

Interview with Nancy deGrazia

ISG-A-L-2008-004

Date: January 10, 2008

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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REDACTED INTERVIEW: This interview contains minor redactions. Redactions will be restored on or after January 1, 2020, per the request of Nancy deGrazia.

DePue: Today is Thursday, January 10, 2008. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here with Nancy deGrazia to interview her about her experiences with the Walker Administration and especially as the wife of Vic deGrazia, who was Dan Walker's longtime friend, very close associate, and kind-of the brains of the operation oftentimes. He's been described as many things, and we will be talking about all of them. Nancy, it's a real pleasure to be with you today. Could I get you to say your name, again?

deGrazia: Nancy Shlaes deGrazia.

DePue: Okay. How do you—

deGrazia: I was Nancy Shlaes during the administration.

DePue: Okay. How do you spell that name?

deGrazia: S-h-l-a-e-s.

DePue: S-h-l-a-e-s. Okay. I'd like to start by learning a little bit more about you. So if you could tell me when and where you were born, and a little bit about growing up.

deGrazia: I was born in Maplewood, New Jersey in 1937. I lived there until I went away to college and then married and came to Chicago.

DePue: Okay. And what were your parents doing?

deGrazia: My parents were Daniel and Ruth Shiman. My father was a jewelry manufacturer. My mother was a housewife and volunteer in many war-related—peace-related causes, as well as an antiques dealer. She bought but never sold.

DePue: Okay. And how did you spell your maiden name?

deGrazia: Shiman.

DePue: Okay. How did you end up coming to the Chicago area?

deGrazia: Well, my sister lived here. My brother-in-law worked at the University of Chicago. And, my sister came with him of course and was pregnant and took a part-time job working for Victor deGrazia in the [Abner] Mikva campaign.

DePue: So how old were you at that time?

deGrazia: Nineteen.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: My sister was twenty-nine.

DePue: Okay. Had you gone to college?

deGrazia: I went to Smith for two years and then the University of Chicago for two years and I married in between.

DePue: Okay. Smith College.

deGrazia: In Northampton, Massachusetts.

DePue: What were you majoring in?

deGrazia: I wasn't majoring at Smith, but I majored at the University of Chicago in humanities. Very broad.

DePue: Very broad.

deGrazia: Very broad.

DePue: You could go out in different directions. What year did you actually attend—

deGrazia: I graduated in '59.

DePue: Okay, so—

deGrazia: And married in '57 and started at the University of Chicago with my first husband.

DePue: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your first husband, then.

deGrazia: He was a real estate appraiser and developer.

DePue: What was his first name?

deGrazia: Jared Shlaes. Both of my husbands graduated—went to the University of Chicago. Both of them. Jerry graduated and got his master's by the time he was eighteen and then went to Germany to enlist in the Army. And he was eight years older than I was.

DePue: Okay. I was going to say, he was a little bit older than you were.

deGrazia: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Do you remember much about the Second World War? You were awfully young during that time.

deGrazia: Not very much.

DePue: Yeah.

deGrazia: I remember when war was declared. It was the first time I ever saw my mother cry.

DePue: Nineteen forty-one, you were how old at the time?

deGrazia: Four.

DePue: But a powerful memory for you then?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay. And, again I keep going back to some of the same territory here. You came to the Chicago area in 1956.

deGrazia: To be with my sister during childbirth.

DePue: Okay. And met Jerry shortly after that time?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: And met Vic, too.

DePue: At about the same time period.

deGrazia: At the same time.

DePue: I know that Vic was working with Abner Mikva at the time. What was his relationship with the Mikva?

deGrazia: He was campaign manager and was for all of his subsequent campaigns.

DePue: Okay. When Mikva was running for Congress, U.S. Congress?

deGrazia: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Okay. How well did you know Mikva?

deGrazia: I still know him very well. I had dinner with him last week.

DePue: Oh, really? Let's talk about how you came to start working for the Mikva campaign and first met Vic.

deGrazia: Well, I met Vic in April '56 when I came out for a preliminary visit, and he hired me to work at the [Adlai] Stevenson campaign where he was employed at the time.

DePue: Oh, the Stevenson campaign.

deGrazia: Presidential, Chicago office. And, by the Mikva campaign, I was just about finishing. But it turned out to be night receptionist, and my mother wouldn't let me go, because I lived in Hyde Park and the campaign was downtown, and I wasn't allowed to do that. So I took a job at the University of Chicago working for the Dean of Admissions for the summer.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: I met Jerry because a neighbor from New Jersey was his good friend and it was a blind date. And I dated him over the summer. I met Vic because my sister worked for him and he, at the same time, met his second wife.

DePue: Now, Vic was born when?

deGrazia: Nineteen twenty-nine.

DePue: So he would have been quite a bit older than you, then? About the same difference.

deGrazia: Eight years.

DePue: Okay. First impressions of Vic?

deGrazia: Scary.

DePue: Really?

deGrazia: Yeah. He had all of the mien of a powerful man. And he was older and the difference in age was much more relevant then.

DePue: Somewhat intimidating then?

deGrazia: Yes. Intimidating.

DePue: What was intimidating about him?

deGrazia: His scowl.

DePue: So he had a way of looking at people and sizing them up or—

deGrazia: And I didn't pay too much attention to him.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: I was very involved with my own romance.

DePue: Okay. Did you see him very much those first few years?

deGrazia: No. He married Robin, his wife before me. Robin worked for my brother-in-law. There was a cross transfer there. My sister worked for Vic and Robin worked for my brother-in-law. In fact, my sister and brother-in-law introduced Vic and Robin at a Stevenson picnic.

DePue: What timeframe would that have been then?

deGrazia: Fifty-six.

DePue: Same timeframe?

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: So there was a lot happening about that time in your life.

deGrazia: I married Jerry in '57, June of '57. And Vic married Robin in '58.

DePue: But from what you've told me before, wherever Vic went, you basically were going to the same place.

deGrazia: That began in '58.

DePue: And where did he go in '58 then?

deGrazia: He worked for Otto Kerner. He was Governor of Illinois at that time.

DePue: Well, Kerner became governor I believe in 1960.

deGrazia: And I've lost '58.

DePue: Okay. But what was it about you that impressed Vic? At that time at least?

deGrazia: I was eager to learn about politics. I was very interested. I had worked in the Young Political Groups in New Jersey.

DePue: How would you describe your politics at the time?

deGrazia: I was interested in politics. I did not feel strongly about issues.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: I was raised a liberal democrat, but that just came in the pores.

DePue: A New Deal democrat?

deGrazia: I guess so. Very much so. My daughter has just written a book on the New Deal. It's a very critical book.

DePue: Okay. Well, that would be interesting. What's your daughter's name?

deGrazia: Amity Shlaes Very successful book in Right Wing circles.

DePue: Okay. So you were interested in the politics. What, in particular, caused you to be so interested in the politics?

deGrazia: Organizing. I liked to see a staff chart. I liked to see things in their proper place. Politics is chaotic, but there is an underlying organizational structure that we try to adhere to.

DePue: From everything I've heard, Vic was a master of organizing.

deGrazia: Yes, he was. He was. And he was a master at hiring good organizers, too.

DePue: So he was a good judge of talent.

deGrazia: I like to think so.

DePue: There you go. Who are you to argue about that one. What kinds of things were you doing in those early years?

deGrazia: Well, kind of what I was doing in '58. Vic had a company of his own called deGrazia and Associates. And he had a couple of clients. One of them was a referendum on mental health financing and I did the secretarial work and not much more.

DePue: Was this during the time he was working with Arnold Maremont?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about Arnold, because he seems to be an interesting character in his own right.

deGrazia: I don't know him very well. I didn't know him very well. I knew anecdotal things about him. He was director of public welfare which had a different name. It's public aid now. And he got involved in a birth control controversy where condoms became known as Maremont Mufflers. Vic worked for him, I haven't got the time right, as his assistant; and, then later, worked for him in New York as an aide in Housing.

DePue: Worked for Vic when he was—?

deGrazia: Worked for Maremont.

DePue: So this was a nationwide organization that Maremont had to a certain extent?

deGrazia: No, he worked for the state in Chicago. And then he did some housing work in New York.

DePue: Okay. So Maremont was something of a controversial figure because of the birth control issue at that time. What were Vic's views about that?

deGrazia: He was with Maremont and shared his views and may even have foisted his own views on Maremont.

DePue: Do you know what his own views would have been on that particular subject at that time?

deGrazia: Oh, it would have been to support Maremont's work.

DePue: Well, that causes me to ask some questions. DeGrazia, he's Italian?

deGrazia: His father was Italian born. Sicilian. He made that careful distinction.

DePue: So I would guess he was also Catholic—

deGrazia: No.

DePue: —or at least raised a Catholic?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: He was not?

deGrazia: His mother was a Catholic and tried to sneak him into mass. His father objected. He was strongly anti-Catholic.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: He had left Sicily after throwing his clarinet at the mayor or the priest. I think they were the same.

DePue: This is his father?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: What was his father's name?

deGrazia: I'm blanking.

DePue: Okay. That's Okay.

deGrazia: Alfred.

DePue: Okay. What year did Alfred come to the United States then?

deGrazia: About 19—

DePue: Roughly.

deGrazia: He had four sons born in '17, '21, '27 and '29.

DePue: Were they all born in the—?

deGrazia: All born in the United States.

DePue: And did he come to Chicago directly?

deGrazia: Yes, he did.

DePue: What did Vic's father do then when he came here?

deGrazia: He was a band leader.

DePue: Oh, really.

deGrazia: And he became a WPA band leader.

DePue: You know, those were tough years and for Vic especially growing up in the Depression, I'm sure, and everybody remembers that. So he continued to work in the Chicago area employed by the federal government.

deGrazia: WPA yes. Teaching band and giving concerts.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about Young Victor then.

deGrazia: He's the youngest of the four and was always a handful of trouble to his mother. He had a lot of chores. He remembers washing the kitchen floors every day, and that kind of thing. He was a truant. And he left school after his freshman year.

DePue: In high school?

deGrazia: Yes. Maybe his sophomore year because he was double promoted. He wanted to be in class with his brother Ed who was two years older and he made it.

DePue: But does that mean he did not graduate from high school at all?

deGrazia: No, he did not. He went to the University of Chicago as an early entrant. And he did not graduate from the University of Chicago. No GED.

DePue: So was he too impatient, too eager, to move on?

deGrazia: Mm-hmm. Yeah. He was. He went also to Lake Forest College to study music. And, wrote some things. He said he majored in music composition, but he didn't graduate there, either.

DePue: So he was a—well, to a certain extent, that would—I don't know how to say this. He was good at starting things, but he was too impatient to move on? I've heard him described as a brilliant man and a person of incredible talents. What were some of the talents that he had?

deGrazia: I should get you a mug. We gave him a mug on his seventy-fifth birthday. Gave everybody a mug that listed his talents on the back. He could listen better than anyone I know. And he could listen while he was doing other things. He always had music going in the background.

DePue: Classical music?

deGrazia: Yes. I'll show you his library.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: And he could detect between the words and between the lines what was really going on. He studied. Also, when he was at the University of Chicago he worked for Bruno Bettelheim. Do you know that name?

DePue: No. What was it again?

deGrazia: Bruno Bettelheim. The head of the Orthogenics School, which was for severely disturbed children. And he was a counselor of the big boys. Without any training. That was his training. And he learned a lot about psychology.

DePue: Did he play any instruments? Any musical instruments?

deGrazia: He played the trumpet. He played the trumpet in a jazz band. I never heard him play the trumpet because he blasted his caps off his teeth the last time he played it and he put it aside. And that was before we were married.

