Just say a certain percent, across the board. And that is an easier sell to the public and the interest groups than setting priorities and cutting some areas and not cutting others, or cutting some areas more than others. And I'm going to explain that.

You go across the board, and it doesn't mean people are going to like the cuts, but your argument is, I'm treating everybody the same. And your argument to the lobbyists for education is, Yeah, we're cutting you 2 percent, but everybody else is getting cut; and that lobbyist in turn can go back to his or her constituents and say, "Look, we don't like being cut, but we got no worse, no better than anybody else."

Well, if you don't go across the board and you set priorities, now you're telling some people, We're treating you differently for the purposes of this budget than other people. Some might be happy if you happen to be holding them harmless or even giving them an increase; but others are going to be unhappy because some are being held harmless or getting an increase or are being cut less on a percentage basis. He felt there ought to be priorities, and one of his priorities was that programs benefiting children had to be spared to the greatest extent possible.

And a dramatic example of how that played out was that in order to protect health care benefits for poor kids, we eliminated dental benefits for adults; poor adults, low-income adults. Jim Edgar did not run for governor thinking, Boy, I can hardly wait to get in there to cut dental benefits for low-income adults, but he had to make decisions. If we weren't going to spend money that we didn't have, and we were going to bring in government, and if we were going to establish children as priorities, you had to cut. We eliminated general assistance for single, able-bodied adults. That was a major decision.

DePue: "General assistance" being welfare payments?

Lawrence: Yeah, for single, able-bodied adults. That was a major decision. And there were protests. People now look back and think Jim Edgar was this wonderful fiscal manager, but at the time, there were protests. The protesters labeled him "Edgar Scissorshands." (DePue laughs) They weren't happy. You know what? I understand why they weren't happy; but if you set priorities and if you want to try to bring the budget back into balance, then you're going to end up making people unhappy.

DePue: Is this when he got the moniker as "Governor No"?

Lawrence: Yeah, exactly. He was saying no. And those were very difficult times. We had to do some things that even ran against his essential philosophy. At least for a time, we did have to delay, even further, payments to some providers. They were already being delayed.

DePue: The Medicaid providers.

Lawrence: Yeah. It actually applied to all the contractors. The Medicaid providers would have been the big-dollar groups. He didn't feel right about doing that, but he made hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts, and he felt rather than

going any more deeply—I've already described at least two (laughs) of the cuts that went in very deeply—he decided we'd do that. It bothered him, and one of his happiest moments as governor was after he got the state back on course and the economy improved, he was able to say, "And we're paying our bills on time." That was a big deal to him.

DePue: I want to postpone a little bit more of this discussion on the budget fight that he had the first couple of years—an extended fight, from what I can tell. Let's go back to the first moments of the administration itself. Do you remember anything significant about the inauguration?

Lawrence: It was a moving moment for me personally, but what I remember most was a conversation the governor and I had the day after the inauguration. I may have referred to this earlier—maybe not. I've been interviewed quite a few times.

DePue: Go ahead, because I don't recall if you have.

Lawrence: He and I had been around each other long enough, even by then, that we tended to end each other's sentences. One will begin; the other will end it. We had this kind of shorthand between the two of us. And I walked into his office, and I said, "You know, Governor, yesterday was a great day, and there was a lot of warmth and pageantry, but..." And then he said, "But today is better, because today, we govern." And that's what I was going to say, but he finished it. (laughs)

DePue: And that pretty much said it all for you, too?

Lawrence: Oh, yeah, yeah. That was quite a moment.

DePue: So you had a candidate who thought more about the governing side of it than the campaigning side.

Lawrence: Yeah. Edgar's always made the distinction that some people run for office so that they can do something, and other people run for office so they can be something. And then in the same context, some people run for office so that they can govern, and other people govern so they can run for office. And he definitely was someone who ran for something so he could do something; but he also campaigned so he could govern. The governing was the major factor.

DePue: My next question is going to be [about] a process that started from the moment that he was elected to the time he was inaugurated and beyond; talk about putting that [governing] team together.

Lawrence: He had some elements of the team around. I was his first appointment, and I tell people, "Don't get too full of praise over that. Don't think that was a great deal. He needed someone to write the press releases (DePue laughs) on the other appointments." I was his first appointment. But there were a few decisions to be made. He ended up selecting Kirk Dillard for chief of staff.

Kirk had been the legislative director for Governor Thompson, and Edgar felt obviously that that first legislative session was going to be crucial and difficult. The Democrats had control of both the House and the Senate, and you had a governor who was going to have to ask them to do things on the budget they weren't going to want to do. So he chose Kirk as his chief of staff, knowing that working with the legislature was going to be a very important priority. For deputy chief of staff, to run, really, the operations of government, he chose Sally Jackson, who had been a cabinet member during the Thompson administration, a very capable woman.

And then, of course, one of his key decisions was to make Joan Walters the director of the Bureau of the Budget. Joan and the governor went back a long way. She had worked for him in Governor Thompson's legislative office when he was director of the office. She had been his top staff person when he took over the secretary of state's office. He had a tremendous amount of confidence in Joan, and it was deserved. She [was] very, very competent. As chief consul, he went with Arnie Kanter. He had gotten to know Arnie during the campaign for governor and had been impressed with Arnie's skills. And then director of legislative affairs; he went with Steve Selcke for that. Mark Boozell had been his director of legislative affairs in the secretary of state's office, and a very competent legislative director, but he decided to go with Steve Selcke because of Steve's experience in the governor's office.

The reason I stop on that is Steve is very competent, very capable. He was very experienced in working with the legislature from the governor's office. It was a disappointment to Mark Boozell that he didn't get it. And Mark was named as Steve's assistant and then became director after Steve left. But I've always admired Mark for the job he did as Steve's assistant, because I know he was personally disappointed that he didn't get the director's job and yet was a loyal, devoted soldier; really, the way he handled that really raised him in my estimation. And he was a terrific legislative director later, but it said a lot about him that he overcame that disappointment and performed well.

Edgar also had a nucleus. The secretary of state's office in Illinois is the largest secretary of state's office in the nation, so he had a core of people who had governed with him in the secretary of state's office, and then, of course, the challenge was to figure out where they would go in the Edgar administration. And he reached beyond the Edgar and Thompson administrations for other people.

One of the interesting challenges that I think a lot of people have overlooked is that you had people who had been in the Thompson administration. They had been helpful in Edgar's campaign, and they expected to stay where they were. (DePue laughs) And some of them did. I think there was one cabinet person ultimately who did, but other than that... When he was asked during the campaign, particularly early on, How are you going to be

different than Jim Thompson, Edgar said, "I'm going to bring in a new administration, and I'm not going to keep any of the cabinet in the positions they're in."

But even below the cabinet level, there were people who expected they were going to stay right where they were. They'd been there with Thompson; here was another Republican coming in. Some of them had worked with Edgar when he was in the Thompson administration. It is easier to transit into a situation where people are friendly toward you than into one where people aren't friendly toward you. For example, the Pat Quinn situation; (DePue laughs) going into the Blagojevich administration. But going into a transition where you have people who are friendly to you can still be difficult because their expectations are different than if you're going in—let's say we would have taken over for a Democrat administration. I think the expectation, maybe of the Democrats, would have been, Yeah, we'd like to stay, but we expect (laughs) we may go. And by that, I don't mean the career employees; I mean the ones that are there and serve at the pleasure of the governor. But this had its own challenges. I went into the press office and made changes there. We brought in our own people, and yet I tried to find positions elsewhere for the people who had been there with Governor Thompson.

DePue: There was one other significant change from the past in Illinois politics that you folks faced, and maybe we'll end our morning session with this discussion of the impact of the RUTAN decision and how that played out in the Edgar administration; because the RUTAN decision came down in 1990, just before he got into office.

Could you explain very quickly what the RUTAN decision was?

Lawrence: The RUTAN decision was that you can't base hiring and promotion for the vast majority of government positions on the political leanings of the people who are applying for those positions or who might be eligible for promotions. That applies to the vast majority of people, but RUTAN acknowledged that people going into policy or top management positions could be changed at the will of the chief executive.

DePue: But there was a list of positions that were exempted from RUTAN?

Lawrence: That list was not contained in the court decision. That would have been way too detailed. But over time, it was worked out which positions were RUTAN-exempt and which ones RUTAN applied to. So if you had a cabinet member, there was no question that the governor had the right to put in whoever he wanted, and if there was someone in that spot, it didn't matter—that person served at the will of the governor. That person went out so the governor's person could go in. Policy positions, all the governor's staff positions, would have been RUTAN-exempt; they wouldn't have been impacted by the RUTAN decision.

But as you get down into the level of division managers in the agencies, and clerks in the agencies, and some pretty significant management positions in the agency; they were covered by RUTAN. There had been the Shakman decision before, saying you couldn't fire on the basis of political beliefs; but this said even if you had vacancies, you can't hire for the vast majority of positions, the people who day in and day out implement policy, based on their political leanings. So if somebody has been loyal to you in the campaign, legally, that is not supposed to be a factor in whether you put that person in as a division manager or a bureau chief in a state agency.

DePue: The old school, at least the stories that I've heard, is that before the RUTAN decision, if there was a position to be filled in some particular agency, routinely (watch beeps) somebody from the governor's staff would call that particular county Republican or Democratic chairman and say, "Do you have anybody in mind for this position?" and a name would be forwarded. Those rules no longer applied for Edgar?

Lawrence: They applied as far as the RUTAN-exempt positions. To put it in another context, it usually is not a matter of the governor or any of his people calling a county chairman and saying, "Do you have anyone for this position?" Usually what happens is the county chairman, the party people, say, We need to put so-and-so on; or somebody who has been a campaign worker for you calls someone in the campaign and says, "I worked in the campaign. I'd sure like to work in your administration." So it's not so much that the governor is reaching out, looking for names. The names are there, and the names come to the governor and his people. And then, a decision has to be made. Look, these people have been loyal to you. Is there a position that would be suitable? But if it is covered by RUTAN, you got to go by the rules. We've seen it in Chicago in some trials lately that, according to federal prosecutors and according to juries up there, the RUTAN rules and Shakman rules were not followed there.

This is not black and white material here in a lot of ways. There was a tension in our administration that was always there. You had Janis Cellini, who may have been called the personnel director; but she was the patronage person.

DePue: It should be noted, she's the sister of Bill Cellini.

Lawrence: Yeah, sister of Bill Cellini. You have Janis Cellini, and her perspective was, We ought to do the best we can to take care of people who have been loyal to us. There's nothing inherently wrong with that view. People who have helped you get elected and would like to serve in your administration ought to get some consideration. If a governor's going to be held accountable for what he or she accomplishes in office, then the governor is entitled to have people working for him who are going to help him achieve those goals rather than

people who might be saying, You know, we really don't care whether this guy succeeds or not. But RUTAN is the law of the land.

Now, Janis Cellini, part of her job was to try to help people who had been helpful to us. And Janis would push the envelope. Then you had the chief consul's office. And there was a guy in there named Bill Ghesquiere. Bill had been a government lawyer for many years; a terrific government lawyer and human being. So there was a tension. Janis would say, "I want to do this," and Bill would say, "You can't do it. You can't do it. RUTAN applies here, and it's got to be done a certain way."

So I thought that was a good tension. I think those kinds of tensions within a governor's office, even though they can be stressful sometimes and inconvenient sometimes, are good tensions to have; where people are coming from different perspectives, they want to accomplish things, but you have the pushback the other way. And ultimately, if you've got an impasse or a disagreement, it ends up with the governor or the governor's chief of staff, or somebody like that, to resolve it. And I think whenever Edgar was confronted with an issue like that, if the lawyer says, "You've got to do it this way; this is the way to do it", then we have to do it this way. He wasn't always happy going along with that, but that was the way he operated, and that was the culture that he set in the office.

But one of the things that—and we're not going to evaluate the Ryan administration in this conversation—troubled me early on when Ryan became governor was that he made his chief counsel heavily involved in the personnel end. I just thought vesting those two things in the same person was going to be troublesome, because there ought to be a tension there, and (laughs) not in the same person.

DePue: The way you've described it is almost that Edgar reluctantly accepts the reality that this is the new law; that he would have preferred the old machinery in place.

Lawrence: That might be too sweeping a statement there, but Edgar was certainly not anti-patronage. And it's interesting, because even back in my journalism days when I was writing columns, I was not anti-patronage. And because I'd done a lot of investigative work in government and highlighted abuses of patronage, people were shocked when they would hear me argue that I thought there were benefits to patronage. And essentially, it came down to what I described earlier. If you're going to hold an elected official accountable for what happens or doesn't happen, then that elected official ought to have his or her own people not only making policy, but implementing policy. But that's not the law of the land, and you've got to follow the law of the land. Now, Edgar saw a benefit to patronage in the whole system. And we had our share of patronage in the secretary of state's office and in the governor's office. There were a lot of patronage positions there, but I believe we followed the law.

DePue: Okay, we're going to end this session because we've been at it (laughs) close to three hours now, Mike. We've got a lot more to talk about and a lot more fascinating things to hear about.

Lawrence: Okay.

(End of interview)

Interview with Mike Lawrence
ISG-A-L-2009-005.04
Interview # 4: April 1, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is still Wednesday, April 1, 2009. This is Mark DePue again with Mike Lawrence. We had close to three hours in the morning, Mike, and it looks like we've got more than enough to talk about this afternoon. We had left off right before lunch—and thank you very much for that—talking about patronage; talking about Janis Cellini's role in that, Edgar's view, and your involvement. Any final words you want to say on the patronage issue?

Lawrence: As I indicated, there were tensions in the governor's office over patronage issues, as you might expect, yet Edgar was definite that we should comply with RUTAN and with the law of the land. Now, what we heard a lot when we would turn somebody down that a county chairman might be proposing was, "Well, that's all right. We'll go to George Ryan, and he'll take care of us over in the secretary of state's office." Whether that was true or not, that George took care of people that way, I'm not in a position to say with any certainty; but we sure heard that said a lot of times, and there's no doubt that George was very popular among Republican county chairmen.

DePue: How about some of the other appointments? We've talked about the governor's staff; what we haven't talked about were the directors of the various departments.

Lawrence: There were a lot of firsts. For the Department of Corrections, Governor Edgar put in the first African American to head that department. That was Howard Peters, who had a long career in corrections and later became a member of the governor's staff.

DePue: I've been told to ask you the story of how he ended up getting that directorship in the first place.

Lawrence: I'm not sure I know. (laughs)

DePue: I might have to rely on other people. I know he was working within the Department of Corrections, was he not?

Lawrence: Yeah. He had held a number of positions there. He had been a warden. And maybe I knew at one time; it's not coming to me now.

DePue: I apologize for putting you on the spot there.

Lawrence: No, no, that's all right. A few years have gone by, and I have some vivid memories, and then there are some things I have no memory of that people have told me about in the last year or two that... When I've gotten together with some of the alumni in the administration, they'll talk about a meeting or some decision I made, and a lot of times I remember it; but there are some times I don't even remember the meeting, let alone what particular decision was made in it.

DePue: How about some of the other appointments that stick with you?

Lawrence: An interesting appointment was Desiree Rogers as director of the lottery. Desiree was African American and the first African American to hold that position. A lot of people think that job is kind of a glitzy job and it's more about show business, but the head of the lottery deals with contracts on advertising, marketing—it's a business operation in a lot of ways. And Desiree is a very attractive woman; she has a matter-of-fact way about her, and she was consistently underrated until people dealt with her. Desiree had an MBA from Harvard, among other things, so she not only represented the lottery well as an out-front person, but she also ran it well as a manager. One of the reasons I bring her up, first of all; (watch beeps) it's an example of how Governor Edgar sought to diversify the administration. The other factor is that Desiree Rogers this year became the first African-American to serve as White House social secretary, which, again, is more than serving tea. It's determining how state events are run, and there's a lot to that job.

Becky Doyle was the first woman to serve as director of the Department of Agriculture in Illinois, again demonstrating the governor's willingness and determination to diversify the administration. There was some opposition to Becky internally. A lot of the good ole boys weren't real happy about having a female as director of the Department of Agriculture, and I don't just mean people in the administration, I mean some of the interest groups. I remember being in a meeting where the governor wasn't there, but several senior staff people were, and Becky was being discussed. A couple of the people in the staff meeting were saying, Oh, this isn't that good a choice; very controversial; people are really upset over; and there were a lot of what I thought were bogus arguments being advanced. I said, "Well, I agree with you. She does lack one important quality," and the people who were opposing her appointment internally looked at me and thought they were going to have an ally in the discussion. I said, "Yeah, she does not have a penis." (laughter) So anyway, not all the appointments were widely acclaimed, but Becky did a good job at agriculture.

DePue: How about the Department of Transportation? That's one of the bigger departments.

Lawrence: There was a case where Governor Edgar ended up going with a professional. That department had been traditionally headed up by people who would be regarded as more politically connected than professionals in transportation, and that was a key decision Governor Edgar made. He went with Kirk Brown, who is an engineer and had been a longtime employee of the Department of Transportation. I thought that sent a very good message that Governor Edgar was serious about running government professionally.

DePue: Any others that you'd like to recall? I know there were some major reorganizations that went on in the administration, especially in the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Human Services. But any others that we should point out right now?

Lawrence: At the Department of Revenue, he went with Doug Whitley, who had been president of the Illinois Taxpayers' Federation. One of the things that's notable about that appointment is that Doug was a Democrat, a registered Democrat; and he wasn't the only Democrat that Edgar named to cabinet positions. Audrey McCrimmon, who was director of the Department of Rehabilitation Services; I'm pretty confident Audrey was a Democrat. She was a very good, loyal cabinet member in the Edgar administration. (clears throat) Governor Edgar demonstrated that he was willing to go across party lines to appoint people he thought were very competent, and Audrey had been a competent performer for the city of Chicago. There are a couple dozen or more cabinet agencies, and we can go up and down them, but those stand out as—

DePue: There's plenty more to be talking about. Let's start with the key relationship with the legislature. Before we get into that, the ground rules of executive power and legislative power were changed quite a bit in 1970; and, to a certain extent, I think that there was an increase of power that was placed in the governor's hands because of the new constitution. In particular, I'm talking about the line-item veto and the amendatory veto. I wonder if you could tell us what his view of using those...?

Lawrence: The line-item veto applies specifically to budget bills, and [while] it was rarely easy to get to the agreement, what he wanted to do was to sit down with the legislative leaders and ultimately, after a lot of back and forth, negotiation, and compromise, agree on a budget; so that when the legislature sent him the budget, he would be in a position to sign the budget. Where the line-item veto has come in in Illinois has been in situations where the legislature and the governor do not have an agreed-upon budget. The legislature ultimately sends the governor a budget, and then the governor may use either line-item veto power or reduction veto power to bring the budget more into line with where he thinks it ought to be. But because Governor Edgar preferred the model of

an agreed budget, I don't remember a time when he used the line-item veto. There may have been, but I got to tell you, I don't remember him specifically using that on a budget bill. I'm not saying it didn't happen, but I am saying I don't remember it being used. So what that tells me is if he used it, he used it very rarely.

The amendatory veto really applies to what is called substantive legislation, where you're going to change a government policy or a law, and it allows the governor to change the language of the legislation, send it back to the legislature, and if the legislature accepts the language, the bill becomes law. The legislature can override the governor, and then it becomes law the way the legislature sent it to the governor. Sometimes the legislature will neither accept nor reject the veto, and then the bill dies. It's in limbo.

Governor Edgar used the amendatory veto power. I think, philosophically, he felt it should not be used a great deal, and he did not use it as much as, for example, Governor Blagojevich used it; but I'm pretty confident that Blagojevich and Thompson used it more than most—

DePue: As I recall, there was a lot of criticism about Thompson's overuse of it.

Lawrence: Yeah, there was, particularly from Speaker Madigan. I personally would be for taking that power away from the governor. I believe in a strong governor's office, but I don't think the governor should be a legislator. And I think Governor Edgar might not be as adamant about it as I am, but I don't think he was absolutely crazy about the amendatory veto. Having said that, he used it, and—

DePue: Remember any occasions where he used it?

Lawrence: I remember one piece of legislation where he used it was dealing with Chief Illiniwek. The legislature sent him a bill which basically said that Chief Illiniwek could not be done away with as a mascot for the University of Illinois, and the governor amendatorily vetoed the bill to say that the U of I board should have the option of whether Chief Illiniwek stays as a mascot. I remember that because I ended up being very heavily involved in drafting that veto message.[21]

I'm pretty confident that he used the amendatory veto just as I was leaving the administration—and to me, this was a very revealing meeting. The bill sent to him basically outlawed what are known as partial-birth abortions. Now, Governor Edgar is pro-choice, but he also was someone who said that

[21] Governor Edgar used his amendatory veto July 15, 1995, changing the proposed law's language from saying Chief Illiniwek "shall" be an honored symbol to read "may." On October 20, the legislature failed to override his change by a vote of 61-49. The issue was put to rest November 30, when the U.S. Department of Education ruled Chief Illiniwek did not violate civil rights laws. See *Chicago Tribune* for July 16, October 21 and November 30, 1995.

he did believe in parental notification. So he wasn't ironclad pro-choice, but he was essentially pro-choice. He got the bill to outlaw partial-birth abortions, and he was favorably inclined to the legislation. He did not like the idea of partial-birth abortions even though he was pro-choice.

But his chief counsel at the time, Elena Kezelis, laid out for him all the details of the bill. She was an excellent chief counsel. And one of the things she pointed out to him was that the bill gave the biological father a course of action against the physician who performed the partial-birth abortion. That bothered the governor. I remember him distinctly saying, "You know, when men can have babies, they start having babies, then maybe I'll recognize rights for a biological father; but men aren't having the babies." He was in a position where he was being heavily pressured by the pro-choice people to outright veto the bill. He was being lobbied by the pro-life people to sign the bill. He decided to do an amendatory veto in which he took that cause of action away from the biological father. The rest of the bill, barring the partial-birth abortions, he left in place.

What that did was send it back to the legislature. It didn't make the pro-choice people happy, didn't make the pro-life people happy. It also raised the possibility that the bill could go into limbo with the change neither being accepted nor rejected. So from a political standpoint, it wasn't a particularly good decision for him because (laughs) he was making all sides unhappy, but in his mind, it was the right decision. I remember Elena and I walked out of that meeting and I remember turning to her and saying, "That's why I work for this guy." (DePue laughs) You know, it was a matter of principle with him.[22]

DePue: When you're talking about relations with the legislature, you're also talking about the personalities of the people in the legislature. So let's start right at the top with Mike Madigan, speaker of the House.

Lawrence: I had a lot of respect for Speaker Madigan. I've known him since he's been in the legislature. He's very disciplined. He outworks everybody in the capitol. And I would say that over the long haul, he has been a positive factor in the lawmaking process. He generally has been part of the solution instead of part of the problem—generally. Now, he and Governor Edgar had a very good working relationship when Edgar was secretary of state, even though they were of opposite parties. That didn't mean that Madigan gave Edgar everything he wanted—he didn't do that—but he was reasonable, and he was upfront. If he told Secretary Edgar he'd be with him on a piece of legislation, he was there. There were times when he told him he wouldn't be with him, but at least that was a factor Secretary Edgar knew he had to deal with; the opposition of the speaker or lack of support from the speaker.

[22] Governor Edgar amendatory vetoed the language, which would have granted biological fathers the right to file suit was issued July 17, 1997.

As I indicated earlier, Madigan got involved in the 1990 gubernatorial campaign because of the redistricting issue, or what was at stake in terms of redistricting. But I think Governor Edgar and I both felt that after he was declared the winner and he was going to be a fact of life for Speaker Madigan, they would resume the relationship they'd had when Edgar was secretary of state. That did not happen. During Edgar's first term, Speaker Madigan, from all appearances, had decided to be the anti-Edgar. They did not have the same relationship they had had when Edgar was secretary of state. They did business together. We did arrive at agreed-upon budgets. There were other things they agreed on. But he was very difficult to work with in many respects. Now, he was still upfront and very direct, so in that sense, he was easier to work with than other legislators who might say one thing and then do another. But he was very difficult for us, from our standpoint.

Over in the Senate, you had Phil Rock in his last two years as the Senate Democrat leader. Phil was someone who was relatively easy to work with from the standpoint that he wasn't as much of a chess player as Madigan. (laughs)

DePue: But another Democrat—was he a suburban Democrat?

Lawrence: Yeah. Phil Rock was from Oak Park. For example, when Thompson was governor and the state had a significant financial problem in 1983, Phil Rock, the Democrat leader, was the first guy out to support Thompson on a tax increase. Phil was less partisan than Speaker Madigan—in fact, I would say significantly less partisan than Speaker Madigan. So the Democrats were in control of both houses, and you had Madigan, who was more partisan, more of a legislative chess player. Phil Rock was more, "Let's just get things done; let's do it the best way we can for the good of the cause." Then among the Republican leaders, you had Pate Philip over in the Senate.

DePue: James "Pate" Philip.

Lawrence: Yeah, James "Pate" Philip.

DePue: Can you tell me where the "Pate" comes from?

Lawrence: I don't know where it comes from. I probably knew at one time and now I've forgotten. But anyway, Pate was very vocal. He was vocal particularly when he didn't agree with the governor. And then you had Lee Daniels, who wasn't necessarily as vocal, but was someone who was not as forthright as Senator Philip.

DePue: And Lee Daniels would be in the House side.

Lawrence: Yeah, he was the House Republican leader. With Pate, you knew where you stood at any given moment. He might change his mind on something, but at that moment, you knew what he was saying was what he meant and where he

stood at that time. Lee was a little more mysterious in terms of where he might end up on something.

DePue: Neither one of these gentlemen, Pate Philip or Daniels, sound like they were automatic supporters for what Governor Edgar was wanting to do.

Lawrence: No, they weren't; but I think there is a misconception that the governor's fellow party members are going to be fully cooperative with him in the legislature. When Governor Edgar was having problems with Senator Philip or Representative Daniels, the media were quick to say, Well, he's not a good ole boy; he doesn't drink with them the way that Governor Thompson did. But when they commented in that way, they really neglected the history.

There was a time when Governor Thompson was in office, when Senator Philip wouldn't take his phone calls for weeks. (DePue laughs) When Governor Thompson proposed that tax increase I talked about a few minutes ago, that Senator Rock embraced, he had to literally follow Philip around the capitol to get his leader, the Senate Republican leader, to introduce the bill. And when Senator Philip finally agreed to introduce the bill, for the one and only time, there was a notation, "introduced by request." Not only that, when Senator Philip was asked about the prospects for the bill he had introduced by request, he said, "It'll pass when hogs fly." And Governor Thompson had his problems with Representative Daniels. Governor Walker had his problems with Democrat leaders when he was governor, and he was a Democrat. Governor Blagojevich had major, major (DePue laughs) problems with the leaders of his party, particularly Speaker Madigan. So—

DePue: At a time when Democrats had an overwhelming majority in both houses.

