

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Harlan (David) Porter

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Education is Key – Civics Education* Oral History project

Interview # ECE-A-L-2019-070

Harlan (David) Porter, a career journalist who worked on the Governor's Civics Education task force, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key – Civics Education* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Sep 18, 2019 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield,  
Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time: 1:32 / 1.53 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 18, 2019.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

© 2019 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Interview being  
processed

## Abstract

### David Porter, Education is Key – Civics, ECE-A-L-2019-070

**Biographical Information/Overview of Interview:** David Porter was born in Tuscola, Illinois in December 1964. He graduated from Tuscola High School in 1983, where he was very active in school news reporting through his work with radio stations at Parkland College and WITT and spent a semester as a government intern assigned to Lee Milner at the Illinois State Board of Education. David attended Southern Illinois (Carbondale) for a year before returning to be managing editor at the *Tuscola Review* in 1986. In 1990 David became publications manager for the Illinois Press Association, serving from 1986-1990 and again from 2006-2014, now serving as Director of Communications and Marketing. In between his stints at the Illinois Press Association, David was general manager for the Regional newspaper based in Tuscola), president of the Porter Development Corporation and the managing editor of the *Mt. Vernon Sentinel*. In 2014, he became the publisher for the *Lebanon Advertiser*. Soon after, he also became publisher of the *Arcola Record-Herald* and the *Tuscola Review*. David served on the Governor's Task Force in Civics Education in 2014, is an award winning journalist, vice president of the Central Illinois chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, public relations chair for the Illinois Newspaper in Education Association, and president of the Sparta Business Association. He has published a booklet on news literacy entitled *News Matters*.

During the interview Dave talks about the Civics Education Task Force with the mission to examine the state of civics education in Illinois and nationwide. The Task Force reviewed Best Practices, funding sources for civics education, teacher training, and course content. The Task Force then made recommendations to the governor and general assembly which eventually led to a mandate to teach a semester of civics in Illinois's public high schools. The semester requirement would include a study of government institutions, current and controversial topics, service learning, and simulations of democratic processes. One recommendation not accepted was a requirement to include a news literacy component, but the subject is included in the required teacher training. Porter talks his profession of journalism from the perspective of a publisher of three downstate newspapers. He discussed challenges journalism faces today, including the role of social media, lack of fact checking, cost of printing/personnel, fewer investigative reporters, growth of large corporations lacking journalism experiences running media outlets, and challenges in news literacy (bias, fact vs. opinion, personal interests over straight reporting, and the ability to ask questions).

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Governors Civic Task Force; Civics High School State Mandate; Illinois Press Association; *Mt. Vernon Sentinel*; *Arcola Record-Herald*; *Tuscola Review*; the state of journalism in the U.S.; challenges for small town newspapers;

**Notes to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

### **COPYRIGHT**

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955**