Interview with Janis Cellini

ISG-A-L-2009-029

Interview # 1: September 15, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

A Note to the Reader

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. This transcript is based on an interview recorded by the ALPL Oral History Program. Readers are reminded that the interview of record is the original video or audio file; they are encouraged to listen to portions of the original recording to get a better sense of the interviewee's personality and state of mind. The interview has been transcribed in near-verbatim format, then edited for clarity and readability, and reviewed by the interviewee. For many interviews, the ALPL Oral History Program retains substantial files with further information about the interviewee and the interview itself. Please contact us for information about accessing these materials.

DePue: Today is Tuesday, September 15, 2009. I am Mark DePue, Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I'm interviewing Janis Cellini. Good afternoon, Janis.

Cellini: Hello.

DePue: Janis and I have been talking quite a bit here already, and I know that this is going to be a fascinating interview. I appreciate you for—You cringe when I say that (Cellini laughs)—I appreciate your taking some time out to help us record a little bit of the history of the Edgar Administration and your life in general, as well. I always start off with some background information, so why don't you tell us when and where you were born?

Cellini: I was born in Springfield, Illinois, the second generation, Italian-American family, on the North side of Springfield, graduated and attended Catholic schools through two years of college. That would be St. Aloysius, Ursuline Academy, Springfield College in Illinois. From there I went to the University of Illinois for a semester, where people...

DePue: Now you're going a little bit too fast here for me.

Cellini: All right.

DePue: Second generation. Does that mean your family was among those who came here to mine?

Cellini: Yes, my grandparents.

DePue: When did they get here; do you know?

Cellini: I do not. I'd have to have my nephew, who knows the exact day, time, and clock, that they arrived and who they were with.

DePue: He's the family genealogist?

Cellini: He's the family genealogist; yes, he is.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about your parents.

Cellini: My father probably was destined for the mines, But his father hoped for more for him, and I think there was an opportunity for someone to be a police officer on the North side of town, which was a little rougher than most sides, probably, at the time, and...

DePue: What do they call people on the north side of Springfield?

Cellini: Northenders (DePue laughs). Proud to be a Northender (Cellini laughs). And I think my grandfather said, "Son, they need a policeman out here, and we think you'd be a good one." So he started out, and most of my life, my father was a beat cop, and had the Levee, which was downtown Springfield, Illinois.[1] I can remember as a kid, on Saturday night our entertainment was my mom would take me and my brother Bob, who was three years older than I—I had another brother; he was quite a bit older, but just Bobby and I, mostly—down to the Levee. Dad would be working, and we'd sit there and watch all kinds of people and characters. And Dad would carry me around and introduce me to everybody, and…

DePue: Most people don't remember much about what the Levee was like, back in the early 1950s, perhaps. What was the Levee like?

Cellini: From my kid's perspective—and I was born in '46—it was a very colorful

1 In the early 1900s, the Levee district, which took in the 700 and 800 blocks of East Washington St., consisted mostly of two- and three-story brick buildings, which housed saloons, small restaurants, pawnshops and assorted small businesses on the ground level and cheap, squalid rental units on the upper floors. The East Washington Street blocks of the Levee contained most of the city's black businesses, barbershops, saloons, little restaurant, pool halls and grocery stores. A few businesses–both black and white–concealed less legitimate enterprises. (https://sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=8810)

(both laugh) and fun place to go. My father knew everybody there. It was mostly bars, restaurants. Of course, I was too young to realize what else might be going on.

A Young Janis Cellini With Family

But it made no difference to my father. He introduced me to everybody; they all knew him by name.

I probably learned my ability to accept all kinds of people from that experience. It was quite an education in that regard. Even though I would call myself an extrovert, much like my father and mother, in my life I've found that introverts probably wouldn't even have gone there. They probably would have been afraid of something like that. But I was young; my father was friendly to everybody. It was a great experience really.

DePue: You were born in 1946, so right at the beginning of the bell curve that we call the Baby Boomers.

Cellini: Yes, yes.

DePue: Was your father a World War II veteran?

Cellini: No. He was on the police force and therefore, I think, was exempt from that.

DePue: What was your dad's name?

Cellini: William.

DePue: And you said you had an older brother as well.

Cellini: Yes, I have an older brother, William.

DePue: So there's just the three of you?

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: How important were religious activities for you? You already mentioned St. Aloysius and going to Catholic schools.

Cellini: Well, the boys didn't go to Catholic schools. I was the girl, and I was sent to Catholic schools.

DePue: Why was that? (both laugh)

Cellini: Well, I hesitate to say this. I think as I've gotten older, I realized that my father saw a lot of life that made him make the decision that his sons were not going to attend Catholic schools. I think he wanted me to have more discipline, and perhaps I wasn't going to be threatened by anything that might be harmful to me, because I was a female.

DePue: Who was the strongest influence in your life, growing up, would you say?

Cellini: My father and mother were equally strong, and so was my older brother Bill. My brother was twelve years older than me, so that when I was in seventh or eighth grade, he was in college. He was almost like a second father figure. So it depends on what aspect of my life you want to talk about influence, you know.

My father taught me to accept everybody; my mother taught me music and fun and read books; and my older brother taught me very practical things. He taught me how to balance a checkbook; he taught me to understand the importance of saving money, very practical. So I had a lot of… I grew up with a grandmother next door; I had an aunt live in the house; my aunt and uncle were next door on the left; my other aunt and uncle were on the right. I mean, I was in a community of my family.

DePue: What was the high school you attended, again?

Cellini: Ursuline Academy.

DePue: Ursuline Academy, which also is on the north side?

Cellini: Yes. It's no longer there. The nuns couldn't afford to keep it running, so it just went out of business I think, two years ago.

DePue: When you were in high school, did you have an idea what you wanted to do with your life or what you were interested in at the time?

Cellini: I had no idea. In fact, I was a… Well, this is an interesting story, perhaps, on this topic. I was elected either treasurer or secretary of my freshman class, and on one day, one of the seniors said, "Let's go out for lunch." I said, "We're not supposed to go out for lunch." And they said, "Just come on. We'll go to the Icy Root Beer." In those days, it was a drive-up. So I said, "Okay." I get in the car, and while we're sitting there having a hamburger at Icy Root Beer at Rutledge and North Grand, going through the Icy Root Beer [drive] is the principal of the school (DePue laughs) and the president of the student body, and they saw **me** in the car. When I got back, they asked me to tell them who else was in the car. I said that I couldn't remember (laughs). And now that I'm telling this story, it's funny, given that the time… So they said, "We're sure that if you go home tonight, you'll remember, and we'll talk to you tomorrow."

Sure enough, I come back the next day, and they said, "Who was in the car?" I said, "I really don't remember." They said, "We're going to have to replace you on the student body, and we still want to give you another night to think about it." So I went home and... I didn't talk to anybody about it because I knew I was breaking rules when I went on that lunch thing. I came back and I said, "I just… I don't remember." So they said, "Well, not only are you going to get replaced, we're going to have you run the reelection for your position. We want you to…" Here's the ballots, you know, pass out the ballots, collect them. They were trying (laughs)... I said, "Fine." So I did that, and I got removed from the student body (laughs). I do remember that, now that I'm talking to you about that.

I did not know what I wanted to do. Everybody else seemed to have a real clear picture, around me.

DePue: This would have been in the early '60s.

Cellini: Yeah. And remember, I didn't go much out of the north end of town. It was a big deal for me to maybe go to Blessed Sacrament parish. It was different in those days. As I said, my grandmother, my aunt, my… Everybody was… I had such an extended family, so I didn't go far.

DePue: I know for both you and your brother, Bill, politics is going to play a major role in the future. Was there any sense of politics when you were growing up? Was there any involvement by your parents?