DePue: Again, I'm intrigued by a person who has such incredible talents. You said yourself he was something of a handful when he was growing up, for his mother especially. And getting to college and high school and leaving early college and not completing it.

deGrazia: He had things he wanted to do. And college stood in the way. Or so he thought.

DePue: So most people would look at that and say, well, he wasn't well focused and he wasn't well disciplined. Would you agree or disagree with that?

deGrazia: I didn't know him then, but I suspect that's true. He became very well focused, but not so well disciplined.

DePue: When did you meet Dan Walker in this timeframe? Because Vic and Dan obviously knew each other pretty well from the Mikva campaign, from Maremont, from a couple of other organizations they were in, in the mid- to late-fifties.

deGrazia: After I graduated college in '59, I went to work for the Independent Democratic Federation, IDF. And Dan was the chairman. Vic was the executive director. And I was the secretary. Or the other employee who did everything.

DePue: So, were there two full-time employees?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay. What was the funding for this? Was that Maremont?

deGrazia: No. Well, I suspect Maremont had a role in it, but I didn't know about it.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: It was membership. It was a confederation of clubs, local clubs around the state. In East St. Louis they were the Democrats. In Chicago they were the anti-Daley Democrats.

DePue: Okay. Well, that says a lot about what the purpose of the organization is, but what would they say at the time, explicitly, was the role or the purpose of the IDF?

deGrazia: DFI. I said it wrong.

DePue: Okay. DFI.

deGrazia: To broaden the purposes of the democratic party for inclusion of new people and their forces.

DePue: You've already mentioned that essentially they were anti-machine in their outlook. What was it about machine politics in Chicago at that time, and this would have been early in the Daley administration, that bothered them, caused them to form this counter-organization?

deGrazia: It was a locked process. You couldn't get in if you weren't related. Nobody thought for himself. The patronage was abusive.

DePue: Now, I would suspect that Vic was such a talented, capable individual that he could have gotten himself into the Daley machine and spent the time and worked himself up. But was that just contrary to his nature?

deGrazia: Very contrary to his nature. He also was executive director of CIG, the Committee on Illinois Government which was a lot more intellectual.

DePue: But many of the same members—

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: —from what I can tell.

deGrazia: Many of the same members. I didn't work for CIG.

DePue: CIG, then, you said it was much more intellectual in its approach?

deGrazia: It was an issues-oriented rather than politician oriented.

DePue: Okay. So the DFI was interested in putting up alternative candidates to the machine politicians and to the slate makers?

deGrazia: Yes. Maybe not putting up. They weren't that strong. But throwing their influence behind other candidates.

DePue: What kind of people were drawn to these two organizations?

deGrazia: Liberal lawyers primarily. The CIG—they supported Steve Mitchell for governor against Otto Kerner I think. I'm not sure what year it was or whom he ran against.

DePue: Okay. But this would have been in the primary election? Perhaps in the 1960 election in the primary?

deGrazia: I'm not sure.

DePue: Okay. What was going on in your personal life at the time? I know you were a young married lady and you started to have a family as well.

deGrazia: I had children in '60, '62, and '63. And, in '62, I worked for Vic at the State of Illinois when he was working for Otto Kerner in the state structure. He was Director of the Board of Economic Development and I was Tourism Director. I came in my fifth month of pregnancy and I left in my ninth month. Twice.

DePue: And during those years were you living in Springfield?

deGrazia: No. I was living in Hyde Park.

DePue: Was Vic operating out of Hyde Park then?

deGrazia: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Okay. But you continued to have children and went right back to work full time?

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: Did you ever consider taking some time off to raise a family?

deGrazia: No. The Board of Economic Development, and particularly the Office of Tourism, was—I was the Office of Tourism. It was not a major thing. And what I did with the \$2000 a year, which was my salary, was write speeches for the Toastmasters to give to the Lions Club in effect. On the wedding of the wine and cheese in Galena and things like that.

DePue: But \$2000 a year, even in 1960's money, that's not much.

deGrazia: I didn't work a full year. I worked from my fifth month to my ninth month.

DePue: Okay. Okay.

deGrazia: It still wasn't much.

DePue: What was your attitude at that time? Were you excited about the prospects of working in government and the kinds of things that you were doing?

deGrazia: Very much. Government was a plateau to be reached. Politics was the means. And I didn't see government as divorced from politics.

DePue: Did you have any ambitions for yourself?

deGrazia: Never.

DePue: How about Vic, and Dan Walker—did you see the potential that they would have for their own political future?

deGrazia: I wish I could say yes, but no. When Vic told me once at lunch that Dan was running for governor, I was stupefied.

DePue: That would have been many years later.

deGrazia: Yes, many years later.

DePue: In 1970 probably when he would have mentioned that. So you were kind of on the periphery on all of this, but very much involved in the nitty-gritty details of it?

deGrazia: That's right. That's exactly right.

DePue: Okay. I'm going to ask you how would you define your specific duties, especially during the time that you were working with Vic on the Board of Economic Development and in this tourism role, specifically, what were the nature of your duties for those years?

deGrazia: They were primarily clerical. I was involved in all of the meetings. And that was the interesting part.

DePue: So you would have been the one who had to type up the minutes, to draft the minutes?

deGrazia: That's right. I didn't have shorthand so I would type very fast during the meetings. Phone calls. I didn't place phone calls. Vic placed his own. And Dan did, too.

DePue: Was the term secretary used in your role, then, or was it more than that?

deGrazia: No, it was something—it was a little more than that. Not much. And I forget what the term was. It was slightly more than office assistant or something like that.

DePue: Okay. Well, let's then talk a little bit about the election—well, 1972 would have been the election—

deGrazia: Seventy to '72 was the campaign.

DePue: Yeah. Walker announced immediately after the Stevenson campaign for Senate.

deGrazia: I was in the Stevenson campaign as executive director.

DePue: Oh, you were?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay. And were you working for Walker during that time then as well?

deGrazia: Well, Walker was the chairman until Adlai took against him and brought Paul Simon in as co-chairman, which must have been early in '72.

DePue: Well, talk a little bit about that, because that's something of a peculiarity, I would think. Walker is the chairman of Stevenson's campaign and then Simon comes in. What's the rationale for Simon as co-director.

deGrazia: There may have been a third one. There may have been a triumvirate but I don't think so. I don't remember.

DePue: Was there something about Walker that Stevenson was a little bit uneasy about or unsatisfied with?

deGrazia: I think he saw Walker as making his own bed out of the Stevenson campaign.

DePue: From your perspective, what was your opinion on that?

deGrazia: I was encouraging him.

DePue: Encouraging Walker?

deGrazia: Yeah. Though I didn't really see it that way. I can't remember the details of what it was that angered Adlai.

DePue: When you say you were encouraging Walker—

deGrazia: Cheering him on.

DePue: —to pursue his own political ambitions?

deGrazia: That doesn't match with my being so surprised.

DePue: I guess that's my question.

deGrazia: Yeah. I think on the cheering on, I'm adding in retrospect.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: Withdraw the phrase.

DePue: It might have been an unfair question. What was it about Dan Walker during that timeframe—during '68 to '70, especially in '70 when he's working on Stevenson's campaign—that you saw in him in terms of potential?

deGrazia: He was so intelligent and Adlai was not. Adlai would take a press release, and, at the last minute, re-do it. Norton Kay, I think, was the press person, and Adlai would re-do it, cross things out and change things, and then send it out like that with the crosses out, which showed exactly where he differed from the rest of the campaign staff and it was not a smart thing to do. He was small-minded. He once had a retreat for senior staff at his home in Galena—senior staff and family and I went and took my three kids and that was just at the time when he was breaking with Dan. And I don't think that Dan was invited.

DePue: The kind of thing that you notice when you see who isn't invited.

deGrazia: That's right. I was surprised I was invited. My three children were not happy there. They said, "This is a dirty place. It's filled with boys' dirty underwear." They stayed at the Stevenson home and the adults stayed at a hotel in town.

DePue: I'm—

deGrazia: Are you going to edit that out?

DePue: No, I might be reading too much into this, but do you think that Stevenson was a bit intimidated by Walker's intelligence and his—

deGrazia: I don't think so. He had a kind of—I can't remember the phrase—but a pre-ordained right to be senator.

DePue: That's the way Stevenson looked at it?

deGrazia: That's the way we looked at Stevenson and he felt that. I don't know if he really felt that, but he was already anointing his son, Adlai IV.

DePue: Did you know Adlai Stevenson II?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: But Vic certainly did—

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: —and Dan certainly did. Did they make any comments about the differences between the II and the III?

deGrazia: Yes. The II was a cause worth fighting for. The III was not.

DePue: So, the II being a cause worth fighting for, an independent-minded democrat who believed in principle, who wasn't part of the machine, wasn't beholden to the machine politics, was any of that the case for Adlai Stevenson III?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: He was—

deGrazia: He wished he was in the cove of Daley's embrace and he was getting closer all the time.

DePue: Okay. But, having worked in the Stevenson campaign, what was Vic's role there?

deGrazia: Well, Vic came and went. Joe Muskrat was above me. I don't remember his title. He may have been the executive director. I should get out my resume and see what I called myself.

DePue: A paid position on the Stevenson campaign?

deGrazia: A paid position, yes. He was an Indian, an American Indian, and had no roots in Chicago. And he was kind of Victor's stand-in. Victor was not paid by the campaign. He came and went with Dan. And sometimes his influence could be felt. Whenever he walked in the office, his influence could be felt, but he didn't come very often. And I don't really know what went on between him and Adlai.

DePue: Okay. During this whole time, throughout the 1960s, you have a very busy career of your own. You're raising children at the same time. What was your husband's opinion about what you were doing?

deGrazia: Well, he said that he liked to see me involved. It was good for me. But after a while it was less good in his eyes.

DePue: So it caused some strain—

deGrazia: Oh yes.

DePue: —because you were away from the family so much?

deGrazia: More during the Walker administration when I worked in Springfield and lived in Hyde Park. Dan was very funny about that. He insisted that everybody move to Springfield and then he said to me, "Except you, Nancy. You've got a family."

DePue: But you moved to Springfield?

deGrazia: No, I didn't. I flew down three days a week.

DePue: Okay. Well, we're getting a little bit ahead of the story then. Let's talk about the crucial time period then when, right after the Stevenson campaign, Walker announces that he's going to be running for governor himself—

deGrazia: Yes. And he tried so hard to avoid Stevenson's swearing-in day and he kept changing his announcement date and Stevenson kept changing his swearing-in date. I don't think Stevenson did it deliberately, but Dan ended up announcing on his swearing-in day, and Stevenson did not take that kindly.

DePue: So there had already been some tensions before that time and now the tensions are only reinforced then.

deGrazia: Right.

DePue: What was Victor's role in Dan's campaign?

deGrazia: He was head of it. The paid head.

DePue: Campaign Director?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: And did that become his all-consuming passion for the next year-and-a-half then?

deGrazia: It did.

DePue: And what was your role, then?

deGrazia: I was the Executive Director, which was kind of like an office manager. I was in charge of all parts of the campaign except organizing.

DePue: Okay. Were you parts of these important discussions I've heard so much about in terms of how they should package a person who is almost totally unknown outside of the Chicago area.

deGrazia: Some. A lot. I was part of those. And I was there for the discussion of the Walk.

DePue: Can you talk a little bit about that?

deGrazia: I remember it more in anecdote from other people. I think Vic was against the Walk. It was Nortie Kay's idea. And it was by far the most successful thing. It was the making of him.

DePue: Vic, you thought, was against it.

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Do you remember why?

deGrazia: It would take him out of Chicago action too much. It had to be done.

DePue: So the Chicago area is where the votes are. He should be—

deGrazia: The Chicago suburban area. Vic was very focused on the collar counties.

