

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Kim Blackwell Fox
Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft – Jim Thompson Oral History project
Interview # IST-A-L-2014-020

Kim Blackwell Fox, executive director of Citizens for Thompson, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft – Jim Thompson* oral history project.

Interview date & location:

Date: July 14, 2014.

Location: Fox family home, Champaign, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mike Czaplicki, ALPL project historian

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Mike Czaplicki, ALPL project historian & Rozanne Robertson, ALPL volunteer

Total Pages: 68 pgs Total Times: 3:22:40 / 3.38 hrs

Session 1: From 1977 Inaugural Volunteer to the Governor's Chief Fundraiser.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on December 4, 2014.

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

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Abstract

Kim Blackwell Fox, *Illinois Statecraft*, IST-A-L-2014-020

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Kim Blackwell Fox was born in Pana, Illinois, to Flossie and Norman Blackwell on September 30, 1955. Fox had an idyllic, small-town upbringing marked by close family relationships, summer days spent in Pana's architecturally significant swimming pool, trips to Dogs n Suds, watching Ed Sullivan on television, and hard work at Reaban's Cafe. She was active in a variety of school activities, including cheerleading, volleyball, and tennis, and took part in the youth organizations of the Free Methodist Church in Pana. After graduating high school in 1973, Fox trained as a stenographer at Springfield Career College and took a job with the Adjutant General for the IL Army and Naval Department.

In 1977 Fox made the momentous decision to volunteer and help plan the gubernatorial inaugural ball at the Springfield Armory. This proved to be the gateway to a twenty-seven year association with Gov. Jim Thompson, as she moved through a series of positions of increasing responsibility — assistant advance, director of advance, scheduling, and executive director of the governor's fundraising organization, Citizens for Thompson. Along the way, she occasionally organized or assisted with major events for other leading figures, including Ronald Reagan and Barbara Bush, and the National Governor's Association convention in 1989. After Thompson retired from elective office, she helped the governor set up the America 2000 fund and gradually wind down his remaining funds. At the time of this interview, Fox and her husband Peter lived in Champaign, where they were co-owners of Fox Development Corporation and active philanthropists.

In this interview, Fox discusses her upbringing in Pana, the various positions she held in the Thompson administration, relationships among the staff, life on the campaign trail, and Thompson's visibility outside Illinois. She offers critical insight into the fundraising process, campaign finance regulations during the Thompson years, the role of Citizens for Thompson, and the expansion of Thompson's circle of informal advisors from his associates at the U.S. attorney's office to major state business leaders. She also shares her perspective on the contribution of Fox Development's Research Park to the state and Champaign economy.

Subject Headings/Key Words: advance work; campaign finance in Illinois; Citizens for Thompson; Fox Development Corporation; Governor's Club; governor's office, scheduling; Pana, Illinois; Ronald Reagan; staff relations, Thompson administration; James R. Thompson

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