Cellini: The politics that I recall the most is that my father sometimes would get to not be a beat cop. He would get to be in the station, or he would get to have a car. My memory is fuzzy, but I think many times it was related to the mayor that he backed. I guess, I'm assuming that if he backed the mayor that won, he got to have a squad car and have a bigger district or whatever. I wish all of my family was here because somebody would argue with me about that. Then if he backed the wrong guy, he'd be back on the beat, back on the Levee, back on foot. That's my earliest recollection of politics, and it was okay. My father was also the secretary-treasurer of the Policemen's Benevolent Association. My grandmother, my **grandmother**, tough, tough woman from Italy, was...

DePue: She was born and raised in Italy.

Cellini: She was, and came over here. I did not know my grandfather, but my grandmother, her sons were coal miners, and she marched in the Progressive Miners Workers.[2] She was really, really for rights for her children, obviously. She raised me, also. My mother went to work when I was in kindergarten, so when I would come home from grade school, my grandmother would be there. And every inch of our backyard had fruits and vegetables and rabbits and

2 The Progressive Miners of America was a coal miners' union organized in 1932 in downstate Illinois. It was formed in response to a 1932 contract proposal negotiated by United Mine Workers President John L. Lewis, which reduced wages from a previous rate of $6.10 per day to $5.00 per day. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Miners_of_America)

chickens and… We had everything. She was also another influence on me, by the way, very tough woman.

DePue: What was her name?

Cellini: Her name was… I only know her as Nonna. I think her name was… Her last name was Decrescentis.

DePue: Oh, boy.

Cellini: That was her maiden name, Decrescentis, D-e-c-r-e-n… Again, this is where my nephew, the researcher, should come in here and fill in.

DePue: We'll have a chance to tighten up on the spelling here.

Cellini: Great, great, and maybe the timing, even, because he knows all of that. She was a very big influence on me too because I was always there. She'd say, "I can tell you a story." You'll have to bleep out some of it probably. She would raise these beautiful vegetables. I can remember having wonderful soups and… People would kill for it today.

She would say to me, after school, "Go get the nice tomatoes and put them out front, and we'll sell them. If anything's bruised, just put them over here, and we'll take them over, and we'll make soup." I can remember a man pulling up and saying, "These are nice tomatoes. How much are they?" And she'd say, "A nickel." I don't even remember what they were, a nickel, a dime, I don't know. He'd say, "That's too much," and she'd say, "Well, that's what they are." He'd try to barter with her, and she held her ground; she held her ground strongly. I was like, "Whoa, okay, give them to him for a dime." We got 300 of them or something like that. (DePue laughs)

Anyway, he walked away paying full price. And I can remember her comments to me after he'd get in the car. I'll clean it up, because she was feisty. And she spoke broken English. She'd say, "The SOB, he think I'm-a stupid 'cause I talk-a funny" (both laugh). And I've cleaned it up (both laugh). So, I think that I'm not a shy, retiring, particularly effeminate woman, but I think I learned a lot from her too.

DePue: Do you know if the family leaned either Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal?

Cellini: I think they did not lean one way or the other for quite a while. I wish I remembered the politician that came around. He obviously was a Republican. Most of the immigrants, as I recall, were Democrats, and there was… I want to say, Carpentier, but I need to really check out that. There was some very nice man that was a politician that came around, and that seemed to somehow get some of us involved in the Republican side of politics.

DePue: This would have been in the early 1960s?

Cellini: You're talking to somebody who doesn't… If you want, we can back, and I can fill that in for you. I really don't know.

DePue: I don't know that it's that important, but I'm trying to get a framework, if you will. Did this happen long before you came along?

Cellini: Yeah. In the '30s, John L. Lewis was the head of the United Mine Workers, and he lived in Springfield. He was a major player in the Democrat Party. A lot of the ethnic miners in Central and Southern Illinois—the Italians, the Welsh, the Lithuanians—they didn't feel John Lewis was treating them fairly. So, lo and behold, they formed the Progressive Mine Workers Union. There were very bitter fights, including bombings and shootings. I'm told that many of the neighbors that I grew up with—I was born in 1946—went to jail over it. So, the bottom line is, whoever John Lewis was for, politically, the Progressive Miners were for the other person, and that included the opposite party. Because Lewis was an officer in the Democratic Party, the Progressives supported and became Republicans. That's how it happened.

DePue: That's a pretty straightforward reason.

Cellini: I think it was all due to one man, who was a Republican, sort of then influencing the way we went, we being maybe some of the Northenders.

DePue: When did you graduate from high school?

Cellini: Sixty-four.

DePue: And where did you go after that? You said the college...

Cellini: Springfield College in Illinois, which is now Benedictine.

DePue: And how far away was that from Ursuline Academy?

Cellini: (laughs) Right next door (DePue laughs).

DePue: So you could throw a stone from Ursuline...

Cellini: Right next door.

DePue: Why SCI?

Cellini: The Ursuline nuns taught me in high school. It was a great, small community, and they also taught at the college. I knew a lot of kids that were going there. We all didn't obviously have money, and we were able to live at home and afford to go there and get a decent education. It was very well-known for its... sort of its associate degree, because you could jump off to other colleges pretty easily.

DePue: At the time it was strictly an associate's degree, then?

Cellini: Yes, it was strictly an associate's. It was only a two-year college.

DePue: Did you major in anything while you were there?

Cellini: (laughs) Beats me (both laugh). I'm one of those people who got more out of people, perhaps, than class attendance. I think I had sort of an idea that I wanted to go into social work or something regarding that. I was still not real pointed on that; it just happened to be.

DePue: It would have been 1966 when you got your associate's degree, I would think.

Cellini: It was.

DePue: Where did you head after that?

Cellini: University of Illinois, with my best friend from high school. We roomed together.

DePue: In Champaign-Urbana?

Cellini: In Champaign-Urbana. She was from the north end of Springfield, and she was from what I think they used to call Germantown. Her father was a Reisch brewery. It had all these local breweries at the time. I can remember to this day, he kept asking her, "Why are you hanging around with that Italian?" The Germans were… They were in a different area than the Italians were. It was very ethnic, if you will.

We were best friends in high school. We roomed together. She was very, very bright. I, of course, was not an A student. I felt great if I got B's and C's. I wasn't one of those people who had to get A's. I was more interested in who was in my class, where they were from, what they were doing. When I got to University of Illinois, I thought, I made it; I passed. But it was a little more serious, scholarly (laughs) studies than I wanted to do, and I was also engaged. So, I decided that I would go to Illinois State—it was closer to Springfield; I could see my fiancé—Illinois State in Bloomington.

DePue: How long were you at the U of I?

Cellini: One semester. And then I graduated from Illinois State in education. I changed my major, and I kind of got focused on wanting to be a teacher. So I became a high school English teacher.

DePue: By the time you got there, you at least figured out a major and a profession.

Cellini: Right. Yes, yes.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about your fiancé at the time.

Cellini: A good guy, went to the Catholic schools.

DePue: Where was he from?

Cellini: He was from here; he was from Springfield. He did not choose to go to college at the time that I was going. And we ended up getting married, and after five years, we weren't married anymore, no children.

DePue: Can I get his name, just for the record?

Cellini: Patrick Bumpus.

DePue: You graduated in 1968, correct?

Cellini: Sixty-eight, correct.

DePue: About the time you graduated was when the college life really started to heat up in another respect, because that's the wave of Vietnam protests and student protests and things like that. Was any of that going on at Illinois State?