Lawrence: In both houses. So Governor Edgar had strained relations with his leaders, the Republican leaders, from time to time. It was not all that unusual in the historic context. However, it gained attention because of the expectation that a governor somehow can control the leaders of his own party. And there's no question that there were a lot of things that Senator Philip and Representative Daniels, particularly Senator Philip, supported Governor Edgar on that Senator Philip was not very enthusiastic about. So there were times when he [Philip] did support a governor of his party when his own view might have differed. But there were also celebrated times—for example, when Governor Edgar proposed comprehensive school funding reform when Senator Philip killed that proposal. That was one of the major proposals of Governor Edgar's second term.

DePue: On this particular subject, I don't know how you cannot compare the style that Edgar used in dealing with the legislature versus the way that Thompson did it.

Lawrence: Well—

DePue: Where Thompson went down to the legislature and was not averse to sitting down right next to somebody while they're in the chair, et cetera.

Lawrence: Thompson was the exception on that, not Edgar. Governor Kerner didn't go on the floor of the legislature and do that. I don't believe Governor Stratton did it.

DePue: Walker certainly did not.

Lawrence: Walker didn't do it. I don't think Governor Stevenson did it. Thompson did it, and there were times he was successful doing that. I think Edgar was uncomfortable with that because he felt that the legislature was separate from the governor; and in many ways, it was a matter of style. But the fact of the matter is: Thompson was the exception there, not Edgar.

One significant difference, though... Thompson and Ryan were more inclined to go in the legislature and in the end say, "What do you want? Here's what I want. Let's agree we'll do them both"—and particularly when it came to the budget, that's how a budget can grow, Edgar would raise the question, "How are we going to pay for this?" (laughs) It is easier to have "good" legislative relations when you're going to let the other side—or not the other side, but the other parties involved, the other individuals involved—have what they want as long as they give you what you want. That is addition. That, a lot of times, is not compromise; it's addition. And that's—

DePue: And Edgar's not talking about addition; he's talking about subtraction?

Lawrence: Subtraction; or if you want new programs, how are we going to pay for them? We're not going to have any if we can't pay for them. That makes it a lot harder to deal with the legislature. Everybody talked about George Ryan's mastery in dealing with the legislature. Now, part of that, to give him credit; he came from the legislature, he knew the legislature very well, and he was well-liked in the legislature generally as an individual. But part of it was that George came in with a $1.5 billion cushion from Edgar, and he shot through that in about a year or a year and a half; and a good part of that was, "You got all this money. Here's what I want. Oh, yeah, you want this? Well, good, we can both have it." And that was Ryan's governmental style. To a lesser extent, it was Thompson's governmental style. It was not Edgar's governmental style.

DePue: The next topic is Edgar's relation with the other political power-to-be in Illinois, the mayor of Chicago; in this case, Richard M. Daley. How did he deal with Daley? How did they get along?

Lawrence: When Edgar was secretary of state and Daley was state's attorney of Cook County, they had a very good relationship. And Hartigan felt that Daley did not do enough for him in the 1990 campaign because perhaps he preferred to work with a Republican governor. Daley's dad had worked very well with Governor Stratton, for example, and with Governor Ogilvie. I don't know

what Daley's mindset was in that 1990 campaign. When Daley was asked about Hartigan's comments, he said something like, "What did he want me to do, take my pants down?" Now, I'm not sure exactly what that means. But the fact of the matter is that one of Edgar's first meetings with other major players after he got elected governor was with Mayor Daley. He went to Chicago and met with Mayor Daley. I think Governor Edgar anticipated they would have a good working relationship. They did work together on the expansion of McCormick Place. But at some point, their relationship went south.

DePue: The one that's oftentimes cited is the mass transit issue. The mayor oftentimes has his hand extended when it comes to Chicago-area mass transit. Do you recall anything on that?

Lawrence: There are two issues that spring to mind.

DePue: Meigs Field?

Lawrence: Well, you know what, that's the third issue. That came later. But one early on—Daley was advocating a third airport at Lake Calumet, and Edgar had some reservations about it. Kirk Brown, the secretary of transportation, was our point person on this. Ultimately, we did come to a position where Edgar did support that third airport at Lake Calumet. And he put Republican votes on—Edgar did. He made calls to Republican members of the House to get the bill passed out of the House. And it got over to the Senate. There was adamant opposition, particularly on the Republican side. Edgar worked the bill; they took a vote, it went down, and Daley immediately pulled the plug on the third airport. He said, "That's it. The governor didn't deliver the votes; we're out of here on this."[23]

Maybe from his standpoint, he would have a different perspective than the one I'm going to suggest. I've known Mayor Daley, and I respect Mayor Daley, but my belief at the time and today is that Mayor Daley used this as an excuse to get out of Lake Calumet. There had been a lot of opposition in Chicago to having that airport at Lake Calumet, a lot of opposition from Midway Airport people who thought it was going to detract. It is not unusual in the Illinois legislature to have a proposal go down on a roll call and then to bring it back later and have it approved, yet Mayor Daley quickly pulled the plug on it; and I thought it was an opportune moment for him to get out of something that was giving him some heat in Chicago. The mayor probably has another perspective on that, and I do respect and like Mayor Daley.

Another issue involved the city treasurer in Chicago, Marion Santos, who had been a Daley person but had done some things to annoy the mayor. The mayor wanted legislation passed that would remove her from—I think it was the city investment board. It was one of the boards in Chicago. He and

[23] June 30, 1992, Lake Calumet Airport opponents in the Senate, led by Pate Philip, killed the plan, 33-25. *Chicago Tribune*, July 1, 1992.

Governor Edgar met privately on this, and the mayor's version is that Governor Edgar agreed to sign the legislation. The governor's version, which I'm going to choose to believe even though I greatly respect the mayor, is that he told the mayor he would not make a commitment to sign it, and he also told him that he didn't think it was particularly good politics for the mayor to go after her in this way. Now, the reason I'm inclined to believe the governor's version is, first of all, I worked for the guy. I wouldn't work for a guy that would come out and tell me something that wasn't true. And the other thing is that would be more consistent in my view with Edgar taking the approach, Do we really want to change a law because of this one problem you got? Anyway, Edgar vetoed the bill, and Daley went ballistic.

So those were two pretty significant episodes. One of the things about the mayor is that he doesn't like to be told no, and he's not accustomed to being told no. (DePue laughs) And when he is told no, he doesn't have a very positive reaction. So there were times they did work together, and there were also times when the Daley people wanted things out of Edgar, and it wasn't so much that he did them because he wanted to do it; he did them because it was consistent with what he thought was right.

But I remember, for example, having a meeting with a senior aide to Daley who I had gotten to know, Tim Degnan. I'd gotten to know Tim when he was a state senator and I was a journalist, and Tim would either call me, or I might call him and say, "Hey, are there ways that the mayor and the governor could work together?" And at one of these meetings—I won't give you the long story on it—but the basic story was that—this was during a time when the Republicans held majorities in both houses of the legislature, in the two-year period that that occurred.

DePue: Ninety-five, ninety-seven.

Lawrence: Correct. And the Republican legislators were making a big deal out of passing legislation that basically would take O'Hare Airport away from the city and give it to a suburban commission. So Degnan, when we sat down, said, "There are three things I want to talk to you about from our standpoint," and the first thing he brought up was this idea of grabbing O'Hare Airport. And I said, "The governor has spoken publicly on that. He will not sign that legislation. He's been asked about it. He will veto the legislation if it reaches his desk." There was a second matter, and I can't recall what it was, but there was another case where I was confident, based on the governor's pronouncements and statements that he made either publicly or to me that he would act consistent with what Daley was seeking.

The third thing he brought up was that (laughs) the Republican majorities were going to pass legislation that would take away a pay raise for Chicago aldermen and the mayor that had been approved recently, and the Republican legislators were going to roll back that raise with state legislation.

And Tim said, "That's personal." I said, "Well, Tim. You brought up three items; each one of them, you said it's personal." And I said, "This one, I can clearly see why it's personal. This is money going into the mayor's pocket that the Republicans are trying to take out of his pocket, so I understand that." And I said, "I have to tell you, I haven't talked to Governor Edgar about this and I haven't heard him say anything publicly about it, so I can't respond on the same basis I've responded to the first two, and I can't make any commitment"—I would not make any commitment—"but I will tell you"—I said, "I think Governor Edgar philosophically has been reluctant to have the state interfere in local government." And I said, "From what I know of him, I'd be somewhat surprised—or even just surprised flat-out, not 'somewhat'—if he were going to allow this kind of thing retroactively." But I said, "I can't tell you on that one. I can't make a commitment."

The bill got to the governor, the pay raise bill, and he vetoed it. And we never heard a word from the city on that. You know, "Hey, we appreciate it." Nothing. That's all right. But a few days later, Daley was in the paper just blasting Edgar on something else. So there's no question that Edgar and Daley did not have a smooth relationship. It was rockier than we anticipated. They did work together on some major things like expansion of McCormick Place, but there's no question that it was not a smooth relationship. And I'm sure that Mayor Daley and his people would have a different perspective as to why it was not smooth than we do, but from our perspective, it seemed as if the mayor was more vocal about being told no than he was about situations where we worked together.

DePue: Were discussions about new stadiums or new casinos also part of it?

Lawrence: That's right. Down the road. Daley at one time proposed putting a land-based casino in Chicago, or he may have wanted to put it in non-navigable water.[24] I can't remember all the detail. What was interesting about that was that when Daley was state's attorney, and then later as mayor, he didn't want a casino in Chicago. When the riverboat casino legislation was passed and then they were looking to expand it, Daley at one point as mayor said he didn't want to be part of that, and as state's attorney earlier, he had been opposed to it.

DePue: That was at the tail end of Thompson's administration?

Lawrence: Yes. So Edgar opposed the casino, in part because he wasn't crazy about the riverboat legislation to begin with, which as you indicated, had been approved at the end of the Thompson administration. But the other factor was this: the law as it stood limited these casinos to navigable water. In some ways, that was a fiction, and the reason I say that is these boats didn't sail a whole lot. So one might argue this isn't about going out on the water, it's about gambling,

[24] In March 1992, Daley backed a $2 billion proposal by Circus Circus Enterprises, Hilton Hotels, and Caesar's World to construct a 3 million-square foot casino and entertainment complex on land near downtown Chicago. *Chicago Tribune*, March 24-25, 1992.

even though when the legislation was approved, the argument was this would increase tourism. People would go out on boats; they'd gamble a little bit. The main factor from the governor's standpoint was if you get away from the navigable water requirement, even if that requirement is a little misleading in reality, then where are you going to draw the line? You're going to tell people all over the state who want land-based casinos, "No, you can't have one?" So the navigable water requirement, in reality, wasn't so these boats could sail, but was a way of limiting gambling in Illinois.

DePue: Was there something in the original legislation that prevented them from building a casino on Lake Michigan proper?

Lawrence: I think there was, although I don't have a specific recollection. But I do remember that Edgar went to Chicago to give a significant speech on this issue during the height of the controversy over it. And during most of that speech, he quoted negative comments about having a casino in Chicago, and the author of those comments (DePue laughs) had been Mayor Daley at one time.[25]

DePue: I suspect he might have enjoyed making those comments. (laughs)

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: In terms of relations, the other one that always needs to come up is his relation with the press. How was that?

Lawrence: I think generally he had a good relationship with the media.

DePue: Did he have a tough act to follow with Jim Thompson?

Lawrence: Thompson was very gregarious. Thompson had come in after Dan Walker, and Dan Walker had been at war with the media, so right from the get-go, Thompson was viewed as someone who was media-friendly. But I think reporters at that time would tell you that Edgar was accessible. He held news conferences frequently; he held availabilities frequently. He was not one to duck questioning. In fact, he enjoyed the back-and-forth with the press, particularly the Springfield press corps, because in his view, they were the ones who knew state government the best. Now, he would lecture them occasionally on what they ought to be writing about (DePue laughs) versus what they were writing about, and I think some did not take kindly to his lecturing. But he was available, and he was responsive to the questions. Some of it may have been he wasn't as quotable as Thompson, for example. I mean, there can be that kind of thing.

[25] A few hours after Mayor Daley made his case for the casino project at the Palmer House Hilton, Governor Edgar gave a speech to the Better Government Association's fundraising dinner at the Ritz-Carlton in Chicago on November 16, 1992. *Chicago Tribune*, November 17, 1992, 1.

My own relations with the press corps—I had come from the press room; I had been there for many years—and I think the people who dealt with me at that time would say that I returned their phone calls; they would say I did not lie to them, I did not mislead them. I think they would say that when I spoke, I was credible, because they knew I was a part of the policymaking in the administration and spoke with knowledge and authority. (phone rings) They would also probably say that I was too critical of them on occasion. And they would say that I was too defensive of Edgar.

I had my moments with individual reporters on individual stories, but I think they knew that I respected them, I respected the job they had to do, and I respected their role in the state government arena. But there were times when I'd call them up and give them a piece of my mind over something, (DePue laughs) and in a pretty spirited way. Now, one of the things I tried to stay away from was making a blanket indictment on a journalist. I might be unhappy with a particular story, but I was not going to accuse the journalist of having a bias against Edgar or me. I tried to keep the criticism specific to the story. And not all press secretaries have done that. There have been some who have made blanket accusations about journalists and about specific journalists.

DePue: How would you rate their coverage of the administration? Do you think it was balanced, fair, biased?

Lawrence: I think their coverage was fair. I had problems with individual stories, but overall, I think it was fair. I don't think there were hidden agendas on their part. We had better relations with some journalists than with others, but I would say overall, they did a good job. I'm going to have criticisms of what they did, but those criticisms, I need to recognize, are based on my own perspective at that time. One of the things that troubles me about coverage of politics and government—and this doesn't just apply to the Edgar years, it really applies today, and it applied even before the Edgar years—there's a tendency to cover the horse race—who's ahead, who's behind, winners and losers—to focus on personalities rather than the substance of the issues, and not to provide historical context when it might be helpful.

When Edgar was having his problems with Philip and Daniels, there was very little written about the fact that Thompson had had problems with Philip and Daniels. And I do think context is important and that historical context is particularly important. It's not that the media don't give any attention to the substance of issues, but that they don't give enough attention to the substance of issues. And I would make that criticism of the media today; that's not just something that happened in the Edgar years.

DePue: How well did Edgar take criticism he got from media? Was he thick-skinned?

Lawrence: I felt when I went to work for him that he was too thin-skinned. He became thicker-skinned, significantly thicker-skinned, as the years went by. I mean,

when I first went to work for him, he might be upset over a line in a gossip column, and that changed. He did get to a point where criticism that would have bothered him at one time did not bother him as much. But you know, I need to be fair and others need to be fair to a politician. We expect them to be thick-skinned; we say, Well, you put yourself out there; you got to expect the criticism. I think that's valid. They do put themselves out there; they do have to expect criticism. On the other hand, it's not my name in the paper when the criticism went to the administration, unless it was some rare deal; it was Edgar's name.

And I think what I have perceived is a lot of journalists who will talk about politicians being thin-skinned are far more thin-skinned (DePue laughs) than the politicians. When they get criticized, especially by name, they get very, very defensive. And I think that's human nature. I don't say that as a condemnation of the journalist; I say that as an observation that it isn't easy to be criticized. It isn't easy to be publicly criticized. And some criticism is a lot easier to shrug off than other criticism. If you've got some crackpot out there criticizing you, that's one thing, but if you have a respected editorial page criticizing you over something that you think you don't deserve criticism for, it's another thing.

DePue: Would he lash out himself or would he rely on you as his press secretary?

Lawrence: He rarely lashed out himself. That wasn't his style. He did some lecturing—I alluded to that earlier. But generally what would happen is I would have ran my five miles, and I'd get to the office about 8:00 or 8:30. I would have read the news from the night before. I would get reports on what was in the newspaper, what was on television. And fortunately for me, he was a little later to rise in the morning than I was, so it might be 9:00, 9:30—and this wouldn't happen every day, but it happened almost every day—I'd get a call. By that time, he would have gotten the same reports I'd gotten.

Some days were not eventful, but almost every day there's going to be something in the media to make a governor happy or unhappy; and usually every day there's something there—even if there's a lot to make him happy—to make him unhappy. So, particularly after his heart problem in '93, when he had the angioplasty and went on an exercise regimen and a diet regimen, a lot of times he would be on his treadmill when he would call me. And I sometimes had difficulty discerning whether he was that exercised over a story or whether the exercise was the reason he was kind of gasping into the phone. (laughs)

A lot of times, if he was really upset—I may have already made the call to the media person, and I would tell him that, and that seemed to take care of it. There were times when he said, You call so-and-so and blah, blah, blah, and tell them this, and I said, "Nah, I don't think I'm going to do that." (laughter) And he'd be all right. "Okay," he'd say, "they're your people," or

something like that, but he had had the opportunity to vent about it. And you know what? He deserved that opportunity to vent. That's the way I regarded it. If nothing else, if he could vent to me, that was fine. So I was fortunate in that I think he had a lot of confidence in me in dealing with the media. He might say, "Call so-and-so and tell them this." But if I said, "Well, I don't think so; I don't think we ought to make that call," he understood that I made a lot of calls on his behalf when I thought it was worth doing.

DePue: Let's change gears here a little bit and get back to the budget issue. So much of the first couple of years was focused on those budget battles. It should be noted that the first and second years of his administration, were tough economic times in the entire country and for the state of Illinois. You're dealing with a recession, higher unemployment rates, and a greater outflow of things like welfare and Medicaid payments. You've talked about it quite a bit already, but let's get up to the point where you're getting to that stage when you ought to be getting the budget agreement. We're talking about a May timeframe. What was the dialogue like at that time?

Lawrence: Actually, the timeframe at that time would have been July, I think. Right?

DePue: I know that the first year—

Lawrence: The first year we went past July 1.

DePue: Correct, and he actually missed a payroll, one payroll, in the process, before the budget came in.

Lawrence: I'm not sure I specifically remember that, but I'm not going to dispute it. I do know we had an extraordinarily long session. As I indicated earlier, part of that was due to the fact that we had Democrat majorities in both houses, and we were asking Democrats to cut programs that their constituents tend to like. So it would have been surprising if they said, Oh, sure, just go on in and eliminate general assistance for able-bodied adults, and we'll eliminate dental care for adults. It would have been surprising if we had said that and they said, Yeah, go ahead and do it. So that accounts for some of the length. We were asking them to do tough things, things they don't like to do. They don't like to cut.

And by the way, I said Democrat constituencies, but there were Republicans who weren't excited about cutting. For example, when we talked about dental care for low-income adults, Republicans were hearing from the Dental Society. (DePue laughs) And when we were talking about trimming back some other benefits, Republicans were hearing from businesses that provide those services to low-income people. So even though the Democrats in some ways were reacting to constituencies that were responsive to low-income people and the needs of low-income people, the fact is, Republicans weren't all that excited about some of these cuts either because they were

hearing from the providers of these services. So it isn't easy. It's easy to get a budget together when you've got a lot of money and you can trade: "What do you want; what do we want?"

But there were other factors besides the cuts. For one thing, the governor had proposed property tax caps, and he wanted that in his first term. So the property tax caps became part of the difficulty in getting an agreement that would end the session. The Republicans in the legislature wanted property tax caps as well, and when we went into overtime, now we needed Republican votes as well as Democrat votes in order to pass the budget. Once we went beyond the deadline—and I'm thinking then it was July first, but it changed at some point; now we have an earlier deadline.

DePue: That was a matter of constitutional amendment in '94, was it not?

Lawrence: So in '91, then, I believe the deadline was July 1.

DePue: At the beginning of the fiscal year.

Lawrence: Yeah, after July 1, you needed three-fifths majorities to pass a budget. My point being that you needed Republican votes on the budget. Republicans wanted tax caps; Edgar wanted tax caps as well. The Democrats were not particularly excited about them because a lot of local governments didn't want them.

DePue: Were the property tax caps primarily a suburban Chicago issue?

Lawrence: It was at that time a Chicago metropolitan area issue, primarily the suburbs. There had been double-digit growth year after year in property taxes, and Edgar had promised during the campaign to put caps on, and wanted to keep that promise. In fact, I remember the Illinois Education Association had supported us during the campaign because Edgar was for keeping the income tax surcharge on and Hartigan was against it. They had been good supporters of ours, but Edgar had said during the campaign he was for property tax caps. I ran into one of the chief lobbyists for the Illinois Education Association when we were hung up at the end of the session. He said, "You know, you could end this thing if you'd get off those caps." I said, "The governor said during the campaign he wanted the caps." And this guy said, "We didn't think he was serious." (laughter) And I said, "Well, he was, and we're not getting off of it." So, that was part of it. And then there was an element of testing the new governor, I'm convinced of that, by the Democrats. They tested him, and he held out.

DePue: That's my question. Was this an element of brinkmanship on his part as well?

Lawrence: I don't think it was brinkmanship, in the sense—he really wanted the session to be over, but there were certain things he wanted to accomplish, and he was not going to go out of that session without having those things accomplished.

DePue: Let's discuss the Republican National Convention in 1992. Anything stick in your mind about that particular convention?

Lawrence: Only that it was the convention from hell.

DePue: Was it San Diego that year?

Lawrence: No, '92 would have been Houston.

DePue: And Bush is running for reelection.

Lawrence: To me, that was the convention from hell. As I indicated earlier, I tend to be moderate, and the right-wingers were clearly in control of that convention. You had Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan speaking in prime time, and Ronald Reagan speaking after prime time—what's wrong with that picture? And it went down to even the delegation level, the Illinois delegation level. Illinois Republicans tend to be pragmatic and non-ideological, except there is an element in the Republican Party that is fiercely conservative, and they were feeling their oats during that convention. And it was just not a good tone to that convention. I thought it was a negative, spiteful tone. I don't think the tone of that convention did George Bush one bit of good. Conventions are hard work anyway for staff people for a variety of reasons, but this one was just unpleasant.

DePue: As the governor of Illinois, a major Midwestern state, with both a strong industrial and agricultural base, there's inevitably discussion about, Is this guy presidential material? How much of a discussion was going on about Jim Edgar at that time?

Lawrence: For one thing, in order for there to be that discussion, the governor has got to want to have that out there. I never felt that Jim Edgar had a burning desire to be president. From an early age, he wanted to be governor of Illinois, and I think he saw that as the pinnacle of his career. The closest he would have come to seriously considering being in the national limelight was in 1996—not '92, but '96—and there was speculation about him as a vice-presidential running mate for Senator Dole.

He and Senator Dole had a good relationship. I think when possible vice-presidential choices were mentioned, Edgar was usually included in the top ten to twelve possibilities. And I think he enjoyed being on the list, but I never sensed he was tremendously interested in it. After Dole chose Jack Kemp to be his running mate, Edgar did say, "Well, it might have been interesting (DePue laughs) to be a vice presidential candidate and be in a national campaign." That's the closest I ever heard him express any desire to run for a national office. He knew what it took to run for governor of Illinois, and he did not have the kind of extraordinary desire you have to have to run for president. He didn't have that kind of desire.

DePue: One of the problems that Edgar inherited when he got to the office of governor was the Department of Child and Family Services—I'm going to use the word it was in somewhat of disarray before I let you respond here. You can challenge whether or not that's appropriate. But as I understand it, in 1988, the whole department was placed under court supervision because of some significant problems. You mentioned early on that anything to do with children was something very near and dear to his heart, so can you talk about the kinds of things he was trying to accomplish there, especially early on?

Lawrence: At the end of the Thompson administration, I think there was some progress being made there. The department had been in disarray for many, many years. But Jess McDonald was a director of the department at the end of the Thompson administration. And if I remember correctly, the department began—either entered into a consent decree or put the wheels in motion to enter into a consent decree in order to make certain changes, including reducing the case load for DCFS caseworkers, and other things.[26] We came in. Edgar had made this campaign promise to replace all of Thompson's cabinet members, or at least not keep them in the same position, and even though there was a perception that Jess McDonald was starting to turn things around at DCFS, Edgar kept his campaign promise, and put Sue Suter in there as director.

I respect Sue, but her background had been one of being more of an advocate than a manager, and I think that there came a point fairly soon into the administration when it was determined, I think perhaps mutually, that there ought to be a change there. And if I remember right, we went with Mac Ryder for a while, a very honorable public servant who I think may have been the chief legal counsel there under Sue.[27] But there were continued problems. There needed to be a major attitudinal adjustment.

DePue: Within that department?

Lawrence: Yeah. First of all, the department is dealing with situations that are horrific. The abuse and neglect of children is just—it is an outrage on our society that this happens. And no matter what the department does, there are going to be cases where terrible things happen to kids, and there will be indications that the department did not do everything it could do. So you got to think about that environment. The attitude at the department, though, was largely to circle the wagons when you'd have one of these. They would give out very little information; they would be very defensive.

[26] In August, 1990, DCFS head Jess McDonald started talks with the various groups that had filed lawsuits against DCFS, seeking to consolidate and settle the suits out of court through a consent decree. The ACLU's suit, filed in 1988, was the most broad ranging, and it was finally settled in August 1991, when U.S. District Judge John Grady gave preliminary approval to the 69-page consent decree that outlined a comprehensive reform of DCFS. *Chicago Tribune* August 13, 1990 and August 30, 1991.

[27] Sue Suter resigned August 6, 1992. Sterling "Mac" Ryder became acting director of the agency until his resignation May 17, 1994. *Chicago Tribune* August 6, 1991 and May 21, 1994.

DePue: Can we bring out a couple specifics here to—

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: Maybe I can help you real quickly. Joseph Wallace; that's the young boy who was actually hung by his mother.

Lawrence: Yeah. Joseph Wallace was a very publicized case, but it became a major issue, and should have become a major issue, both for the people of Illinois and for the administration. In this case, there was a woman who had had a long history of involvement with the department and mental health issues from the time she was a child. There had been a fire in her unit of the apartment building. It hadn't amounted to much, but the caseworker went to the apartment building, asked the superintendent or somebody in authority about the fire, was told, It was no problem, and left. Then Joseph Wallace was found hanged, and his mother had done that. She had put him on a chair, put a noose around his neck, and then kicked away the chair. If I remember right, the noose was attached to some kind of a lamp or some kind of appliance on the ceiling. It's an outrageous, devastating case.

Our administration did an internal investigation—in fact, I was very much involved in it—and we determined that the caseworker was responsible; but there were supervisors who had not done their job, and we dismissed them. We took a great deal of criticism from the union over that, but the fact that we had investigated, we had taken action of the kind we did, really sent a message to the department and the workers in the department that we knew their jobs were very, very tough, but they had to do them better and would be held accountable.

DePue: Was there an increase in the staffing?

Lawrence: Yes. During the Edgar years, we increased the staffing. Now, part of that was due to the consent decree that we entered, which required it. In a way, that was fine, because that was always a good argument to the legislature; that we didn't have to sit around and hold discussions with them about the merits of X caseload versus Y caseload. There was a consent decree that dictated what the caseload was. But the other significant factor here was that Governor Edgar had brought Jess McDonald back into the administration as director of Mental Health, and then he moved him over to be director of DCFS. Remember, the feeling was Jess had been doing a good job as director of DCFS at the end of the Thompson administration, and we eventually put him back into that job. I think he did an outstanding job.