DePue: More than Chicago itself?

deGrazia: Yes. More than Chicago itself because he felt that people who moved to the collar counties were Democrats from Chicago who didn't change their point of view just because they moved to the collar counties. DuPage County in particular.

DePue: There are a couple of other people who became very important, in some respects earlier than this. The one at the top of the list would be David Green. Your impressions of David Green?

deGrazia: David Green was a brain on feet. The machinations of his mind were marvelous and with numbers in particular. He could pick a bellwether county or precinct and extrapolate for the whole world to see what would happen if that one went this way and that one went that way.

DePue: Do you recall the first time you ran into David? Was that during the campaign or before—

deGrazia: No. Before that. He was a blackboard manufacturer and remained so until his retirement. And I met him at social occasions at Vic's.

DePue: Okay. But a very much behind-the-scenes kind of a personality, it sounds like.

deGrazia: I think he would have liked to be more in the front. It didn't work out that way. His actions were contrary to what I think his wishes were.

DePue: So it wasn't his nature to be the person who was up front?

deGrazia: That's right. And I think maybe my perception of him wanting to be comes from later years when he was a tad resentful that nobody interviewed him.

DePue: No? Well, I can tell you that Governor Walker certainly regrets that he hadn't been interviewed. Of course, Victor was interviewed in the early 80's and David Green, who is considered to be the other person who was most influential in Walker's career and campaign, had never been, so I can understand that. We were talking about the Walk. Were you able, from the Chicago area, to follow the Walk itself and—

deGrazia: Oh yes.

DePue: —and to measure its success?

deGrazia: The press releases every day included the daily blister count. We said that. I'm not sure it's true. It was a way we made fun of the Walk.

DePue: Was Nortie Kay already part of the team?

deGrazia: Yes. Nortie Kay was the second employee after me.

DePue: Okay. So he was the one who was putting together the press releases?

deGrazia: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Did you get a sense of when that was really starting to pick up momentum and the public was starting to pay attention to Dan?

deGrazia: Well, not at the beginning. Not in Rosebud,. I think is where it began before he got to Springfield. I don't remember exactly where, but a month into it.

DePue: Did you see Dan during this timeframe?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: Because I know occasionally he flew back up north to do fundraisers and things.

deGrazia: No, I didn't.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: Or maybe I did, but it was just once or twice.

DePue: And one of the things that often comes up—during the Walk itself—was that he began to grow and mature as a campaigner, and to a certain extent, his personality changed.

deGrazia: It had to. He was alone most of the time on the road. They'd honk and wave. He stayed the night with strangers every night. He had to turn it into something that would be a success.

DePue: Well, I have heard others say, and himself as well, that he was something of a loner; he had something about him that gave the appearance of being aloof or distant. Intense, certainly. But all of that seemed to change a little bit during the campaign. Did you observe any of that?

deGrazia: Yes and no. I think it did change during the campaign, and because of his relationship with the people he spent the night with. He was grateful to be there. He had a bath. It was an important relationship. On the other hand, as he approached winning the nomination, he became a little arrogant. I remember he called me once from the office about seven o'clock and he was the only one there. He said, "I don't have any money. I can't get home." I said, "Well, I'll write you a check in the morning." He said, "No, I don't have any money." I said, "Well, there's a Coke machine, and the key is in my desk. You can get probably five dollars out of there." But he expected money to be provided.

DePue: Money was a big problem, though, was it not?

deGrazia: Big money was a big problem. Money for advertising. A tremendous problem. I went without my salary, and that included my children's school tuition, for five months, and they were about to be bounced. But miraculously he won the primary and I could ask Dave Green for a loan.

DePue: Well, I know that both David Green and the governor himself, at the time the candidate himself, they were providing a lot of the money that was keeping the campaign going.

deGrazia: Yes. And my wants to Dave Green's need was very small. But it was a couple of thousand dollars of tuition and if my husband ever found out, he would have been furious.

DePue: Your husband wasn't aware of the financials? That you weren't getting paid then?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: Why didn't you tell your husband?

deGrazia: It wasn't a good marriage at that point.

DePue: Okay. Just the strains of the separation and all?

deGrazia: And my focus.

DePue: So, by this time, then, your husband resented the amount of time and attention and devotion you were putting into the campaign?

deGrazia: Yes. I left the campaign in February of '72 to go home and mend my marriage and we looked at houses in the suburbs. I lived in Hyde Park then. And, then Vic called me and offered me a raise. I laughed. I hadn't been paid in months. So what was a raise going to do me? He said, "I've got some money now. Come back." So I did. And my husband was very angry.

DePue: Well, February of '72 was one month prior to the actual primary itself.

deGrazia: It was after the primary. It must have been March –a week after the primary.

DePue: And as you mentioned before, winning the primary kind of loosened up the purse strings of some major donors for him then.

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Talk a little bit about, then, the campaign after the primary and against Ogilvie.

deGrazia: We were pretty power crazed after we won the primary, because that was the one bigger hurdle than the fight against Ogilvie. And then it turned out not to be because the fight against Ogilvie was hard.

DePue: Harder than was expected?

deGrazia: Harder than was expected. I don't know if it was harder than the primary. It was harder than was expected.

DePue: Were you involved in some discussions about how to package Dan and issue? I guess I'm going back to both Ogilvie and Simon. Simon was hardly a machine politician, although he did have the blessing of the slate-makers.

deGrazia: It was hard to make him into a machine politician. But they tried. We tried.

DePue: Did you have any qualms about that?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: In retrospect, I should have, but I really loved Paul Simon. I didn't. Daley wasn't paying attention. I think that's the secret of the primary.

DePue: And apparently Simon wasn't paying much attention to it either?

deGrazia: No. Not enough. Dan was totally focused. Vic, too.

DePue: But the general election—you couldn't say the same thing about Ogilvie could you?

deGrazia: Well, Daley wasn't paying attention then. He wasn't. Daley is more important than the Republican issue.

DePue: So Daley kind of gave his tacit support to the Walker campaign, but not enthusiastic support?

deGrazia: Hardly. And the Hanrahan race was going on at the same time. He was running for States Attorney.

DePue: So how did that factor into this process then? What was Hanrahan's first name?

deGrazia: Edward.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: Let's look at the clippings on that to refresh my memory.

DePue: Okay. We can get to that a little bit later, then.

deGrazia: Okay.

DePue: So, you've got the Ogilvie campaign. You said the Hanrahan campaign was in that play as well. What was the platform, then, that Walker was running against Ogilvie?

deGrazia: Taxation. Ogilvie passed an increase in taxes or signed an increase in taxes.

DePue: But was Dan going around and saying he was opposed to the initial implementation of the state income tax?

deGrazia: I think the state income tax was considerably earlier.

DePue: That happened in '69.

deGrazia: Yeah. With Henry Horner.

DePue: No, that was Ogilvie's administration.

deGrazia: In '69. Yes.

DePue: And from talking to others, even though Walker, in general, supported the concept and the need to have a state income tax, he and Vic certainly saw that Ogilvie would be vulnerable because he was a Republican and was the one who adopted the state income tax.

deGrazia: That's accurate.

DePue: Okay. But Dan's campaign was that no increases in taxes are needed?

deGrazia: That's right.

DePue: Would you describe him as a fiscal conservative in that respect?

deGrazia: Yes. As social, a liberal and a fiscal conservative.

DePue: Okay. And he packaged himself as such during the campaign?

deGrazia: Mm-hmm.

DePue: How about Vic? Would he have fallen into both of those categories?

deGrazia: Yes. Maybe less into the fiscal conservative, if it served the social needs.

DePue: Let's go back and talk about Vic a little bit, then, again. A little bit more about his political views. His policy views.

deGrazia: Vic felt that policy was a means of promoting the person. And whatever policy—well, I don't want to make it that harsh—he had personal liberal views. But Dan did not always agree with them. And they came to a meeting of the minds somewhere in between. Dan took Victor's advice wholesale—in one mouthful. And sometimes brought up some disagreement, but rarely. But Victor's advice was political. It was not issue oriented.

DePue: I don't know if I've heard anybody ever suggest that Dan wasn't his own man in terms of his policy views. And there is an incredible amount of trust and respect that the governor certainly had for Victor and, from what you said, that was Victor's political mind. His insight into politics and his advice is political, then?

deGrazia: Yes. And Dan recognized that.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: And they both recognized that, what Victor's role was.

DePue: And it was a remarkable team, even at that time. Anything else that sticks in your mind about the Ogilvie campaign itself? What became so tough about the Ogilvie campaign that surprised the Walker folks?

deGrazia: I think the collar counties looked like they were not going to deliver. We worked the collar counties ad nauseam. And they did deliver. But that was the hinge.

DePue: So was it an issue of getting the turnout up?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Because I know Dave Green was, especially in the primary, very focused on the turnout. If we can get the turnout to a certain level, we can overcome the votes that the machine is going to generate.

deGrazia: It became a little different with the collar counties in the general election because the turnout could go either way. It was getting our voters out.

DePue: It was that some of the people who left Chicago and moved out to the collar counties were certainly going to be voting republican instead.

deGrazia: And those who were there for a long time. There was tremendous amount of polling individually at the collar counties and we learned to recognize our voters. There was a technique, a polling technique, and the arguments that moved them from [one] place to another that Vic used in his political consulting work later, his jury litigation consulting.

DePue: Okay. So a lot of that insight into jury selection came from doing polls and figuring every angle that they possibly can to get Walker elected in '72?

deGrazia: That's right. And David Garth made the media stuff and David Green was very involved with Vic in the polling.

DePue: Well, the comment I always hear about David Green is—you mentioned it yourself to a certain respect—he was a walking calculator. If David Green said we're going to win, then it was a given, because he knew the numbers.

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: A week before the general election then, was there confidence or was there still some serious doubt about—?

deGrazia: Serious doubt.

DePue: And that surprised everybody given that a few months before they had beaten Simon and he was the miracle man to a certain extent.

deGrazia: Yeah. It was serious doubt.

DePue: So describe then the mood on election night itself in as much detail as you can.

deGrazia: Well, I remember the second one, when we lost, better.

DePue: Yeah, Okay.

deGrazia: There was to-do before the election day about where to hold the party and what kind of party it should be. It was housed on Wells Street at the corner of Adams, I believe, 105 West Adams. And an architect came in and said the floor wouldn't withstand the party. It was an old building. But nobody wanted a fancy hotel. It was not like Dan to have a fancy hotel. We had just finished a Dollar for Dan fund-raiser which only cost a dollar for dinner; it was a big success and interesting people but, of course, it didn't raise very much money. But the tone was underdog and eventually we went to, I believe, the Midland Hotel, which is not a fancy hotel. But I can't remember for sure. But the mood was nervous. We had all invested our lives in this, and I think we were being paid at this time but I'm not sure. A tremendous number of volunteers. I supervised the volunteers, and we had sometimes too many. And I would drop a file of cards and I would get someone to alphabetize them so people would feel wanted.

DePue: When was it, then, in the evening, that you figured out that David Green was able to say, "I think we won, Governor"?

deGrazia: Yes, and it was quite early. I, at that time, did not know he was such a machine. So I still had my doubts.

DePue: So, it wasn't a moment of euphoria for you at that point?

deGrazia: Not quite. It became it a little later.

DePue: Okay. When the press started to announce him as the winner.

deGrazia: Yeah. That's right. See it in the Tribune and then you know it's real.

DePue: What's the mood at that time?

deGrazia: Oh, tremendous elation. And then just hugging and dancing. These people had been two-and-a-half years together, most of them, on this campaign.

DePue: And we think the current election campaign is a long one. That was an amazingly long campaign, as well, for governor.

deGrazia: Yes, it was. It was.