Cellini: Not that I would have been a part of. If you look at my background, questioning authority was not really in my nature at that time. Let's just say I never explored it. I was pretty programmed, if you will, to the values and ideals of where I came from. I would not have ever thought, at that time, to question anything. It was later. It was later that I did that.

DePue: But this is a time of political awakening for so many people of your generation especially.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: And I also know—I don't know much about the details—but Bill [Cellini, her brother], in 1968 or 1969, became the director of transportation for the newly-elected governor of Illinois, Richard Ogilvie. Were you going through your own evolution, in terms of political views, at the time?

Cellini: No, no. I had no interest in politics at the time. I was graduating from school, going to get a job, always Bill's younger sister, always knew I never wanted to embarrass him, which would cause me to even toe the mark even more. We were proud of him. He was the first person really, in our second generation, to graduate college, so he was really somebody to be proud of. All of us—all of us, meaning cousins, aunts, uncles, we kind of looked up to him. He got involved in that. Now, at that time, I wasn't very enlightened. I think I was a late bloomer. I got married, and...

DePue: What year was that?

Cellini: I got married in '69, and then I think… I can't remember the year my father died—he loved my husband—but he had a heart attack and he died. That event triggered many, many things and many changes in my life, one of which was to question everything, almost.

DePue: Let's back up just a little bit. You graduated from college in 1968. Did you go directly to teaching after that?

Cellini: I did.

DePue: And where did you teach?

Cellini: I taught at Springfield High School.

DePue: So you still didn't go very far from home.

Cellini: Exactly, exactly.

DePue: Now you would have been downtown; that would have been the only difference (Cellini laughs).

Cellini: Well, I drove… It [Springfield High School] was still where it is now, and it was just what I did.

DePue: How long after you started teaching, then, did your father pass away?

Cellini: I think I was a teacher for about four years, and my father died. Of course, he sort of made me toe the mark in many ways. He was very strong, and I would never question my dad. I loved him to death. But when he died, something happened. I separated from my husband. I also, at the time, as I taught, I started going out to then Sangamon State [University], now UIS [University of Illinois, Springfield]. At that time, they had just all kinds of very liberal, long-haired professors, whose classes I would be in, because in those days, I was going for a master's degree at nighttime.

DePue: In education?

Cellini: In education.

DePue: Yeah, Sangamon State would have been brand new at the time.

Cellini: In little buildings, right out on South Sixth Street, not even where the campus is now.

DePue: And its charter, right from the very beginning, was to be this new, very innovative, very liberal-oriented college environment.

Cellini: Correct, correct. And it was the first time in my life that anybody ever espoused—or I heard—things that really shook me to my core. It was really challenging my beliefs.

DePue: Do you remember anything in particular?

Cellini: Well, I had a couple professors that were Marxists. They were… It was that era. They were married, then they were unmarried. It was the back end of the '60s. It was the early '70s and late '60s. They were living a life that I had never seen before, and they were influencing me, at least causing me to question the kinds of things that I was taught, which is really what education should do in the first place. At the time, it was kind of earth-shaking to me, and then when my father died, I really, really kind of overreacted, perhaps, got separated and went off to California for a year.

DePue: Can you talk about that in any more detail? Are you willing to...

Cellini: California?

DePue: No, about what it was about your father passing away that really changed so many things for you?

Cellini: Well, he was pretty much the… I would do anything for my father. He ruled the family, and he was very kind to me. I could do no wrong. He loved me unconditionally. So, with that gone, not only the fact that somebody who loved me unconditionally was gone, but the fact that somebody who I would not do… If I ever had, "Am I going to do the right thing or the wrong thing?" My father would always… His presence always I would choose the right thing. I would never even consider, "Whoa, maybe I ought to try something else over here," never.

With him gone, it kind of loosened the reins a little bit, which is how I even got to California, because I separated; a friend of mine was moving to California. She said, "You want to go?" and I said, "Yeah, I'm off for the summer." So I go, and I not stay three months; I stay for a year. I go up and down Route One, meet all kinds of fascinating people in California.

DePue: Fascinating people?

Cellini: Oh, different people than anybody I ever grew up with, mostly.

DePue: Was this early '70s now?

Cellini: Early '70s, yeah.

DePue: Well, this is during the height of the hippies and the...

Cellini: Yeah, it was kind of, during that time...

DePue: ...the counterculture, and…

Cellini: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DePue: That's what you're experiencing out in California?

Cellini: Yeah, but I was still… I was seeing it; I can't tell you I was much a part of it. On the edge of it, probably. And then, after about eleven months, meeting everybody was great, but I missed the Midwest. I missed the stability of it, probably. I couldn't find a job out there. I tried desperately. By that time, I had a master's degree. I ended up in a tomato canning factory for about a day and a half, and then I worked part time at a warehouse record store because the master's degree was too much out there. Everybody was moving out there, trying to find work. Then I met some people that were very different. I decided I'd come back home where things were a little more stable, and I kind of could get a job for sure. I came back and taught again, only this time I ran a school for truants.

DePue: Were you working for the Springfield School District?

Cellini: I was. They hired me as a teacher within a truant school, and then eventually I was the director.

DePue: Is this a separate school from the other junior high and high schools in town?

Cellini: Only physically. It was the kids that nobody really wanted. They couldn't keep them in school for various reasons. We were at the Boys' Club for a couple years; we were in an outbuilding at one of the middle schools; we were at Lawrence Adult [Learning Center]. I did that for five years.

DePue: When you came back, after this obviously a fairly traumatic experience—your father passing away, going out to California and experiencing lots of new things—did you come back and want that job, or was that the job that was available?

Cellini: I came back and fell into a summer school job. They had summer school; it was at Lanphier High School. I seemed to, throughout my career, gravitate to those students who were a little different, who didn't do well in the mainstream. So, in my years at Springfield High School, beginning, I usually got the lower-track classes, the classes where there were behavior problem kids, or kids that were always trouble.

DePue: This is where growing up with familiarity to the Levee District of Springfield kind of...

Cellini: Yeah, maybe. I could accept them. I knew that they probably didn't have the same advantages I had growing up or whatever. So I'd gravitate toward that. And then there were a couple teachers at Lanphier, when I was there at summer school, who were involved in the creation of this truant school. One of the teachers said to me, "You'd be perfect." She said, "You love those kids." She said, "Why don't you just apply?" She said, "They're going to open it up." So that's how I got the truant job. So, from California [to] summer school [to] truant job.

DePue: Did you like that job?

Cellini: Loved it. Best job I ever had in my life, next to Jim Edgar.

DePue: (laughs) Why?

Cellini: I did; I loved it. Why?… Oh, because you can make a difference, because you could actually help somebody. I'd go pick up kids at home because their mothers would still be sleeping. Education wasn't a priority in the home, and they never learned that it would be a good place for them to get some skills.

DePue: Any particular stories or anecdotes that you have, where you can identify that, yeah, that really did make a difference in that kid's life? Sorry to put you on the spot here.

Cellini: (pause) Oddly enough, none jump to mind, other than they still come back. I'll be sitting upstairs, here in this job, and…

DePue: It is thirty, thirty-five years removed from all of that too.

Cellini: Yeah. I'll see them on the street. Many of them went to prison, a lot of them. All I can say is we probably made them feel like they had a family for a while.

DePue: I know that in 1978 you experienced another change in your life. I think it's that year you started working at…Was it the Department of Children and Family Services?

Cellini: Yes, it was.

DePue: Why that move?

Cellini: I had been running the school, running it, for a couple years, and I got a little bit more involved in politics. I had always been a precinct committeeman, after I had gotten married. My brother said to me one day, he said, "You know," he said, "if you can get people out to vote," he said, "that would be a good thing." He said, "You mind being a precinct committeeman?" So it started when I got married. I lived on North Seventh. Interesting story there.