At the same time, we brought in people like Martha Allen, who had been a television reporter in Chicago. And Martha did a great deal at that department, with the support of Jess, to make it more transparent. A big part of the issue had been that the department was inclined to circle the wagons

and give out very little information, and to be very, very defensive when there was a case that came to public attention. I want to emphasize; this is a department that has an extremely tough job, and no matter how good it is, there will be cases where mistakes are made because you have human beings involved; not only the children and the parents, but caseworkers who are human beings as well. And I'll tell you, there aren't a whole lot of us who would be a DCFS caseworker—it wouldn't be something I'd want to do—and we're fortunate to have people who do that job. But acknowledging that, they have to be held accountable. I think currently, there's some issues because the Blagojevich administration had reduced the staff at DCFS, and there's some indications that some of the problems we saw back in the sixties, seventies, eighties and early nineties are coming back.

DePue: This next incident was certainly notorious—I don't know if it has anything directly to do with DCFS—the nineteen kids who were found in that Chicago apartment, Keystone? I think they were [called] the Keystone 19.[28]

Lawrence: Yeah. I certainly remember the Keystone 19 and that being an issue. I have to tell you, I don't remember it with the specifics that I remember the Joseph Wallace case.

DePue: This one also got an awful lot of press and went on for a long time: the Baby Richard case; an adoption case waged from 1991 to 1995. Custody of three-year-old Richard was awarded to his biological father by the state supreme court after three years with the adoptive parents, and Edgar protested that decision.

Lawrence: Yeah, he did. That had a profound affect on the governor and the first lady. This was a situation where this child was being taken away from the only parents he really had known. If I remember right, the mother had consented, and there was some issue with the biological father over whether he had to have consented at the time. The courts held that the biological father should have the child, and the governor and the first lady were really upset over it.

DePue: So this was a personal thing with them?

Lawrence: It was. They didn't know any of the parties to the situation, but personal in the impact it had on them. I can remember that there was a major address that the governor was going to be giving, and he always liked to lock in on the speech maybe a couple of days before the speech. By "locking in," I mean be comfortable with the final draft of the speech, so he could rehearse it a few times on the teleprompter. Well, he walked in the morning of this speech, and I can't remember whether it was a State of the State or the budget, but he said he wanted to talk about Baby Richard in this speech.

[28] See *Chicago Tribune* February 2, 1994.

And that was fine. We worked with it that morning of the speech and got the language and got it on the teleprompter, but what struck me about that was that Edgar—part of his discipline was to not wait until the last minute to be putting things in the speech, like with Governor Thompson, for example. I remember coming to one of Governor Thompson's major addresses, when his staff was handing him copies—at that time, there wasn't a teleprompter—of the text, pages that weren't ready when he went to the rostrum. The reason was he'd been fiddling with his speech right up until the last minute. (DePue laughs) Edgar liked to be prepared, and well prepared, and so this was an indication of how strongly he felt about this subject; that he was willing to go back into the speech the morning of the speech.

Adoption had been a major component of Edgar's program for children, beginning with his campaign for governor. He had proposed, during the campaign, Project Heart, which was aimed at streamlining the adoption process and putting more emphasis on adoptions. And I think one of the substantial accomplishments of the Edgar administration was dramatically increasing the number of adoptions in Illinois.[29]

DePue: Simplifying the whole process.

Lawrence: Yeah, simplifying it, and it made it more of a priority for DCFS and other agencies to seek permanent placement for kids. So the Baby Richard case, it was a dramatic case, it touched the Edgars deeply, but it's not like this was a new interest to them. Adoption was something they cared deeply about personally, and also from a policy position.

DePue: Did it play well in the press? Did the public generally support his position?

Lawrence: I think the public did generally support his position, but the supreme court didn't it like it, particularly Justice Heiple. But the fact of the matter is, the public was engaged on this, I would say simultaneously with the Edgars' becoming engaged, because there was a columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, Bob Green, who had written many, many columns on this case.

DePue: It was apparently selling newspapers.

Lawrence: Well, maybe it was. I don't think that was the only thing. But Bob really got on it. He wrote pretty much a daily column. It was not unusual for him to have several days in a row when he would be writing about Baby Richard.

DePue: Did Governor Edgar take Justice Heiple to task directly?

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[29] Governor Edgar announced Project HEART (Helping to Erase Adoption Red Tape) in his first State of the State address, February 13, 1991, and Brenda Edgar organized the project and formally launched it November 4, 1991. The number of DCFS wards permanently placed increased from 724 in FY1992 to 7275 in FY 1999. *Illinois Issues* (January 1992), 33. Data from DCFS Wards Adopted FY1976-2007," Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/adoption/index.shtml.

Lawrence: I don't know that he ever did it personally.

DePue: But through the media?

Lawrence: He was critical, although the governor's style was not to be critical of individuals on a personal basis. But he was critical of the decision and the attitude of the court and the attitude of the justices.

DePue: Let's get to the flood of 1993. And to set the stage on it a little bit—

Lawrence: Excuse me, but before we do that, could we take a little break?

DePue: We sure could.

(pause in recording)

DePue: We're back at it after a very quick break. We're just about ready to get into the flood of 1993, and to set things up: it had been a wet 1992 for the upper Midwest—or the fall season, at least. As I recall, there was plenty of snow cover for the north Midwest region. And then, 1993, [during] that very unusual summer—May, June, and July—the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois were just inundated with a much higher level of rainfall. So this was a flood on massive—Biblical, almost—proportions. And it required a lot of very tough decisions, I would think, for the governor. When did it first become obvious that this was going to be something that the governor and the administration were going to have to respond to in a very significant way?

Lawrence: I think it was being forecast a few weeks ahead of time, but I'm not sure any of us realized what a mammoth effort it would require. If I may, just for context here, you really have to go back to the fall of 1990; because after Edgar got elected in November, within a week or two after, there was what they called the New Governors Conference in Kentucky. These were senior governors talking to the newly elected governors, and Governor Edgar took me along on that trip. And the senior governors emphasized to the new governors, I know right now you're thinking about how you're going to pay for health care, how big your education budget is going to be, but one of the things you need to do is make sure that you are equipped as an administration and as a governor to deal with emergencies and natural disasters. It's not something that you campaigned about, but it is something that you will have to deal with, more than likely, as governor, and you will be judged by how you respond in times of great need for your constituents.

So as we entered our battle with the great flood of 1993, Governor Edgar was mindful of how important it was to deal with the situation as capably and compassionately as he could. Now, I don't think that Governor Edgar and I were thinking about a flood of epic proportions when we were

sitting in that New Governors meeting—we were probably thinking about tornados.

DePue: And he got a couple of those, too.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. But this was an unusual disaster in the sense that when you do have a tornado, you have the episode and then you're dealing with the aftermath of it. In this case, this was unfolding over a period of weeks and months, and so you were dealing with trying to mitigate the damage—by deployment of Guard troops and working with local communities on sandbagging and levee-shoring efforts—at the same time you're also dealing with people who have been displaced by the flood. And it was ongoing.

DePue: How did he go about organizing the administration to deal with the crisis?

Lawrence: Of course, all his senior staff people in the administration were involved in one way or another—if not all, certainly (laughs) almost all of us were. From an agency perspective, the point agency would have been the Emergency Management Agency, but you had several cabinet departments involved, and one of the keys there was to coordinate the efforts of these departments. One of the senior staff members who played a key role in this was Al Grosboll.

DePue: To get all of the various agencies to work together?

Lawrence: To coordinate their activities. There was a flood center established. If I remember right, it was staffed by people from the various departments who literally were sitting in a room together.

DePue: That, I'm sure, was in the basement of the Emergency Management Agency, where they had their operation center.

Lawrence: I think it was, yeah.

DePue: I noticed on the list of directors here that IEMA—Illinois Emergency Management Agency—had a director change in 1993. Do you recall that? Was that in conjunction with the flood? It went from John Plunk to John Mitchell.

Lawrence: John Plunk was there for the flood, and as far as I know... John did a very good job for us during the flood, so... (laughs) I had forgotten that he may have left in that year, but I think if he left, he left voluntarily. He wasn't kicked out because he did a decent job for us.

DePue: Maybe month after month of around-the-clock work (laughs)—it would wear anybody out.

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: Any challenges or difficulties getting some of the other agencies of government to support?

Lawrence: Not really. If the governor makes it clear he wants something to happen, it's going to happen. Where you have the most difficulty in getting agencies to work with each other is in a situation where the governor may not be passionate about it getting done, and so the bureaucracies are going to operate the way bureaucracies typically do. But in this case, the governor made it clear that this was a priority, and he wanted everybody in the administration who ought to be involved in this to be involved and to do it with commitment and dedication.

DePue: How about working with the federal government?

Lawrence: Our relations in working with the federal government were good. Somebody could have a different recollection of that, but as I sit here, I don't remember any significant problems. Any time you have agencies working together, issues may come up; any time you have a local government working with a state, issues may arise; or the state working with the feds, issues may arise. But as I recall it, we all realized we were in one heck of a situation, and we needed to forget or overlook some minor differences and all pitch in for the good of the cause.

DePue: I'm thinking it might have been a bit of a stretch when the governor or somebody makes the decision to get the Department of Corrections involved in terms of turning out some manpower. Was that a tough decision to make? Was that an unusual decision to make?

Lawrence: It was made in consultation with the officials at the Department of Corrections, and the kind of prisoners who were released for flood duty—when I say "released," I don't mean from the prison system, but freed from being behind prison walls to going out and working on the dike—I think the prison officials were confident that they would have the right kind of prisoner out on those dikes. I don't recall any significant episodes involving prisoners; in fact, I think the prisoners enjoyed doing something other than the normal prison routine. We did get positive feedback from a lot of communities who felt the prisoners were helpful in helping them shore up the levees.

DePue: How about the governor's attempt to outreach? Did he get out and about and see a lot of the damage?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He was out on almost a daily basis. I recall being with him on several helicopter flights and seeing this unbelievable situation where you're looking at maybe a little bit of a chimney of a house. And then, of course, he would land the helicopter. He did help in some sandbagging efforts, but the main purpose for the governor was to get a firsthand look at the situation and what was being done, but also show the communities and the

individuals that he cared about them. There's always the question when a governor comes into an area, whether the things done to accommodate the governor are going to deter from dealing with the disaster directly. Governor Edgar was sensitive to that, but he felt it was very important for him to get a firsthand view and personally tell people in these communities that he was going to do everything he could to help them, not only as they were fighting the flood but as they were dealing with the aftermath of the flood.

DePue: Do you have any personal memories, anecdotes of that time?

Lawrence: Yeah, I do. I did not talk about this publicly until Governor Edgar talked about it publicly. As he was leaving office, he offered a reprise on his years in government, and there was one episode in particular that he talked about. It wasn't the only episode he talked about, but one of them was the weekend of July 4th. I was at home, and I got a call from a reporter from The Associated Press in Chicago, who told me that a state representative from Quincy was complaining because he had asked for the National Guard to come out and been told that the National Guard would not come out. I sure didn't remember any request like that to the governor's office, so I told the AP reporter that I was going to check it out and get back to him, and asked the AP reporter if he would hold off on the story at least long enough to let me get back. I said, "I'll be back in an hour." He said fine.

Then I called the state representative directly. It was actually Representative Art Tenhouse from Quincy. I said, "Art, did you ask the governor's office to call out the National Guard, because," I said, "that's what I'm told you told The AP." And he said, "Well, Mike, they may not have gotten it exactly right, but I did ask for the National Guard to be called out, and I was told no." And I said, "Well, who'd you make the request to?" He said, "John Plunk." I called John, and I said, "John, Art Tenhouse said he made a request to call the National Guard out, and you told him no." And he said, "I told him no after I called the general, and he told me that the National Guard was engaged in some other activity and that it generally didn't do things like this."

So I said, "John, do you think the National Guard should be called out? You know the situation there right now. Do you think it should be called out?" He said, "Yes, I do, Mike." And I said, "Well, you know, our forefathers put the civilian in charge of the military, and the civilian is getting ready to exercise its power." (laughter) I said, "Now, what I will do is, as soon as we hang up, I'm going to call Governor Edgar. I'm going to recommend to him that the National Guard be called out." I said, "I don't know what they told you about not normally doing these things, but I remember as a reporter back in 1965 covering the Great Flood on the Mississippi, and there were Guard people all over those levees." And I said, "I think they may be out right now in Missouri, but in any event, I want you to call the general and tell him (watch beeps) I'm going to be calling the governor and recommending to the

governor that he call the Guard out; and if the governor agrees with my recommendation, I'm going to go right into the office; I'm going to issue a press release. I want you to tell the general that I'll be calling him, if the governor approved my recommendation, as soon as I get to the office to get the specific units that will be called out." John said okay. So I called the governor, I laid it out for the governor, and he said, "Yeah, I agree with your recommendation. Call them out." I went to the office, called the general, got the units that would be activated, then put out a press release right away. Well—

DePue: Was that General Lynn that you were calling? General Don Lynn would have been the adjutant general at that time.

Lawrence: It could have been. I don't remember—and I hope I don't offend him (laughs) by saying I don't remember or in my depiction of this, but this is the way it was told to me by John Plunk when I called him. So Governor Edgar noted as he was doing this reprise over his years in public service that this may have been the one and only time in the history of Illinois when a press secretary called out the National Guard. (laughter) And the National Guard under the direction of the general did a great job once it was mobilized—did an outstanding job. In fact, a week or two later, we were in Quincy, and the general himself was there, and he came up to me and said, "This has been great. I think we've done a lot of good here. The community really appreciates what we've done." So it worked out well for the Guard, and it certainly worked out well for the citizens of Quincy and around there.

DePue: I know just a little bit about that because I was in the National Guard at the time. That timing of July 4th would have coincided with units just getting done with their annual training or in the midst of annual training. And I know from what I read that it was July 13th, when the crest hit Quincy, so maybe they got there in time.

Lawrence: Yeah, they did get there in time, and they did a lot of good. Like I say, the general may have felt that he had valid reasons for telling John Plunk no, but I think it was good that we called out the Guard. I feel good about that decision.

DePue: What was the governor's mood during all of this?

Lawrence: He was very focused on the flood. We had a legislative session going on at that time, so he had to deal with the legislative session, but he felt strongly that it had to be an overriding priority for us to deal with this flood.

DePue: Was he upbeat through all of it?

Lawrence: Yeah, I think he was genuinely upbeat through it. He felt like this was a test of his stewardship and that one of the reasons he was in the office was to respond to situations like this, and he liked the management aspect of it. He wasn't

happy about people being dislocated, but he did feel like he was doing a job that he was there to do.

DePue: There was a lot of discussion about levees and about whether or not we should allow communities behind levees that we knew would eventually be breached, and there were certainly plenty of examples where there were breached levees and indiscriminate flooding—you already described some of that yourself. What was the administration's thought about lessons learned?

Lawrence: I don't recall specifically. I do remember we were involved literally in moving a town, but... my recollection, and it is a little vague, is that we were interested in trying to learn from what happened there. But this is a difficult thing to deal with. I spent several years in the Quad Cities, and you would have people who routinely were flooded out, then they would go back in, and there was encroachment on the flood plain even after you'd have these episodes. And as you know, what you run into is this whole argument about individual rights versus government responsibility. I think people that don't live along the river have a legitimate point when they say, Well, that's fine, but we keep paying it, one way or another, for them to exercise their individual freedom. I think the best way you can deal with these situations is prospectively, and what you try to do is limit encroachments on the floodplain. And I think if there was a follow-up as a result of what happened in '93, Al Grosboll would be the one to give you the details on it. I was probably on to other things by then.

DePue: (laughs) I suspect you were. Well, speaking of other things, I do want to ask you about one other area of Edgar's administration for today, and that would be life outside the governor's office—his personal life. Let's start with the family. They lived in Springfield?

Lawrence: The family lived in Springfield from the time he went to work for Governor Thompson as his director of legislative affairs. By the time that Governor Edgar took over the reins of state government, Brad, the elder child, was at Colorado State University at Fort Collins. I think Elizabeth was there for a few months at the mansion—or at least in Springfield, and I think she moved in the mansion with them—and then she went off to school at Miami of Ohio. So during most of the administration, the governor and Brenda were there with first dog Emy and then a later dog that came along, Daisy. The kids were in and out during school holidays, but they both chose to go to school out of state, and they were in school—Brad may even have graduated and stayed in Colorado—during the time that the Edgars were in the mansion.

DePue: Did either of those dogs make any appearances over in the state capitol?

Lawrence: Yeah, they both did. The governor would bring them over, and—

DePue: Any raised eyebrows when that happened?

Lawrence: (laughs) No, they were good dogs. Emy, which stands for Executive Mansion, Youngest (DePue laughs), was a pup almost when he became governor. She really had a wonderful personality, and there were times when we'd either be in the governor's office at the Capitol or his office at the mansion, and we'd be involved in intense discussions about the budget or some other issue, and I could feel my blood pressure rising. Then I'd take a look over at Emy, who a lot of times was just sprawled out on the carpet, and I'd say, "You know what? If it's not bothering her, maybe it shouldn't bother me so much." (DePue laughs) But it was good to have her around. Daisy was a little more frisky and probably not as well-behaved, but still a good dog.

DePue: How did Brenda like living in the mansion, and by extension, the fishbowl, if you will?

Lawrence: Brenda is a shy, very private, person. When Jim Edgar was secretary of state, they lived in a subdivision in Springfield, and Brenda tried to lead as normal a life as possible. She picked up Elizabeth after school, she went shopping... That changed when they moved in the mansion, and it had to change. She had to have security, and there were other reasons why it would change. You're living in a mansion; you're not living in your own home. But I thought she made a very good adjustment. She's an extraordinarily gracious, compassionate person. Whenever she had a public appearance to make, she would get uptight about it, but then she'd do great. I've seen this in her for many years, where she might have a speech to give—"Oh, what am I going to say?"—and she always manages to come up with exactly the right thing to say (laughs) and to say it well. And she got into activities like Project Heart and other activities. She was not someone to be sitting in on our senior staff meetings or meetings with the governor, but there was no question in my mind that she was a valued advisor to the governor.

DePue: How involved were they religiously once he was in office?

Lawrence: I think they regularly attended church. I know he was someone who in his speeches would not talk about God, and I don't ever remember him closing his speeches by saying, "God bless you and God bless America" the way a lot of public officials do. But yeah, they were regular churchgoers. They went to the Central Baptist Church. I know when he was secretary of state, they were in a Sunday school class there, and I don't remember now whether they continued that when he became governor. But there's no question they were regular attendees. And he was not someone to talk about religion. He went to church.

DePue: Was he one to live his religious faith, though?

Lawrence: He did live his religious faith. I remember as a journalist interviewing him, and him talking about being a born-again Christian and that part of his responsibility was to witness; and he said it was not comfortable trying to go

around telling people they ought to be born again. He felt the way he would carry out that responsibility was to lead as good a life as he possibly could and try to show by example.

DePue: How salty did his language get?

Lawrence: I think I heard him say "damn" once, and that was it. If he was quoting what some other official might have said to him, he might use a word stronger than "damn," but it would be in the form of a direct quote. He would say directly what this person said to him. But other than that, he said "damn" once.

DePue: Once?

Lawrence: Yeah, that I heard. But other than that, it was kind of "jeesh" or "jiminy." (DePue laughs) And I worked later here for Paul Simon, and I never heard a curse word out of Paul. The strongest word I heard out of Edgar was "damn," but no, he did not swear, even privately. I think it's fairly well known he did not drink, and he did not allow liquor in the mansion. He and I actually had an argument over that because I felt that having a total ban on alcohol at the mansion would come across as judgmental to people. And his argument was, "We didn't have liquor in our home." But he was the governor, and he felt strongly about that, so there was no liquor in the mansion. And I do think some people, especially some people in the media, took it as being judgmental.

Now, I have to say that I like to have a drink or two before dinner, and I have been to dinner with him many times during the time I worked for him, and since, where I have ordered a drink or two before dinner and never heard a word from him about it. In fact, shortly after I went to work for him, we went on our first retreat, the staff did, and we came down to Giant City Lodge. This was a political retreat. When I say the staff, I don't mean the entire governmental senior staff. It was a retreat that wasn't on state time or anything, and it was really to talk about his political future.

So we end up having a dinner at the Giant City Lodge, and Secretary Edgar's sitting at the head of the table, I was on his left, and there are about, oh, maybe fifteen other people around this table. The waitress came around for the drink orders, and Secretary Edgar orders a Diet Coke or something like that, and then I watch as the waitress takes the orders around the table. People who I know like a drink or two before dinner were ordering ginger ale, (DePue laughs) Coke, iced tea. And it came around to me, and I said, "Well, I'd like a vodka martini." He didn't bat an eye, and it went on. And when the drinks are delivered, I'm sipping my vodka martini, watching these other guys. (laughter) I think they made up for it later after he left. But the reason I tell this is he wasn't judgmental in a personal sense; he was never that way with me, but he did have feelings. He told me, "I don't see where alcohol's

ever done anybody any good." And I tried to tell him there were times after I met with him when alcohol did me some good, but... (laughter)

DePue: Did he laugh when you said that?

Lawrence: Yeah, he did. He wasn't judgmental, and yet I felt by putting an absolute ban at the mansion, it would be viewed that way; and I think it wasn't only in the media, but some of the legislators. When they would come over, they were accustomed to having a drink at the mansion; or if there was going to be a dinner, their having wine at the table, and that didn't happen.

DePue: Part of the public persona that you have with somebody like Governor Edgar, and I know there were statements to that effect, was that since he's formal and somewhat stiff in public, he didn't have a good sense of humor.

Lawrence: He has a fantastic sense of humor. It's very quick. It's not the kind where he said, "Hey, I heard a good joke today." It isn't that kind of humor; it's a back-and-forth, and a lot of times, it's self-effacing. I enjoyed his sense of humor immensely, and I continue to enjoy his sense of humor immensely. With some of the things we had to deal with in the governor's office, and frankly, what any governor has to deal with, I don't see how people deal with that without having a sense of humor; although I'm told—I never saw any sense of humor in Dan Walker. One of his most loyal staff people was telling me one night about something funny that had happened that day internally in the governor's office. This is back when I was a reporter, but we were out for dinner and off the record. I said, "Did Governor Walker laugh, too?" And he said, "Dan has no sense of humor." This is someone who defended him publicly and privately, and I don't know that the person said that as a criticism, but I thought, Wow, that is some observation.

DePue: I don't normally like to interject, but Governor Walker told me himself that he doesn't have that kind of a sense of humor.

Lawrence: I think it's a weakness.

DePue: Last question for today then is what would Governor Edgar do with his leisure time, when he had it?

Lawrence: He's a voracious reader. I referred to that earlier. He was a history major in college, and so he reads a lot of history and biography, not only about American history but world history. He has a keen interest in global affairs, reads a lot in that area. During his time as governor, he was a stamp collector, and one of the ways he would get away from the stress of the job was to go to a stamp store in the Loop. He had at least one store I remember clearly that he would go to. He's a collector of first edition books, particularly books that were later made into movies. He's a hiker—does a lot of hiking. And while he was governor and secretary of state, he would relax by going to horse races. He was very much into horse racing. He wasn't a big bettor, but he enjoyed it.

His father-in-law was a trainer of horses, and now he has maintained that interest, and in fact, owns many racehorses. So that is a passion of his. As I said earlier, he is fully capable of self-entertainment.

DePue: Yeah, these are all very private kinds of things.

Lawrence: Yes, but when Marianne and I go out to Arizona, we typically will get together with him and at least one other couple, maybe two other couples, for a long night of dinner. And he's wonderful. He enjoys that. He's not antisocial, but he is capable of self-entertainment. My dad was very much like that, so maybe that's one of the reasons why Governor Edgar appealed to me.

DePue: Any anecdotes that stick with you today about times when he would go and pursue some relaxation?

Lawrence: (laughs) The only time that comes to mind right away, actually (laughs) had to do with... We were down in southern Illinois. In fact, we were here for the Du Quoin State Fair. I can't remember the year, but it was after he'd had some health episode. I don't remember whether it was the angioplasty or the gall bladder, which was the next year, or the quadruple bypass surgery. I get up in the morning, and the troopers tell me that he'd been to the emergency room the night before at a hospital down here. And I thought, Oh, wow. And they said, It's all right, Mike. The governor didn't want us to call you because he thought right away you'd think it was a heart or something like that. He had a case of chiggers. (DePue laughs) He'd been out hiking in southern Illinois and got the chiggers, and he ended up having to go to the emergency room.

DePue: I think that's a good anecdote to finish on for today.

Lawrence: Okay.

DePue: Thank you very much. It's been a blast, and—

Lawrence: Okay, good. I'm enjoying it.

DePue: —we've got more to talk about.

Lawrence: Okay, that's fine.

(End of interview)

Interview with Mike Lawrence
ISG-A-L-2009-005.05
Interview # 1: July 2, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Thursday, July 2, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, and we're here with Mike Lawrence this afternoon. Good afternoon, Mike.

Lawrence: Good afternoon, Mark. It's good to have you back in Carbondale.

DePue: This is our fifth session and we've gotten through everything up to about 1994 and the first couple years of the Edgar administration. Today's job is to talk about those last few years of his administration, and we'll certainly be focusing on things like education, a couple scandals, unfortunately, perhaps—

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: —and his decision not to run for reelection. But let's start with something you mentioned you wanted to go back and cover again, and that was the management style of Governor Edgar.

Lawrence: Yes. You asked me in an earlier discussion about his management style; I left out a major point of it and I'm glad to have the opportunity now to talk about it. The governor established the position of executive assistant. There were several people who had that position, and each one of them was responsible for a group of agencies under the governor. They were empowered to act as his representative to those agencies and to oversee those agencies. In fact, the collection of executive assistants was referred to by the media and others as a "Super-Cabinet." What that meant was these folks on the governor's staff could talk and deal frequently with cabinet members, department heads, and convey what was happening in the departments and key decisions that needed to be made with respect to those departments to the governor. It also meant, because of the authority he gave them, that there were decisions they could make without having to go to the chief of staff or to the governor himself. The executive assistants had a good understanding of what their decision-making authority was; when they could make a decision and when it had to go to the governor.

It did expedite decision-making on a lot of issues. Not only that, but when we came into office, as we've discussed, we had this substantial fiscal crisis—not nearly as substantial as the one the state of Illinois is involved in today as we talk. We relied on agency directors working with these executive assistants to make cuts in their operations or to figure out more effective ways of operating, and that process was facilitated by the structure that we had. As I'm pretty confident I mentioned earlier, Joan Walters, the director of the Bureau of the Budget; her collegiality with these department heads was very important, but the executive assistants helped Joan carry out her duties as well. Typically, the executive assistants would meet with Joan as the agency directors under their jurisdiction were meeting with Joan.

The structure facilitated decision-making and increased or added to the teamwork of the administration, because the agency directors felt that there were key people on the governor's staff that they could deal with, get decisions from, and make appeals to if it came to that. Structures alone don't always determine whether something's going to be successful or not, but the combination of the structure and the people who served in the role of executive assistants, I think, was a big factor in having the administration work as well as it did during the first term.

DePue: That's very important for us to cover here, hearing that side of the Edgar administration. I think there are several questions that come to mind. One of them is, were there executive assistants that had that same responsibility for the constitutional offices?