DePue: Well, now that you've got the elation, what's next?

deGrazia: Then Vic had a heart attack and that cooled everybody's spirits.

DePue: That was a few weeks or a few days—?

deGrazia: December 13, we always used to celebrate it after we were married. And, no, first, after the election, the top brass went to Florida to what turned out to be a health spa. They didn't know it at the time, and they didn't want a health spa, but they went and made plans for the Cabinet. I was not involved in that.

DePue: Were you involved enough to know the types of people that Dan wanted to appoint in his administration?

deGrazia: Yes. Particularly the health people. They were all stars. In the meantime, I was organizing the process by which we would scan and look at applicants for the top jobs.

DePue: Now, Vic is crucial to this because he's running Dan's campaign, and in the process of running any campaign, you're having to negotiate with people, make promises for support—

deGrazia: He was beholden to no one, is what we said.

DePue: Vic said that, or Dan, or both?

deGrazia: Both.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: It wasn't quite true.

DePue: Well, it's inherently not going to be.

deGrazia: We didn't know enough people, though, at high levels. There were an awful lot of strangers who came into the cabinet, and I think that was good for it, but it took a little shaking down or shaking out.

DePue: So when Dan and Vic and David and others are—

deGrazia: Dave and Norton and Mort Kaplan.

DePue: —and Mort Kaplan, are looking for the right fit in the new administration, their primary motivation is people with talent or people—

deGrazia: People with talent.

DePue: And where did they look to find them?

deGrazia: In other state governments. They brought in experts to tell them. The Health Cabinet is a good example. Leroy Levitt was head of Mental Health. Joyce Lashof was head of Public Health. And then there was a coordinator, Mark—I'll

have to look up his name—he was the head of the Health Cabinet. And I think one other. And all of them came from academic places.

DePue: Okay. So from around the—

deGrazia: A lot from academia.

DePue: —country.

deGrazia: Mark Lepper. L-e-p-p-e-r. Yes. Two of those are from Chicago and one from elsewhere.

DePue: I would think the campaign that he ran for both the primary and the general was, 'I'm going to clean up government. I'm going to make it transparent'—that's probably not the word they used at that time—

deGrazia: No. It's a good word.

DePue: —that this is an anti-machine campaign. We want to root out the negative side of the machine politics. And all of these people you're talking about, they're anything but the machine kind of candidates. They're anything but people that you are beholden to because of the way you ran the campaign. Did that further alienate Walker and his administration from the Daley operation?

deGrazia: I think it did. I didn't pay attention to it, then. It was too early in the administration for me to realize how important it was to give Daley his due and pay attention to him. Although I don't remember his offering people. He stayed locked up.

DePue: Okay. Well the thing that you do read about in terms of continual trouble with Daley in person was the CTA, the Chicago Transit Authority, that Daley wanted money for the CTA in that first budget. Do you recall some of that?

deGrazia: I think Jim Houlihan had the lead on that. Do you have him on your list?

DePue: No, I don't.

deGrazia: He's the Assessor of Cook County now. And I think he would be very valuable to you.

DePue: Okay. What happened to you? You mentioned that there was some discussion about whether or not you were going to move down to Chicago. Can you go into some more detail on that?

deGrazia: Dan told me I didn't need to, which was kind of out of policy. Dan had an exaggerated approval of things. He was trying to take care of me so I wouldn't have to be separated from my children.

DePue: Well, he had a large family.

deGrazia: He had a large family. And my job in the campaign, in the election, after the election, was—I had a bunch of agencies. I was assistant to the governor with liaison responsibilities with the financial and regulatory agencies: banks and trusts, savings and loans, financial institutions. But I also had the responsibility for the office management of the governor's office in both places, and the mansion management.

DePue: So you were managing the mansion while still living up in Chicago, and you say you flew down to Springfield, spent, what, Tuesday through Thursday in Springfield and—

deGrazia: Generally, I went back for dinner and came down the next day.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: There were state planes going all the time, so I just hitched a ride. Sometimes I stayed over.

DePue: Well, that's an awfully hectic schedule for a mother in the house.

deGrazia: It was. Particularly in the summer when I wanted my children to be in the country and I rented a house in the dunes and got out there just once or twice a week and arrived at nine, took my children shopping at the midnight Jewel and that was it., and left at five in the morning.

DePue: So let's talk about a typical day for you. Say you got on that aircraft at—

deGrazia: Six.

DePue: —at six?

deGrazia: Mm-hmm. I'd often go down the Outer Drive from Hyde Park and I'd see it coming in.

DePue: So you were cutting it close.

deGrazia: I'd race to make it. Sometimes I flew Air Illinois. Do you remember Air Illinois?

DePue: No.

deGrazia: It was the shuttle aircraft, for profit, and it went belly up.

DePue: Was this flying out of Midway or—

deGrazia: Meigs.

DePue: Meigs. Okay. Well, there is something else that's changed about Illinois. Okay. And got back into Chicago—and got back home at about what time?

deGrazia: Nine.

DePue: Okay. So you weren't seeing a lot of your kids at that time.

deGrazia: No.

DePue: How old were they at this time?

deGrazia: Nineteen seventy-two—they were twelve, ten and nine.

DePue: Okay. So does that mean that your husband was doing a lot more of the typical chores with the kids.

deGrazia: I got a full-time maid. I don't remember his doing any more.

DePue: Okay. But more cause for tension in the marriage itself?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Let's go ahead and take a break if you don't mind. This might be a good time to pause—

deGrazia: Okay.

(pause in recording)

DePue: We are back from our break and during the break, Nancy found the mugs that she was talking about that listed all of Victor's many talents: 'Cook...' Chef or just Cook? What do you think?

deGrazia: Cook.

DePue: ...'Father, Editor, Farmer...' and I know he is something of a gardener as well; 'Wine-maker...' oh my. 'Writer, Liberal, Boss, Gourmet, *Nonno*'

deGrazia: That's the Sicilian word for grandfather.

DePue: Okay. 'Counselor, Politician, Reader. Son, Democrat, Art lover, Uncle, Advisor...' Advisor par excellence, perhaps. At least I know that's how Dan would look at it. 'Traveler, Brother, Friend, Storyteller, Collector, Campaigner, Thinker...' One I didn't see on here is an accomplished musician.

deGrazia: No. Missed that one too? He's not an accomplished musician except, I think, in the trumpet. But I can't tell about that.

DePue: But I know talking to others that they always were impressed that Victor was somebody you could sit down and have a wonderful conversation about a huge array of different subjects as well.

deGrazia: He was extremely knowledgeable about music.

DePue: And some have described him as a Renaissance man pretty much.

deGrazia: Yes. Some have.

DePue: But during the administration, Dan Walker had an ability to collect enemies, if you will. And because of the animus that many felt toward Dan Walker, Victor was obviously brought into that as well and the criticism that you often heard about Victor was that he was Machiavellian in his approach to his duties, his job.

deGrazia: And you know that his brother wrote a book about Machiavelli.

DePue: Yes, I do.

deGrazia: It won the Pulitzer Prize.

DePue: So, a little bit of irony in that respect.

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: So can you comment on that particular label that Victor earned?

deGrazia: Well, he said once, during the campaign, when things were going very well with the press, they were about to descend on us, "It can't go on like this too long. If they can't hit the organ-grinder, let them hit the monkey." And he then did something, I don't remember what, kind of outrageous. And they came down on Victor, not on Dan. You can only do that once.

DePue: So he deliberately did something during the—was this during the Simon campaign or during the general campaign?

deGrazia: The Simon campaign.

DePue: That caused the ire of the press to be directed towards him?

deGrazia: Yeah. And it was done not thoughtlessly. It was done as a deliberate move and the issue, whatever it was, was one that they wanted to get done anyway.

DePue: Well, can you talk a little bit about the relationship that the Walker administration had with the news media? How would you characterize it?

deGrazia: Well, Nortie Kay came out of the news media. It was *Chicago Today*, a paper that's folded. And he was the *Chicago American*, I think, before that. And he had a good relationship with the media. But it didn't last. The underlying affection,

the mutual affection, lasted, but they got very irritated, particularly around budget time, when Dan would not release the budget until the legislature had a chance to look at it. And there were probably many other times, too, and the media became disenchanted sometime through the Simon campaign, close to the end.

DePue: End of the Simon campaign. The media came out and endorsed Simon overwhelmingly over Walker, did they not?

deGrazia: I think so.

DePue: And how about the general election?

deGrazia: I think they probably endorsed Ogilvie, but I can't remember.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: Newspaper endorsements were very important at the moment, and then they faded.

DePue: But maybe the sour relationship with the media extended into the administration itself? Is it in part because of this first budget that was produced?

deGrazia: It certainly wasn't because of the endorsements, because the endorsements were editorial board, and the reporters were quite distinct from that.

DePue: Okay. What was it about the way the budget was handled that the media took umbrage to?

deGrazia: They didn't have access to it early. Bush has the same problem.

DePue: Was that something that was deliberate on Vic and Dan's part?

deGrazia: I don't know, because a lot of what we did was because we were novices. There was a tremendous novice element to all that went on in the first term. The only term.

DePue: Okay. I think it was William Goldberg who mentioned to me that part of that was that if you released the budget late, then the media can't dig and manipulate and mis-portray things; they just have to take it at face value.

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: Was there some intent involved in that?

deGrazia: There probably was.

DePue: How about the administration's relationship with the legislature?

deGrazia: Well, the legislature was pretty much controlled by Daley and we tried to break that and did with the election of Redmond as the speaker of the house, but, in the process, there was a disconnect between Vic and the assistant directors, or the directors of agencies. When he tried to influence the agencies to hire somebody, which did happen, and usually on behalf of legislators who asked, he wasn't always able to accomplish it and that made him look bad to the legislators who thought he was all-powerful.

DePue: Because he just wasn't able to make it happen in some cases?

deGrazia: That's right. These young directors were ideologues often, and the not-so-young, too. I remember during the transition time between election and the beginning of the term, when Vic was in Florida and when he was in the hospital and not working after his heart attack, I was responsible for setting up a plan for review of applicants and I misunderstood the process totally. I thought that Dan and Vic would pick the directors and then the directors would pick the assistant directors, which were gubernatorial appointments, but that the directors would have control of that. Well, that's not the case. The assistant directors were the political link and so we had to kind of shuffle and re-focus the proposal and get the letters to—the application letters, the names—to Vic and Dan.

DePue: So the director positions was how Dan wanted to effect change and bring efficiency to government by finding the very best talent in the country. The part that you didn't understand was that the assistant director position was the political appointee, the one that would bring the connection between that particular agency with the governor's office?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: And I would think, then, the absence of Vic during that timeframe—

deGrazia: Was crucial.

DePue: —that that hurt a lot.

deGrazia: It did.

DePue: Then he came back—

deGrazia: It was a heavy responsibility for me.

DePue: I'm guessing you weren't brought in to the inner circle of some of this thought process until that point in time.

deGrazia: That's right.

DePue: Who was there to really help you work through that then? Was the governor—

deGrazia: Bill Goldberg was, and the governor some and Vic worked from telephone at home after about a week.

DePue: And when was his heart attack?

deGrazia: December 13, 1972. He didn't go to the inauguration, so he wasn't up and about then.

DePue: When was he able to actually get back to work full time then?

deGrazia: February.

DePue: So right after the new administration began.

deGrazia: He moved to Springfield then.

DePue: Okay. Well, we talked about the difficulties with the legislature, with the press. We've kind of hinted around, we've talked about the difficulty with the Daley administration itself, the Daley machine. Anything else you'd like to say about challenges that Dan Walker and his administration had with Daley? With the machine?

deGrazia: There is so much to be said, and I don't know enough about any of it.

