

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Randall Witter

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Project Name Oral History project

Interview # ISE-A-L-2020-011

Randy Witter, a lobbyist with the Illinois legislature since 1975, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft* – *General Interest* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Feb 7, 2020 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:33 / 1.55 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on March 11, 2020.

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

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Abstract

Randall Witter, Illinois Statecraft, ISE-A-L-2020-011

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Randall (Randy) Witter was born in November 1948 in Moline, Illinois. Randy grew up in Rock Island and graduated from high school in 1966. He graduated from Western Illinois University in 1970, and after being drafted into the U.S. Army, he served in Germany, then returned and attended graduate school at Sangamon State University, earning his Masters in Public Administration in 1973. A few months later, in 1974, he began working with Bob Cook as a lobbyist in the Illinois state legislature, and was still a lobbyist at the time of this interview.

This interview focuses on two issues in which Witter was a careful observer. The Illinois legislature debated passage of the Equal Rights Amendment from 1972 through June 1982 when the time limit established by the U.S. Congress expired. Randy's memories of the yearly ERA fight was especially detailed for 1982, the last year of the struggle between supporters and opponents in 1982. He discusses the challenges of walking through the capitol building which was often filled with supporters and opponents. He also discussed the hunger strikers, the incident where a group of more radical feminists who called themselves the Grassroots Group of Second Class Citizens chained themselves to the railing outside the Senate chamber, and the culminating incident, their using pig's blood to write the names of their political opponents on the floor.

The second part of the interview focuses on Witter's memories of then Senator Barack Obama, who served in the Illinois Senate from January 1997 until his election to the U.S. Senate in the election of 2004. Randy shares his memories of when he first met Senator Obama, and his impressions of the man, his skills as a legislator, and his success in the presidential campaign of 2008.

Subject Headings/Key Words: ERA fight in Illinois; Cook and Witter; Bob Cook; Phyllis Schlafly; chaining incident in legislature in 1982; Grassroots Group of Second Class Citizens; Tom Hanrahan; Barack Obama;

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

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