

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert Hartley

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Historians Speak Oral History project

Interview # HIS-A-L-2010-043

Robert Hartley, a long-time journalist covering Illinois politics who then became an historian chronicling many aspects of Illinois history, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Historians Speak* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Sep 29, 2010 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Date: Sep 29, 2010 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Date: Sep 30, 2010 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Date: Nov 2, 2010 Location: Telephonic interview with Hartley in his winter home in Surprise, Arizona.

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Carolyn Berning, ALPL volunteer

Edited by: Betty Workman & Jan Culp and Rozanne Flatt, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 180 pgs Total Time: 2:40 + 2:37 + 3:06 + 2.37 / 2.67 + 2.62 + 3.1 + 2.62
= 11.01 hrs

Session 1: Hartley's early life and career as a journalist.

Session 2: Work with the Lindsay-Schaub newspapers & early writing career

Session 3: Books on Jim Thompson, Paul Powell, coal mine disasters & more

Session 4: Discussion on Paul Simon, and the future of journalism in America

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on Jan 31, 2011.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Robert Hartley, *Historians Speak*, HIS-A-L-2010-043

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Robert Hartley was born in Winfield, Kansas on August 30th, 1936, and was bitten with the journalism bug very early in life. After attending the University of Kansas in 1958, and then completing Army Basic Training, Hartley began working at the Twin Falls (Idaho) *Times-News*, and joined the Idaho Army National Guard. Over the next twenty-seven years he worked in a variety of newspaper positions, steadily moving up from reporter, to editor of the Lindsay-Schaub chain of newspapers based in central Illinois, and culminating as publisher of the Bellevue, Washington *Journal-American*. Through it all, he remained a keen observer of the Illinois political scene.

During that time, Hartley also began his writing career, publishing a book on Senator Charles Percy in 1975 (*Charles H. Percy: A Political Perspective*), and one on Governor Jim Thompson in 1979 (*Big Jim Thompson of Illinois*). In 1986, Hartley made a major career shift, and began working at the Rockey Company, a Public Relations firm in Seattle. He retired from that in 1999, at which time he was Co-CEO and the majority shareholder. He had also resumed his writing career, starting with a biography of Illinois State Representative Paul Powell, followed by a book entitled *Lewis and Clark in the Illinois Country*, then *An Uncertain Tradition: U.S. Senators from Illinois, 1818-2003*, a book he co-authored with David Kenney. He and Kenney also collaborated on a book on the Centralia and West Frankfort mine disasters entitled *Death Underground*. Hartley followed that with a book on President Chester Arthur's expedition to Yellowstone Park in 1883 entitled *Saving Yellowstone: The President Arthur Expedition of 1883*. His latest book is *Paul Simon: The Political Journey of an Illinois Original*, which came out in 2009. Each book was discussed in detail, as well as Hartley's reflections on the state of journalism today.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Sen. Charles Percy; Gov. Jim Thompson; Gov. Dan Walker; Sen. Paul Simon; State Rep Paul Powell; Gov. Jim Edgar; Illinois politics, 1960s through 2000s; Twin Falls *Times-News*, Metro-East (St. Louis) *Journal*; Decatur *Herald*; Decatur *Herald & Review*; Lindsay-Schaub Newspapers; Toledo, OH *Blade*; Bellevue, WA *Journal-American*; The Rockey Company; Centralia mine disaster of 1947; Gov. Richard Ogilvie; Sen Everett Dirksen; Richard J. Daley; Robert Howard; Richard Durbin; David Kenney; Metro-East (East St. Louis); Bellevue, WA *Journal-American*

Note 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.

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