DePue: What was the thought that Vic and Dan had about establishing some rapport with the machine? What was their intent?

deGrazia: Well, it depends on when you are asking about. The Daley machine knocked down the appointees for three cabinet positions. And after that, there was a permanent war.

DePue: Why did they take issue with some of these cabinet appointees?

deGrazia: I think they just wanted to slap us. Mary Lee Leahy was one. And, Beverly Addante was another. They were all women. A-d-d-a-n-t-e. And Nancy Phillipi was the third. Mary Lee was to be the director of—I don't remember what. She ended up at Children and Family Services. It was a little bit later.

DePue: Which, from what I know, is a very good match for her.

deGrazia: Yes, that was fine.

DePue: Who was the second one again?

deGrazia: Beverly Addante. A-d-d-a-n-t-e.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: And the third was Nancy Phillipi.

DePue: Right. Now, I'm sure people at the time were noticing the similarities, that these were all women.

deGrazia: Yes, they did.

DePue: And was it that Daley, in particular, or some of his lieutenants took issue with women being involved in such high positions?

deGrazia: I think so, and they were accused of it by some of the press, but not much. It slipped by. Not slipped by—it was deliberately ignored.

DePue: By the media?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay. The kind of thing that wouldn't be ignored today?

deGrazia: I think not. I hope not. I didn't need approval. I was not a cabinet position.

DePue: How would you describe, then, Walker's executive style—his leadership style once he became governor?

deGrazia: He was a pretty good delegator. I enjoyed working for him. I liked his style. I liked the fact that he gave me these agencies to watch over and trusted me to do that when I had no experience and no reason for him to trust me.

DePue: But Vic in his own interview was recognized that Dan was a very good delegator, but he also said that Dan was a hands-on manager, too. That he didn't just give people assignments. He was going to be there to perhaps look over their shoulder and work with them some.

deGrazia: I saw more of the delegator than a hands-on manager.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: There were certain departments that he never let go of: prisons, pardon and parole—not the Pardon and Parole Boards, but Corrections. And then the ones that got into trouble, like the Savings and Loan Agency.

DePue: So he could be more hands-on and more insistent. Would others in the administration, the ones who were getting more attention, call him a micro-manager?

deGrazia: I don't think so. The one where he micro-managed was Corrections. When something went wrong in Corrections, a prison.

DePue: Why was he more hands-on for that one?

deGrazia: The whole administration froze. It was scary. What would happen? Attica was at that time and—

DePue: And he had a couple of prison riots of his own to deal with.

deGrazia: Yes, he did. You could feel the tension in the air.

DePue: How about the way he approached financing? You said he was a fiscal conservative, so what was the approach there?

deGrazia: Well, it was very little of across-the-board cuts. He worked with the Bureau of the Budget, Hal Hovey, and it was specific barriers.

DePue: I know that he brought in zero-based budgeting, so there is a lot more scrutiny in terms of each one of the administrations budgets.

deGrazia: And that was delegated to Hal Hovey.

DePue: Okay. So, Hovey was Dan's point man in that respect?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Maybe you're not in a position to know this, but how exactly did it work, then, when Hovey would sit down with one of the directors and go through the budget? Or is that the way it occurred?

deGrazia: I think it did. It occurred with me and my office budget. Hal was another walking brain. He had a crack-up and I don't know what became of him. But he went first to Citibank and then to HEW—it was—at the time.

DePue: Okay. But were you expected, when Hal would sit down with you, to say, “Okay, why is this particular budget line so high?” That you would have to—

deGrazia: Yes. And where could you find 20 percent or 10 percent to cut.

DePue: So the expectation was that you needed to cut?

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: And was that going—

deGrazia: I'm sure that wasn't true of all agencies.

DePue: Continue to have—

deGrazia: I also sat in with those meetings with my agencies, with the Bureau of the Budget.

DePue: So you played the same role with your organizations underneath you?

deGrazia: I was a little more protective than Hal.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: I was there to be protective but not totally.

DePue: But he was looking for somehow to gain some cuts out of the process.

deGrazia: My agencies. It might be to give money to other agencies, and I think it was.

DePue: What were the agencies, again, that you were overseeing?

deGrazia: Banks and trusts, savings and loans, financial institutions, registration and education. And finance, because we didn't know what finance was. We thought it was an outside regulatory agency when it was an internal one. But I had it, so I kept it, and then I had the Department of Public Aid, which is a non sequitur here, but the Director of the Department of Public Aid, Jim Trainor, was hired originally to be head of Registration and Education, and he arrived on my doorstep one day and said, "I'm here to be Director of Registration and Education." And I said, "We've already got one of those." And he said, "Well, he's going, I understand." And sure enough, he went, and Jim sat in the office next to me for about two months while he learned about Public Aid.

DePue: So I'm not sure I understand your specific role here, because in some of these agencies, certainly they had directors. They had—

deGrazia: They all had directors.

DePue: —legislative appointees who were directing these things, so—

deGrazia: Gubernatorial appointees.

DePue: Okay. Legislative approval.

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: Okay. I'm sorry. But you're the person on the inside of the administration who is overseeing these operations and answering directly to the governor's office.

deGrazia: Yes. Sometimes through Bill Goldberg.

DePue: Okay. Not Vic?

deGrazia: No. Rarely.

DePue: Is that because Bill Goldberg was more the policy guy?

deGrazia: Yes, and more the finance guy.

DePue: Okay. How often did you see Vic, then, during these years?

deGrazia: I saw him every time I went to Springfield.

DePue: Okay. But you worked more closely with Bill and others?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: And with the directors themselves?

deGrazia: Oh, yes. I saw them once a week each.

DePue: Okay. How would you characterize your relationship with these directors, then?

deGrazia: Well, it was known I was there to oversee them. And, mainly they didn't like that. But I'm easy to get along with and everybody had this. Every agency had a liaison person.

DePue: Was this something that was unique to Walker's administration?

deGrazia: I don't think so. I think it was standard.

DePue: So you had your position, and you also had the Deputy Director position in many cases who was something of a political appointee and, I would assume, somewhat beholden to the Walker administration, and would be in communication with Victor and Dan and—

deGrazia: More directly with Victor. Not through me.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: The policy head would be through me.

DePue: So that was kind of the dividing line in terms of—

deGrazia: I think so. I hadn't thought of it that way before, but yes.

DePue: Okay. You worked with directors much more than with deputy directors?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Well, I can see where this is a very demanding job for you, then, as well.

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: And, how would you appraise your own performance in that position?

deGrazia: Well, I was scared most of the time. I didn't have the background to do this, and I kept saying to myself, "Victor thinks you can do it. He has hired you for every

job you've had for the last decade, and you didn't think you could do any of them, and you could." So that kept me going.

DePue: And I'm sure that's not the way you want to project yourself to these directors who are all powerful in their own right.

deGrazia: Right. Jim Trainor, the Director of Public Aid, who I trained to be Director of Registration and Education, I trained as a well, but Dan said, "Let's make him Director of Public Aid. We need one of those." And he asked Dan that I be the liaison, even though it was outside the regulatory activity. And, I said to him, "Jim, why did you do that? Do you think I'll be easier on you than Bill Goldberg? Or—" and he said, "No, I respect what you do and your attitude towards your role." And I chose to believe him. I'm not sure it's true.

DePue: Do you feel like you grew into the position then?

deGrazia: Yes, I did.

DePue: By the time you got to '75, '76, you were feeling much more comfortable about your role.

deGrazia: Much more comfortable. But by then we were in the middle of a nursing home strike, pharmacy strike, because the rates were cut.

DePue: Well, these are tough times economically. The time period when he was governor, you had Watergate. You had the tail end of the Vietnam War. You had a serious downturn in the economy. How did all of that affect the Walker administration?

deGrazia: I don't remember it affecting it at all, except in the budget cuts.

DePue: Do you—can you talk—

deGrazia: They weren't cuts. They were reallocations.

DePue: Okay. That was going on at the state level then?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay. And that kind of tension is always going to exist in the administration.

deGrazia: There was tremendous tension over the matching grants with the federal government and Medicaid. There had been errors over the years that people had been loathe to report because they didn't want to get caught. They weren't criminal. There were just errors in reporting. And we had to straighten that out, and that took a long, painful time.

DePue: Okay. Do you recall any discussions within the inner circle of the Walker administration about possibly running for president?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Can you talk about some of that?

deGrazia: Nobody talked about it to me except Vic. And this was towards the end of the Walker administration. I was the liaison person for the change from Walker to Thompson. Bill Goldberg and I shared this responsibility for turning over the reins. And that's when I heard about running for president.

DePue: Did it make sense to you?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: Why?

deGrazia: Seems to me he came off a loss, an embarrassing loss.

DePue: This is after he had already lost in the primary?

deGrazia: Yes. How can he have the chutzpah to then run for president.

DePue: But was it your understanding that Vic and Dan, and perhaps Bill Goldberg and Nortie had been kicking this around before that primary loss?

deGrazia: I don't know. I know Vic had been thinking about it, but I don't know about the others.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: It's outrageous. And it might have worked, if he didn't have the Roberta problem.

DePue: Okay. Well, let's talk a little bit about how well did you know Roberta, then?

deGrazia: I knew Roberta well. Very well. Because I handled the mansion.

DePue: How would you describe her?

deGrazia: She was unhappy in her role. She didn't want to bring her children to Springfield.

DePue: But she did.

deGrazia: She did. She was a very good wife. She didn't show any discontent to the public, but she was clearly unhappy. She wanted the mansion to be her home, not a public event.

deGrazia: She did participate some in the Walk. Probably the correct PR amount.

DePue: Do you say she was supportive of Dan's career?

deGrazia: I don't know. Yes and no. She was supportive of anything he wanted to do, but she wished he would do something else.

DePue: And was that then the cause of some tensions in their own marriage?

deGrazia: I didn't see it, but it must have been.

DePue: Okay. So none of that was apparent to the public at all during the time he was governor?

deGrazia: I don't think so. I don't think so.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: I did the staffing for the mansion, vetting the staff that was there and getting new people. There was a woman who had been accused and went to trial for trying to poison her husband who worked in the kitchen, and I was kind of overwhelmed by this and I thought, I've got to do something about it.

DePue: Do something before it got into the media?

deGrazia: Yeah. It never got into the media. I thought about whom I should go to with it, and I decided it was Dan. It was his stomach that was at issue here.

DePue: Yeah.

deGrazia: And he said to me, "Well, was she convicted?" I said, "No." "Was she still living with her husband?" "Yes." He said, "Then she can stay."

DePue: It sounds like a trial lawyer at work there to a certain extent.

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: What was the reaction within the administration, then, when you got close to the '76 primary season and you realized that Daley's folks were going to put up a candidate against Walker?

deGrazia: I guess we always expected that. There was never any love lost visibly between then. No love lost at all.

DePue: Was there any sense that you got from Victor or from Dan that maybe they needed to do some more accommodation with Daley and make some—

deGrazia: I think they felt it was too late. Any accommodation would be clearly for re-election purposes.

DePue: How about earlier in the administration.

deGrazia: I got it from lots of people, but not from Vic or Dan, lots of lower level.

DePue: People saying that he needed to ease up a little bit and try to figure out some way of getting along with the mayor?

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: And you passed that on to Vic?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: And what was the reaction you got from Vic, then?

deGrazia: Thank you.

DePue: Pretty curt conversation.

deGrazia: Curt conversation, yes.

DePue: And did you ever bring it up to the governor himself?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: How often did you get to see Dan then?

deGrazia: Whenever my agencies, which were minor agencies except Public Aid, had a problem that involved the governor.. When I took on Public Aid, which was in '74, there was constant—twice a week.