Lawrence: Not to my knowledge. Of course, the governor's operation is a lot bigger. It covers two or three dozen agencies, and no constitutional officer has that large an operation. Several of those executive assistants, though, had served as administrators in the secretary of state's office when Jim Edgar was secretary of state. For example, one of the executive assistants was Al Grosboll, and his jurisdiction, among other things, was over agencies related to environment and natural resources. Well, Al had been the deputy secretary of state to Jim Edgar. George Fleischli was another individual who had been a department director in the secretary of state's office. He also served as an executive assistant, and if my memory's accurate about this, among areas that he looked after were the Racing Board and the Department of Agriculture.

But there were also some executive assistants who came from outside the secretary of state's office—in other words, outside of the contingent that served with Secretary Edgar. One that comes to mind immediately, because she was crucial, was a woman named Felicia Norwood. Felicia was a graduate of the Yale Law School, and her job was to oversee the human services area. Because human services takes such a large part of the budget, when we were having to make cuts, many of those cuts and many of the most controversial cuts were in the human services area. Felicia did a marvelous job of working with the directors of the agencies that were involved with human services, dealing with groups that were unhappy about those cuts, and helping the governor to set priorities on what needed to be preserved and what could be cut.

DePue: Another question I've got here is in terms of accountability, not just to the governor but also to the legislature, because I would think it's a more natural relationship. The heads of agencies are accountable in part to the legislature—they have to go and testify and things like that—but I'm not sure the same would be true for executive assistants who were overseeing agencies.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's a good observation. It was much more common for agency directors to testify than it was for executive assistants to testify. In fact, I don't

have a specific recollection of any executive assistant testifying before the legislature in a formal way. However, legislators, like others outside of the administration, recognized that the executive assistants were key people, and so the executive assistants did interact with the legislators; it was just not in a formal kind of way.

DePue: Was there some criticism the governor was setting up a separate, I think you called it a Super-Cabinet, that wasn't really accountable?

Lawrence: I think ultimately the governor was accountable, the agency directors did testify frequently in front of the legislature, and I think the agency directors were held accountable; so in a sense, the administration was held accountable for the decisions that it made. The executive assistants did not have a formal relationship with the legislature. Again, I have no specific recollection of an EA, which is what we called them, testifying before the legislature—it might have happened, and I've forgotten about it—but legislators were not bashful about approaching EAs when they wanted something or were unhappy about something.

DePue: Were there some agency directors who saw what the executive assistants were trying to do as not necessarily helpful but interference?

Lawrence: I thought when the structure was established that that might be the case. The governor met with the cabinet, but not all that often. He met with individual cabinet members, but I thought that agency directors might see the EAs as a negative. To my knowledge, I think the directors, even if they might have had some qualms early in the administration, came to see the EAs as benefits. It wasn't so much that the EAs and they did not have some disagreements, but I think their view was that the EAs were interested in their agencies, and would help them in and facilitate the decision-making process. It's been my experience watching government as a journalist for many years, and then dealing with government after I left the governor's office, that cabinet members can build up a lot of frustration if decisions are not being made. They may be unhappy about decisions that are made, but if decisions are not being made and they're out there being held accountable, a great deal of frustration can build.

DePue: Okay. What I'd like to do next is have you give us a little bit of a character sketch and the role that these individuals played in the Edgar administration because I wanted to get a little bit clearer picture from your perspective of who these people really are. You mentioned Joan Walters already, and I know we talked about her in the past. Anything else that we would need to know about her personality or the strength she brought to the office, because she didn't bring an awful lot of experience in the very important task of being the budget director.

Lawrence: She had run a program in Seattle for the homeless, a pretty substantial program, so she had that experience. She also had been an administrator for Governor Edgar when he was secretary of state. Before Al Grosboll was the number-two person, Joan was the number-two person. Al succeeded her in that role. We may have talked about this before, but if we haven't, we need to make sure we give Joan her due. She was extremely well-organized, very intelligent, hard working, and collegial. Her way of working with the EAs and the agency directors was crucial to the administration dealing with the budget situation it had. She listened well, but she was no-nonsense at the same time, at least professionally. Now, she has a great sense of humor, but there was no question she was goal-oriented and all about making sure that we did the right things financially.

DePue: The next one is the chief of staff when the governor began his administration, and I know we have talked a little bit about Kirk Dillard, but can you flesh out his personality a little more for us?

Lawrence: Kirk brought a background of working with the legislature, and I think we did talk about this before. The governor decided that the first term would really set the atmosphere for his relations with the legislature. There was a lot to do in that first term because of the state's fiscal crisis. It not only involved the budget cuts, but it also involved making the income tax surcharge permanent. Kirk was very good at dealing with legislators, and his role was in many ways more of a liaison role to legislators and other external interests than it was an internal administrative role. We had Sally Jackson at the beginning of the administration as really the director of government operations; then you had the executive assistants and cabinet directors. So Kirk was more of an external person than an internal administrator.

DePue: How about Gene Reineke?

Lawrence: Gene Reineke had been involved in the Thompson administration. He became an EA later in, I think, the first term of the Edgar administration—if not, it would have been early in the second term—and eventually became chief of staff to the governor, his third chief of staff. He performed extremely well in the chief of staff role. Gene did some of the external duties that Kirk had done, but he was much more of an internal person. By that time, Sally Jackson had moved on, the EA system had been greatly modified, and Gene was a key administrative person, internal person, as chief of staff, and he did a very good job.

DePue: We didn't mention Jim Reilly. He was the second chief of staff from '94 to early '95, I would assume.

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. Jim Reilly succeeded Kirk when Kirk decided to run for the state senate—he's a state senator today as we speak, and interestingly enough, I think preparing to announce for governor. (DePue laughs) Jim came in at a

time when Governor Edgar was getting ready to run for reelection and was in fact running for reelection. He took a significant salary cut to come in as the chief of staff—if I remember right, he'd taken a leave as executive director of McPier in Chicago—and was a very strong chief of staff.[30]

Jim is a very, very bright guy. He does have a strong personality. Kirk had been more congenial, let's say, but Jim, in many ways, was more inclined to get in and deal with very controversial things in a very aggressive way. Jim and Governor Edgar had gone back a long way; they were legislators together way back in the seventies. And Jim had been part of Governor Edgar's Kitchen Cabinet. He was someone who the governor would have lunch or dinner with from time to time. He would seek out his advice on various matters, even though Jim did not have a formal role in the administration at that time. I think Jim came in, took the salary cut, and did it largely out of friendship for Governor Edgar. Also, Jim really enjoyed the kind of action that there was when you were serving in the upper level of the governor's office. He had been chief of staff under Governor Thompson, so he had a good sense of what he thought the job was about when he came in.

DePue: This is a name I know we talked about in the last session, so I'll give you the option of not adding anything else about Howard Peters.

Lawrence: Howard was director of corrections, of course, through most of the first term and then came onto the governor's staff as the deputy chief of staff. He was very instrumental in the reform and reorganization of how we were delivering human services and ultimately became the first secretary of the Department of Human Services. A very bright guy—always impressed me with how well he had done his homework going into meetings; very disciplined in that respect. Didn't particularly like to get up early in the morning, (DePue laughs) but once he was going, he would go into the night, and was a very, very hard worker and a very effective worker.

DePue: Governor Edgar himself wasn't necessarily a morning person, was he?

Lawrence: No, he wasn't, and I appreciated that because one of his first phone calls in the morning usually came to me to discuss what had been in the media overnight and what had been on the air. The fact that he didn't get going until a little later in the morning was helpful to me because I had ample time to get my five-mile run in and catch myself up on what had gone on.

[30] McPier is the nickname of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, a municipal corporation that owns and operates the McCormick Place convention center and Navy Pier, both in Chicago. The authority, which was created by the Illinois Legislature in July 1989, is governed by thirteen directors and a chief executive. The mayor of Chicago and governor of Illinois each are responsible for selecting six directors; the mayor also appoints the chairman of the board, while the governor appoints the chief executive. Governor Jim Thompson named Jim Reilly as the first chief executive of McPier in 1989.

DePue: Here's another name I know we mentioned last time—and it's been about two months since you and I last talked, so I have to beg the listener's indulgence on this—Mark Boozell.

Lawrence: Yeah, I think we probably talked about Mark. Extremely well organized and, again, a hard worker. He was the director of legislative affairs in the first term. He was not the first director—and I think I talked about this, so I will try to truncate this. One thing that impressed me about Mark very much: He had been Edgar's legislative director in the secretary of state's office; I think he thought he was going to be the governor's director of legislative affairs right away, after Edgar became governor. That did not happen. The governor decided to have Steve Selcke, who had been a veteran legislative affairs guy under Governor Thompson, take the director's job, and Mark then was asked to work with Steve. Mark was disappointed, but he was very professional about it, and he did a first-class job working with Steve; and then did very well when Steve moved on and Mark became the director.

DePue: You've already talked a little bit about Al Grosboll today; I don't know if we had talked about him before, because he came in a little bit later in the administration, I believe.

Lawrence: No, he came in early in the administration. He would have come over from the secretary of state's office. He was an executive assistant early in the administration. What you may be thinking about is that he later became deputy chief of staff in the administration. He had a long history with Governor Edgar. Governor Edgar had a great deal of trust in Al. I don't think any staff person was more thorough than Al when he would get involved in an issue. And we kidded him, because a lot of times, he wanted to share far more of his knowledge about something with us than we needed to know or even had time to listen to.

DePue: Does that mean he was a good storyteller?

Lawrence: He liked to lay everything out instead of maybe starting out with the highlights and then entertaining questions and responding to questions. But Al's a terrific person. In fact, we kidded him, and continue to kid him, about his loquaciousness, and he still takes it all in good spirit, but there's no question that he was an excellent, excellent staff member. Among other things, he really deserves the lion's share of the credit for working out the controversy we had over Dickson Mounds early in the administration.

DePue: Is there more of a story about that that we need to hear about?

Lawrence: Oh, yeah, yeah, I think there is, and (laughs) like you've indicated, Mark, it's been two months, and I'm old now, so, you know, I may be talking about some things we already have talked about, but—

DePue: I don't think we talked about Dickson Mounds.

Lawrence: Dickson Mounds was a museum in western Illinois, and it became controversial because the bones of deceased Native Americans were exposed there; that was part of the display. Dickson Mounds became the kind of an issue in which there were protests. And Governor Edgar assigned Al to sit down with the Native Americans, plus the people in the relevant government agencies, and try to work something out. What did come out of it was a significant modification of what was at Dickson Mounds to make it into a much better museum and also to address the issues regarding the dignity of these deceased Native Americans. It didn't happen overnight; it took a lot of time, a lot of meetings; but the outcome was very positive.

DePue: Anybody else that you think we should be mentioning here in terms of painting a little bit more of a personality portrait?

Lawrence: I'm worried I'm going to leave somebody out, but as far as the first term... I mentioned George Fleischli earlier. George had been a very successful football coach at Griffin High school in Springfield, and—

DePue: That's the Catholic high school.

Lawrence: Yes. The Lions, if I remember correctly. But he had come into the secretary of state's office, had served as the director of the department which oversees all the state buildings in terms of maintenance and issues related to those buildings. George was close to the governor—I think he remains close to the governor—and did a very good job.

One of the issues that George and I ended up working on in the first term had to do with guns. George was one of our liaisons to the sportsmen and the gun groups, and George and I sat down with the gun groups and the gun control groups—initially we did that separately: I dealt with the gun control groups and George dealt with the gun groups—to try to work out a combination on what is now a pretty effective identification program. But the gun groups were unhappy because there was a huge backlog of requests to get Firearm Owner's Identification cards.

DePue: FOID cards.

Lawrence: FOID cards. The gun control people were interested in having an instant check on people who were purchasing guns and ammunition. Now, at the outset, the Illinois Rifle Association was not real excited about instant check or any kind of ID program beyond the FOID card. And the gun control people were actually interested in perhaps more sweeping legislation. What ultimately happened was that we—by "we," I mean the administration—agreed to put money into substantially updating the computer system at the state police. That gave the state police the capability to process FOID card requests much more quickly and be current with them, but it also, of course, gave them the capability to do instant checks. When people would go to a gun

dealer, there would be a certain period of time—I'm hazy on it now; it might have been twenty-four hours, forty-eight hours, something like that—where a check would be made on whether the prospective purchaser of a gun or ammunition had a criminal record or some kind of mental health history that would be a red flag.

Ultimately, the gun people saw the benefit of getting faster processing of FOID cards. The gun control people recognized this was a step forward, to have an instant check program. And I remember how surprised the people in the state house press room were when Governor Edgar went to the Blue Room, which is in the suite of offices where the state house press corps operates, and on one side of him were the gun control people and on the other side of him were the people like the Illinois Rifle Association; and he made an announcement of this program which they all embraced. I think that was certainly one of the more memorable days in that first term. And George Fleischli was a big part of that.

DePue: Anybody else? I know a lot more names are going to come up as we go through the second administration.

Lawrence: Yeah, there will be.

DePue: Let's go ahead, then, if you don't mind, and get into that timeframe. We have to start, of course, with getting him reelected. March was the primary—I think March 8, 1994 was the official primary date.[31] Did he have an opponent in the primary?

Lawrence: Yes, he did have an opponent, Jack Roeser, who is a wealthy conservative activist. And he was never happy about the governor's positions on social issues, including the fact the governor was pro-choice and for gay rights. Jack challenged him in that primary. And you have to take any challenge seriously, but unless I'm wrong about this, I don't think Jack did as well against the governor as, for example, Steve Baer had done in the '90 primary.[32]

DePue: Did the governor have to expend any political capital or money in that primary campaign?

Lawrence: Well... (microphone noises)

DePue: We just lost a mic here real quick. Go ahead.

Lawrence: And that's Mark's way of saying that I'm a clumsy person. (DePue laughs) The governor was a believer in spending some money, doing some advertising, early in a campaign, so I think he would have done that even if

[31] The 1994 Illinois primary election was held March 15.
[32] Edgar defeated Baer in the 1990 Illinois gubernatorial primary by a margin of 225,552 votes, 482,441-256,889.

we had not had a primary. Now, he may have done more of it because we did have a primary, but I'm pretty confident that he would have done something early, during the primary season, even if he had no primary. But as I look back on it, I don't think we had the stress during the primary season in '94 that we had in 1990.

DePue: The Democratic primary was a bit more interesting. I'd like to have you reflect on that. It was a three-way race; Dawn Clark Netsch, who was the comptroller at the time; Roland Burris; and Richard Phelan.

Lawrence: Yeah, we had Burris, Phelan, and Dawn Netsch. Early on, I think the conventional wisdom was that the nominee would be either Burris or Phelan. Burris, of course, had been in statewide office for many years, and he was the attorney general. Dick Phelan was president of the Cook County board, and certainly at the time Phelan was elected president of the Cook County board, he was viewed almost immediately as a potential gubernatorial nominee on the Democrat side.

DePue: For those who aren't schooled in Illinois politics, the Cook County board doesn't sound very sexy, but that's one of the power bases of the classic Democratic machine.

Lawrence: Yeah, it's a major job. Dick Ogilvie, by the way, had been president of the Cook County board as a Republican when he got elected governor. So there had been a precedent for that presidency of the Cook County board to be a launch pad for future governors. The conventional wisdom was Burris or Phelan. Now, Phelan had picked up quite a bit of baggage as county board president because he made decisions regarding taxes and some other matters, and there were people who felt that he had not kept faith on some campaign promises he had made.

But during the primary, Dawn Netsch, who was then the comptroller and had been a state senator, ran a television commercial that was really a home run. I'm going to mix metaphors here because it was actually a commercial that had her shooting pool, and that was not a totally made-up situation. Dawn, as I understand it, did shoot some pool. But the point of the commercial was that she was a straight shooter. It was a very good commercial and very effective, and Phelan had baggage. Burris—I think his people thought that they could sit back and win that primary. They were looking at the early polls that showed him well ahead of Phelan and Netsch, and I don't think they recognized that was based primarily on name identification.

DePue: I would think his campaign would especially be pinned on the turnout of the black vote in Chicago. Who did the Democratic machine favor in this mix?

Lawrence: I think they were divided. I don't know that Dawn Netsch would have been the candidate of most of what we might refer to as machine people, or organization people, because Dawn was an independent Democrat. Certainly, Roland Burris would have had a block of support; and I think Dick Phelan would have had a block of support among the regulars. But Dawn Netsch, with that commercial—and she ran it relatively early in the campaign—really zipped by them.

DePue: Who did Edgar prefer to be running against?

Lawrence: I don't know that he ever stated a preference. He certainly wouldn't have publicly, and I don't recall that he did privately, even before the primary. I do know that after Dawn Netsch won that primary, Governor Edgar was not elated. I'm choosing my words carefully here, because it wasn't like he was despondent or in a panic, but he had a lot of respect for Dawn Netsch, and he recognized that even though they might have differences on issues, she was a good government person. He felt that way about her. And I think that he felt she was a more substantive candidate, just based on her record and her seriousness about state government, than either of those two primary opponents.

When he ran against Hartigan, for example, in '90, he liked Hartigan. It wasn't that he thought Hartigan would be a terrible governor, but he did feel that Hartigan had some significant deficiencies, [which] we discussed earlier. I certainly don't want to dwell on them at this point, but he was someone who moved around a lot on various issues. And the governor felt that when Netsch took positions on issues, they were heartfelt. He sure didn't see her as a perfect politician; there is no perfect politician, including Jim Edgar. But I think he saw it far more as a white hat, black hat situation running against Hartigan—even though I don't [want] to connote that he saw Hartigan as evil, just more distinct in terms of who would be most effective governmentally—than running against Dawn Netsch.

There were questions about Phelan's trustworthiness, based on what he said during his campaign for county board chairman and what he did. And Roland Burris, with all due respect, had never demonstrated a real command of the wide range of state issues. Dawn Netsch did have command of those issues. So I'm probably giving a longer answer here, but that's because it's more a matter of nuance. I think it's fair to say that he was far from delighted when Dawn Netsch won that nomination.

DePue: But there were distinct issues involved, differences between the two candidates, and at least many in the media were portraying those issues as being to the advantage of Governor Edgar.

Lawrence: Yes, and I think I know what those issues were. During the primary, Dawn Netsch had introduced a program that called for reform of how we fund our schools, and her program included a 42 percent income tax increase.

DePue: From 3 to 4.25 percent income tax. That's a healthy increase.

Lawrence: Yeah, it is, and that became a major issue in the campaign; we made it a major issue. Now, she also talked about property tax relief. And we can get into this later, because Edgar called for comprehensive school funding reform during his second term. I don't want to pick at her proposal. I mean, she did put something forward; I think she deserves credit for having done that. I would argue that it was not a complete proposal of comprehensive reform that she laid out. Among other things, it didn't require any substantive reform in education; it was all about funding. But that was an issue we used. Edgar had made the surcharge permanent but basically held the line on taxes during a tough fiscal time for the state—he'd done that by making cuts—and so—

DePue: And that had been a campaign promise of his first campaign, had it not?

Lawrence: Exactly, yeah. And Dawn Netsch, particularly as a state senator, was more inclined to favor government spending and government programs than Governor Edgar had been as a legislator or as governor. So there was a legitimate difference on the approach to government spending between Governor Edgar and Dawn Netsch.

The other major separation was on the issue of crime. Governor Edgar as a legislator had voted for the death penalty and, as governor, there had been people executed on his watch. As a state senator, Dawn Netsch had been an outspoken opponent of the death penalty; but it went further than that. She also had been an outspoken opponent of determinate sentencing, taking discretion away from judges; things like that. So there was a clear difference on the issue of criminal justice, and that was something that we really made a major part of our TV advertising.

When we unveiled the first ad that dealt with the death penalty and other criminal justice issues, I met with the media the day before and gave them packets with substantial documentation on what the comparative positions had been on the death penalty, determinate sentences, and other criminal justice issues. So when the ads did run, the media did not say, Well, they were just cheap shot negative ads. We had provided the kind of documentation that caused most in the media, if not all in the media, to say, This is a legitimate difference between the candidates that voters ought to know about.

DePue: Carter Hendren, I know, was the campaign manager for 1990. Who ran this campaign?

Lawrence: The campaign manager in 1994 was a young man named Andy Foster. If I remember correctly, he was either under thirty or just thirty when he undertook this assignment. He did a fantastic job. He had been involved in the presidential campaign of George Bush the first, if I remember right, as a field representative, either while he was a student at Marquette or shortly after he got out of Marquette. Andy was a hard worker, very well organized, very likeable, yet able to make tough decisions. And one of the things about the'94 campaign that was particularly heartening to me was the number of young people we had in key roles, beginning with Andy. Overseeing the field operation was a guy named Dave Bender. There were a lot of young people who took positions of major responsibility in that campaign and did a good job.

I did the same thing in '94 that I had done in '90. I was involved in both the campaign and in the government office, and my pay in government was reduced to reflect that and then supplemented out of the campaign. I don't think that's something that could be easily done today, but at the time, it was accepted as an honest way of handling the roles that I had; given that I was Jim Edgar's press secretary both as governor and during the campaign. But I did spend time at the campaign office. I was probably, even then, one of the older folks in that office. It was largely young people, and as I say, they did a marvelous job.

Governor Edgar won that election with a record plurality for a sitting governor of Illinois. I think that was attributable to the fact that the majority of Illinoisans felt he had done a good job under tough circumstances during his first term. I do think the issues worked for us in that '94 campaign, and I think the campaign organization under Andy Foster's leadership did a great job. A guy named Phil O'Connor, who had run Governor Thompson's 1982 reelection campaign, was brought in, and he may have had the title of chairman.[33] And Andy Foster could have had the attitude, I don't need anybody else in here at the top of the campaign, but he didn't at all. He welcomed Phil's advice and certainly respected Phil's experience and insights, and the two of them to this day have an excellent, warm relationship.

DePue: Talking to Carter Hendren, he (laughs) really stressed to me how much running campaigns and getting down in the trenches is a young person's business.

Lawrence: Yeah, I think that's true. I guess it depends on how you define "young." In 1994, I would have been fifty-two. I had a lot of energy then, and I have a fair amount of energy now, but I don't have as much energy now as I did in 1994, and I did not have as much energy in 1994 as I did in 1984. So you need a combination of good young people and seasoned people. The '90 campaign was more of a campaign for the more senior people. In '94, even though there

[33] O'Connor held the title of general chairman.

were senior people involved, it was more of a young person's campaign organization.

DePue: According to what I have read, the governor won by a 60 percent plurality, something close to a million votes, and Netsch had 34 percent. That kind of surprised me; so 6 percent went somewhere else, and—

Lawrence: I thought the governor may have had more than sixty. In a percentage basis, it was the largest reelection plurality for any governor of Illinois. And, of course, it would stand today, because Governor Blagojevich did not win reelection by that margin.[34]

DePue: Were there any debates?

Lawrence: Yes, there were two.

DePue: Can you tell us a little bit about the debates that they had?

Lawrence: One debate was in Chicago, and it was, I think, more of a standard kind of debate. I'm not remembering the details, except I'm pretty confident it was in Chicago and carried principally by the Chicago TV stations. The other debate, I have a more specific recollection of. It was in downstate Illinois, I believe Champaign, and it occurred at—it was either the AP members' association conference in Illinois, or it might have been the Illinois Press Association—a gathering of newspaper people from throughout the state. So you had those two debates. The second debate, I know occurred on a Friday afternoon. I don't have it right in front of me, but I think it was held at a time where there would be more limited attention to it than if it were held at another time.[35]

DePue: When we talked about the '90 campaign, you had some very distinct memories about the debates in that campaign. But you don't have those same distinct memories for the '94 [campaign]?

Lawrence: I don't, Mark, and that's interesting, isn't it?

DePue: Here is the election vote. This is from the *Tribune* on the ninth, so I'm sure they're still tallying a lot of votes at that time, but 1,818,441 for Edgar; 957,400 for Dawn Clark Netsch. What they don't have is a breakdown of Chicago versus the suburbs versus the downstate vote.

Lawrence: Edgar carried every county, except one, in Illinois.

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[34] Edgar defeated Netsch 1,984,318 to 1,069,850 (63.87 percent to 34.44 percent), a margin of 914,468 votes. Libertarian candidate David L. Kelley received 52,388 votes (1.69 percent). By comparison, Rod Blagojevich won reelection in 2006 with 49.79 percent of the vote, defeating challengers Judy Baar Topinka, Rich Whitney, and Randall Stufflebeam.

[35] The first debate, sponsored by Chicago's WLS-Channel 7 and the League of Women Voters, was held at 9:00 PM, Wednesday, October 19; the second, sponsored by the Illinois Associated Press Editors Association, was held in Champaign, Friday afternoon, October 21.

DePue: Cook.

Lawrence: No. He carried Cook. We did not carry Gallatin County, (DePue laughs) which is a county near here, in southern Illinois. It's an extremely Democratic county, and that is the one out of 102 that he did not carry in 1994. But I've been to Gallatin County, I've met the people there—I've even worked on projects with some of them—and they're nice people.

DePue: And what did they think of Edgar?

Lawrence: They probably think more highly of him now (DePue laughs) than they did in 1994, but they are very much a Democratic county.

DePue: In the midst of this, July 7, 1994, Edgar had heart bypass surgery.

Lawrence: Yeah. We may have discussed this; I'm confident we did. In 1992, he'd had the angioplasty.

In '93, he had gallbladder surgery; all of which got a lot of media attention. I think the gallbladder surgery got media attention because it was a year after (laughs) he'd had the angioplasty. Nineteen ninety-four, I was in Springfield, and, as a matter of fact, I was at St. John's Hospital.

I wasn't a patient there. My father-in-law, with whom I had a very close relationship, had surgery for an aneurysm; and when the surgeons got into him, they determined that his circulatory system was in such a condition that there wasn't much they could do. He never came out of that surgery in any kind of conscious state. So I was at the hospital with my wife and other members of the family, and that evening, I decided to go home briefly to get a little bit of rest.

My wife dropped me off at our condo in Springfield, and it wasn't long thereafter the phone rang, and it was Brenda Edgar. She said, "Mike, Jim and I know what you're going through today, but he thought you ought to know he's going to need bypass surgery." And I said, "When?" And she said, "Well, they're wheeling him by me right now on his way to surgery." So I called my wife, she was back at the hospital by then, and I told her about the phone call. She said, "Mike, there's nothing you can do here for Dad, and I've got my sister here," and she said, "Go do your job."

I called some of my staff people. We met down in my office in the Capitol, and began to work on how we would disclose what was happening to the media and deal with the aftermath. And I remember when I got there saying to one of my top assistants, Dan Egler, "You know, Dan, we had the angioplasty in '92, we had the gallbladder in 1993. I don't think the media felt, once we got through that, that there was any significant issue of health here on the part of the governor; but now we're into this, and I'm not sure how the media will react." I made that observation, but then we got back

down to work, trying to determine how to roll it out. And as in '92 and '93, we made a decision to be as complete and accurate and timely in disclosure as we possibly could be.

That surgery occurred in the early morning hours.[36] I talked to a doctor, a key doctor, and I got a good idea, certainly, of what had happened. We began making media calls early the next morning. We had made the doctors available, and the doctors were instructed by me, with the support of the Edgars, to be fully forthcoming in their answers.