I had never been a precinct committeeman before. I can't think of the Democrat committeeman's name; he turned out the vote. He was very good; he was very good, knew everybody. But I remember going to the polls, and he would be there: "Hi, Mrs. Jones, glad you could come." And he'd have something in his trunk for them. "How are you? Here you go. Nice to see you. Give this to your son." It was quite an education for me, that first time as a precinct committeeman. There was nothing bad about it. He was just... He enjoyed everybody, and he turned out the vote. I got slaughtered. The

Republicans, what, we had probably my vote and my husband's vote at the time.

DePue: You described yourself as rather apolitical, up to that point. Obviously Bill is quite a bit older; he's involved with the Republican Administration for those four years and obviously stayed involved afterwards. Was that the extent of the reason why he asked you, just because you were family?

Cellini: Yeah, probably, probably because he was getting active locally. He was active locally, and probably the party structure and the precinct committeemen structure was something he was involved in and probably saw that I lived in an area where there wasn't a Republican committeeman.

DePue: How would you describe yourself in terms of a political philosophy at that time?

Cellini: At that time…probably somewhere where I am today, which is a very moderate Republican, fiscally conservative, but very moderate socially, if not a little bit on the liberal side socially. I don't think I'm any different now than I was then.

DePue: You didn't see any conflict with your own personal views and working for the Republican Party at that time, then?

Cellini: No, huh-uh, but I think the Republican Party at that time was pretty moderate.

DePue: What caused your move to the Department of Children and Family Services?

Cellini: Oh, I was divorced at that time, and I think that the truant school was probably dissolving or changing. My brother was in politics, and there were some opportunities available at Children and Family Services, which kind of was a natural flow from being in education. I was only there for a year, as I recall.

DePue: What did you do there?

Cellini: I ended up doing a lot of the community liaison work in Chicago for a lot of the Hispanic communities, but I wasn't there long enough to make much of a difference because from there, I went over to Governor Thompson's office.

DePue: That would be 1979, 1980?

Cellini: Again, I'm going to reiterate this, I haven't a clue.

DePue: Somewhere in that timeframe, I would think.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: How did you end up over in Governor Thompson's office?

Cellini: Bob Kjellander was the… Was he the personnel director? He was either personnel director or on the campaign at the time; I don't remember.

I think it was a combination of things. I think it was kind of the year of the woman, where they wanted to sort of not have all these guys, somewhere where there's always guys, kind of year of the woman.[3] I was a little more active politically. At least I understood now how to work a precinct, not that I opened my trunk. I would at least mail out letters and say, "The election's here," and I'd go door-to-door, and I'd work a precinct, that's all. I'd say hello to people. I'm still a precinct committeeman.

I think it was a combination of things. I was ready for a change. I had the ability to make that change. The job was political, and to me, politics always equates to people, and I'm much more oriented to people. So, Bob Kjellander knew my family; he knew my brother, and they asked me if I wanted to consider coming over and doing the downstate personnel work.

DePue: What did you say Kjellander's position in the Thompson Administration was?

Cellini: I want to say it was director of personnel. I think it was director of personnel at the time.

DePue: And how...

3 The Year of the Woman was a popular label attached to 1992, after the election of a number of female Senators in the United States. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Year_of_the_Woman)

Cellini: He had either been on the campaign, and then he was director of personnel, or he might have... He was on and off campaigns a lot.

DePue: Director of personnel, at that time, are we talking about the person who would do the politically-oriented hiring?

Cellini: Yes, yes, yes.

DePue: The patronage guy?

Cellini: The patronage man.

DePue: Did he have a role in local politics as well?

Cellini: I don't think Bob did. I think...

DePue: I know later on he became the Republican Party chairman, correct?

Cellini: No.

DePue: I'm sorry.

Cellini: He was a national committeeman. I don't know his history really; I'm sorry. You ask Jim Edgar; he can tell you all of that. He can tell you the year and everything, because Jim Edgar at the time was also a staff person, like I was, upstairs. But he was in the Legislative Office, and I was in the Personnel Office. And that's how I met him, was we were staff people.

DePue: Tell me about that first time you had an opportunity to meet Edgar.

Cellini: I can't remember if he was the head of legislation or a staff person and somebody else was the head of it when I started; I don't know. But we had occasion to go…

Obviously, if he was the legislative liaison, the legislators would be coming to him saying, "Can you help me? I've got some constituents in my district, and I've got some issues." Of course, when it came down to the job part, "I've got so-and-so, and he's looking for a job. Is there anybody...?" He would talk to me about it, or he would talk to somebody else about it because I was mainly the county chairmen liaison. There was another person in the office that would more or less deal with the legislative office. In other words, I would be dealing with the party structure downstate, the county chairmen of Macon County, Morgan County, all the counties downstate.

DePue: I thought you had also mentioned that you were up in the Chicago area, working with Hispanic communities.

Cellini: That was only at DCFS.

DePue: I'm sorry.

Cellini: I had nothing to do with Chicago after I left DCFS and came to Jim Thompson's office.

DePue: What was your initial impression of Edgar as a person, as a character?

Cellini: I would say, obviously off the top, very handsome, a nice-looking man, very well-dressed, very meticulous, serious. Serious is a word that I would describe him as. And in a couple of the conversations that we would have—because he would not have been working with me; he would have been working with my counterpart—you could tell he was a little bit uneasy about the notion of patronage, maybe at the time, a little bit.

I can remember saying to him, "I don't know that there's anything more important than being able to help somebody, whether it's somebody out of work or your son, your daughter, somebody that's had a misfortune." We sort of had those conversations, not a lot of them, but… I probably gave him a different perspective, maybe, than his thought about it.

DePue: How about Jim Thompson? Did you have many opportunities to meet with him and...

Cellini: None, none. I worked for Jayne Thompson on one of the campaigns, but Jim Thompson, no; I was not at that level.

DePue: Flesh out a little bit more, if you could, the nature of your job and what you did.

Cellini: My role… When we started this, I drew this picture, and I always say this is the politician and...

DePue: When you started to sketch that out—I need to describe this on the tape here—it almost looked like a snowman without a head, but then there's all these slashes through it. If you don't mind, we'll include this in with the interview.

Cellini: That's fine, because I think it describes the process better than anything, at least in my mind. When somebody gets elected to office, there is no way in any given day they can be responsive to every need of every citizen of this state, let alone this country—I think about a president and that boggles my mind—because I knew the extent to which you tried. Jim Edgar tried to be responsive to most everything. He had a keen sense of wanting to be a very good governor. He wanted to govern.

The best way for me to try to describe what I did was that I only represented a very small piece in all these little tunnels, if you will, or pieces of this politician, of trying to get a segment's voice to him. My segment was simply the party structure's leaders, downstate. Well, that was Thompson, downstate. When I got to Edgar…

DePue: Yeah, we'll talk more about that later.

Cellini: Here, I was hired to be that liaison, to hear what they had to say, what their concerns were, what the issues for the party were from their area. That was

my role, okay? Al Grosboll was there because he was more a thinker; he was an environmentalist; he had a programmatic interest.[4]

Edgar was so good at putting people in slots where they would do the maximum job, listen the most, and then **he** would listen to each of his people, and he would weigh it out, and he would make his decisions. That was how he managed. Sometimes we'd get pitted against each other, just because he had to come to a right decision for himself.

So, you have Al Grosboll; you have me; you have Mike Lawrence, the press guy; you had Joan Walters, the Chief of Staff; you had—I can't even think of all the people that we had—George Fleischli, the head of Physical Services.[5, 6, 7] [That] sounds like a job that you would think Edgar wouldn't have cared about, but George was meticulous about surroundings. Edgar was meticulous about everything. The new library was under Jim Edgar, and George was the head of Physical Services.