DePue: And Mary Lee Leahy is already the director at this time, correct?

deGrazia: Of DCFS. Jim Trainor is Director of Public Aid.

DePue: I'm sorry.

deGrazia: We had a social work cabinet that met together of liaison people who oversaw the cabinet agencies and the directors of—it was called “the Officer Krupke”. You know that—

DePue: Yeah.

deGrazia: It was social work and mental health and corrections, and it was trying to break that cycle.

DePue: Okay. But, then the nature of the kinds of meetings and discussions you had with Dan on that, how would you characterize them?

deGrazia: I don't think he really recognized that group. We dealt with them individually, their agencies. The savings and loan was often in trouble and when a savings and

loan went bankrupt, or was it a bank—it was a bank—I remember writing Dan a very long memo on it every day. And, finally at the end of one I said, "I don't know why I'm burdening you with all of this. I just find it so fascinating." And he laughed and said the same thing.

DePue: But you knew he wanted to know the details when there were problems that were going on.

deGrazia: Mm-hmm. There was also some stuff on registration and education. I don't know what that's called now, that agency.

DePue: Was he always supportive of your positions? Offered up cogent advice to you?

deGrazia: I once wrote him a funny memo, after the establishment of the Weather Modification Board; I said we could appoint our fair-weather friends instead of our foul-weather friends. He got very angry and said, "Don't ever put anything like that in writing."

DePue: He's told me himself he doesn't understand sarcasm well.

deGrazia: He knows that?

DePue: He doesn't have that kind of sense of humor.

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: You say you recognize that in him as well?

deGrazia: Yes, I do. But I didn't know he did.

DePue: Well, I suspect that a person in the public light, like he has been for his whole life, has heard it all by now.

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Any other particular controversies you recall during the administration?

deGrazia: Well, the very first was the Tony Angeles, whether his contribution was a loan or contribution. And I went to a Grand Jury about that one. I went to three or four Grand Juries, because I accepted his check.

DePue: Okay. Was his selection in the first place in part fallout because Vic was not available during that particular point of time?

deGrazia: Probably—

DePue: Because that was right at the beginning of the administration.

deGrazia: Yes, it was. And Vic got out of his sick bed to tell him he was out. That was a very hard moment.

DePue: Would one of Vic's jobs have been to vet these people in the first place, to kind of screen those things out?

deGrazia: Part of the screening. There would be screening done by me and by others, but if he knew something special, as he did in this case, he would have stopped it.

DePue: Okay. I'm jumping back and forth here a little bit too much. Mike Howlett is an opponent during the primary campaign. How seriously did Dan run during the primary campaign?

deGrazia: It seemed a total run, all of his efforts. I'm not sure.

DePue: Because some have suggested that there wasn't that same fire that he had when he was the underdog running back in 1971-72.

deGrazia: That's probably true, but I didn't see that difference.

DePue: What was—

deGrazia: I was in government, not in the campaign; that made a difference. And Vic was too, and he regretted it.

DePue: He was in government and not the campaign?

deGrazia: Yeah. He took a leave of absence, if I recall correctly, to work the campaign, but he always said that it was a mistake to go into government. It drained his energy and did not let him focus on campaigning, which he would do 100 percent of the time for all four years. He felt he should have done.

DePue: That he should not have been appointed as Deputy to the Governor?

deGrazia: Right.

DePue: That he should have been that behind-the-scenes person who was still thinking in political strategies?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Do you think Dan felt the same way?

deGrazia: I don't know.

DePue: Because I would guess that Dan wanted to keep him very close and have him on the inside. Wasn't he effectively doing the same thing, the political strategizing, when he was in the administration?

deGrazia: Yes. But he managed to get involved in other things that were a drain.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: Particularly the lack of patronage or the implementation of patronage, both of those.

DePue: I'm not sure I understand that particular comment, there.

deGrazia: Well, Dan Walker did not believe in patronage, but Vic was responsible for placing people and that is the illusion that is the reality of patronage.

DePue: Well, the deputy director positions.

deGrazia: And other lower positions at the request of legislators.

DePue: So there was always some tension there. Here you have a governor who has made his case to the people of Illinois, that he is going to change the way government works, and yet perhaps Vic's realization, well, Okay, but you still have to have some of that. There was a tension there then?

deGrazia: There was a tension there. Not between them. They both knew what each other was doing. But the rest of us felt the tension. We didn't have enough people. We didn't come armed with enough to staff all the agencies, and that was part of it. That seems kind of funny, but we just didn't have them. We didn't know enough people.

DePue: So by the nature of the way governments are organized, there were a certain number of patronage positions that had to be filled and the well was pretty dry in that respect.

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: That's interesting.

deGrazia: And our people were also very young.

DePue: Well, and that's a good point. I know that especially during the Walk and that initial primary, even in the general election, he generated an incredible amount of enthusiasm among a lot of very young people in Illinois. That he brought a lot of people into politics. Would that be accurate?

deGrazia: That's accurate. Like Barack Obama.

DePue: And what he's doing currently.

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: It's interesting, doing all of these interviews with people about Dan Walker and especially his campaigns and his administration at the time when we're right in the midst of the primaries for a very important election.

deGrazia: You might want to talk to Abner Mikva.

DePue: His name has come up in all of these, and he would be a wonderful person, and I understand that he is up to the task of being interviewed as well.

deGrazia: Yes. He spent the last month in Iowa.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: Or parts of it, anyway.

DePue: I think he has been interviewed in the past, but I'd have to go back and confirm that.

deGrazia: And there would be some negative in that.

DePue: In interviewing him?

deGrazia: No. In what he says.

DePue: About?

deGrazia: Dan. And Vic.

DePue: Okay. But he's another one of that group of liberal Democrats who were very much independent of the machine, was he not?

deGrazia: Yes. Yes, he was.

DePue: And the same can be said of Paul Simon at the time, even though he was the slate-makers' candidate in 1972. Let's talk, then, about that final campaign you've alluded to. From your perspective, Dan and Vic are running as hard as they ever have in trying to gain re-election?

deGrazia: I don't know. I may want to retract that because Dan was certainly involved with his love life.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: And, his number two, as she was always referred to.

DePue: Roberta Nelson.

deGrazia: Roberta Nelson.

DePue: So even during that last campaign, then.

deGrazia: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Was it Dan's nature, then, to turn his total attention to—well, you mentioned distractions like Roberta Nelson, but turn his attention away from governance and toward the campaign otherwise? Or would he still be—

deGrazia: We never had that opportunity to judge. He's never been in government while he had a campaign before. In '74, when we were trying to do something with the make-up of the legislature, Vic had a large group going that were assigned each a legislative district and I was one of them.

DePue: How did that work?

deGrazia: It didn't seem to work very well, and I think perhaps his attention was not totally focused on it.

DePue: His being Vic's or Dan's?

deGrazia: His being Vic's. Dan didn't seem to be involved at all.

DePue: Okay. But the intention in '74 was to put up alternative candidates in the—

deGrazia: In the primary.

DePue: —Democratic primaries. Did they have some successes there?

deGrazia: They had some. But, I know I was not successful. I had the first congressional district, the first legislative district, which was around here. And I just remember being ashamed of the job I did. I hate precinct work. That's why I got into paid politics. So I didn't have to do it anymore.

DePue: So you're fascinated in politics, but you don't want to be the one who has to go down into the streets and do it. Did Vic understand that, or he had confidence that you were up to that as well?

deGrazia: I think he had confidence that I was up to that.

DePue: Okay. There was some success. You mentioned Redmond was the one who was able to get into the Speaker of the House position.

deGrazia: That was a big fight.

DePue: And that was after the '74 election.

deGrazia: I think so.

DePue: Okay. So both the concept of putting up primary candidates who were not beholden to the Daley machine so that you could gain more control over the legislature, plus the Redmond fight, are even more examples where there was no accommodation or compromise made with the Daley machine.

deGrazia: Right.

DePue: So it wasn't a surprise to anybody in 1976 when Howlett was put up in the primary?

deGrazia: I think Howlett was a surprise.

DePue: That it was him?

deGrazia: Yes. I don't know who we expected it to be, but Howlett seemed too old and too tired to win. But he did.

DePue: He won the primary at least.

deGrazia: Yes. Yeah.

DePue: And, the mood, then, among the—excuse me—among the Walker administration when Howlett won the primary—

deGrazia: It was open-mouthed. We were shocked. Everybody but Dave Green, I guess.

DePue: Everybody thought he was going to be successful, to win that primary election?

deGrazia: Dan. Yes.

DePue: Dan felt that way?

deGrazia: No. Everybody felt Dan would win the primary election. We were power drunk, maybe. But, the same team that made it so brilliantly in '72 was pretty much the same team that did not carry it off in '76.

DePue: Would it be fair to say there was some arrogance in that respect?

deGrazia: There was much arrogance and Daley was paying attention, which he wasn't with Paul Simon.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: That was the key thing. Daley was paying attention.

DePue: What was your mood, then, afterwards, in those months following? He still had an administration to run and you had a big part in that.

deGrazia: Yeah. And I was the transition coordinator with Bill Goldberg.

DePue: So, an additional duty.

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: Were you able to stay focused on your job, or was it more difficult?

deGrazia: No, I was able to stay focused on my job. I was not so focused on my children or my husband.

DePue: Yeah. So continued tension in that respect?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Growing tension by that time?

deGrazia: Growing tension, yes.

DePue: Well, I know that you got married to Vic in 1977. Of course, it would have been January 1977 that the transition actually occurred. So can you talk about the nature of your relationship just a little bit in those last couple of years of the administration.

deGrazia: Well, we had worked together for close to fifteen years, starting back in '56 when I came to Illinois, or '58 when I finally started working with him. And there had been a growing attraction over the years, particularly in the last year. He was divorced, had been for two years. And he asked me to marry him around Christmas. I was separated from my husband then.

DePue: Christmas of '76?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: And, I said yes in January.

DePue: Okay. Did your husband know about this?

deGrazia: No. And I didn't want him to know because of the custody of the children. I even lied to my sister because I was afraid that Jerry would find out.

DePue: But everything after Dan's out of office—all of this happened very quickly then?

deGrazia: Very quickly. We knew each other pretty well, so it was able to happen.

DePue: Well, let me ask you this, then. When you started off, we talked about your impressions of Victor. By 1975, '76, how would you describe Victor?

deGrazia: There was still a lot of awe. Not fear, anymore, but awe. I think I said to myself, This is the greatest thing I've ever done, marrying an Italian without a job with five children to support, and not knowing

DePue: Some of his and some of yours?

deGrazia: Five of his and three of mine.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: ...not knowing what the future is. Not Jewish, which was a very important element in my father's and mother's life and quite in mine, too. But I'm going to do it. But I thought I knew him well, but I didn't know him very well. He turned out to be a fantastic husband.

DePue: That is was always some kind of political calculation for any decision?

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: And that was—what year, then, that he got divorced?

deGrazia: Seventy-five or '74. I'm not sure which.

DePue: So before the nature of your relationship with Vic started to change.

deGrazia: Yes. It made it a lot easier.

DePue: How did it work out with you and your children, then? Did you gain custody?

deGrazia: I did. I gained custody and—

DePue: Was that contested?

deGrazia: No. He had full visiting rights.

DePue: And how old were your children at that time?

deGrazia: What year was that? Sixty-seven?

DePue: Seventy-six, '77.

deGrazia: Seventy-six, '77. Seventeen, fifteen, and fourteen.

DePue: What were they telling you about how they felt about the divorce and getting married again?

deGrazia: They were not happy about it. My oldest one said, "It's my time. Not yours." They had known the deGrazia's since childhood and we celebrated every year, tree-trimming with them, and they came to Hanukah with us and the older

deGrazia children used to babysit for my children. But it's different to make them siblings. We took them with us on our honeymoon. The five of them. The five younger ones.