My first concern, of course, was for the governor and for his health; but you know, we were in the middle of a reelection campaign. We had control over how we were going to disclose this, and we wanted to be forthright, but we had an element of control in that we determined it would be announced at a certain time; we would have these doctors available.

What we had no control over, really, was how the media and the public would react. And I really didn't know how the public would react. I knew the media would go out on the street and talk to people, and I didn't know what their interview subjects would say. And the next day, the vast majority of people who were interviewed knew somebody who'd had open-heart surgery and recovered well from it; or they had relatives, they had friends. There may have been a couple who had open-heart surgery themselves. And the reaction was essentially, He's a relatively young man; this is a corrective procedure; and we see no reason why he can't continue to do the job as governor.

DePue: If my math is correct, he was forty-eight years old or thereabouts at the time.[37]

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: Were there any doubts in your mind ever that maybe this is the end of his political career?

Lawrence: Yeah, I had some doubts when I walked into the office after getting that call from Brenda. First of all, you never know how a surgery is going to turn out. He had outstanding surgeons, but you're put under a general anesthetic. This isn't like having a broken arm fixed (laughs); I've had some surgeries that were not anywhere near as delicate as that surgery was. There was a question of whether he'd be physically capable of going on, but there was also a question of how the people of Illinois would respond.

DePue: Do you remember the first time or two after the surgery when you actually spoke to the governor, and the kinds of things he was telling you?

[36] Edgar's surgeons began work at 10:30 PM, July 7, and finished the operation around 1:00 AM, July 8.
[37] Edgar was forty-seven years old.

Lawrence: I think I talked to him the day after the surgery. He called me. I was still in Springfield. My father-in-law had passed away. And he said, "Mike, I know what you've been through." And he said, "I appreciate your help in putting together what you did." Of course, I asked him how he felt, and he said he felt pretty good, all things considered. (laughter)

He and I had been around each other for so many years, so intensely, and we seem to have this almost instinctively as well: when he would start a sentence, a lot of times, I would finish it. When he did the angioplasty, because I knew he was going to go on a rigid diet, I changed my diet as well; and I did it because I didn't want to be sitting there eating a bacon cheeseburger for lunch while he was eating a salad. But I'm glad I did it. It made me a healthier person. I actually lost more weight on his diet than he did. But now, I said to him, "Governor, when you had your angioplasty, you know, I went on that diet," and then he finished it. He said, "I know, Mike. I don't expect you to have open-heart surgery (laughter) unless you need it." It was unusual when the two of us had a conversation where there wasn't some humor in it, and that's true today.

DePue: I want to take this up to the national level. This is an off-year election as far as the presidency is concerned, but it was not your typical off-year election. Nineteen ninety-four was a resounding victory for Republicans at the national scale, so I wonder if you could reflect on that a bit.

Lawrence: There was a national movement, a reaction largely to the first two years of the Clinton presidency—issues dealing with the failed effort on health insurance reform and some other things. It is not all that unusual to have a party opposite that of a newly-elected president do well in the off-year election. And in Illinois, I think part of Governor Edgar's victory could be attributable to a national trend, but I also think that when you look at the margin of his victory, there were certainly state factors heavily involved in his victory. He not only won by a record margin, he brought Republicans into office with him. Republicans in the House took control for the first time in a long, long time, in decades, and Republicans may already have been in control in the Senate.

DePue: Are you talking about the Illinois level or at—

Lawrence: I'm sorry, at the state level. But certainly [it] was a major development for Republicans to capture the House. Not only that, they won all the statewide offices that were on the ballot. So Judy Baar Topinka was elected treasurer, and there had not been a Republican elected treasurer for many years. And Loleta Didrickson came in as the comptroller. It was clearly a sweep for the Republicans in Illinois. It meant that Republicans would have control of the governorship and the two legislative chambers, which was a dramatic change from when Governor Edgar came into office, where Democrats had control of both chambers during his first term.

DePue: Your memory is good. James "Pate" Philip had taken over as Senate president two years before that time, and in this election, Lee Daniels takes over as the speaker of the House, interrupting Mike Madigan's long reign there as speaker.

Lawrence: Not for long. (laughs)

DePue: Yeah, two-year window of opportunity, if you will.

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: So we've got the election in November. He starts his second term. Any new directions, changes, that he wanted to do going into that second term?

Lawrence: The fiscal situation had really moderated significantly. The cuts we had made had streamlined government. The recession that hit us in the early 1990s was over. It wasn't like there was a gush of money, but it was a lot different on the financial side. And I think the governor in his second term clearly wanted to accomplish something like comprehensive school funding reform. He had—

DePue: He had just run against it.

Lawrence: I'd like to talk about that for a while.

DePue: Yeah, let's go ahead and just go through the entire educational issue, and I'll let you start with that.

Lawrence: What we began with is the fact that Jim Edgar, as a freshman legislator, had sponsored a bill that would allow local school districts to employ an income tax in order to reduce reliance on property taxes. So this was an issue he had identified with, going to the beginning of his career in elective office.

DePue: Was this his idea, his initiative, or had he picked that up from somebody else?

Lawrence: My recollection is he was certainly one of the chief sponsors of it, if not the chief sponsor. That didn't become law, but he clearly had identified school funding reform as an issue and had identified himself with it in a leadership role. When he announced for governor, one of the things he said was, "We have to end our undue reliance on local property taxes to fund education." He said that when he announced for governor in August of 1989. During his first term, of course, he was dealing with what we thought at that time was a significant deficit. (laughs) Measured against today, it wasn't. But the first term was consumed with really righting the ship of state financially.

I think we made a mistake in that 1994 campaign that had ramifications in the second term. I don't want to necessarily go into details in a negative way about Dawn Netsch's proposal, but there was not a component of true substantive reform in education; not only bringing dollars in, but how

do we use those dollars? How do we employ them? But she laid out a plan, and I think she deserved and deserves credit for having done that; even though I today, and I did then, believe the plan was flawed. We did not offer an alternative in that campaign; instead, we hammered her on her plan. And Edgar never said he wouldn't raise taxes. He never said he would not propose school funding reform. He did say that he felt there ought to be substantive education reform before we looked at that, particularly reform of the Chicago schools. We should have offered an alternative, and the alternative could have included the substantive reform. We did propose some substantive education reforms, but we never offered a specific school funding reform proposal.

Now, in 1990, Edgar had favored keeping the surcharge on; his opponent had opposed keeping that surcharge on. Edgar won, and that gave him a clear advantage in convincing legislators to vote to keep that surcharge on. He had run on that issue, and he had won. I think we should have been for some kind of school funding reform proposal. We should have offered our own in '94.

DePue: Were you telling Governor Edgar that at the time?

Lawrence: When I advised him at that time, I did so in confidence, and I'm going to keep that in confidence today.

DePue: (laughs) Okay. You won't mind if I ask him that question?

Lawrence: No, I don't mind, and I don't know what his recollections will be, but I don't feel comfortable saying what I may or may not have advised him on. Whether I did or not, I've used the word "we," and I was out there as his chief spokesperson attacking Netsch on her proposal for a 42 percent hike. But the governor decided to put together a comprehensive school funding reform initiative. I think he went about it the right way. I think we came up with a good plan. He appointed a commission headed by Stan Ikenberry, the U of I president. I think at that time, he may have been the former U of I president. But Stan was very well respected.

DePue: And that apparently was right at the beginning of that second administration?

Lawrence: Pretty close to it, yeah. I do think, though, that it really got going after the legislature and the governor did approve Chicago school reform, substantive school reform. The governor felt it was important that that happen in order to go forward with school funding reform. He appointed the commission. It was a broadly-based commission, they did a good job, and they came up with a proposal that I think made sense.

DePue: Several times here, you've mentioned the substantive reforms that Edgar was stressing that maybe Netsch wasn't. What in particular do you have in mind in that respect?

Lawrence: A major part of that reform was putting control of the Chicago school system under the mayor, where there would be more accountability. The mayor's office historically had been very involved with administering Chicago schools but did not really have the accountability for outcomes. Mayor Daley—the current Mayor Daley—had said publicly several times that he wanted that responsibility, and so we gave it to him; even though there was a lot of resistance in the legislature, particularly among Chicago Democrats, to doing that, because the Chicago Teachers Union was very much opposed to reforms that might deal with teacher qualifications, testing, [and] who controlled the system. They were very much opposed, and Chicago Democrats historically had been very responsive to the union. So it was not an easy thing to get done, and I don't think it would have been done if Republicans hadn't had control of both houses of the legislature. To me, that was one of the positive outcomes of having Republicans have control of both chambers. There were some negative ramifications on other matters.

DePue: It might be worth our effort for you to paint a picture of what was wrong with the Chicago school system.

Lawrence: Again, there was a lack of accountability. There were rules, work rules, that benefited teachers and not necessarily students.

DePue: Does that mean it was difficult to fire teachers that were—

Lawrence: Yes, and these rules had to do with teacher workdays; it had to do with the number... I don't remember how this got resolved, but there were people on the payroll as teachers who were not in the classroom. So there were a lot of issues. There were issues about having input from parents and others into the way schools were run; they didn't have enough input into that process, and communities and neighborhoods didn't have enough input. So there were a lot of elements—

DePue: Was part of it also a budgetary issue?

Lawrence: The budgetary issue would have been mainly a question about whether the money was being spent effectively. It was not unusual for the Chicago schools to have financial crises from time to time, and the legislature and the governors through the years would end up having to deal with that. I think the fact that the governor and the legislature were called upon, on occasion, to bail out the Chicago school system also begged the question of how effective that system was in terms of educating children.

DePue: So Chicago's school district had lots of different problems. The proposal [was] an occasion, then, where Mayor Richard M. Daley and Edgar were working in conjunction with each other?

Lawrence: They were. Mayor Daley said he was for it. I'm not sure he was twisting arms in behalf of it, but ultimately you had Republicans in control of both houses

and you had a Republican governor, and the Republicans in the legislature had been saying for years that the Chicago schools needed substantive reform. Governor Edgar believed that, there was the clout to do that, and so it got done.

DePue: What was at the heart of the reforms for the Chicago school district?

Lawrence: I think the best person to talk to about that might be Al Grosboll. I don't remember. I think Al will have a lot better recollection of the details.

But the heart of the reforms was more accountability and trying to get at situations where the interests of the students were uppermost in what the rules of the game were.

DePue: I'm sorry to put you on the spot in that respect. I was living up in Chicago during some of that discussion, and my recollection was that we previously had a superintendent of Chicago school systems; and after this reform, you had a chief executive officer, in the person of Paul Vallas, taking some initiatives that the Teachers Union wasn't necessarily pleased about.

Lawrence: But again, Paul Vallas's coming in was a direct result of Mayor Daley being given responsibility and accountability for the schools. Mayor Daley put Paul Vallas in there.

DePue: And so part of the substantive reforms that Edgar is pushing for at the statewide level is, one, let's solve the problems that the Chicago school district has. Anything else that comes to mind?

Lawrence: No. There had been a fairly comprehensive school reform back in 1985 when Governor Thompson was in office. As a matter of fact, I think a lot of the elements that I talked about regarding community control and more parental input may have come with those reforms in the mid-eighties. Again, the main reform in 1995 was to put accountability in the mayor's office, but that also involved a lot of issues that the teacher unions were not happy about. There are always questions, fairly or unfairly, about how well schools perform in our state. Most people believe their schools perform well, and when I say "most," I mean throughout the state; but there are clearly school districts in Illinois that are not performing well, and people try to get at why that is and try to remedy them. So there were probably elements other than Chicago school reform that were part of what was being done, but there's no question that the centerpiece of the substantive reform effort was the reform of the Chicago schools.

DePue: You mentioned Stanley Ikenberry, and the Ikenberry Commission, I believe, is what it ended up being called. What was their charter?

Lawrence: Their charter was to look at school funding in Illinois; determine whether it was fair; determine whether it was guaranteeing an adequate level of funding

for each and every schoolchild in the state; look at the revenue mix that was supporting public schools in Illinois; and having documented what the problems were, to propose solutions.

DePue: This gets back to the issue of Edgar the politician and Edgar the manager. Was the creation of this commission politically or substantively motivated?

Lawrence: I would say both. When it comes to policy, politics and substance oftentimes intersect. They have to, to get things done. It made sense to approach this issue in a comprehensive, reasonable manner, and to have a blue-ribbon group assembled to do that. At the same time, it also was a way of giving credibility—additional credibility—to anything that the governor might ultimately support. He had a lot of credibility as he went into the second term, but when you have a blue-ribbon panel look at it, you're probably going to get a better product. And I said earlier—and again, I don't want to dwell on it—I believe then and I believe today that Dawn Netsch's plan was flawed. I think part of the reason for that was it was pretty well hatched in a campaign atmosphere. It was something she sincerely believed in, wanted to happen, but I think the Ikenberry Commission took a more comprehensive approach and came up with a better product.

DePue: Was the Chicago school reform issue a matter of discussion during the campaign?

Lawrence: It was.

DePue: What was she [Netsch] saying? Do you recall?

Lawrence: She said she believed in substantive reform, but frankly she was counting on the votes of the members of the Chicago Teachers Union to help her become governor. I don't say that in any kind of negative way, but she was probably more restrained politically in what she could say about Chicago school reform than the governor was.

DePue: I know that the commission issued its report, I believe it was March of 1996, and my understanding is that it called for a billion and a half in property tax relief and some 400 million in new state education funding, and obviously an income tax increase as well.

Lawrence: It called for an increase in state taxes, if I remember correctly.

DePue: Not specifically income taxes?

Lawrence: I don't know that it defined... It was clear that we were looking at an increase in the income tax, and perhaps increases in some other taxes.

DePue: And what does the governor do, armed with that information?

Lawrence: The other aspect of their recommendation was that this be done through a constitutional amendment. The substantive underpinning for that approach was that if it were done through a constitutional amendment, the people of Illinois would have to approve it; but even more importantly, once it was in the constitution, it would be more difficult to undo. In New Jersey, several years before, the governor and the legislature had done substantial school funding reform, which included raising state taxes by legislation instead of through a constitutional amendment. There was a public outcry, there was a rebellion, and two years later, much of what had been done was undone. So it was not a very good attempt in New Jersey. That's the substantive underpinning.

Politically, it'd be easier, we thought, and I think we may have miscalculated; but we thought it would be easier, and the Ikenberry Commission thought it would be easier, to get legislators to vote to put it on the ballot than to get them to vote straight up for the kind of tax increase we were talking about. So there was a substantive reason, the substantive reason being that it would lock in the reform. The political reason was that legislators could put it on the ballot and say they were sending the question to the voters.

DePue: Do you remember the specifics of the amendment that was being proposed?

Lawrence: Again, Al Grosboll would probably remember the specifics. I don't—

DePue: Did it include a mixture of income tax increase and property tax relief?

Lawrence: I think the fundamental ingredients were assuring an adequate level of education for each and every schoolchild in Illinois. What that meant was in less affluent areas of the state, areas that did not have a hefty property tax base, state money would be put into those districts to bring them up to what's called a foundation level, which is an adequate level of funding; and there was a way to determine what that level was. If it wasn't in the body of the proposed amendment, it was spelled out in the Ikenberry report. So that was one factor, the guaranteed adequate level of funding for each and every schoolchild. In Illinois, we have tremendous disparities; and we weren't saying that every kid had to have the same level, but we were saying there needed to be the right floor on this, and there wasn't. The other aspect was property tax relief, and the third aspect would have been the increase in state taxes to pay for all of this.

DePue: I'm sorry about putting you on the spot here on this.

Lawrence: No, that's all right. I'm not being apologetic, I'm just being realistic here—it was a long time ago in some respects, and we dealt with a lot of other issues in the governor's office as well, even though this was certainly a major issue.

DePue: I wanted to again put you on the spot and ask your views on the political landscape; the legislative leaders and their positions on this.

Lawrence: Well, I was disappointed in the position that the Republican leaders took.

DePue: We're talking about Pate Philip and—

Lawrence: And Lee Daniels. I think the leaders—and they were probably reflecting the majority of their followers—thought that a vote even to put this on the ballot would be used against their members when they ran for reelection; they would be portrayed in television commercials as voting for some kind of huge state tax increase. They were worried about that. Now, they didn't articulate it that way publicly, but that was the chief motivation.

When I say the leaders represented a viewpoint of the rank and file, I think there were a lot of rank and file Republican legislators who wanted to tell the Illinois Education Association, their school superintendents back home, and constituents who were concerned about the quality of education for children in their areas, I'm for it; but they never wanted to vote on it. And the leaders really were the ones who were out front, and in '96, what they said was, There's no point giving this to voters. We'll handle it in 1997 straight up. So the constitutional amendment proposal never got a fair hearing in the general assembly in 1996.

DePue: And as a result, it never appeared on the ballot in 1996?

Lawrence: Correct. And then in 1997, we went back to the legislature. By that time, the Democrats had taken back the House, but we went back to the leaders, Democrat and Republican—particularly speaking to the Republican leaders—saying, Okay, you said you'd do this directly back in 1996. You didn't want to do it by a constitutional amendment, so let's do it directly. Here, we're still making the same substantive proposal; it's based on the work of the Ikenberry Commission and the recommendations. Let's have a vote. We got a vote in the House. Speaker Madigan became an ally of the governor. He had been pretty much the anti-Edgar during the governor's first term; not in a personal way, but in a political way.

DePue: During all the budget fights, I would suspect.

Lawrence: Yeah. But he talked to the governor after the 1996 election when he won back control of the House. He walked in and told the governor, "You know, I tried fighting you all the time. Now I'm going to be with you when I can be with you." It was a significantly different attitude, and he followed through on that. He still opposed the governor on some issues, but he supported him on other issues, and the big issue he supported him on was comprehensive school funding reform. The speaker worked with the governor. He put on sufficient votes out of his caucus to go along with some votes that came out of the Republican caucus.

Daniels fought having those votes go on, but there were several members of the Republican caucus—principally downstaters, but not entirely;

there were some suburban Republicans—who came on board for it. It took them courage to do it because their leader was not for this. I remember, because some of them gathered in the governor's office after the vote in the House, and it was kind of like, Okay, this is our port in the storm here.

Then it went to the Senate, and Senator Philip killed it in the Senate; he would not allow a vote. I really believe Senator Philip was acting in what he thought was the best political interest of his members; and I know for a fact that there were some Senate Republicans who told the governor they were for his school reform proposal, they told educators in their districts that they were for it, but they didn't want to vote for it. And so it was fine with them if Senator Philip would not call the bill for a vote. He took the bulk of criticism for the lack of a vote, and certainly he was not someone who was personally in favor of school funding reform. It wasn't a big issue with him; and in some ways, it was a negative issue in his area because most of the schools there were pretty well funded through local property taxes, and in the first term we had also put a cap on property taxes; he wasn't getting heat on that side from his people. But I believed then and I believe today that his primary motivation was to protect members of his caucus who really didn't have the guts to come out and vote for it.

DePue: What was the nature of the personal relationship between Edgar and the two Republican leaders, and did Edgar try to work with some of the other legislators to go around the resistance he was getting?

Lawrence: Let's talk first about his relationship with the two leaders. They loved him during the campaign season, particularly '94. He was very popular. The polls showed through most of the campaign he was going to win with a substantial margin. In the last two or three weeks, he turned over a lot of his schedule to the two Republican leaders, Mr. Daniels and Senator Philip. In other words, where they told him to go in and campaign, that's pretty much what he did. They loved him during campaign season.

They had a different attitude, a lot of times, when the legislature was in session. And he probably had different relationships, as you might suspect, with each of them. I will say that both of them supported him on some issues where they weren't necessarily enthusiastic about supporting him. They recognized he was a Republican governor; he was the leader of the party, and sometimes his differences with them get overblown because it's not pointed out where they may have worked with him. But having said that, particularly on the school funding reform, they were both obstructionists.

Now, Governor Thompson had trouble with both of them, too. That sometimes gets overlooked in discussions about Edgar's issues with the Republican leaders. I may have mentioned this earlier. But Governor Thompson in 1983 felt it necessary to propose a major state income tax increase after the state got into financial difficulties, largely because of the

recession in the late seventies and early eighties. Senator Rock, who was the Democrat leader, immediately went out front in favor of a tax increase, but Senator Philip, who was the Republican leader in the Senate, balked at it. Governor Thompson felt it was important to have the Senate Republican leader as the sponsor in order to put on the Republican votes he would need. He literally had to follow Senator Philip around the Capitol a couple of times to talk to him about it, and when Senator Philip finally did introduce the bill he was asked by the media, "Well, what do you think the chances are for this proposal?" Senator Philip said, "It will pass when hogs fly," or he might have said, "when pigs fly." That was Governor Thompson's leader talking; (DePue laughs) and the sponsor of his bill.

So Governor Thompson had his issues. There were weeks when Senator Philip would not return Governor Thompson's phone calls. Governor Thompson had issues with Representative Daniels. But on a personal level, Governor Thompson was more inclined to be one of the boys than Governor Edgar was. It was just not Governor Edgar's style. He met frequently with the leaders; he had an open door to the leaders; he communicated regularly with the leaders; but he didn't sit down after the day and have a Jack Daniels with them and laugh and scratch with them. It wasn't that kind of relationship. How much of a factor that was in 1996 and 1997 on school reform, I can't say for sure. I don't think it was a major factor. I think the major factor was that there were rank-and-file Republicans [who] didn't have the guts to vote for a tax increase, and they still wanted to appear to be for adequate school funding.

DePue: You painted a picture where this issue really isn't going very well in either house of the legislature, and it didn't take too much longer before Edgar tried a pretty novel approach and did an ad campaign that he funded with 400,000 of his own dollars in the campaign fund. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Lawrence: The media largely were covering this issue as a personality thing and as a strictly political issue. In other words, even though they gave some coverage to the substance of the issue, their main coverage had to do with Governor Edgar not getting help from the Republican leaders.

DePue: Well, the media likes conflict.

Lawrence: Oh, yeah, exactly. And also, the effort had gotten off to a rough start because in 1996, Lieutenant Governor Kustra was running for the United States Senate, and he was engaged in a primary battle with a guy named Al Salvi. Shortly before the primary election date, which would have been in March, Bob was asked—I believe it was by Rick Pearson, the political writer for the *Tribune*—whether the Edgar administration was considering some kind of major tax increase proposal. He had gotten wind of the fact that there might be some kind of an announcement in the spring of 1996. And Bob told him that he didn't know of anything like that. Again, in fairness to Rick and Bob, I don't know how the question was asked, and I don't know exactly what Bob's

answer was. In any event, Bob lost that primary a few days later for other reasons. I think he would have been a good United States senator.

But when Rick pinned down that this commission was going to recommend this comprehensive reform and that Governor Edgar was going to support it, he wrote a story that ran (phone rings) across the front page of the (phone rings) *Tribune*, and the headline on the story was something like "Edgar Readies Tax Bombshell." (DePue laughs) So that was the first that the people of Illinois heard of this proposal, and it was the first framing of it for the people of Illinois and for the other media throughout the state. Now, I have no problem with Rick breaking a story—he had the essence of it—but the first part of the story dealt with the fact that this proposal would require a huge increase in state taxes. It wasn't until you got to the jump, way down in the story, that it laid out that none of this would happen without a vote of the people of Illinois, because it was going to be a constitutional amendment, which would require their approval. It wasn't so much that the story was written, but it was how the story was framed in the headline and in the story itself. I think Republican legislators, among others, saw how this proposal was being framed and could be interpreted by potential political opponents, and that put us behind the eight ball to begin with. I think it's important to note that.

Then, we get into the coverage itself. We unfold it the way we had planned, framing it in the way we wanted to frame it; but again, the *Tribune* story had preceded this. And then the media get all caught up in the governor's differences with his leaders; the leaders are opposing this. And in '96, the constitutional amendment didn't go anywhere at all. Ninety-seven, we're still having issues.

Edgar decided that the only way to explain to the public what was at stake here, the substance of this, was to buy our message; control the message through a thirty-second commercial. And he did not use government funds to do that. He didn't think it would be appropriate—neither did I; but he dipped into his campaign account. Now, Governor Edgar is pretty tight. He was tight with the state's pocketbook; I think he was kind of tight with his own, or at least he was back then; and he was tight with his campaign treasury; so the fact that he was willing to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars out of his campaign funds to put that message out there I think says a great deal about how important the issue was to him and how he felt the issue was being played in the media. The idea was to try to generate enough grassroots support to put pressure on rank-and-file legislators and their leaders. We did not succeed in 1997. We succeeded in the House, but we did not succeed in the Senate because Senator Philip would not call that bill.

I left in July of '97 to go to the Paul Simon Institute. After I left, the governor was successful in 1998 in getting a part of that reform accomplished. The part that he got accomplished—and it's not insignificant that he did—was

to establish a guaranteed funding level for each and every schoolchild in Illinois and to get enough money appropriated by the legislature to pay for that funding level. That process is still in place, but I don't think it's been fully funded in some of the years since Governor Edgar left office. So he got a part of the reform. He didn't get all of it.

DePue: Do you think he would have gotten there without that ad campaign in the spring?

Lawrence: I think that helped to set the stage for what happened in 1998. I think the ad campaign was important.

DePue: Did he get some residual effect out of the media as well?

Lawrence: Yeah, he did get what we in the business call earned media out of it.

DePue: Earned media?

Lawrence: Earned media. That means people do something that earns them attention in the regular newscasts or news columns, and sometimes people do that by airing commercials and having those commercials reported on.

DePue: One of the things you said he was aiming for was to get the public interested enough to call their legislators; write their legislators; to say, We need to do this. Did that occur?

Lawrence: The polls showed that the majority of people in Illinois were willing to pay higher state taxes in exchange for property tax relief and to guarantee an adequate funding level for school kids. So I think the ad campaign reinforced that. I think even before the ad campaign, the polls indicated that the majority of people favored it. But the skittish legislators took the viewpoint, A majority of people may favor this, but [for] the ones who don't favor it, that will be *the* issue for them in the next election. The ones who do favor it may give us some credit, but it's not going to drive the way they vote.

DePue: Politics is an interesting business in that respect, isn't it?

Lawrence: Yeah, it's an interesting business, intriguing; it's also sometimes disappointing.

DePue: And frustrating, I'm sure. Did he call a special session in 1997 to address this particular issue?

Lawrence: Either in '96 or '97, I believe he did give an address to a joint session on this issue.

DePue: In the last few years, a special session for the legislature is nothing unusual. Was that something that Edgar was reluctant to do unless for very specific purposes?

Lawrence: I don't know whether he did a special session. He may have. What I was referring to was he did go before both houses of the legislature and give an address on this issue, which was somewhat unusual.

DePue: According to what I've dug up here, and I could be wrong on the dates, but December of 1997 is when he actually signed legislation; at the very end of the calendar year.