What we would all be doing is we would all be almost a funnel to hear what the drumbeat was, and then he would call on us to say, "What's the drumbeat?" I had that role of the drumbeat of the downstate county chairmen of the party, if you will.

DePue: I would think there are two dimensions to the kind of inputs that you're getting from the county chairmen. One would be in terms of programs and initiatives and legislation that's currently...

Cellini: Of course, yes.

DePue: Another one is the classic definition of what the county chairmen are interested in...

4 Allen Grosboll enjoyed a successful career in Illinois politics, starting in 1973 as an intern with the Illinois House Republicans. After becoming Deputy Secretary of State in 1984, he followed Jim Edgar when he was elected governor in 1990, working as an executive assistant, monitoring several government agencies, and playing a key role in conservation issues and the Flood of 1993. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/OralHistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/GrosbollAllen.aspx)

5 Mike Lawrence began his journalistic career in the mid-1960s, spending much of it with the *Quad City Times-Democrat,* while reporting on Illinois's political scene. In 1987 Lawrence went to work as Press Secretary for Secretary of State Jim Edgar and followed Edgar when he became Governor in 1991. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/OralHistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/LawrenceMike.aspx)

6 In 1981, Joan Walters was selected by then Secretary of State Jim Edgar to be his Chief of Staff, serving in this capacity until 1986. In 1991 she became Governor Edgar's Budget Director at a time when the state struggled to fill a $1 billion deficit. After succeeding in that, she later became the Director of Public Aid. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/oralhistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/WaltersJoan.aspx)

7 George Fleischli, who began working in Illinois state government with the Department of Conservation, served for the Secretary of State Jim Edgar as his Director of Physical Services and followed Governor Edgar into his gubernatorial administration as an executive assistant and overseeing several key state departments and boards. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/OralHistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/FleischliGeorge.aspx)

Cellini: Right, jobs.

DePue: … That's placing people into positions, getting people jobs.

Cellini: And also too, it's more than that. There's things like, "Hey, Janis, we don't have much going on down here. We just had a new restaurant. Is there any way you can tell me who to call that we could put a sign that says we have a restaurant, so that people would pull off the highway and come to our town?" There's all kinds of things like that, things you don't think about.

Most people think, Oh, a county chairman, he's going to call up; he's going to want a job. That's really a large part of it, because he had people that he wanted to put in place, as the party leader, but it's more than that. They cared about the philosophy; they cared about the seat belt law. That was the big deal when Edgar was secretary of state.

DePue: I suspect you heard from people who cared about the drunk driving initiatives.

Cellini: More than I wanted to, because that whole drunk driving issue was a whole other person that was trying to pull that together for him. So, whenever we had issues that... If that was an issue that I wasn't much familiar with, I would try to set up the county chairman with the person that was heading the issue that they were concerned about.

He was great about that. He had an uncanny knack in my opinion—this isn't just my opinion—for not being what I would call an extrovert or a people person, he had an uncanny knack of putting the right person in the right job and then letting us all war it out if that's what it would be, or talk about it. Then he would call us all together; he would listen to us, and he would make a decision based on that. He sort of… He was unusual in that regard, I think.

DePue: We're just a little bit ahead of the narrative, but what you've been talking about here is the heart of what we wanted to get to in the first place. This is all very important information you've been talking about. But we probably need to go back and find out how Edgar, first of all, became the secretary of state, that that was an appointment that Thompson made; he didn't actually run for the position. But it wasn't too much longer—I think around 1982—that Edgar asked you to be, what, for his tenure as secretary of state?

Cellini: Personnel director.

DePue: And that personnel director job is what you've been describing for the last five minutes, then?

Cellini: Yeah. Well, that and what I did in the Governor's Office too. But in the Governor's Office, I wasn't at a position that I went directly to the politician. I went to my boss, who went to the politician. So I had the downstate county chairmen voices and what they wanted. Then I would relay that to my boss; it

was first Bob Kjellander, then Greg Baise. Greg Baise took Bob Kjellander's spot while I was there.[8]

And then, when I went with Jim Edgar, I was—I obviously knew him a lot better—and then I was given the whole state. So I was one of the people that would say, "Here's what's going on."

DePue: Now, is that in the secretary of state position? Is that '82 and on, that you were working the whole state and went directly to Edgar?

Cellini: Yes. Sometimes you didn't go directly to Edgar. Sometimes you'd get a phone call, and somebody would say, he wants to know about something. But pretty much, in the secretary of state's office, there was the ability that he had time to call a meeting, and we'd have big staff meetings. There was actually a little bit more time being secretary of state, to be able to coordinate your efforts a little bit more.

DePue: We probably ought to kind of put a couple other markers down here, as well. The secretary of state in the State of Illinois is different than a lot of other states. It's generally seen as one of the highest profile positions...

Cellini: In Illinois.

DePue: ...in Illinois. Of course, it's a constitutional officer, so he has to run for office. What made the secretary of state's position such a political plum?

Cellini: Probably the fact that it had offices in almost every county of the state. It had driver's license facilities; it had personnel—probably that in and of itself—and again, depending on the issue… The other thing is sheer numbers. I think there were over 4,000 people under the secretary of state. I think the treasurer and the comptroller, at best, had 200 or maybe less. So, you have jobs.

And the secretary of state was over the physical complex. It had its own police department; it was head of Index, where you register to lobby.[9] I think we had… I don't remember how many departments we had, vehicles, driver services, archives; there were quite a few departments. But probably politically, because everybody has to get a driver's license. You have to have a facility close by for people to go do that. They had offices there.

8 Gregory Baise, who started as a volunteer for Jim Thompson in 1976, was just out of college when Thompson was running for governor for the first time. Over the next fourteen years, Baise served in the Thompson Administration in a variety of capacities, first as the governor's travel aid, until 1979, then as his scheduler, and in 1981, as Thompson's personnel director. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/OralHistory/illinoisstatecraft/Thompson/Pages/BaiseGregory.aspx)

9 The Index Department maintains all state agency rules and publishes the Administrative Code and quarterly updates of the Illinois Register, serving as a state clearinghouse and central repository for the daily business of state government. (https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/index/about.html)

DePue: What were the rules at the time you stepped into that position—I think it was around 1982—as they pertained to patronage? What were the laws in place at that time?

Cellini: I don't know if the Secretary of State's Office at the time had Rutan-exempt positions.[10]

DePue: Rutan's going to happen in 1990, so this is a long time before that.

Cellini: Before that.

DePue: The court proceedings would have been working its way through the system for several years before 1990, but it was, I think, June or July of 1990 that the ruling came down from the Supreme Court.

Cellini: Pretty much, I think that, if there was an opening for a job—if we're just talking about jobs—there would be candidates, and you would hear from people and say, "This is a good person." "This isn't a good person." You would hear from county chairmen; you would hear from legislators; you would hear from their preacher; you would hear from somebody in the office that knew the person that was applying. That's where I can get a little boisterous, if you will, a little bit more worked up about the meaning of patronage.

For me, patronage was somebody really coming to bat for somebody. You're going to hire somebody out of the blue for a job? Or are you going to hire somebody that somebody knows, that can give you a little background? They come from a good family; they used to be a teacher, and they don't want to teach anymore, whatever the reasons be.

But the general public, to me, always made a distinction that, for some reason, if a county chairman said this was a good person, versus the patronage, say, internally, the internal office politics: "Here, I know somebody, and they're applying for that job" or a preacher, what difference does it make? It's all somebody coming to bat for somebody, saying, "This is a good person."