DePue: Where did you go for the honeymoon?

deGrazia: The Virgin Islands, but I can't remember which one.

DePue: And how did that experiment work?

deGrazia: Not too well. They sort of resented our relationship. We thought, "mix well with a hot sun and good orange juice and that would be a good way to start off." But they had spent a lot of—they went to nursery school together, but this was different. It was too intense. So I wouldn't recommend it.

DePue: The two families didn't mix well together.

deGrazia: Eventually. But not there.

DePue: Were they united in being upset with the two of you?

deGrazia: No. No, they weren't.

DePue: Did they take sides in that respect as well?

deGrazia: The boys were okay. The girls were difficult.

DePue: Okay. Was there a girl on each side, Vic's and yours?

deGrazia: Vic had one girl, the youngest child, and I had two.

DePue: Okay. This is an important transition period for all of you, and you made it a little bit more complicated. But Vic has spent his entire life up to this point working in different campaigns and especially focused on Dan Walker, that Dan Walker was going to be his guy who could help make the changes that Vic saw. What was going to be the direction that Vic now turned?

deGrazia: He had his housing experience, too, and mental health. He turned to consulting, which meant to him at that time lobbying for the people he worked with in government. But after a year, I think it was just a year, he got a call from Chet Kamin who was a lawyer with the administration who worked with the Corrections department, and was a partner in—I can't remember what major law firm—who said to him, "You remember the polling you did in both campaigns where you had one-on-one in-person polls, interviews, that lasted about an hour and tried to figure out what it is that moved someone from one point to another?" And Vic said, "Of course I remember." He said, "Would you be willing to do that for litigation?" The case was AT&T versus one that's owned by the man from Georgia.

DePue: I'm at a loss here myself.

deGrazia: And he was for the plaintiff and was a master. It was the largest judgment ever rendered up to that point.

DePue: So the nature of his job or his consulting was to advise the lawyers how to screen potential jurists?

deGrazia: No, he couldn't look at individual jurists. He looked at the jury pool and polled within that and then determined what issues would make a bad juror. It was much easier than what issues should make a good juror.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: And came up with a profile with a lot of components.

DePue: So after the success of this first trial, then business started to find him after that?

deGrazia: Yes. And it was mainly people who were being sued by AT&T. He said, at some point, "Maybe they'll pay me to stay home." But, it didn't come to that. One of the people, a big organization, was Lytton Industries, and he became almost Lytton's outside counsel.

DePue: Were you living in the Chicago area at that time then?

deGrazia: Here.

DePue: Okay. And, how long did he continue to do that?

deGrazia: Well, the role changed. He became a litigation strategist rather than jury selection, where he would write closing arguments and opening statements and work with the lawyers all through the trial. But he did it until the day he died. He was working on a case then.

DePue: And he died just recently?

deGrazia: April 2, 2005.

DePue: Okay. So how old was he at that time?

deGrazia: He was sixty-six.

DePue: Sixty-six. So he wasn't—

deGrazia: Seventy-six.

DePue: I was thinking he was a little bit older than that.

deGrazia: Yeah.

DePue: I know he passed away in Syracuse, did he not?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: What caused him to go back to Italy, then?

deGrazia: We went back every year.

DePue: To see relatives?

deGrazia: Yes, but not old relatives. Nephews. And we decided to buy a piece of a vineyard in Sicily. His nephew was a wine exporter who lived in Florence.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Okay, we took just a short break here. But we've got the interview to the point where you're living in Long Grove, here, and Victor has moved on to a very lucrative career.

deGrazia: Yes, it's nice.

DePue: And we were talking about going back to Syracuse. So all of this stuff now starts to stress just how much of a Renaissance man Victor was, with all of the many talents that he had. Despite the reputation that he had gained in some circles as being Machiavellian, that wasn't at all the way that you saw him, I'm sure.

deGrazia: Well, he always felt the shortest distance between two points was a curve. And he didn't mind being called Machiavellian. He admired Machiavelli. Someone once called him Mussolini and he hit the ceiling.

DePue: And he saw the distinction in what way?

deGrazia: Mussolini was an evil man who used his mind for bad purposes. Machiavelli used his mind for good purposes. Although, Machiavellian—

DePue: It's taken on a completely different connotation in today's world. Vineyard in Sicily...

deGrazia: In Sicily. His nephew, who exported wine for many years and had a fantastic reputation. Marco deGrazia—his bottles say, "A Mark deGrazia selection,"—had bought a piece of land in Sicily and was making his own wine for the first time. And there was an adjoining piece of land, small, that he wanted Vic to buy. And we did. Or we almost did. We got power of attorney. We remortgaged the house. We went prepared to buy it, and the man decided not to sell. He was waiting for a loan to open a Toyota agency, and it didn't come, so he wasn't ready to give up his vineyard. So we drove down to Syracuse, which is a town we like very much, and he died there.

DePue: Was he ailing before that time?

deGrazia: No. He had something called AAA, which we didn't know he had, which is abdominal—I have trouble coming up with the other ones. There is a real mental block. Aorta—abdominal aorta—something.

DePue: Aneurism.

deGrazia: Aneurism. Right.

DePue: So this had to be a devastating experience for you at that time.

deGrazia: It was. It was. It's still a devastating experience.

DePue: Let me ask you this. You said that when you first got married, you were still in awe of him. He turned out to be a wonderful husband. What surprised you about him after you got married?

deGrazia: His generosity of spirit. We never fought. We had one fight on our honeymoon, where I left him in St. Thomas or St. Somebody and he was grumbling, "I always get the children." because I walked out and left the children, too.

DePue: Obviously for just a very short time.

deGrazia: For a night. I went and sat at the airport, waiting for a plane to be ready to go, and I said, "No, you can't do that." I went back.

DePue: And I would assume that the fight had something to do with the kids as well?

deGrazia: Yes. He slapped a daughter, and I said I wouldn't be married to a child-beater, and he never did it again.

DePue: So a generosity of spirit surprised you. Anything else?

deGrazia: He made me laugh all the time.

DePue: And you didn't know that before you first got married?

deGrazia: I didn't think of it. I don't think I knew it.

DePue: What did he see in you?

deGrazia: Well, he loved me a long time, he told me.

DePue: Was that surprising to you when you heard it?

deGrazia: Yes, it was. I had not been aware of it, except the last six, eight, nine months. He was very good to me, through Parkinson's and cancer. I have cancer, too. Breast cancer, and I'm in remission.

DePue: When did you find out about the Parkinson's?

deGrazia: Fourteen years ago.

DePue: So, over ten years he was dealing with that reality as well. Both of you were.

deGrazia: Yes, he was. And he was very good about it. He hated illness, particularly his own.

DePue: Because—

deGrazia: I don't know why.

DePue: He didn't want to admit weakness in that respect?

deGrazia: I suppose so. He had his hip replaced and both knees replaced, one of them twice. And an ankle fusion. I was the caregiver and he was the invalid.

DePue: A reluctant patient.

deGrazia: Reluctant patient, indeed. But a good caregiver. And then when the situation was reversed, although the Parkinson's wasn't so bad then, he was very careful and loving.

DePue: Did you keep track of Governor Walker after he was out of office?

deGrazia: Yes. Vic was very influential in getting him out of prison early.

DePue: What did you think about his relationship with Roberta Nelson then?

deGrazia: I thought it was adolescent.

DePue: Did you let him know that? Did Victor let him know?

deGrazia: I think Victor let him know. They had a conversation in that room which then had a couch and not all those plants.

DePue: Well, that room is now what's been turned into something of a greenhouse.

deGrazia: Garden room. We have a greenhouse, too, in back.

DePue: Yeah.

deGrazia: Victor told him. They were still discussing the presidency after we were married. A run for the presidency. And Vic said, "As long as you're with Roberta Nelson, I can't be"—and he then married her. He was not best man at our wedding—we only had six people at our wedding, plus the children—and he came.

DePue: He was invited.

deGrazia: He was invited, yeah.

DePue: Did Roberta come with him? Roberta Nelson?

deGrazia: I can't remember.

DePue: But, Vic was not shy about his—

deGrazia: No, he wasn't.

DePue: —dislike of the relationship?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: How about afterwards? After they got married?

deGrazia: Then he was—he may not have liked her, but he didn't show anything. We didn't see them much at all. We were invited to a progressive party they gave where horses and carriages would take you from one restaurant to another as you had a course at each restaurant. And we didn't go because it seemed like such conspicuous consumption. And everything was labeled, Gov. Dan. He seemed to really be going through a difficult phase.

DePue: That it was hard for him to back away from—

deGrazia: Pomp and circumstance.

DePue: Okay. And, Vic found that whole world distasteful?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: How much were you aware of the financial difficulties that he was getting into?

deGrazia: Well, I was aware of them, but it was a great shock when he was indicted. I didn't think they did that to ex-governors, although I had lived through the Kerner indictment.

DePue: And, of course, some of the same personalities that were involved with the indictment and the prosecution of Kerner — specifically Jim Thompson.

deGrazia: Jim Thompson. And Sam — his assistant. SS.

DePue: I can't recall.

deGrazia: Samuel—I think he was—no, he was U.S. Attorney after Thompson.

DePue: Okay. You knew about, and Vic knew about, the yachts, though, certainly?

deGrazia: Yes. That was another example of what he didn't want any part of.

DePue: So Vic expressed that to Dan?

deGrazia: I don't know, but he probably did. I don't know. Because we didn't see much of him then.

DePue: To a certain extent, that was a conscious decision on Vic's part and your part to distance yourself from the governor a little bit? Or it's just kind of a—just a natural outgrowth of that change in direction for him?

deGrazia: Can I say something off the record?

DePue: Well, we probably ought to turn the recorder off, then.

deGrazia: Yes, I think so.

DePue: Okay.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Let me start this up again. You mentioned, though, at the time that the indictments came down that you and Vic were very surprised by that?

deGrazia: I don't know if Vic was. I remember going to a meeting of my five-state hospital board, and as I came in, somebody, one of the executives there said to me, "Well, your boss is going to the clink." I knew it, but to have it expressed that way to me was very harsh. And—

DePue: Go ahead.

deGrazia: —Vic was helpful in getting an attorney, Tom Foran, for Dan. I'm not sure whether he got the best representation, but Tom didn't charge him. He was a well-known figure who had some notoriety. Do you know him? Who he is? Was?

DePue: I certainly recognize the name.

deGrazia: He was the U.S. Attorney who prosecuted the Chicago Seven.

DePue: Okay. And, of course, Walker had gained some of his reputation because he had written the report following the riots.

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: Vic was the executive director of that.

deGrazia: Okay.

DePue: Well, he did move in those circles then, did he?

deGrazia: Yeah. There was a story that he liked to tell about the time that was finished—The Walker Report. And I may have told you this the last time. Vic, wanted to be sure there was no publicity about it. So he made himself the contrarian and he gave the staff the impression that he had pushed for a much lighter treatment of Daley and the report contained that because nobody had seen the results. And the report said police riot and a few other key words that condemned Daley.

DePue: Well, police riot is the thing that is continued to be remembered about it today.

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: And I know that they debated that particular phrase a lot before it finally ended up in there.

deGrazia: Yes, they did. So they wanted to make arrangements for a party to celebrate and give copies of the report to all the staff, and they didn't want anybody to know about it. So Vic's secretary's husband, who had a different name, made a reservation at the Yacht Club for the party, and the whole staff met there, and people were very cold to Vic because they thought he had screwed up the report and downplayed the role of Daley because he had let them have that impression.

DePue: That's interesting. This is the second occasion now where you have mentioned that he had done something—

deGrazia: Put himself on the block. Yeah.