Lawrence: It might have happened, then, in the fall of '97 rather than in '98 or later, but I do know it was after I left. Now, that could have been a factor. Maybe all he needed was for me to be out of there, (DePue laughs) and then he could get some business done. (laughs)

DePue: Well, Mike, I seriously, seriously doubt that. The numbers that I have here, 485 million in new funds for education; $4,225 that the state would guarantee each schoolchild, and that would go up by increments in 2000-2001 as well. Included in that legislation was a billion and a half for school construction; included in the legislation was teacher certification and tenure reforms.

And that it was funded by an increase in cigarette tax, phone tax and riverboat casinos' penalty for late income tax filers, but not by income tax increase.

Lawrence: Yeah. There's been a real resistance, as we know, among legislators to raise the income tax. But I think it's clear he did get a lot done here, and I think sometimes there's perhaps too much emphasis, even among some of us who worked for him, on the fact he did not get the entire comprehensive reform. He did get quite a bit, and he got a lot more than he would have gotten if he hadn't put both his political capital, almost literally, you'd have to say, into this issue.

DePue: Nineteen ninety-seven had to be a busy year because that was also the year that the administration was doing a major reform of the Department of Human Resources. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about that.

Lawrence: This came about as a result of a reform effort that had some private funding from the Casey Foundation. There was a man named Gary McDougal, who had been very successful financially as an executive at—I think it was UPS—and served on the board of the Casey Foundation, which deals with issues involving kids and poverty.

Usually, if a child or a family is in trouble or in need of assistance, it's not in one area: the same family that might be involved with the people in public assistance, might also be involved with mental health issues; could be

disability issues; could be substance abuse issues. It's usually not one issue, and yet the way state government approached it was the same family, or even the same child or young adult, might have three or four different case managers coming from different bureaucracies.

What we decided to do—and this was after running some pilot programs around the state—was, at the state level, to bring together several human service agencies under one roof. It created a large agency, the Department of Human Services, because parts or all of a half-dozen or so agencies were brought in. And that was a real challenge, of course, to get that agency launched and operating effectively when you are bringing in all these different bureaucracies who have been used to operating on their own. The idea was that by putting them under a single roof, you would encourage an approach, really a multi-disciplinary approach, where there would be one case manager, and that case manager then would be able to draw on different divisions of the department. That was the idea. I was a strong advocate of it.

There's been some criticism that it was too big an agency—and I don't think there's any perfect administration; I don't think there's any perfect agency anywhere—but I think the agency was very effective in dealing with welfare reform and implementing welfare reform in Illinois. Actually, we got started with welfare reform in Illinois, with the Edgar administration, and even earlier with the Thompson administration, before you had the national welfare reform. Illinois got a lot of high marks for how it implemented welfare reform, and I think this agency did a great job.

Howard Peters was the first director of the agency. He had been very involved in trying to shape it. Joan Walters had been a factor in that as well. Howard, and then Linda Renee Baker, who succeeded Howard and also had been involved in our administration, had the challenge of not only bringing these various units together and having them work together, but of implementing welfare reform at the same time. And I think both Howard and Linda deserve a lot of credit for the work they did there.

I know, from time to time, advocates for various groups—mental health, disabilities, substance abuse—said, We think it was better before; maybe we ought to consider going back to the way it was. I think their view is that they don't get as much attention to their cause at a division level as they used to get by being separate agencies. But if you look at it from the standpoint of the client, the person who needs the help, I think it makes a lot more sense to have one case manager and coordination within a department, between various services, than it does to have six different departments and six different case managers.

DePue: Were there some staffing economies or efficiencies in the process of combining all these? If you have one caseworker who can...?

Lawrence: Yeah. I think there was an argument that we made at the time for efficiency and more effectiveness; but that was not really our main argument. We made the argument, and I think it was a sincere argument that could be documented, but we didn't make it in order to downsize the bureaucracy; we made it in order to make the bureaucracy operate more effectively for people who needed help.

DePue: One of the things that I find very interesting about this is Howard Peters, who came up through the corrections system. I'm thinking this is quite a different kind of a job than if you're in Department of Corrections. What was it about Peters that he had the skills to do both of those?

Lawrence: It is a lot different job. First of all, you have Howard Peters' story. I say this with his permission. He grew up in public housing in Memphis. He enjoyed the second grade so much, he took it twice—I've used that in introducing him to various audiences, and I can do that because of what happened through his career—went on and got a Master's degree in education psychology; worked for DCFS in the area of social services. And I may be a little off there, but the fact of the matter is, regardless of what agency, he had experience in the human service area.

When he moved from corrections to the governor's office, his main area was over human services, although he continued to oversee corrections in his job as deputy chief of staff. Howard, if you look at his background, had pretty good insight into what human services looked like from the client level. And the other thing about Howard is when he gets into something, he really gets into it. He got interested in fishing, and he really went at it. He got interested not long ago, maybe a few years ago, in motorcycle riding, and he really gets into it. He got into this human service reform when he was on the governor's staff. He knew chapter and verse of it; he was a part of shaping it; and I had no doubt that, given his administrative experience and then his feel for the issues involved here, he would do a very good job as secretary of the Department of Human Services.

I think his major adjustment was going from being director of the Department of Corrections to coming on the governor's staff as a deputy chief of staff. Corrections, to my knowledge, and during the forty-five years I've been around state government one way or another, is run almost as a quasi-military operation; and when the director says something, it goes down as an order from on high. When he came onto the governor's staff, he discovered that you can go into senior staff meetings with any title, but it's pretty freewheeling; just because you say something and your title is a certain title, it doesn't mean you're not going to be challenged on it. (DePue laughs) And I think that was a significant change for Howard. He adapted to change well, but I do think it was an eye-opener for him when he came on the governor's staff.

DePue: That gets us to the point where we go into some other terrain that's oftentimes associated with the Edgar administration, and that's the MSI or the Management Services of Illinois scandal. I'll turn it over to you and let you lay that out, if you could, for us.

Lawrence: One day I was going through my mail, and I had a handwritten, anonymous letter that alleged that employees of what was then the Department of Public Aid—the name changed under Governor Blagojevich—who were supposed to be monitoring a contract, had been bribed by the contractor. The contractor was a company known as MSI. MSI had provided in-kind contributions to both the 1990 and 1994 campaigns, essentially by giving us our computer services for those campaigns. It had a contract with Public Aid in the period we're talking about where it was—if I remember right—supposed to be getting us federal matching money that we otherwise might not have gotten through normal procedures, and it was then to get some of that money as a payment for its services. So the idea was that the company would save the state much more money than what it got for its services and the state would be better off in the long run because we'd have more federal aid coming in.

I knew one principal of the company, a guy named Mike Martin. Of course I knew him, because I was in the campaign office in 1990 and 1994. And the first time I remember meeting Mike Martin was on what I think was a Saturday afternoon in 1990, when I was in the campaign office and had spent a couple of hours writing a memo to Secretary Edgar on a rather complex situation. Sometimes those are hard to write about in simple terms. The governor's very smart, but my training as a journalist was to take complicated issues and put them in simple terms. I had just finished with this, and there was a lot of information to get into this memo, and my screen went blank. As far as I knew, I was the only person in the campaign office at the time, but then I heard some rattling around somewhere, so I went back into the room which held the guts of the computer system, and there was a guy there. I said, "What are you doing?" And he said, "I'm just taking down the system for some repairs we need to do." And I'm not going to share with you the words I used, but let me say that in fairly strong language, I told him that his timing was not good and that I would hold him accountable for reviving what I had just lost if it was at all possible. Actually, he was able to recover it. That was my first meeting with Mike Martin, who I began calling Crash Martin after that.

So now we fast-forward. I get this anonymous letter, hand-written, and I didn't know whether the allegations were true. Instinctively, I felt they could be true, because I had come to have some questions about Mr. Martin's integrity. But it didn't matter whether I thought the allegations were true or untrue, I knew what I had to do with them. I walked down to the office of the chief counsel, Jim Montana at that time, and Jim had been a former federal prosecutor. I said to Jim, "Jim, I've got these allegations here, and they need to go to the state police." In our structure, even though I could deal with the

state police directly and often did, on something like this, the chief counsel is the liaison with the state police. Jim agreed immediately: it needed to go to the state police.

DePue: But you haven't told us yet what the allegations were in this letter.

Lawrence: I thought I had, but I probably wasn't clear. MSI, Crash Martin's company, had bribed employees of the Department of Public Aid who were supposed to monitor them [MSI] to make sure that they weren't ripping off the state. I don't remember whether every specific [detail] was in there or any; but the way it came out later, there had been vacation trips involved, steaks; various things that those officials should not have taken. We also didn't know at the time—I didn't know—whether there were people in the governor's office involved.

DePue: Before you go too much more in the narrative, and I apologize for interrupting; I'm curious why it was you who got the letter.

Lawrence: Of course, I can't tell you for sure, because I've never known who wrote that letter. I have my suspicions.

DePue: But what does that say about your role in the administration?

Lawrence: I think the person who wrote the letter to me knew I would do something about it. I had been involved in dealing with the tollway scandal and doing the best we could to correct that situation [and] hold people accountable. So I think the author of the letter knew, or had a strong sense, that I would do exactly what I did. Now, you asked the question, so I answered it. It's not particularly modest to say that's why they did it, but I have to say, factually, I believe that's why it was done; that they had a strong sense I would do with it what I did with it; that I wouldn't try to deal with it in some other way, try to head off any investigation or sweep anything under the rug. In any event, it went to the state police. I later discovered that either this person who wrote me the letter or somebody else had also gone to the FBI. The FBI and the state police worked on this together.

DePue: Roughly when did you get this letter? Was it '97, or was it earlier than that?

Lawrence: You know, I don't remember. It would have been sometime in '96 or'97, because I had left the governor's office by the time this got to the stage where Governor Edgar was being asked to testify in the case. I don't remember, Mark, specifically whether it was '96 or'97, but I will say that when my role became known, and it became known (laughs) as soon as the investigation got underway, there were people in the governor's office and elsewhere who were unhappy with me. Not the governor himself, but there were other people, because they were friends of the principals in MSI, and some of them were interviewed by federal and state agents.

DePue: I'll ask you, and I think I know what your answer will be: [are you] willing to name any names of those folks?

Lawrence: No, I don't want to get into it. There were names that surfaced later as unindicted coconspirators—and it wasn't just people in the governor's office. I'm not going to name him—he's dead now, and I'm not going to dirty up his reputation—but he came to see me. This was a few months after the investigation was underway. I had known him well and [we] had gotten along well. And he said, "You were a crack investigative reporter in your day. Why didn't you just take care of this instead of sending it over to the state police?" And I said, "When I was a reporter, I was a reporter. I was a government official when I got this, and my job as a government official is not to conduct a criminal investigation, or an investigation of something that could be potentially criminal. That's the job of law enforcement." He persisted, and I finally said to him, "If you want me to say I should have done it differently, you're not going to hear that from me. If I got a letter tomorrow with the same allegations or a phone call with those allegations, I'd turn it over just the way I did this." And a lot of people have said, Well, that must have been a hard decision; and I have to say— I made a lot of decisions when I was in the governor's office—that was one of the easiest ones I made. I clearly knew what I should do, and I did it.

DePue: When did Governor Edgar become aware of this? Was it at the time you turned it over to be investigated?

Lawrence: My best recollection is I didn't tell him immediately; and the reason was we did have an investigation being launched, and I didn't want to impede that investigation in any way. I talked to the chief counsel about it, and that was the extent of it at that time. Now, there did come a time when Governor Edgar became aware of it, of course, and I can't remember whether I told him or if he became aware of it in another way.

DePue: I'm not sure I understand the reasoning here. Why would informing Governor Edgar at the time you handed this over to the state police have impeded the investigation?

Lawrence: I want to make something clear here. I don't think Governor Edgar had anything to do with what happened in MSI in the sense of any kind of improper behavior; and when he became aware of it, our administration fully cooperated. My state of mind at the time—and when we talk about a period where he didn't know about it, I don't think it was a long period of time—was, you have an allegation of wrongdoing; you need to have that allegation investigated; you give those allegations to the proper authority; and then you let them deal with it. It wasn't so much that I thought Governor Edgar had done anything wrong, but I've always figured the more people who knew about an investigation, the more likely it becomes that it's going to get compromised some way. When I was working investigations as a journalist, I

didn't tell many people. You start talking about it, and before you know, somebody can start destroying records or doing something.

Again, I want to emphasize: Governor Edgar acted appropriately throughout this. He didn't engage in behavior that was part of those allegations, and once he became aware of the investigation, he cooperated fully and expected people in the administration to cooperate fully. And again, I can't remember the timeframe between the time I turned it over and [when] he knew about it. It might even have been a matter of days. But my state of mind was: turn it over, let law enforcement do their job, and get out of it—even get out of it myself at that point until I was asked to get involved in it.

DePue: How soon after you handed this over to law enforcement did the news media get wind of it and get it out into the public?

Lawrence: I don't remember specifically, but it was at least a few weeks—could have been longer.

DePue: By that time, then, Governor Edgar knew about what was going on?

Lawrence: Yeah, he did. Yes.

DePue: What was Governor Edgar's advice to the staff in terms of this investigation?

Lawrence: He didn't make any big speech, but he made it clear we were to cooperate, because that's the way he operated as governor. If you had an investigation underway, you cooperated.

DePue: Was the investigation focused on public aid, or elsewhere as well?

Lawrence: I think the state police and the FBI would tell you they were doing a comprehensive investigation. It would have been focused on the Department of Public Aid because the allegations were that members of that department had been corrupted. But I know that their investigation took them beyond the Department of Public Aid. They interviewed people on the governor's staff; they interviewed people in the state Senate and elsewhere.

DePue: What did you think of the press coverage?

Lawrence: It's been a few years, but my recollection is that the press coverage was generally fair, and in most stories, it pointed out that the administration launched the investigation. When we referred the matter to the state police, it did launch it [the investigation] from the state police standpoint. I didn't know until later the FBI was involved. But the people in the media were pretty fair about pointing out that the administration launched it and was cooperating.

They didn't always do that. I can remember being particularly concerned because Governor Edgar's name was in the headlines in a negative

way, and I never liked to see that. On the other hand, it was our administration, and I totally understand why it was reported on that way. Also, at one point, there were some assertions made that we had not done what we should have done, and there were assertions made that this letter contained allegations that it did not contain, and that we didn't pursue it. A group in Chicago made these allegations, I knew they were wrong, and they cast us in the light of covering up the involvement by the governor's office in all of this.

DePue: The comparisons with Watergate and those kinds of things are almost inevitable, as are the allegations that the governor himself was involved with all of this. Where was that coming from?

Lawrence: This particular thing I'm talking about may have come from the BGA, the Better Government Association, although I'm not 100 percent sure of that. If it wasn't the BGA, it was a group that might be a cousin of the BGA in terms of its declared mission. I was concerned when this came out that it would be misleading; and there was also a suggestion that I had not told the whole story and acted appropriately, given these allegations that they said were in this letter.

DePue: You had turned the letter over to the state police?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. I called the state police because obviously, the media did their job, and they called me for a reaction. They were raring to go on the story. They were firing up.

DePue: Were they asking you to see the letter?

Lawrence: They didn't. No, they asked for my reaction like they were, at least for the moment, accepting what was being said as true. And I said, "Did they show you a letter? I'd like to see it, because I know what that letter said." And they said—

DePue: Did you keep a copy of the letter?

Lawrence: No, no, I didn't. I turned that letter over to the state police. That's what you do. But I asked the journalists, when those accusations were being made that we had covered up, "Were you shown the letter?" And they said, No, but the people said they had it on good authority it was in the letter. I called the state police, and I said, "Look, I don't want to do anything to impede your investigation, but allegations are being made that there were things in the letter that I didn't read in that letter. I don't want to compromise your investigation, but are you at a point where you can give me the copy of the letter?" And they said, Yes, we are, and we appreciate the fact that you handled it the way you did; you have handled it the way you have handled it during the investigation; and we understand the position you're in; and yes, you can have a copy of the letter. When I shared that with the media, I think all but one outlet killed the story at that point, because what was being alleged

was way off base. It just wasn't true. I think that was an example when the media, when it was given an accurate accounting of what happened, behaved responsibly.

DePue: I'm curious about the role that the auditor general would play [in the investigation], and I know that William Holland became the auditor general in 1994. Maybe we should start with what that position is in the first place, and if Edgar was involved in his particular appointment.

Lawrence: The auditor general is a position created by the 1970 constitution. The auditor general is appointed to a ten-year term by the legislature, and it takes an extraordinary majority to appoint the auditor general. The extraordinary majority is required to try to assure that it's a bipartisan appointment. Bill Holland is the second person to hold that position in Illinois. The first was Bob Cronson. Bill had been the chief of staff for the Senate Democrats, so he came to the position out of a partisan background; but he was appointed to the position in a bipartisan vote, I believe he has been reappointed as well, and that takes an extraordinary majority. When I was in the governor's office, Bill and I probably had a couple of quarrels in the press about audits they did and how the findings were interpreted and presented, but I feel and have felt that he's done a highly professional job. And I'm not sure where you're going with this—

DePue: Was his office involved with the MSI investigation?

Lawrence: I don't remember his office being involved. The auditor general does routine audits periodically of state agencies to determine whether they have complied with state laws and have operated in the proper manner, primarily from the business standpoint: are you doing the things you're supposed to do, and are you complying with the law? There were several law enforcement agencies, including the state police and the FBI; I believe postal inspectors may have been involved, although I'm not 100 percent sure on that; and then the U.S. attorney's office in Springfield.

DePue: Ron Lowder and Mike Martin, who you've talked about quite a bit already, were two people who were convicted—mail fraud and bribery—in this particular case; and that was in late 1997 when all this came to fruition. Then there were a couple people from the administration who were cited in the indictment: Robert Wright and Mike Belletire.

Lawrence: They were. Were they identified as unindicted coconspirators?

DePue: Yeah.

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: Whether or not the article used that language, they were unindicted, at least.

Lawrence: Maybe they were cited in the indictment, and maybe they didn't end up being unindicted coconspirators. I could be—

DePue: They were not convicted. That's what I'm saying.

Lawrence: No, no, no, and they were never charged. Later, the names of unindicted coconspirators came out, and I don't remember for sure whether their names were among them or not.

DePue: Do you think the scandal had any permanent damage on Governor Edgar's reputation?

Lawrence: I think it could have become an issue if he had run for reelection or if he had chosen to run for another office or if he had chosen to run for governor a few years after he left office. Yeah, it would have been used in commercials against him; I don't have much doubt about that. I write a column every other week now for newspapers around the state, and when I write about reform, periodically in the feedback on the website, someone will say, "You remember Jim Edgar and MSI? And you were his press secretary." And that's fine; it goes with the turf.

But yeah, there are people who use that against Jim Edgar, there are people who would use it against him if he ever were put on a ballot; but the fact of the matter is that when he left office, polls taken independently showed that he was popular and, more importantly, a higher percentage of people trusted him than when he first became governor. His trust numbers were pretty high when he became governor; they were even higher when he was leaving. So this reinforced for me that most people in this state don't expect any administration to be perfect. What they do expect is for the person in charge of the office to set the right ethical tone and to deal seriously with allegations of wrongdoing, even if they involve contributors, friends and political allies.

Governor Edgar dealt seriously with these allegations. He set the right tone in the secretary of state's office and in the governor's office. Neither of those administrations—in the secretary of state's office and in the governor's office—was perfect. Today, I will have people tell me that they were strong-armed to make political contributions to Jim Edgar. They won't say it was by Jim Edgar, but that people representing Jim Edgar put pressure on them to make political contributions.

DePue: People who were in government?

Lawrence: I would say that the vast majority of these occasions that are alleged would have involved state employees; yeah, that state employees were pressured. What I can say is that when these kinds of allegations came to our attention, we did look at them, and there were cases where there was undue pressure put on, and people were disciplined as a result of that. Now, were we perfect? No.

But we tried to deal seriously with the wrongdoing and allegations of wrongdoing. What people need to understand as well is that people can say things are happening, but proving them can be something else. We weren't perfect, and no administration is perfect, but I believe the people of Illinois properly concluded that Jim Edgar tried to do a good, honest job.

And in the MSI case, the FBI and the state police did their job. They interviewed the governor. People can say, Well, would the state police take on a governor? They work for the administration. And my response is: the state police are professionals, particularly the people investigating this situation; but even if you grant for the sake of argument that the state police might not want to take on a governor, I don't think the FBI would have any trouble with it. They interviewed the governor; they thoroughly investigated the situation; there were indictments and convictions.

DePue: Thank you very much for bearing with me through this series of questions. Let's change gears here a bit, because 1997's also the year you decide to step down from your position as press secretary. Why the timing; why the move?

Lawrence: I told Governor Edgar during his first term that I would not stay for a complete second term if he ran for reelection and won reelection. I found my work as press secretary challenging and stimulating. I'm glad that I worked for the administration—I'm proud of having worked for the administration and proud of what it accomplished—but I didn't love being a press secretary or being in government. I don't mind the hard work and the intensity, although I've never worked that hard under that kind of intensity in any job I've held—and people who were around the state house pressroom when I was a reporter would, I think, say that I was a very hard worker and very intense—but the work in the governor's office was tremendously demanding and intense.

Having said that, that's not why I felt I wasn't going to go the full two terms. I found it frustrating—the pace of progress. I'm a more patient person now than I was then, but I think I'm still not the most patient person in the world; and if you're on the inside trying to get things done, and you have to rely on other people in government and in the administration, you have to rely on the legislature to try to get things done, it can be frustrating. I have a lot of good feelings about what we did get done, and I have a lot of respect for a lot of people in government, in all branches of government.

What I'm trying to say is it wasn't an arena that I wanted to stay in for a long time, at least not as an insider, as a government employee. As it turned out, I was with Governor Edgar for ten years. That was longer than I ever thought I would be with Governor Edgar in the role of being a government official. So I told him during the first term that I would not go the full route if he won a second term. He won reelection.

I told him within the first few months after he won reelection that I was going to begin thinking about the next chapter of my life and to start taking action that would bring me to that next chapter. I said to him, "Up to this point, I've devoted everything, all my energies and my concentration, to you and my family, and I'm now ready to start exploring the afterlife here." And I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to move on. He said, "We're going to do some exciting things. I think you'll enjoy them, and I hope you stay on for a year or two—at least that long." I said, "I may do that, but I want to be upfront because I may be talking to people—and I don't plan on doing anything unethical in the process—about what possibilities might be there." I figured I could not go back into the state house pressroom as a reporter. I mean, I was now branded as a partisan. Possibly, I could get an editor's job somewhere, or perhaps an editorial page editor's job.

DePue: As I recall, you'd already done that and—

Lawrence: I had done that, but I could have been interested in doing that again. I didn't explore it that thoroughly, but there was certainly nobody knocking on my door saying, "Lawrence, we'd like you to come to work here as the editorial page editor, as an editorial writer." I really thought I had about two realistic options. I'd been a journalist for twenty-five years and I'd worked in government, and even though I have no complaints about my salaries in either position, you don't build up a lot of wealth if you do journalism or government the right way; unless you're an exceptional journalist and get into a situation where you make a lot of money in journalism. Generally, you don't make a lot of money in journalism.

I was in my fifties, and I figured I could either go into corporate PR and make a lot of money, or I could somehow hook up with the state university system and maximize the pension credits I had built up in government. I wasn't drawn to higher education strictly because of the pension possibility, but that was a factor there, and it was something that I wanted to be realistic about. But I was also interested in dealing in public policy from another aspect, other than being a journalist and other than being an insider. I began exploring and talking to people about both possibilities, and I determined after one or two interviews with people dealing with corporate PR that I just didn't want to do it. It wasn't me. I just wasn't into pushing a product or a company.

I was still struggling with what to do, and then one day, Paul Simon called me. For whatever reason, Paul called me when he wanted to get in contact with Governor Edgar. Now, Paul could have called Governor Edgar directly; [as] a sitting U.S. Senator, he and the governor had a good relationship, but Paul would call me. And Paul called me, and he said, "Mike, I'm going to take you into my confidence here. I'm not going to run for reelection in 1996, and I'm going to set up this public policy institute at SIU; and the reason I'm calling you is I'd like the governor to be there at the event

where I announce this decision." And I said, "I'm sure he'll be there if he can, unless there's some huge schedule conflict, but I'll check with him." I said, "By the way, what do you plan to do at this institute?" And he told me a little bit about. Of course, I told the governor; the governor said, "Oh, yeah, I'd be happy to do that." And then I thought, You know, this might be something I would want to do now. This could be the next chapter. I like southern Illinois. I'd been down there a lot with Edgar because he likes southern Illinois.

I didn't want to put Paul on the spot. I've known him for more than thirty years, and I was kind of his contact with the administration even though he didn't need one other than the governor. I decided I would take an indirect approach so that if he were not interested in having me there, he could get that word to me and it wouldn't be a direct no. So I called Gene Callahan, somebody very close to Paul and a good friend of mine, and I said, "Would you sound Paul out about the possibility of my coming there, or at least talk about?" I said, "I'm not sure even if he wanted me that I would go there—I'd like to know more about it—but I'd appreciate it if you would at least sound him out." Gene said he would. And then, as I recall, a few days later, there's this familiar baritone voice on the phone saying, "When can you come?" (DePue laughs)

A few months before that—it was around Thanksgiving of '96—I'd gone in to see the governor in his mansion office on another matter, but I said to him, "Governor, I'm setting a deadline for me to be out of here. If I don't set this deadline, I'm not going to be out of here." I think it was June first or something to have made a decision. And the governor said, "Well, do you have something?" I said, "No, but I've got to do this or I'm not going to get out of here." And as it turned out, it wasn't long after that that the call came from Paul.

Then the governor asked me if I would stay through the '97 legislative session—we had education reform, among other things, on the table—and he asked if I would help him find a successor to me. Those were the two things he said after I told him about my interest in going to Southern and Paul's interest in having me come there. And so when Paul and I made an agreement that I would come to Southern, we did agree that I would not come until July first, at what was supposed to be the conclusion of the legislative session.

DePue: We've been at this for a while today. I think we probably should call it quits, and then finish things off tomorrow, if that sounds satisfactory.

Lawrence: Yeah, we covered a lot of ground here.

DePue: Thank you very much, Mike.

(End of interview)

Interview with Mike Lawrence
ISG-A-L-2009-005.06
Interview # 6: July 3, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Friday, July 3, 2009. It's a beautiful Friday morning here in Carbondale, and I'm at the residence of Mike Lawrence. Good morning, Mike.

Lawrence: Good morning, Mark.

DePue: This is our sixth session and, as we had talked about last night, it should be our last, because we have gotten through the Edgar administration and have some loose ends, but some important loose ends, to tie up. Yesterday, we were talking about your decision to step down and to move on to different directions, and you mentioned you'd like to make just one or two more comments in that regard.

Lawrence: Yeah, I'm not sure that I conveyed my feelings clearly enough. Essentially, I'd been a journalist for twenty years before I went into government, and in journalism, you make decisions every day, you put out a new product every day—things move along. That is not the nature of government and it shouldn't be the nature of government. Perhaps government should move a little bit more quickly than it does, but there ought to be, in a democracy, checks and balances and other factors that keep things from happening too quickly, at least most of the time. My personality was really one of moving along, getting something done rather quickly, and then moving to the next thing, and that did not fit well in the governmental mold.

