

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Bernie Schoenburg

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Illinois Statecraft – Jim Edgar* Oral History project

Interview # ISJ-A-L-2009-006

Bernie Schoenburg, a political reporter and columnist with the Springfield *State Journal-Register*, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft – Jim Edgar* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: March 9, 2009      Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Date: March 16, 2009      Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, ALPLM volunteer

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt & Cheryl Wycoff, ALPL Volunteers

Total Pages: 44 + 58 = 102    Total Time: 2:10 + 3:06 = 5:16 / 5.27 hrs

Session 1: Childhood, early career as journalist through 1990

Session 2: Jim Edgar administration + reflections on Govs Ryan & Blagojevich

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 07/14/2009.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in  
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## Abstract

## Bernie Schoenburg, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISG-A-L-2009-006

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Bernard (Bernie) Schoenburg was born on June 26, 1954 in Chicago, Illinois, and grew up in nearby Evanston. His mother, Edith (Youngman) Schoenburg, escaped from Nazi controlled Europe in 1942. Bernie attended public schools in Evanston before enrolling at the University of Illinois, where he eventually settled into journalism as a major and career choice. Following graduation, he was employed by the Bloomington *Pantagraph* from 1976 to 1986, then worked as a reporter and later supervisor in the Chicago office of the Associated Press for three years. In 1990, when his wife Kim (Yaffe) Schoenburg joined her father in a medical practice in Springfield, Bernie began work with the Springfield *State Journal-Register*, becoming its statehouse reporter and columnist, writing bi-weekly political columns. At the time of the interview, he was one of central Illinois most highly respected journalists.

Schoenburg has chronicled the careers of many of Illinois' most prominent politicians. He addressed the Edgar administration in detail during the interview, especially budget challenges early in his administration, Edgar's welfare reforms, and educational initiatives in Edgar's second administration, including his attempts to reform the Chicago school district. Schoenburg also shared his insights on the dynamics of Illinois politics, including the 'Cutback Amendment,' the 1994 gubernatorial election, and the dominance of the 'Four Tops,' (the four legislative leaders) in Illinois politics. He spoke about the MSI scandal, which occurred during Edgar's administration but never directly tarnished Edgar's generally honorable reputation. Schoenburg also reflected on the careers Governors George Ryan and Rod Blagojevich, and shared observations on Barack Obama, who he knew from his days as a junior legislator in the Illinois Senate.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Growing up in Evanston; journalist at *The Pantagraph* of Bloomington, (Illinois); Associated Press; the Springfield *State Journal-Register*; Governor Jim Thompson; Governor Jim Edgar; Mike Lawrence; Cutback Amendment; Gov. George Ryan; Speaker Mike Madigan; Mayor Richard M. Daley; MSI scandal; Illinois legislature; Dawn Clark Netsch; Brenda Edgar; Gov. Rod Blagojevich; Barack Obama

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

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