DePue: Of course, the whole patronage issue has a rich and long history...

Cellini: Yes, it does.

DePue: ...in American politics in general, starting... After the Civil War, it really got ugly, but it started... [President Andrew] Jackson was all about the spoils

10 Rutan-exempt means that a particular position's duties and level of responsibility have been reviewed and determined to warrant making political support or affiliation permissible considerations in decisions affecting that position. (https://www.illinois.gov/sites/itap/SitePages/RutanExemptEmployees.aspx#:~:text=Rutan%2Dexempt%20means%20that%20a,in%20decisions%20affecting%20that%20position.)

system, the term that was used at that time.[11] A lot of that had been replaced by merit testing.

Cellini: Um-hmm.

DePue: How did that factor into the process that was in place when you were in the secretary of state's office?

Cellini: There was always merit testing when I was in patronage. There was always merit testing, thank God, because that was a marker for, could somebody do the job or not? You wanted that. Even on the higher-level jobs, you wanted to see a resume with some (laughs) substantial background to do the job. So merit testing, to patronage people, wasn't a bad thing. At least to me, it was like, "Okay, you got to pass the test to get a job. That's a good start. Let's do it." It was helpful. You didn't want to put a round peg in a square hole. You wouldn't want to give somebody a job that couldn't do the job. They had to have a certain amount of knowledge.

I think maybe in the old days, the round pegs in the square holes probably gave it a bad name. A lot of times people would come off of a campaign even, whether it's a Democrat or a Republican, and people that they had worked with on the campaign for twelve months prior, they would **know** that person's ability. If you're working with somebody side-by-side for twelve months, you're going to know, is this a good worker or a bad worker?

Sometimes even the people on the campaigns would get jobs because people would know their work ability. That's never made clear. I think all of us, if we were in a position to hire, would want to hire somebody (a) who was qualified and (b) who had some people saying good things about them. So when a county chairman said good things, somehow that was a bad thing in some people's eyes.

DePue: Was it you or your office that was actually making the final decisions about hiring? If you had a licensing agency, let's say, in Coles County or someplace like that, would you be making that call or that…?

Cellini: It depended on the status of the job. If it was a lower-level job, we had a Department of Personnel that would call a personnel list, and there would be X amount of people that would be on it with A's. And I could certainly say, "Hey, I understand this guy's a good person. We've had several calls on his behalf." Sometimes that would be a chosen one; sometimes it wouldn't, because you got a Department of Personnel, and they're going to be interviewing everybody. I'm not going to be interviewing everybody. Maybe they saw somebody that would do better.

11 The spoils system was instituted by Democratic President Andrew Jackson. "To the victor goes the spoils" meant that every government job belonged to the party in power. (https://sites.google.com/site/jacksonianera/Home/spoils-system)

DePue: What was the feedback you got from the Department of Personnel folks? Did they resent that you were calling?

Cellini: Sometimes. I think sometimes they wanted to be left to their own choices, and that's fine. A lot of times they got their own choices.

DePue: Why do you think the public—and you've kind of alluded to this quite a bit already—but why do you think the public had such a sour view towards patronage? Again, just to put another marker down, that's the nature of Chicago politics. Chicago machine politics was all about patronage, and of course it was flourishing in the '50s and '60s and into the '70s.

Cellini: Um-hmm. Your question again is…?

DePue: Why did the public have such a negative view towards patronage?

Cellini: (pause) I think that the public, depending on what party you were in… The general public, not the active politicians or the active political people? Maybe because always what's reported is maybe the abuse of patronage. Maybe they saw that so-and-so's cousin got a job or so-and-so's brother or a relative, and that's the ones that would always get reported.

Out of 4,000 jobs in the Secretary of State's Office, if a reporter were going to come, I would imagine he would pick out a legislator's brother or a local politician's sister. I don't guess that he would say, "Oh, but that's only twelve out of the last 200 they hired." They wouldn't report on the guy who got a test grade of an A and got hired. So a lot of it had to do with reporting. Maybe somebody had bad experience with patronage, maybe somebody who didn't get a job and somebody that knew somebody got it. I don't know. I don't know.

DePue: How about the news media?

Cellini: Well, it's different today than it was then. I don't know. I think you'd have to have studies on how the news media is now electing our politicians. To quote an old hippie from the '60s, Timothy Leary used to say, "Beware of your television; they're programming you."[12] Well, aren't they? They truly are. Most people, after working hard during the day, they want to come home and be fed...not most people; that's very raw. It's easier to be fed information than to seek out the truth. Timothy Leary, God bless his soul, was right, beware of your television.

That's a story I can… I was working for Edgar; it must have been the early '90s—I don't know when Leary died—but I remember I saw a little thing in some funky, far-out newspaper in Chicago where Timothy Leary was going to be speaking at the downtown Hilton Hotel. I was desperate to go. I

12 Timothy Francis Leary (October 22, 1920 – May 31, 1996) was an American psychologist and writer known for his strong advocacy of psychedelic drugs. Evaluations of Leary are polarized, ranging from bold oracle to publicity hound. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy_Leary)

really wanted to go. I had kind of followed him in the early '70s because he was this kind of...this character who got...I don't know if you know much about him.

DePue: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Cellini: I'm not going to go through it all. But the bottom line is I wanted to see him.

DePue: He had quite the reputation and dealt with drugs and freely admitting experimenting with drugs was a good thing at the time.

Cellini: Yes, I guess. But I was always fascinated with the man because I really believed in his concept that we were being programmed. I thought that was really the case; I really did.

When I saw that he was going to give this talk—I was working for the governor at the time—I thought to myself, Oh my God, I can't just show up at a Timothy Leary talk. But then again, I thought, Well, I'll just go case it out a little bit. If it's just sort of nondescript… Well, I went in there, and I did… It was weird because there was like twelve people in the room, in this huge room. I just kind of sat and listened because I wanted to know where he had gotten to because the whole media thing does fascinate me and how it does program us and how it elects our politicians—but that's something different.

So I go to this thing, and at the end of the whole hour and a half, he says, "I leave you with just this; beware of your television." He said, "They are subtly programming you, not just on political issues, on the foods you eat, on the medicines you take." He goes through the whole litany of everything. Nobody knew I went, so… Not that Governor Edgar would ever have told me not to, because he always kind of let me explore what I...

DePue: But I suspect that Timothy Leary wasn't your classic definition of a moderate Republican.

Cellini: No, no, no, no, no. No, he was not.

DePue: He would have fit someplace else (laughs) on the political spectrum, perhaps.

Cellini: I don't know. I saw him a couple of times… I saw him a couple of times—maybe I was in California—and he was bright. He was bright. That's another story, but…

DePue: We started on this because I asked you a question about the news media and their perception of patronage. Let me ask you it this way, what was your relationship with the news media?

Cellini: Oh, I never talked to the news media, ever.

DePue: Did you have explicit instructions not to?

Cellini: No, I did not. I had no instructions not to; I always chose not to. There was no reason for me to. Mike Lawrence, if I had an issue in the Governor's Office,

Mike was a great, **great** resource and sounding board. I have to believe...in fact, I think he wrote an article, pro-patronage, about a year and a half ago.

DePue: Mike Lawrence.

Cellini: Uh-huh. And I think he kind of changed his mind about it, after being in the capitol. I don't know that. You might look up the article.[13] But I think he really decided that patronage wasn't a bad thing.

DePue: Do you recall—this is really kind of an unfair question—his own evolution in that thought process.

Cellini: His own, being Mike Lawrence's?

DePue: Yeah.

Cellini: No, I don't. I don't.