DePue: Did you miss the sense of accomplishment, then, to a certain extent.

Lawrence: Yeah. It seemed that there was a lot of wheel-spinning in government, and that had nothing to do with our administration; it really is the case with all administrations. And as I indicated, in a democracy, things shouldn't move too quickly. In a dictatorship, a lot of times they can move very quickly.

DePue: We've got you out of office, and I think you stepped down in July when you moved to the Public Policy Institute, or was it known as the Simon Institute at that time?

Lawrence: At that time, it was known as the Public Policy Institute. Paul [Simon] did not want the institute to bear his name at least until we had reached an endowment goal that he established for the institute.

DePue: You stepped out of the administration, but were you able to stay in touch with the governor and other people in the administration? You were, after all, by most regards, just about his most trusted advisor at that time.

Lawrence: I did stay in touch with the governor and the administration. In fact, the day we moved into this house that we're in, in August of 1998, the Edgars happened to be in southern Illinois—I think it was around the time of the Du Quoin State Fair—and the Governor and Brenda brought lunch over to the house. That was a very nice thing for them to do and it made our move into this house particularly meaningful.

He had asked me whether I would do his remarks when he announced his decision as to what he was going to do in 1998. To set the stage for that, my last day on the job as his press secretary was June thirtieth, and he wanted to take me to lunch. He let me choose the location, and we went to Popeye's, which is a family-owned barbecue place in Springfield. It was operated by an African-American man, who wore a sailor cap just to add to the atmosphere of the place. (DePue laughs) It was my favorite barbecue place in Springfield. In any event, we had a good lunch that day, and at that lunch, the governor said that he would be making a decision in the summer with respect to what he would do in 1998. His options were to run for reelection as governor—there are no term limits in Illinois; there was a U.S. Senate seat open; and the third option would be to retire from elective office.

DePue: A U.S. Senate seat open?

Lawrence: Yeah. Well, it would have been Paul Simon's seat. No, no, wait. Simon's seat opened up in '96. I'm trying to think...

DePue: Carol Moseley Braun was going to run for reelection.

Lawrence: Yeah, you're right. You're right. I'm wrong about that. I guess what I'm saying is there was a U.S. Senate race available if he wanted to run for the Senate, and there was a feeling that the incumbent, Senator Braun, was vulnerable. So, again, he asked me if I would write his remarks at the time.

Now, we fast-forward to the Illinois State Fair. The governor invited Marianne and I to attend an evening at the fair with him and Brenda, and as we were settling into our seats, the governor said, "Have you got my remarks written?" I laughed, and I said, "Well, have you made a decision?" He laughed, and he said, "No," and I said, "Well, it's a little difficult for me to write the remarks until you've made a decision," and he agreed with that. But I then came back to Carbondale—

DePue: I want to clarify one thing. Earlier, when you started this story, you said this was 1998. This has to be 1997.

Lawrence: It would have been in ’97, because filing for the ’98 election would have been later in ’97; it would have been in December of ’97. You know, we’re eleven years down the road, (DePue laughs) eleven or twelve years, so the dates sometimes can get a little mixed up in one’s mind. But anyway, I came back to Carbondale, and I actually wrote three speeches. Now, there was some similarity between the three. Regardless of what he did, it was important to document his record as governor, so that was going to be a common part of whatever remarks he made. But beyond that, (laughs) it certainly would vary depending on what he wanted to do.

I got that done and then I was called into Springfield the weekend before he was to announce this decision. He had set a date. He had told the media he was going to make the announcement on a specific date, and he did that to discipline himself to come to grips with this very important matter in his life. The weekend before he was supposed to make the announcement, we were at his log home, which was right outside of Springfield, near Williamsville. It was kind of a getaway for him and Brenda from the mansion. There were several aides there, and I was there, and—

DePue: Do you remember the other aides?

Lawrence: I don’t want to start naming them because I may leave somebody out, and that just wouldn’t be good if I did. I don’t have a specific memory of exactly who was there, but there were maybe three or four of us—Brenda was there—and there was a discussion of these three options. He had not made up his mind at that point. I’m trying to remember now whether there was one meeting out at the log home or two. I think there was one. Anyway, at the end of the last meeting at the log home he asked me to stay behind. And I remember he said, “How do you like things at the university?” I told him I liked them and I thought it would be a good atmosphere for him, but then that was the end of our discussion.

We had meetings at his office in the capitol the next day. I want to be accurate on this, and I’m hung up on whether it was one or two days at the log home, but I suppose that’s something you can ask him about, and he may have a better memory of it. But I do remember that we moved the venue to his office in the capitol and had some more discussions. I can’t remember whether it was exactly the same group or possibly some different people. Ultimately, we came down to the day before he had told the media he was going to make this announcement. And I left the meeting we had in the office that day with the belief that he was going to retire from public office, that he had made that decision. Now, he did not say that explicitly, but I kind of took that with me as I went home.

Then we scheduled a session that night at the mansion so he could begin rehearsing the remarks that I’d written. So we got to the mansion. We went into the ballroom at the mansion—now, here my recollection gets very,

very clear. This is something I don't anticipate forgetting. There's a stage in that ballroom. He went up to the stage—there was a podium there for him to use—and one of my assistants, Anne Plohr—now Anne Plohr Rayhill—ran the teleprompter, and she had three speeches, the three alternatives, which I had not titled except for one, two, and three. He got up and called a number, and the number he called was the number as if he were going to run for reelection. And he said something like, "Don't get excited. I've pretty well made up my mind what I want to do, but this is the version I want to just run through." And I took that to mean, and I took it correctly, that he had decided to retire but, for whatever reason, felt more comfortable getting into it another way.

Well, he started to read the remarks, and he couldn't continue. He became emotional. Brenda walked over to where I was sitting—there were maybe a half a dozen of us in this big room—but she walked over to where I was sitting and said, "We have a problem." At that point, we recessed into the library right off the ballroom and the governor said, "I know intellectually what I should do." He said, "I mean, I've worked through it intellectually, and I believe it's the best thing for me to retire." But he said, "This is hard." And at that point I said, "You know, Governor, I've been the one person consistently arguing that you should retire, that that would be the best course." By the way, I had made that point during his first term—and it didn't apply to just Jim Edgar. I don't believe in term limits by law, but I do believe two terms for a governor of Illinois is enough. I think Governor Thompson was a good governor, but I felt fourteen years was too long. So I had consistently been an advocate of a two-term situation.

DePue: But you had also not recommended the U.S. Senate run?

Lawrence: No. I thought that would be okay, but I have to say, that was a distant third, I felt all along, in all his considerations. Being governor of Illinois is a major, major deal. You are the governor of one of the largest states in the nation. It's one of the most challenging jobs you can have, politically, outside of being the President of the United States or, let's say, governor of California. So to go from that into the United States Senate, where you're one out of 100 Senators—it's a great honor to be in the U.S. Senate, but you're one out of 100. He would have been in the Republican caucus, which was generally more conservative than he is politically. To me, it just didn't seem to be a good fit and he felt the same way. That was really, I felt all along, kind of a distant third. I think he could have won that Senate seat. I think he thought he could have won that Senate seat. I think he could have won reelection. It wouldn't have been a given, but I believe he could have.

So I spoke up in the library that night as someone who had advocated that he retire, but I said, "You know, it's your decision, it's your life, and if you feel like you want to go for a third term, I think it's not a certainty you could win. I think you could win. I think it's likely you could win, and you

could continue as governor of Illinois." He said, "Well, I'm going to sleep on this, and let's get together tomorrow morning." Now this is the night before the day he has told the media he's going to make this announcement, and supporters through the years (laughs) and others have been invited to this ceremony.

I went home. I think perhaps somebody, either reading a transcript here or listening is going to say, "Well, wait a minute. When Lawrence said he went home—we thought he moved to Carbondale." I was actually commuting to Carbondale at that time because we had not sold our condo in Springfield, Marianne was at the condo, and so I was back up there routinely on the weekends. But I went to the condo, and Marianne said that Bernie Schoenburg from the Springfield paper [*The State Journal-Register*] had called. Well, I have a cardinal rule: I return my phone calls, and I return them in timely fashion. I didn't particularly want to return that phone call because I knew what he was calling about, but I returned it. Bernie said, "Mike, I'm getting ready to go with a story in the morning paper that says the governor has decided not to run for reelection and decided not to run for the Senate, that he's decided to retire." And I said, "I would just tell you this: if I were in your position, knowing what I know now, at the very least, I would qualify that." And he said, "Okay." And I thought that was a fair thing for me to tell him. It was certainly accurate, without going into the detail, and I wasn't going to do that. That wouldn't have been fair to the governor, to tell Bernie (laughs) what had just happened.

The next morning, we get together at the mansion, in that same library, and the governor said, "I've got it together now. I'm comfortable with my decision, but the kids are coming over for lunch, and we're going to have one more family discussion on this." I said, "Governor, we have this gathering here in a few hours, and you always do much better when you rehearse your remarks a few times." He said, "Yeah, I know. We'll eat quickly." (laughter) So we came back in about an hour, he went up to that same podium in the ballroom, he called out the number of the retirement speech and began rehearsing it, and that's when I knew that the decision was finalized.

There were some memorable moments during my time with Governor Edgar—a lot of memorable moments. That was certainly one of the most dramatic episodes—the night before, what happened then, and then having him call out the number of the retirement remarks shortly before he was going to make the announcement.

DePue: The night before, when he couldn't even finish the selection, was that a rare moment of emotion for him? Was that typical?

Lawrence: Yeah, it was a rare moment. He is a pretty controlled individual, a fairly cool customer. He had a moment like that which Marianne witnessed during the 1990 campaign. I was based in the campaign headquarters when this

happened, but he was making an appearance in his old legislative district as the gubernatorial campaign was winding down and he got emotional. He was in front of supporters that had been with him for years and years. The race, as we've discussed, was very close. He certainly had no idea whether he was going to win that thing or not, and he got emotional then. But generally he's a pretty cool customer.

DePue: What was Brenda's position?

Lawrence: Brenda's position, as near as I can tell, was that she would support him in whatever he did. I think she was a little concerned about his health, but she didn't push it one way or the other. Now, what happened in their private moments together, I can't really say, but knowing her and observing her during the discussions where I was present, I think she was pretty—she was leaving it up to him. I don't think she wanted to unduly influence him one way or the other.

DePue: This sounds like it was a fairly step-by-step process in his mind, but there are several different events. Do you recall positions that anyone else around him were taking?

Lawrence: No. I can generally. There was a strong feeling... Well, there was some division. There were some who felt he ought to run for the Senate, and I would say most of the folks thought he should run for governor again. It was very tempting for him and others around him to continue in political activity because his poll numbers were very good. I remember, after he announced his decision, the immediate reaction from the media around the state, particularly the political writers, was, Why would he do this? He's really popular. He could win, whether he ran for the Senate or whether he ran for reelection. Why would he get out? He was a relatively young man. That was really the flow of reaction from the media and a lot of insiders.

DePue: What was his explanation for why he made the decision he did?

Lawrence: I told you he and I were on the same wavelength most of the time, the vast majority of the time, and I believe he felt as I did: that he'd had two terms; it was a wonderful opportunity for him; it was good for the state of Illinois that he was there; and it was time for him to move on to another chapter of his life.

DePue: But a guy who was that immersed and seemed to love politics and the public limelight, the next chapter wasn't the Senate seat, it was to retire from what he had loved and defined himself by all these years.

Lawrence: As we've discussed, it was a very, very hard decision for him, but I believe he made the right decision, and he has told me more than once that as hard as that decision was to make, he believes he made the right decision.

DePue: Do you think it was weighing on his heart some that he knew, even though Brenda was saying she'd support whatever he did, that she would have preferred to step away from the public?

Lawrence: I think you're going to have to ask Brenda about that. I'm not convinced that she had a strong position in this other than to support him, and I don't believe she wanted to unduly influence him. Again, I don't know what they shared in their private discussions. Brenda, when she had gone into the mansion as the first lady, had some insecurity, which is understandable. In many ways, Brenda is a shy person, but she really blossomed in her role as first lady, and I think she came to see that she could accomplish things as first lady. I think she became comfortable in that role, and she surely did an outstanding job as first lady of Illinois. I think at the time, when people were searching for an explanation as to why he made this decision, I think they came to the conclusion, Well, Brenda must not have wanted him to do it. I don't agree with that conclusion.

DePue: But that certainly was the public perception.

Lawrence: It was the public perception. I believe this was during the second term—she had been asked at an event she was doing at the mansion whether she was concerned about his health if he were to continue in elective office. And Brenda, being a very forthcoming person, said, yes, she was concerned. (laughs) One of my staff people was over, covering the event. She [Brenda] called me, and she said, "Oh, Mike, I think I made a terrible mistake. I was asked whether I was worried about Jim's health and I said I was." I told her, "Brenda, I think it's perfectly normal for a spouse to be concerned about her husband's health, and don't worry about it. It's been said, and I don't think there's any real negative factor here. But we did get calls on it in the press office, I expected that we would, and I basically told the media what I'd told her: that I was not surprised that she would express concern over her husband's health and remaining in a stressful job; that I did not consider that to be a statement on her part about what her preference would be; and it was not intended to be that kind of statement. People, a lot of times, look for easy answers in complicated situations. This was an extremely difficult decision for the governor to make, and I believe there were several factors, but, essentially, I think he felt two terms as governor is enough for a chief executive of Illinois. I believe that. I think he believes it. I believed it then, and I believe it today.

DePue: And why not go out when you're on top?

Lawrence: That's the other factor, and I made that point during the discussions; that I'd watched too many ball players—I'm an old sports writer—and too many politicians go one more season or make one more run that they shouldn't have made.

DePue: It's important to remember that this decision was made on about August 20th, 1997, so there's still about fifteen months to go in his administration. And you're out of the picture now. How much were you involved with other decisions over the next year?

Lawrence: Well, I wrote his State of the State address in '98, the one he would have delivered in early '98, and I wrote his budget address.[38] So I was involved to that extent. When I say I wrote them, I did the same function that I had done while I was working for him full-time. I had an assistant, Dan Egler—I think I may have talked about Dan earlier—who worked with me. In fact, we were very much a team. Typically, Dan would do a first draft of a major speech; I would then work on it and give it back to Dan, and we would work it back and forth between the two of us. Dan, I thought, was especially strong at flowery language—or "flowery" isn't the right word—uplifting phrases, and my strength was in arguing for certain policy positions through the rhetoric of the speech. Tom Hardy, at that point, had succeeded me as the governor's press secretary, so I worked with Tom, Dan, and, of course, the governor.

The way it typically worked, we would meet with the governor before we'd begin any drafts to get his thoughts on what he wanted to say. Then we would begin to put them in speech form, and once we had a draft that we had agreed on, it would go to the governor, and he would review it and inevitably change parts of it. We'd go back at it, and then the governor, Dan and I, and, later, Tom, would settle on a final draft, and that is what he would rehearse. I think I talked about that process earlier.

DePue: You had not, so that's some more light onto the way the inner circle was working; that's important as well. Just another one or two highlights here in that last year, and since I work for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, I want to ask you about his involvement with the library and museum when it was still just a concept.

Lawrence: He was very supportive of it and very, very involved in it. As you may know, he was a history major at Eastern Illinois University [and] has a strong interest in history. He reads voraciously, novels and what we might describe as lighter books, but he reads very deeply into history and current events, international events, international situations. So he felt very strongly that there ought to be a library to honor a great president.

DePue: Tell us what your new career was like in Carbondale at the SIU Public Policy Institute.

Lawrence: Paul Simon had started the institute in January 1997 after he retired from the Senate, and I came in July first of that year, so I think it's accurate to say that the two of us launched the institute. There was no question: Paul was the

[38] Governor Edgar delivered his final State of the State address January 27, 1998, and his final budget address February 18, 1998.

senior partner; I was the junior partner. He set the agenda, and I saw my role as more of an implementation situation, although he was always open to my thoughts on what we might pursue.

DePue: What was the agenda?

Lawrence: There were several things on the agenda. Shortly after the institute got started, he held a conference on Social Security; how we were going to pay for it in the long term. And we got deeply into campaign finance reform in Illinois; in fact, he made me the point person on that, and that was my principal assignment in the fall of '97 and carrying over into the winter and spring of '98. There were a lot of things that Paul wanted to explore, and we did: year-round schools; restrictions on tobacco; it was a wide-ranging agenda. Paul made several international trips while he was director of the institute. Paul had an amazing breadth of interest. He and I had a marvelous personal and professional relationship, but there are going to be dis—not disagreements, but tensions—you know, honest tensions, civil tensions (laughs) as well. And Paul constantly wanted to expand the agenda. I wanted to somewhat limit the agenda because, among other things, I had the strong feeling that if you got something started, you needed to see it all the way through. We did not have a huge staff. Paul and I were the principals, and we had maybe half a dozen support people—in fact, less than half a dozen when we began.

DePue: Was this entirely funded through the school?

Lawrence: It was principally funded by the university, primarily using state funds, but Paul began fundraising activity soon after he came on the job, and we knew that was a priority. Paul set a goal of having a ten million–dollar endowment for the institute, and we worked at that very diligently. Paul, not surprisingly, didn't enjoy raising money—I don't know too many people who really do—but he had dedicated himself to this endowment, and there came a point where he wanted it behind him; yet we were not going to raise ten million by the time he wanted his fundraising duties to be over with. We set a target of raising seven million by December of 2003, and we made it.

Ultimately, we arrived at that seven million because I knew Paul was really weary of the fundraising, and yet he wanted to raise that ten. So one day, I said, "Paul, look, let's set an interim goal of seven million by December 2003. The university's going to be cranking up a capital campaign. We will be part of that capital campaign to get to the remaining ten million, but that will be as part of the university capital campaign." He liked that idea and that's what we agreed to. Well, we got to seven million just before he died in December 2003.

DePue: Did that come as a surprise to everybody when he passed away? Was his health failing at that time?

Lawrence: He had had bypass surgery while I was still at the institute. The bypass surgery went well, so he and Edgar and I could joke that somehow I was really hard on the people I worked for, because, you know, both guys ended up having bypass surgery. But I think it's fair to say that Governor Edgar really did everything the doctors told him to do in terms of diet, exercise, after he had his angioplasty and after he had his bypass surgery. Paul couldn't get going after his bypass surgery, and he just was someone who had to be busy all the time.

People who knew Paul casually probably didn't realize that he was driven, really driven. I mean, he hated a spare moment. I remember one time, he and I had a meeting with the dean of the law school, and we had blocked in an hour and fifteen minutes for this meeting—and that was a long meeting for Paul. He could get pretty fidgety. And I don't blame him—it was a long meeting for me, too; I can get fidgety. You want to get to it, you get it, get decisions made, and move on. But as it turned out, the meeting only lasted about a half-hour. We got our business done in a half-hour, and we had an event later that afternoon. I said to Paul, "Paul, you got about forty-five minutes to an hour here that was unscheduled. The law library's right down the hall—because the event actually was in the auditorium of the law school later." I said, "You know, you can go down to the library—they've got a lot of interesting magazines down there—or you can go take a walk around the campus lake." He knew what I was getting at. He laughed. (DePue laughs) He said, "Mike, I'm going back to the office and dictating some letters."

So when you say, was his death unexpected?—I think it shocked a lot of people, and I'm not going to say I wasn't stunned by it. When he was in the hospital for tests—he had to go in for more surgery. This would have been maybe a couple years after his bypass surgery, and by then, he had remarried. His first wife, Jeanne, had died of cancer within a couple years after I joined the institute. And he had remarried. His wife, Patti, was the widow of a former president of SIU. He had had heart disease, so Patty was very knowledgeable about Paul's condition. When they were meeting with the doctors prior to his surgery in Springfield, I would talk to Paul, and I would get one version, which was essentially, Ah, it's nothing to it; it's just a chip shot. And then I'd talk to Patti, who said, "This is a very serious situation. I'm very concerned."

Our daughter was scheduled to get married in Hawaii, and we wanted to be there. Marianne and I, of course, wanted to be there. It was a very small wedding. So I went ahead, reluctantly, and I remember calling Paul the night before I went to Hawaii, and I said, "You know, Paul, I really feel torn about going." He said, "You know where you should be." And he said, "That's where you should be, with your daughter." And I said, "Yeah, I know that, but it's still hard." So I went over there, stayed in close contact by phone, and we knew, at some point, the surgery was not going well; not that the surgeon was at fault in any way, but it just was not working out. And then, of course, he died while I was over there. In fact, he died on the day my daughter was

married.[39] We did get back in time for the service, and I was honored to be a pallbearer at the service.

DePue: This is the second time that this set of circumstances surrounded your life.

Lawrence: Yeah, you're right. I don't know that I'd ever put those two things together, but yeah, they were very emotional times.

DePue: Was the funeral service an emotional experience for everybody?

Lawrence: Yes. I think it's fair to say Paul was loved by many, many people, including me.

DePue: Did Governor Edgar make the funeral service?

Lawrence: You know, I'm pretty confident he did, though (laughs) you'd think I would have a very specific memory. Now I'm having trouble recalling whether he was there specifically. I think he was, but... I mean, I know he would have been there unless there was some significant factor another way, because he and Paul had a very good relationship. In fact, when Governor Edgar had made his decision not to run for anything in '98, Paul was very interested in having him come and join us at the institute. In fact, he was willing to make the governor a co-senior partner in the institute. Fortunately for me, they had a very good relationship.

DePue: Well, since you broached the subject here, how was it that Edgar ended up over at Champaign?

Lawrence: I think he felt that Champaign would be more centrally located in the state than Carbondale, and he would have easier access to Chicago and other places, and that's absolutely correct. And he liked the people at the U of I.[40] I think there was a little bit of a tug to come down here, because he liked southern Illinois, he liked Paul, I think he likes me, and—

DePue: (laughs) You're being very modest, Mike.

Lawrence: Yeah. But in the end, he decided it would be best for him and Brenda to be located in Champaign.

DePue: Now, he ended up going to Champaign, working at the Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

Lawrence: Yeah.

DePue: That had already existed when he went there?

[39] Paul Simon died December 9, 2003.
[40] University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Lawrence: Oh, yeah. It had been in existence for decades.[41]

DePue: Sam Gove was an inst—

Lawrence: Sam Gove was a longtime director, a very effective director, of that institute, and he was a mentor to Governor Edgar. And Sam, of course, was lobbying hard for the governor to go there. I know we don't have much time, but I might share one of my favorite stories about the governor going to the University of Illinois. Actually, there are two.

DePue: Please, share both.

Lawrence: He actually came down to Carbondale to tell me he had made his decision: it was going to be Champaign. I started to give him arguments, not so much against going to U of I, but in favor of coming down to SIU. And at one point, he said, "Mike, I appreciate what you're saying, but it's academic." Now, I don't think the governor intended that pun, but I thought (DePue laughs) it was one of the great puns.

The other story that I enjoy even more is when he was finalizing his decision and getting ready to meet with Jim Stukel, who was then the president of the U of I, to negotiate his deal at the U of I. He said, "Mike, I know that I want to talk about salary—there are a lot of things that I know I want to talk about, but," he said, "you've been on a university campus for a while now. Is there anything you can think of that I might not have thought about?" And I said, "Yes, a parking space." (DePue laughs) I said, "Paul Simon did not have a designated parking space at SIU for several years, and I used to watch this former United States Senator and current director of the policy institute drive around and around the parking lot, looking for a spot. That was not the best use of his time." I said, "Paul admitted he made a mistake by not getting a parking space locked down before he came here. I finally succeeded in getting Paul a pass where he could park in service areas around the institute. Yeah, I nailed that down."

A few weeks later, I'm talking to Governor Edgar, and he said, "Well, I finished my negotiations with Jim Stukel." (laughs) "I have to tell you, we got to the end of the negotiations, and Stukel said, 'Jim, is there anything else?' and I said, 'Yes, I want a designated parking space. It doesn't have to be right in front of the institute or anything like that—it can be within a block of the institute—but I want a designated space.'" And he said Stukel said, "You want to talk about that as part of these negotiations?" And the governor said, "Yeah. I told him Paul Simon (DePue laughs) used to drive around and around the parking lot at SIU. Mike Lawrence told me all about it." So that was part of his deal to go to the U of I. Anybody who's been around a state university campus knows that parking spaces are a premium.

[41] The institute was created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1947.

DePue: I've learned that the hard way. (laughter) Very good. I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the Public Policy Institute and its relationship with the university; specifically whether or not there were expectations that you and Senator Simon would have classroom duties?

Lawrence: Yeah, that actually was part of my contract, that I would teach 25 percent of the time. Now, given how Paul and I operate—we both have never worked a forty-hour week. Paul, as I said earlier, had to be busy all the time, and I'm not quite as driven as Paul in the respect of filling up every minute of my day, but I like to be busy too, and I am busy. Like Marianne has said, I've created my work and my stress in every job I've had. It was part of our contract to teach. Paul taught in journalism, he taught in political science, and he taught in the history department; I taught in the journalism and political science departments.

DePue: Were these as guest lecturers or were these entire courses?

Lawrence: These were entire courses. Paul did do guest lecturing in various classes at the university, I also did guest lecturing, and I continue to do guest lecturing. I also continue to teach, even though I retired from the institute November 1 of 2008. We probably ought to tell our audience here that after Paul died, I became the interim director of the institute, and then there was a national search. I became the director, and then I served as director until I retired.

DePue: That was a different kind of an experience for you, I would think. Do you enjoy that? What's the relationship like with the students?

Lawrence: Really, my main draw to the university was the opportunity to work in a policy institute; it wasn't necessarily to interact with students. I hadn't been on a college campus for any length of time since I went to college back in the sixties. But I've enjoyed teaching. I've gotten a tremendous amount of satisfaction not only from teaching but from interacting with students in various ways. I have mentored many students, and I never would have conceived of myself as being a mentor back in the pressroom days and back in the governor's office days. I was too busy, you know, (laughs) doing things that I thought I needed to do professionally. And yet, I have to say, in the pressroom days, I'd had interns for ten years in the bureau, and many of them did well, and I took a lot of pride in what they accomplished. The interaction with the students was vitally important to me and turned out to be the most fulfilling part of my stay at SIU.

DePue: What do you tell that student who comes up and says, Mr. Lawrence, I'm thinking about going into politics. What do you think?

Lawrence: I encourage it. I lay out for them what the pluses or the minuses are, but, like I tell my students—particularly the well-motivated students, who say, Well, I've heard that politics is dirty or that you have to compromise too much—

decisions affecting their lives are going to be made whether they participate or not. It isn't like if they stay out of it then somehow government doesn't operate and policies aren't made. I said, "So if you don't get involved, at least to some degree, and I would say the minimum is to be an informed citizen, then you are really leaving the decision-making up to people who you and I might not want to be making those decisions." And I have helped students get internships in government and in politics. I've helped them get internships in journalism, particularly public policy reporting types of internships. I want students engaged; I want young people engaged. I think it's very important to the future of our state and our country that we have a rebirth of citizenship.

DePue: This might sound like a peculiar line of questions here, but towards the end of Governor Edgar's term—and you've already told a very vivid story about his decision whether or not to run for a third term—was he the kind of person who would go out of his way to identify and groom people to move up in the Republican ranks?