DePue: I assume that that's where the comment about generosity of spirit comes from, then.

deGrazia: Well, it was me. I interpreted it a little differently. There was a man who later Vic knew—he didn't know him at the time—who worked for Daley and became a good friend. And he said, "I saw you at that party for the publication of the Walker Report." And Vic said, "How could you have? There was no one there but us." He said, "I was the maitre d'." Daley's spy was there.

DePue: Wow. That says quite a bit about the way the Daley administration worked at the time, too. You were surprised, shocked, to find out about—

deGrazia: I had never known anyone who was indicted.

DePue: Nor had you ever aspired to know somebody who was indicted, I'm sure. How difficult was it for Vic at that point in time?

deGrazia: It was very painful. Very painful. He tried to help all he could but when Vic had a heart attack, Dan said, "That's me lying there." And when Dan was indicted, Vic clearly felt that was him. Though it was an activity that Vic had nothing to do with.

DePue: Even though the relationship between the two had cooled somewhat—

deGrazia: Yes. But there was a hang-over of many years' involvement.

DePue: Were you all surprised, then, at the point in time when the governor pled guilty?

deGrazia: No, I don't think so. He did it for Roberta. He had been doing things for Roberta for a couple of years.

DePue: Roberta Nelson?

deGrazia: Yes, Roberta Nelson.

DePue: Okay. So, my next question is, did you understand his rationale for doing that, because in many cases people were saying, boy, they didn't really have that much on him.

deGrazia: I think it was chivalrous and—

DePue: You think Dan had the expectation that the sentence would be rather lenient.

deGrazia: Yes, I do. So did I, certainly. The sentence was a shock.

DePue: And the sentence was?

deGrazia: I don't remember how many years he was—

DePue: Seven years, I think. I might be wrong on that.

deGrazia: They were making an example of him.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: At the same time, I think, a savings and loan scandal of a different kind was going on in the senate.

DePue: Well, the Keating Five scandal. There was another person who went to prison for savings and loans incidents—and the governor— [Charles Keating was convicted of fraud, racketeering and conspiracy in relations to his wrongdoings in the collapse of Lincoln Savings, and eventually served four and a half years in prison.]

deGrazia: But not for self-dealing. It was something else.

DePue: The governor mentioned to me, he was one of the only other people who ended up in jail, and the comparison between himself and Keating, he stressed, were completely different. The governor mentioned that nobody lost any money because of what happened in his case.

deGrazia: Yes. He was self-dealing.

DePue: Self-dealing? What do you mean?

deGrazia: He lent money to his son that was for his use.

DePue: Once he landed in prison up in Duluth, did Vic ever go to visit him there?

deGrazia: No, he didn't.

DePue: Do you know why?

deGrazia: He didn't like to see him there. He wrote him. Called.

DePue: So they stayed in contact?

deGrazia: Some, not much. Somebody, there was a woman, Mary Bucaro, who went to visit him. She was an attorney—a young attorney—had just become an attorney after the Walker administration, and she went and carried news back and forth.

DePue: You mentioned already that Victor was very involved, though, in trying to get the governor out. Exactly how did that play out?

deGrazia: He tried to get the pardon and parole board to act, but I think they didn't have jurisdiction. There was another attorney who was head of a board who did have jurisdiction. I think his name was Toby Barry.

DePue: Toby Barry?

deGrazia: Barry. I'm not sure. And he got him to agree to suggest early parole because of illness. That's the way I remember it.

DePue: And, eventually, then, obviously, they were successful because he was released.

deGrazia: Yes. Took a while.

DePue: Did the governor come back down and did you see him after that time?

deGrazia: Yes. Immediately after.

DePue: What was that meeting like?

deGrazia: It was painful. He looked terrible. Not the way he looks now. His long hair. I don't think he had long hair, then, but he looked gaunt and sick. But it was joyous, too.

DePue: How had he changed from the governor that you remembered before—the person in office?

deGrazia: He was much quieter. He didn't speak so much. But other than that, I didn't feel any change.

DePue: But, the rapport between Vic and Dan was back?

deGrazia: It seemed to be back, yes.

DePue: An emotional experience, I would think.

deGrazia: Yes. Quite an emotional experience.

DePue: Okay. By this time, this is well into your marriage. You had reached some understanding with the children in the new marriage?

deGrazia: Yes. We had.

DePue: Okay. How much have you been able to keep in touch with Dan, afterward, both you and Vic, and now with Vic's passing, up to this day? Do you still keep in touch with the governor?

deGrazia: Yes, I do. He calls maybe once every three months. And I call him. I helped him with the distribution of his book.

DePue: Okay.

deGrazia: I like his wife.

DePue: Lillian.

deGrazia: Lillian, yeah. I see him at funerals, of course. Dave Green's and Roberta Walker, one.

DePue: And from every indication talking to him, throughout his life he had high regard for Roberta one?

deGrazia: Yes. He's been splendid to her from an outside point of view. When he went to things that the Greens gave—parties, and they're involved in the theater in Highland Park, or Wilmette, I guess it is—they'd go by the house and have a dinner party first. And Dave and Dan and Lillian have been there and they always have Roberta with them. I remember very well I didn't recognize her the first time. I went to introduce myself and she said, "I'm Roberta." I said, "Sorry."

DePue: One of those embarrassing moments.

deGrazia: It was one of those very embarrassing moments.

DePue: I would assume that the governor came back for Vic's funeral as well?

deGrazia: Yes, he did. And he spoke.

DePue: Was he one of the pall bearers?

deGrazia: No, Victor was—it was a memorial service. Victor was cremated in Sicily.

DePue: Okay

deGrazia: It was a great service. We had a jazz band. It played "When the Saints Go Marching In."

DePue: So, very much a celebration of his life.

deGrazia: Yes. Ab Mikva was the master of ceremonies and Dan spoke and many children.

DePue: Who else was there of some note?

deGrazia: Ed Burke, who brought a commendation from the City Council for Vic, which was a great surprise to everybody, because the City Council had never smiled on Vic before. And Vic managed Ed Burke's campaign for—I don't remember what. I don't remember.

DePue: And this ceremony was here in town then?

deGrazia: It was across the street at the church.

DePue: Okay. The community church, I saw?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: A very quaint-looking place.

deGrazia: They just bought my property.

DePue: Oh, did they?

deGrazia: Yes. I'm very pleased.

DePue: Okay. Well, let's kind of conclude then with some more general comments, for you. You spent a huge part of your life and devoted an awful lot of energy to Vic and especially to Governor Walker. Looking back on those years, now, what do you think you are most proud of.

deGrazia: Managing the Department of Public Aid relationship.

DePue: Because?

deGrazia: Jim Trainor was a wild card, and sometimes went off the handle. I was very good at keeping him in good perspective, and I mean that without irony. I don't mean political perspective, but he would get so mad at somebody in the nursing home

business and say, "I will never see him again. I won't deal with him". I worked mainly with the nursing home people more than the staff of public aid.

DePue: So just like Vic and Dan were very good political match, you and Trainor, you felt the same thing?

deGrazia: Yeah, I thought we were. He was not loved by public aid people, but he was respected.

DePue: So did you surprise yourself, then, at how successful you were once you got into those positions?

deGrazia: Yes.

DePue: How about regrets? Especially regrets that dealt with the Walker administration?

deGrazia: Well, I'd like to have seen him have a second term. Not be president, but have a second term.

DePue: Mm-hmm.

deGrazia: And if I had worked the precincts the way I should have, maybe he ...one vote counts. I took my children to work for an Aldermanic candidate in the 44th Ward, and they won by 100 votes. The people—my candidate. And the children were so impressed that they worked a precinct that produced a ten-vote margin, and that made one-tenth the difference. And I was reminded that I should have put my heart more into the precinct world.

DePue: We mentioned a couple of times the possibility of running for president, presidential aspirations. He was obviously a very ambitious man. He had places he wanted to go. But I get the impression you never saw him in that presidential role.

deGrazia: No, I didn't.

DePue: Why?

deGrazia: I don't know why, because Jimmy Carter was his friend and I didn't see him in a presidential role either. He was presidential in his manner, in his mien, he was top executive. But I just couldn't think that high.

DePue: Overall, then, how would you assess the Walker administration?

deGrazia: I think it was a mistake not to deal with Daley in a more—a nicer manner.

DePue: To have found some accommodation with him?

deGrazia: Yeah. Found some accommodation. I think it was possible in the beginning. I think that was a major mistake and impeded some of the measures that he wanted to pass. But, I think he had good people in his cabinet who did good things.

DePue: Would you say today, would you be willing to say, that his four years was a success?

deGrazia: Yes, and no. A success means re-election.

DePue: Both a success and a failure?

deGrazia: Yes. A failure in the lack of re-election, but also—the people who remained in my mind. The issues subside. That's part of Parkinson's.

DePue: The people, because of the excitement that you had working with some other people with incredible talent and focus—

deGrazia: Yes. They were. Many of them.

DePue: You probably know that historians look back at this, at his four years, and chalk it up as something of a failure.

deGrazia: Yes, I know.

DePue: He got very little done legislatively and left—certainly didn't leave the mark he hoped to leave.

deGrazia: No. The thing he did do successfully was to open up mental health hospitals to different kind of care. To straighten out the mess with Washington, along with Medicaid full share, which had been hidden by the previous administrations and was hidden in the beginning of this administration by the matching grants and how they ought to have been paid.

DePue: So how would you have liked to have those four years remembered?

deGrazia: As an attempt to bring more representative government to Illinois that failed because it was not entirely successful because of the relationship with Daley, which was both of our faults.

DePue: Both parties?

deGrazia: Both parties.

DePue: You have to realize, also, though, that as the public's memories fade of the Walker administration, because that's a long time ago, what they do remember is, "oh, he's one of those governors who ended up in jail," and in many cases they make the leap that, 'oh, well, that's because—

deGrazia: Did some malfeasance in office.

DePue: Yes.

deGrazia: They also remember that he walked the state. I find that interesting, that everybody remembers that. And that's true. They always say, "What did he do in office? Were you a party to it?" And the fact that it wasn't done in office is lost. I don't think there's anything you can do about that, unless *you* do something.

DePue: Well, it's in part why he was so eager, so willing, to sit down and be interviewed in the first place, because he wanted to correct that perception.

deGrazia: I think his book helps.

DePue: The book is why I had the opportunity to do it in the first place because I went to one of his book signings. Is there a great amount of resentment on your part because that's how the public perceives this?

deGrazia: Yes. They were the four most wonderful years of my life, and I felt I was working toward a noble cause and everybody discounting him is painful. Less so, each day.

DePue: Let me read a quote, and I've been doing this for everybody I've interviewed here, Taylor Pensoneau—Pensoneau and Ellis wrote a biography of Walker, and one of the things that Pensoneau wrote at the very end of this, I want to read it and get your reaction to it, get your response to this: "Walker's followers"—and certainly Vic would be the closest in that respect and you as well—Walker's followers "knew that they were part of something special when they signed up and embarked on their improbable drive to capture Springfield from those entrenched interests. And they did it. And for most of them, it was the time of their lives. God, was it exciting."

deGrazia: Yes, it was exciting. The only person I know who was sorry he was there was Vic. He thought he could do more good outside.

DePue: Was it because of—because he could do—

deGrazia: More good for Dan.

DePue: —for Dan.

deGrazia: That's right.

DePue: Any final comments, then, looking back on these years, these crucial years of your life?

deGrazia: No.

DePue: It's been a joy to sit here and listen to your stories, to have the opportunity to interview you.

Nancy deGrazia

Interview # ISG-A-L-2008-004

deGrazia: Thank you. I've enjoyed it, too.

DePue: And thank you very much.

(end of interview)