DePue: You're talking about patronage in a very general sense, and that's great. What I would like to do is, at least in a chronological sense—because I'm kind of chronologically oriented—get to the point where he is the governor, Edgar is the governor as well. You're there with him for eight years, during the time he's secretary of state. Do you recall the election campaign and what role you played in the 1990 election campaign?

Cellini: I didn't. I played very little. I strictly did my job. On my off time, I would help fund raise a little bit, but I was not part of the campaign. I was in the office, and I was doing the job of the office. I was never on a campaign.

DePue: Was that part of Edgar's design, that you wouldn't be?

Cellini: Probably, probably. I think it probably was. I think that was where the blend of where does politics begin and good government… Where does it stop, and where does it begin? I think it was probably, maybe in his mind, a purposeful thing.

DePue: I'm asking you to read his mind, and I can ask him these questions as well, and I probably will. Did he keep you out of it because of the potential for political damage if stories get out about you being involved, and you're the patronage chief, et cetera or just because it was a matter of, that's what he saw good governance being?

Cellini: I think that that's probably what he saw good governance being. I was always pretty conscious of my name. I always thought… I didn't ever want... My goal was...as was all of us... That was the good thing about the people he chose; our goal was always to make him the best we could. That was what really pulled us together. And he had the ability.

13 The Mike Lawrence article referenced by Janis Cellini may be found through the following link: https://thesouthern.com/news/opinion/editorial/lawrence/mike-lawrence-like-it-or-not-patronage-enhances-accountability/article_7a829502-97a3-59a0-9c71-f714e9670cd4.html.

The beauty of it was, we had a good, tight group at secretary of state, so we got to work together for a few years. Then, as it moved to the governor, it expanded, which changed the dynamics, but there was still the basic core of being able to work together, which was really an advantage. I'm getting away from your question, which was…?

DePue: I think you're getting to it. Essentially, why he was structuring your position the way it was, kind of removing you from the political side of it.

Cellini: Well, I was never a campaign person anyhow. I was never a campaign person. I never was one of those people who, "Oh, out of this county comes 12,000 Republican votes, and if we get that one, we're going to win this one." I was never fascinated with that. I just wasn't. I was one time called a zealot by his legal counsel and by a couple other people, I was like a political zealot. In fact, probably in my younger years I was.

DePue: A zealot in what respect?

Cellini: In the respect of patronage. I was representing the party, and that was my role, and that was what I did, and I did it with a lot of energy.

DePue: Did you have a sense that you were a zealot in a cause that there weren't that many followers?

Cellini: No, I didn't. I just knew I was a zealot in a cause that had people who didn't believe the same as I did (both laugh).

DePue: How about Edgar's own personal views, as far as patronage is concerned? I would imagine that the two of you had somewhat philosophical discussions about the role of patronage in the process?

Cellini: I was a zealot, and he was probably much more balanced. How's that for a good answer?

DePue: (laughs) Well, I'd like you to flesh it out, Janis (both laugh).

Cellini: I knew you would (laughs). I may have relayed this story to you. In the Governor's Office, there's like 65,000 jobs under, supposedly, the governor's purview. Of that, 4,000 or so were term appointments or exempt from the code—you could appoint them politically—as were the board and commission appointments, which is a whole other thing we can get on.

DePue: Oh, boy, yeah.

Cellini: But I digress. I can recall a conversation with him where a term appointment would be coming up, and this is my role now. Remember, I'm listening to the party chairmen, the party structure chairmen, okay? And maybe down in, say, Mt. Vernon or maybe in Springfield or maybe in Peoria, there was a very good political job available. There would be a very good political job available. In other words, in that county, they would… Of course, everybody would know about it because it would be a good job.

For two or three years prior to the term appointment being up, they'd be saying, "In 1996, this job's going to be open, and we want Jim Edgar to consider this person." Most of the time they would know what was in their counties. The smaller the county, the more they would know what was going on. When the term appointment came due, it was my role to sort of say, "Okay, Jane Smith has been in there for the last twelve years, and her term appointment's up." She's obviously been renewed a couple of times.

So, when he [Governor Edgar] first won, I would have to say, "Okay, we've got this term appointment that's up, and you've got some people that want the present person to be replaced." Then I would have to say, "And I'm being told that they [the proposed candidate] didn't even vote; they've never voted. It's not even a person that voted. They want a good Republican in that job because you're a Republican; you're the leader of the party, and that's what they expect."

I can remember him calmly looking at me and saying, "Does this person do a good job?" I would have to say yes or no. If it was yes, I'd say, "Yes, my understanding is they do an excellent job." And he said, "Then they make me look good; don't they?" And I'd say, "Yes, but we've still got to consider this other person." And he'd say, "There will be enough." Maybe there will be other things where that person could be considered. So I'm the zealot; he's the balancer. You understand? And he was always like that.

DePue: How about positions where you were hearing from the county chairmen or local politicians, but you heard from other locations that the person they were trying to advance wasn't really up to the job?

Cellini: Always try to weigh out the best thing, because you wanted… We all wanted our boss to look great, and we know that it took the best person to do the job. You'd have to weigh it out.

A lot of times I'd have to say, "No, can't do it," which was not… It was easy and hard. It was easy on one level because I knew it was the right thing. On the other level it was hard because, say you've got a county where there's, what, two jobs, and they waited twenty years to get the one job, and the time was up, and (DePue laughs) we had to say, "No." It was tough.

DePue: Right about the same time that the governor's running for election to be the governor, the secretary of state's running for the governorship, one of the things we've already talked about is the Rutan decision comes down from the U.S. Supreme Court. Of course, Mary Lee Leahy was the lawyer.[14] She's here in town still.

Cellini: Yes.

14 Mary Lee Leahy, the Springfield attorney who triggered a landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Illinois political patronage more than two decades earlier, died in December of 2012. She was 72. (https://www.rrstar.com/article/20121213/NEWS/312139852)

DePue: She had worked that thing all the way through the various courts. But the lawsuit, the original lawsuit, was all about a couple of people who were applying for positions in Governor Thompson's Administration—one of them was a woman by the name of Rutan—against the Republican Party of Illinois. The lawsuit stated that it was Thompson's policy, fairly early in his administration, to say that there was a hiring freeze, and the Governor's Office was going to approve all of the positions that are up to be filled. That's where the allegations came in, as saying this is unfair; it's prejudicing people who are not Republicans, against the hiring process.

Anyway, it works through. In 1990 the decision comes down; the Supreme Court rules in favor of Rutan. So the next step is to decide what these exempt positions are, which you'd been talking about. Were you involved in that process at all?

Cellini: No, I was not. I was not at the level where I would have been involved in that. In that time, I was in Thompson's office, and I was still down... I was working for the people that would have been involved in it.

DePue: But you're doing that kind of work...

Cellini: Right.

DePue: …the same kind of work that the lawsuit addresses. What was your personal view about the Rutan case?

Cellini: There were times when I think… There were times, not many in my life because you remember I'm a patronage zealot, that… For example, the Cynthia Rutan... I think she wanted a promotion. Isn't that true?

DePue: That's one of the things. She wanted a promotion.

Cellini: I think she wanted a promotion. Well, she was already in the system; she probably knew the job. Why not let her have it? That would have been my view on it, okay?

But be that as it may, I believe that patronage offers more effective government and more effective, good government, because I believe now that with all of the rules and regs and hoops that you have to go through to hire and to fire, that it's just not as effective. I think you get a more responsive government with patronage. I will carry that to my grave. And I mean good patronage. I'm not talking about bad patronage.

It doesn't mean everybody you hire has to have been a precinct captain. But, if you look at today, President Obama and the czars—I think I said this to you privately—what Rutan did was give us the top positions and left everything, the higher-level management positions and the mid-level, to be covered by Rutan. In other words, they have no political influence whatsoever.