Lawrence: I think he had an interest in that, and I would even say a strong interest in having good prospects. Since he left the governorship, I think the most fulfilling thing he does is interact with students and young people. So yeah, I mean, he's well aware of his own history. He was an intern; that's how he got started in state government. He was mentored by Senator Arrington and others, so I think he's always had that sense of helping to bring other people along.

DePue: I'll let you decide if this is an unfair criticism, but the criticism in 2009 is that after Edgar we had George Ryan, but now the Republican cupboard is rather bare.

Lawrence: I think there are a lot of reasons for that, and I don't know how much time you want (DePue laughs) to spend on that subject.

DePue: Is it unfair to criticize Edgar for that?

Lawrence: I don't think it is fair at all to criticize Governor Edgar for that. I've watched Illinois politics for forty-five years. A major difference between the two parties is that the Democrats typically have a base, or more than one base, even when they don't have the governorship or the secretary of state's office or even any statewide offices. They have the mayor's job in Chicago, a very powerful position. They generally have held the presidency of the Cook County board, which is another powerful position. So even when they've had their downturns at the state level, they have maintained political bases. The Republicans really don't have that kind of base. Now, some might say they have DuPage County or have had DuPage County through the years, but it's never been the same as having the Daleys running Chicago or having Democrats in control of the Cook County board.

When Governor Edgar left office, a Republican succeeded him as governor, and the Ryan scandal set the Republican Party back for years and years. And part of the reason it had the impact it has had in the long term was the lack of a base for the Republicans. The other factor is the state has changed over time demographically, and the Republicans at the national level have not appealed to a broad base of individuals. Minorities generally don't feel that the party is addressing their situations, and men and women who are pro-choice and inclined to be Republicans get beat up (laughs) by some of the more aggressive pro-life people.

So I think the situation of the Republican Party in Illinois today has to do with the national Republican platform, the messages that are often sent from Washington. For example, we have a growing Latino population in Illinois; it's the fastest-growing demographic. A lot of Latinos would be inclined to vote for the Republicans, except the message they got from Washington a couple years ago on immigration and other matters was, We don't value even the legal immigrants who are here. Now, I'm not saying that is what the national Republicans were saying, but that is the message that came through to Latinos in Illinois. There are several factors involved here, but I don't think it's fair at all to blame Governor Edgar for that.

DePue: Okay. Let's go to the decision that he was wrestling with—

Lawrence: Could I say one more thing?

DePue: Absolutely.

Lawrence: When he won in '94, he brought Republicans into all the statewide offices with him. There was a tremendous bench at that point. And some of the pundits were saying at that time, Where are the Democrats going to be? The Republicans have it all.

DePue: I think one of those might have been Jim Ryan, who had the unfortunate disadvantage of having a name that everybody recognized, but 2006, Governor Edgar—I'm jumping ahead here—is being encouraged by a lot of Republican circles to run for governor again against Rod Blagojevich. Were you involved in any discussions on that one?

Lawrence: Yes, I was. He and I met at his favorite barbecue place down here in southern Illinois, Dixie Barbecue, which is in Jonesboro, about twenty miles down the road. We had a long discussion, and I discouraged him from running. When he called me to set up the dinner, he said, "I've been hearing from all sorts of people who believe I should run. I think it's probably time I listen to somebody who believes I shouldn't run." (DePue laughs) I said, "Yeah, I'd be happy to have that conversation with you."

DePue: What was the essence of your advice at that time?

Lawrence: I discouraged him from running. Now, I did it in the context of being respectful of the fact that it was his decision, it was his life. But he was asking for my advice, and my advice was that he should not run. There were several factors as far as I was concerned. I go back to the fact that I think two terms as governor is enough for anybody. This was somewhat different than the situation in '97 had been. In fact, it was different in some significant ways. I mean, the state of Illinois was in trouble, real trouble, as we were looking at the 2006 election, and there were a lot of us who had concluded that Governor Blagojevich was a disaster. Having said that, I made these points, and I'll try to be succinct.

One was, Don't run for governor to fix the fiscal mess. That should not be your motive. It needs to be fixed, but you fixed it once, and then it didn't last. If you're going to, at this point in your life, devote the kind of energy it would take to get this thing under control, you need to recognize that you may fix it and then it could become undone. So you have to have a motive, in my opinion, beyond just fixing it. There has to be something that you want to accomplish as governor beyond fixing the fiscal mess.

I told him that I felt that people regarded him very highly; he probably would win if he did run, but he would not come out of that campaign enjoying the reputation that he was enjoying today; that the Blagojevich people were going to throw all sorts of dirt at him. The only way they could possibly beat him would be to drive his negatives above Blagojevich's negatives, which were substantially high. I said, "You and I know those commercials don't have to be true, they don't have to be accurate—they can be distorted, they can be misleading—but we also know that people tend to believe them. But even if you won..." And I told him he would win. His negatives might not be higher than Blagojevich's, but they would be higher than they were (laughs) at that time.

The stress of going through that kind of campaign would be significant, and then going into the governor's office and dealing with what he would have to deal with would be very stressful, and I told him I had a concern about his health. I think he's in good condition today, but you cannot overlook his heart history, and I feel that part of his heart issues were brought on by stress. You know, one of the things he told me was he had slept pretty well after leaving the governor's office, and he said, "Now I'm back to tossing and turning at night the last several weeks." I said, "Well, (laughs) what does that tell you?"

I also told him that there's a tendency when we get a few years past a situation to look back and see the positives in a far more distinct light than we tend to see the negatives. He had a good administration, but there were positives and negatives. I believe there were far more positives than negatives, but I said, "Look, it was not Camelot when we were there before, and even if it were Camelot, you can't return to Camelot. You're someone who needs to

have the team around you that you trust, and you're not going to have the same team that you had before. You may have some members of that team, but you're not going to have all those members in that team." And I said, "Governor, I don't mean to be presumptuous, but if you're thinking that I'm going to be there as part of that team, I'm not going to be there. I don't want to worry like that ever again. I love you, but (laughs) I'm not going to be there in that role again. I don't know that that should influence your decision—it should not—but you just need to know of that. I feel like I need to tell you that as long as we're having this discussion."

It so happened that I was scheduled to be in Chicago for a meeting of our advisory board at the institute, and then after this meeting was scheduled, Governor Edgar made an announcement or sent out an advisory that he would announce his decision as far as running for governor later that day. We had our advisory board committee meeting. I was already scheduled to go to a luncheon where Governor Edgar was going to moderate a panel. That had all been scheduled before; this was the *Illinois Issues*' thirtieth anniversary luncheon I serve on the board of *Illinois Issues*, so I was going to be there.[42]

Between the meeting with the advisory board and the luncheon, I get a call from Eric Robinson, who had been one of my deputies in the press office, and who had really continued to serve as a media advisor to the governor—in fact, he was Governor Edgar's last press secretary.[43] He said, "Just so you know, the governor's going to announce that he's not going to run," and I said, "Okay. I think it's the right decision, but I appreciate your letting me know that." Well, the governor (laughs) and Brenda show up. I was in a sitting room at the Union League Club on the first floor, and they came in there, but there were other people in the room, so it was essentially, Hi and how are you? As far as I was concerned, he'd made the decision, and he knew how I felt about it; Brenda knew how I felt about it, so there's no point in my breaking off conversations with other people to talk to them. It would have been awkward if I had done that.

I go upstairs to the luncheon, and there are probably a couple hundred people at this luncheon—the governor's going to moderate the panel—and Brenda motions for me to come over to her table. I go over there, and she motions me to lean down because she wants to whisper something, and she said, "He still doesn't know." (laughter) Talk about déjà vu. (laughs)

DePue: What strikes me in talking to him is this is a man who always wants to have a plan and have everything mapped out.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's right; you're exactly right. Here we go again. I went back to my table and then watched him moderate the panel and now was not an

[42] The meeting and announcement occurred September 30, 2005.
[43] Eric Robinson served as press secretary from 1997-1998.

informed—well, I was an informed observer, but I sure didn't know what he was going to do. What I knew was when he went up to moderate the panel, at least from Brenda's standpoint, he was still wavering. After the panel's over with, somebody came to get me—I think it might have been Mike McCormick. You know, I was planning to go to the announcement, it was right upstairs in the Union League Club, but this person said, "Mike, there's a holding room, and the governor would like you to be in the holding room." I thought, Oh, well, now this may be another mansion library discussion. But I got in there, and he said, "Mike, I'd like you to stand up there with me, and don't worry, I'm going to announce (laughs) I'm not running." As you know, and as the people in Illinois know, that was a very emotional moment when he made that announcement—very similar in some ways to what had happened in the ballroom the night before he had made that announcement back in 1997.

DePue: At the time he made that announcement—I'm going to need to ask him this question as well—did you and did he think that the Republicans had a decent chance to dethrone Blagojevich?

Lawrence: I thought he would beat Blagojevich.

DePue: I mean that when he steps down, then whoever would get the nod; obviously Judy Baar Topinka.

Lawrence: You know, I think he felt that Judy Baar Topinka would be a good candidate against Blagojevich. She had been elected three times statewide. In fact, her third election, she was the only Republican to win statewide. That was after the Ryan scandal, and the Republicans lost every other race, but she won reelection as treasurer. She is a moderate Republican. She had been an effective campaigner in her other races.

DePue: She had the name recognition as well.

Lawrence: She did have the name recognition. I think what happened, though, was that even though people recognized her name and had generally positive feelings about her, those feelings were not deeply rooted. I think what happened was that Blagojevich outspent her tremendously and drove home the message that, without saying it like this, You know, you may not like me; you may not think I'm doing a good job—she'd be worse. (DePue laughs)

DePue: An interesting campaign message.

Lawrence: Yeah. But in his commercials, he didn't say, You may not like me; you may not think I'm doing a good job. He basically threw everything at her, linked her to George Ryan, and he drove her negatives even higher than his own.

DePue: I'm going to do some backpedaling here, because we've mentioned his name quite a bit. Obviously the person who became governor after Edgar stepped down was George Ryan. When he ran the first time around, there were already

some negatives about it. Do you know how Edgar felt or how you personally felt about George Ryan being the Republican candidate?

Lawrence: You know, the governor and George Ryan had a far-from-warm relationship through the years, particularly after the governor became part of the Thompson administration as a legislative director. But I think the governor, he supported George Ryan. I think he was hopeful that George would be a decent governor.

DePue: Did he hit the campaign trail for George?

Lawrence: I think he may have done some things, but I don't think he was real, real active, no. He supported him, he endorsed him, but as I say, they didn't have a warm relationship.

DePue: I'm going to ask you some personal opinions now. What is your personal assessment of George Ryan's administration and his obvious legal problems?

Lawrence: I think he damaged the state, he damaged his party, and he betrayed the public trust. I've known George for a long time. He was a back bench legislator when we first met. I was covering the legislature at that time. It would have been mid-1970s, about 1974. In fact, he came up to me one day, and he said, "You know where Maquoketa, Iowa is?" (DePue laughs) I said, "I not only know where it is, but I know how to spell it." And that was how we met. I was working for the *Quad City Times*, and Maquoketa, Iowa was in the Iowa part of the *Times* circulation.[44]

DePue: Just north of Davenport.

Lawrence: Yeah. He was a good source for me through the years as he rose to become minority leader, speaker of the House, and then later as lieutenant governor. He was very helpful to me as a reporter. I liked him, but I came to see a side of George once I went into the government, and particularly went to work for Edgar, that I had not seen before. There was a vindictiveness to him. In many ways, George was about being a good friend but also being a bitter enemy. If he liked you, he would do everything he could to be helpful to you, but if you crossed him or opposed him in any way, then it was another matter. My assessment is that George came out of Kankakee County, where there had been a tradition of the McBrooms mixing politics and business. And then, the longer he was in state office, the more he came to see government as a way to advance personal agendas as well as policy agendas. I can look at him and Lura Lynn as individuals and feel some compassion, but I also have to say that I think he was guilty, and as I said, he did tremendous damage to public confidence in state government; then Blagojevich compounded that damage and extended it. I think George—and I don't say this in any gleeful way—but I think he's where he should be.

[44] George Ryan was born in Maquoketa in 1934 and had entered the Illinois House of Representatives in 1973.

DePue: You've mentioned the other name, and we've already brought him up a couple times before, so it's only fair to ask your opinions about Rod Blagojevich as a politician, as the governor.

Lawrence: First of all, for some context here, I've known governors of Illinois going back to William Stratton. I think I mentioned earlier in our interviews that I met and interviewed Governor Stratton when I was a high school editor, and I came to know Governor Stratton after he left the governorship. I knew Kerner pretty well; I knew Thompson very well; of course, Governor Edgar, I worked with him and for him; and, as I just told you, I knew George Ryan very well. I never knew Blagojevich very well—I have had very little time with him—but I have monitored him since he began running for governor. He wasn't a particularly impressive candidate when he was running for governor, but he was running against George Ryan. Now, I know your inclination will be to correct me: He was running against Jim Ryan. Well, Jim Ryan's name was on the ballot, but he was running against George Ryan. The polls at the time showed that a relatively high percentage of people in Illinois thought that Jim Ryan was related to George Ryan, and there were probably some who thought he was George Ryan. The Republican brand had been badly tarnished. So I give Blagojevich credit for winning a primary election. You know, he did have a contested primary.

DePue: It was a pretty narrow victory against Paul Vallas.[45]

Lawrence: Yeah, it was a narrow victory, and he wasn't a particularly impressive candidate, but he did win the primary, so I think he got some credit for that. But as I indicated earlier, he was a disaster as governor, and he has damaged the state in ways that will be felt for decades. Even looking beyond his alleged criminal activity, his fiscal policies were awful. He has eviscerated a state workforce that by and large was very competent, had seasoned, experienced people who operated very competently day after day. Many of those people either left state government prematurely or they were driven out or forced out, and you don't rebuild management in those agencies overnight.

From the fiscal standpoint, in his very first year of office, he borrowed ten billion dollars. He and his financial guru, John Filan[46], sold the legislature on this scheme to issue ten billion dollars in bonds, put the receipts into the pension fund, which would then, in their mind, forgive the state from making traditional payments into those pension funds so they could spend the money somewhere else. The idea was that the interest the state would be paying on those bonds would be significantly exceeded by the interest the state would draw by investing that money. At the time, I wrote that that was Enron-esque, and I think it's proven to be true. What a lot of people don't realize is that,

[45] Blagojevich defeated Vallas by a 25,469 vote margin, 457,197-431,728; former Illinois Attorney General Roland Burris trailed both men with 363,591 votes.
[46] Blagojevich's budget director.

typically, the debt retirement is done evenly, over the life of the bonds. In this case, the Blagojevich administration back-loaded the debt service, so the citizens of Illinois fifteen years from now will see an escalation, a pretty significant escalation, in the debt service that the state is paying on those bonds. I think that's unforgivable, because the Blagojevich administration will be long gone by then. He's gone now already. I may well be gone by then, so maybe I won't be impacted by that, but my kids will be. I think that's unforgivable. (whistling sound in background)

DePue: I still have quite a few more questions, but I definitely wanted to get your views on the state of journalism in America today. As a life-long journalist yourself, you must have very definite views of your old profession.

Lawrence: I'm not happy about what has happened and is happening. I think there's a lot of uncertainty about the future of journalism. I have a friend who's a Pulitzer Prize winner who was laid off because of downsizing at one of the major newspapers in this country. I think that has negative implications for our representative democracy, where people are supposed to vote on the basis of being informed. Many of them aren't informed and they vote anyway, (laughs) but... I have a concern.

Having said that, I believe there will always be a need for what journalists are supposed to do: gather facts, sort through the facts, check whether those facts are accurate, present more than one side of an issue. I think the need will be there. We have an explosion of information today—blogs, Twitter, websites—but much of what appears through those media appears without the discipline that journalists should typically bring to the business of gathering and communicating information. I am guardedly optimistic that there will be a need for journalism as we look forward. What form it will take, I think is unclear.

DePue: Much of your comments here are based on print journalism, the old-style newspaper, and of course, the consensus today is that what's damaging the print media is what you just talked about: this explosion of information, especially on the Internet. I want to get your impressions of the allegations, especially coming from the right in the country, that mainstream media are increasingly biased in terms of how they portray the news.

Lawrence: I don't buy the conspiracy theories that generally come up, not only from the right but from the left. I don't buy them when it comes to the mainstream media. Surveys have shown that the majority of journalists in this country, and this has been true for a long time, tend to be left of center—not necessarily radically left of center—but I think most of them try to do a good, honest job. There is no such thing as pure objectivity. We all bring our life experiences and biases into what we do. Journalists are no different. As a journalist, I tried to recognize the fact that I did have biases and [tried] to deal with those biases

in a professional manner, holding myself accountable for making sure that I was doing justice to views that I didn't agree with.

I really think the remedy for someone who wants to be well-informed and is concerned about biases is to look at a variety of sources for information. I watch both Fox News and CNN. I also watch what used to be the major networks (laughs): CBS, ABC, and NBC. But there's a view, which I tend to agree with, that Fox is on the right and CNN tends to be on the left. I watch them both. I will go to websites that are liberal, decidedly liberal, and websites that are decidedly conservative. I will read several versions of the same breaking news story, not only on websites that may tell it one way or another, but on the so-called mainstream websites—you know, a newspaper website. I really think the way that a news consumer can respond to whatever biases there may be is to make sure that you go to more than one source.

One thing that does worry me is that I think people increasingly are going to sources they believe will reinforce what they already believe. For example, a conservative will watch Fox News because that reinforces whatever that person believes, and the individual will not hear much about views that may differ from what that person believes. And the same is true for somebody who refuses to go to Fox News and goes to CNN exclusively. I am worried about that. When the vast majority of people were sitting down and watching Walter Cronkite—and they might have a choice of Walter or David Brinkley or Frank Reynolds—there were differences between ABC, NBC, and CBS, but they were all operating within just about the same parameters; and what that meant was that we were being exposed to views, some of which we agreed with and some of which we didn't agree with. When we heard things or read things that we didn't agree with, they might actually cause us to reassess our beliefs or modify our views or change our mind, or they might reinforce how we felt. It is healthy to be exposed to views that don't coincide with your own. That is healthy.

DePue: Let me give you an example right out of today's headlines. Just a few days ago, Michael Jackson died, and if you were to watch American television right now, you would think that Michael Jackson's death was the most important thing going on in the news right now. Maybe that's a little bit of editorializing on my part, but what's your reaction to that?

Lawrence: I think it's been overdone, the coverage. I think Michael Jackson was an important person to millions of Americans; and I don't share the kinship with Michael Jackson that many of these people feel, but I recognize that he was an important person, not only in this country but internationally, to a lot of people. So I can understand why his death is being covered, particularly given the circumstances of his death. But, typically, what happens today is that episodes like this tend to be over-covered. The coverage goes on for days, and it's saturated coverage. I think Governor Sanford of South Carolina ought to be grateful for the timing of Michael Jackson's death, because if that had not

occurred, I'm convinced that it would have been the dominant story for several more days.

DePue: Do you think, given some of the other news events that are going right now that either Sanford or Jackson should be the lead stories?

Lawrence: No, I don't, but I'm not in charge of those operations. (DePue laughs) I say that recognizing that one of the great things in this country is that the media are free to make decisions like what ought to be the lead story or what ought to be written and talked about.

DePue: Of course, I'm asking these questions from the perspective that I'm sitting across from somebody who used to be an editor and making those decisions.

Lawrence: I was an editor back in the sixties and seventies, and I was a news bureau chief up until 1987, and in all those roles I made judgments about what was news, what wasn't news, what ought to be emphasized, what should not be emphasized. As a managing editor back in the early seventies, what I tried to do on the front page of the newspaper was to make the lead story something I thought people should know about; but I would usually try to get somewhere on the front page a story that people instinctively would probably be more interested in. The idea was to draw them into the front page. I looked at it like you're dealing with a friend; there are some things you're both interested in; there are some things you're much more interested in than your friend, but you think your friend ought to know about; and then there are some things your friend really cares about that maybe you don't care that much about, but you want to engage in conversation about those kind of things.

DePue: You have students now who are journalism majors?

Lawrence: A lot of them are journalism majors; not all of them, though.

DePue: What's your advice to those students about journalism ethics, if you will—what their goal should be as future journalists?

Lawrence: I think their goal should be to inform people in a fair, thorough way, and I'm telling them they need to be confident in more than one medium—not just print, not just broadcast, but in several media that we have today. Essentially, I want them to fulfill the role that journalists, in my view, are supposed to fulfill in our representative democracy: do everything they can to make sure the public is informed, and hold people in government accountable for what they do and don't do.

DePue: Let's change gears one more time and wrap things up with some reflections on all those many years that you've been associated with Governor Edgar. What are you most proud of, looking back, in terms of what the governor—maybe the secretary of state—was able to accomplish?

Lawrence: I'm most proud of his efforts, his successful efforts, to bolster confidence in public officials. I really think that the people of Illinois gained confidence in the competence of state government as a result of his tenure. I go back to the fact that when he left, the public opinion polls showed that he was more trusted than when he entered office, and his numbers in that regard were pretty good when he entered the office. What that tells me is that the people recognized that he was someone very determined to do a good job. He wasn't perfect, his administration wasn't perfect, but he was determined to do the right thing. He made some very tough decisions; he solved problems—not all problems, but he solved some very major problems—and I think he and Brenda Edgar served with dignity and class.

DePue: Is there any particular thing that you can point to as a disappointment or regret in terms of what he was trying to accomplish?

Lawrence: Well, I regret that he did not succeed in the comprehensive school reform, because that was a major initiative in the second term. Now, as we've noted, he got a lot of what he sought to get, and he wouldn't have gotten that if he hadn't fought so hard for comprehensive reform; but I think that was a disappointment for him, and it was a disappointment for me. In that respect, (laughs) there is one thing I wanted to go back to on that, because I don't think I made clear the connection between the '94 campaign and what happened on comprehensive school reform afterwards.

What I have said earlier is that I felt if we had had a plan of our own during that campaign, a specific plan, we very possibly could have been more successful than we were on comprehensive school reform. I implied why I felt that—I'm not sure I was explicit about it. If we had offered an alternative—and again, as I've said several times, I believed then, I believe today that the Netsch plan was flawed—we could have gone to the legislature and said, We won, and we campaigned on the basis of our proposal.

Instead, what happened was that when we went to the Republican leaders—I'm going to call it an easy response—their response was, Wait a minute. You ran against Dawn Netsch's plan and won by a record margin, and now you're asking us to run against the plan that you ran against—or you're asking us to vote for this plan and then to go on the ballot ourselves. In 1990, or actually in 1991, after he had run to make the surcharge permanent, he [Edgar] went to the legislature and said, "I ran on that and won," and they couldn't come back to him and say, Oh, yeah, but we could lose. It just didn't work that way. So what we got hit with was, again, You ran against the plan, and now you're asking us to vote for it and then go on the ballot. We could explain how our plan was different, and it was different, but in the perception of the legislature, and frankly with most of the media, it was boiled down to a simple matter of, You ran against her comprehensive school reform; now you're for it. That made it more difficult, and that would have changed if we had had our own plan.

DePue: Okay. What would you say in terms of the final assessment of Governor Edgar's administration and how you would rank him with the many other governors that you worked with?

Lawrence: I'm very proud to have worked for Governor Edgar and I think he was a very good governor. I'm not going to rank him among all the other governors that I've been involved with, and I'll tell you why. I was a part of that administration, very close to him professionally and personally, and I just don't think it'd be fair for me to step back and say, I'm going to assess him on the same basis that I'm going to assess other governors with whom I've interacted.

DePue: You're honoring the very advice you give your journalism students.

Lawrence: That's right. Now, if we take him out of the equation—and I'll say I think he did an outstanding job; I'm proud to have worked for him—of all the governors that I interacted with, Governor Ogilvie stands out as a truly exceptional governor. I've read a lot of Illinois history, I've read about other governors, and again, taking Governor Edgar out of this mix—other people are going to have to make their assessments of our administration—I think Governor Ogilvie could go down or should go down as one of the great governors of the state. I did know him well. I knew him well when he was campaigning. I think we've talked about Governor Ogilvie.

DePue: Yeah.

Lawrence: I would rank him way up there. I thought Governor Thompson was a good governor, and he had some really outstanding people in his administration. I had a frustration with Governor Thompson in that I thought he had a tremendous amount of ability and didn't fully utilize what he had. Having said that, I still think he did a good job as governor.

DePue: You know Jim Edgar as well as just about anybody. I'd like to have you try to describe the Jim Edgar that you know in just a couple sentences.

Lawrence: Very smart; an intellectual; a very good political strategist; a person with a great sense of humor; a man who's very much in love with his wife and his family; someone who regularly goes to church but doesn't feel compelled—and never has—to talk about God in his political rhetoric; a very decent person; reserved, and yet someone who is very successful in politics and government without having the kind of gregarious personality you normally associate with people in that profession. I'm proud to have worked in his administration, and I'm proud to have him as a friend.

DePue: How would you personally like to be remembered?

Lawrence: (laughs) Oh... I don't know. I'd like to be remembered as someone who was a good family man and then tried to make a positive difference in various ways throughout his life.

DePue: Would you feel more comfortable with the label as a great journalist or a great press secretary?

Lawrence: That's an interesting question. First of all, I don't think I was great at either one of them. I did okay in those jobs—and you know what? I'm even going to say I did better than okay. (laughs) I would not use the word "great." I think I know what you're getting at and I'm going to respond. I think of myself as being a journalist, not of being a press secretary. I was a press secretary for ten years, but my nature, my personality, my professional self-identification is as a journalist.

DePue: Very good. (laughs) You saw right through my question. Closing comments; final comments?

Lawrence: I want to apologize to our audience for rambling on occasion. As a press secretary, I had the discipline of talking in sound bites; as a journalist, I have the discipline, since I'm back to writing columns now, of writing no column that exceeds 600 words; and I apologize for not applying that same discipline here. When you're reflecting on things that have happened, literally, a lifetime ago, and also on an administration and a period of intense activity in an administration that has now been out of office for more than a decade, there's a tendency not to have your thoughts organized in as crisp a manner as I have tried to do in what I write today.

Having said all that and made that apology, I've enjoyed this. I think it is a very worthwhile endeavor to record an administration in this manner. I think there are lessons in my life and in the activities in which I've been fortunate enough to be involved; they're timeless in many respects. Journalism will change, but the principles of fairness and thoroughness and completeness will survive in some form—I'm confident in that. We're going to have our ups and downs in government in this country, but the lessons from the Edgar administration, both the good and the bad, and some of the ugly, I think, are important for future generations to have access to and to reflect upon. So I appreciate this.

DePue: Well, it's been a great honor and privilege for me to listen to these stories; to give you the opportunity to tell the stories with all of the (Lawrence laughs) aspects that are involved. You chuckle, but I think it's important to get the entire story, and certainly as a journalist, in the process of doing your research, you were always going for all of the details and a complete and thorough understanding.

Lawrence: Exactly, yeah.

DePue: That's what you've given us here, Mike, and it's invaluable, so thank you very much.

Lawrence: You're welcome.

(End of interview)