How does a politician—and I believe Mike Lawrence's article will address this—how does a politician deliver on what he says he wants and what the change he's going to make, if he's not able to change the very fabric, the very core, the very core of the bureaucracy that is? What's going to make that different? Putting a czar in place isn't going to make Obama's world greener; it just isn't, because, in fact, what happens is the bureaucrats under that czar, who have been there for twenty years, are going to run the whole show anyhow; they're there. We were all coded. They're were all there under civil service; we're all there.

If you look up Mike Lawrence's article, I believe he will even agree with that. I come from a little bit more, I don't know, raw place. I think that, if you're going to run for office and you win, I think you ought to be able to bring people on board that think like you, that feel like you, that believe in the things you believe in.

DePue: Part of the bad reputation—at least in the Chicago area—for patronage was because once a person was hired to be part of that patronage army, there were all kinds of expectations: 1) that you had to contribute to the party coffers, 2) that you had to go out on election day and make sure that the voters turned out and that they voted for the right people. That was all part of the picture of how patronage worked in the classical sense in Chicago.

Cellini: And to some extent, it's probably still true. You want your people in an organization to follow, to do whatever your goal is. If you're going to get elected as a Republican, you want the Republicans to win, so you've got to do a certain amount of door-to-door work; you just have to.

Right now, presently, what, I'm passing out, what, thirty petitions in my precinct? There are three or four candidates for governor next time and for the local parties. There's a lot of work that has to be done. Now, if it's expected of me, I don't know; I do it because I choose to. You're saying the bad news comes when somebody's forcing you to do it.

DePue: That's where a lot of the allegations and a lot of the trouble that eventually led to the Shakman Decrees, up in Chicago, because people were forced to contribute, and they were forced to work.[15]

Cellini: Well, hey, here's something new maybe we could think about. If you don't like to do that, go get a job outside of government. I don't know. I don't think you should force anybody to do something. But I think that, yes, that is an allegation, and maybe some of that was true, but I still say that, if you're an

15 The Shakman decrees were a series of federal court orders regarding government employment in Chicago, which were issued in 1972, 1979 and 1983, in response to a lawsuit filed by civic reformer Michael Shakman. The decrees barred the practice of political patronage, under which government jobs are given to supporters of a politician or party, and government employees may be fired for not supporting a favored candidate or party. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakman_Decrees)

elected official, you want people that work for you who believe in the same things you believe in.

I don't think that's any different than Obama doing what he's doing right now. You try to put people in place that sort of think like you do, and you want to try to make a difference.

DePue: These practices we're talking about, it should also be said, are as old as human history (laughs).

Cellini: I told you the other day, I went over to...when they first redid, restored the Old State Capitol down here. One of the volunteers at the time, I guess, knew who I was. I wanted to just see what was going on. I was always in the office, and I always worked, but I wanted to come over and see the Old State Capitol restored. And one of the volunteers said, "You might be interested in this letter." She showed me this letter to Abraham Lincoln, and it was from somebody out in, I don't know, Petersburg or something, wanting to know if he could help her son get a job. It was like the millions of letters that we would see every day. So yes, it has been going on.

DePue: The one difference was, when Lincoln became President of the United States, the Republican Party was brand new; it had all these old Whigs and Democrats and (laughs) every different kind of party in the world that was under this kind of very broad and poorly defined umbrella.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: That made it more challenging for him to play the role as the good patronage chief, I would think.

Cellini: Also too, just know this. I think people think, Oh, if you're the head of patronage, all you're going to hire is Republicans. That's not really the case. You really do try to find the best person for the job, and guess what, sometimes they're not going to be Republicans. I believe in patronage, so I'm...

Somebody's going to read this; they're going to say, "Oh, she hired Democrats." You know what? Yes, sometimes, yes, we did; we certainly did. Sometimes we hired people that never voted, which always got to me, but…

DePue: And how did you know they didn't vote?

Cellini: People's voting records, you can look at if you want to. But you would mainly know—I never had time—you would mainly know because usually people would know. If you got a guy from somebody, he's going to say, "Why are you going to hire that guy?" They would always have their guy to hire. "Why are you going to hire that guy? He never even votes."

DePue: Let's go back to the Rutan positions. You said roughly 4,000 exempt positions in state government when you came into office, when Edgar came into office?

Cellini: Yes, about 4,000, and that was the other thing, here. It was kind of backwards what Rutan did, because most of the time, if you heard from a local county chairmen who was down there trying to carry the message for the party, trying to do the best they could—Democrats or Republicans—they didn't have somebody they wanted to make the director of an organization. They wanted, "Give me the local driver's services rep job when you're secretary of state," or "Can I get the highway maintainer [position]?" What Rutan did was basically flip that around, where the only jobs they could ask for were the higher jobs, the upper-level jobs.

DePue: If Janis Cellini was given the authority to decide what kind of jobs are exempt and what kind of jobs shouldn't be exempt, how would you define it? Where would you draw the line?

Cellini: Health, safety, emergency management, that's the few off the top of my head that I probably… I would say to you, probably those kinds of things could be looked at a little better. (distracting microphone noises)

DePue: (addressing microphone issue) That's fine.

Cellini: All right.

DePue: Next one.

Cellini: They could be removed; they could be not so patronage, not that you couldn't give a patronage referral.

DePue: So positions like in the Department of Corrections, your average… I can't even remember the name of the position.

Cellini: Correctional officer.

DePue: Corrections officer or in the police force or those kinds of positions.

Cellini: But again, know this; all of those now have merit testing. You're going to have to go for people that are qualified. I think Thompson said, "If I've got three people or two people that are qualified, and they both have A's, I think I'm going to go for the Republican." That was a statement that Jim Thompson made. Jim Edgar never made that statement. I don't think I remember him saying that, but…

DePue: Do you recall, when you were in the position as the… What was the official title for Governor Edgar? Director of Personnel and…?

Cellini: And labor relations.

DePue: Labor relations, which is essentially what we've been talking about this whole time, the patronage chief for Edgar's office. Is that a fair way of saying it?

Cellini: Yes. We don't say, "patronage" anymore. We say, "director of personnel for the governor." Yes, that's a fair way of saying it.

DePue: Do you recall hearing any feedback about what was going on at the Secretary of State's Office, your old bailiwick, and how the rules were being used there, versus how you and Edgar were expected to apply the rules?

Cellini: When you look back on it, what happened there was this. There was never a strong relationship between George Ryan and Jim Edgar. So, when we won, basically there was no communication, so I don't know what they did or how they did it. Basically, I probably wasn't thought well of, not by George Ryan, but by some of the people that worked for him. Looking back on it, it was probably a blessing, considering all that happened. But no, I don't know what they did. I don't know how they did it or anything.

DePue: The position that you had, you're responding to the county chairmen, but were Governor Edgar or other people in the administration also giving you some advice. "We would like to have some mixture of minorities and women and other people into those power positions?"

Cellini: We would always do that. Governor Edgar allowed us to have a little—we started at the secretary of state's office—he allowed us, as often as we could, to hire, for lack of a better word, handicapped people. We had a tremendous program, hiring people that a lot of people would never hire, and it still work, even now in government, because the gentleman who headed it for us is still in an agency where he's able to make a difference.

DePue: Do you remember his name?

Cellini: The young man? His name was David Dailey.[16]

DePue: But not any relationship to the other Daleys?

Cellini: No, different spelling, I think. David had cerebral palsy and was a strong advocate for people whose mind was good, but their bodies weren't. He knew the disabilities rules backwards and forwards. He was really an advocate, and Edgar was very proud of that. In fact, I remember he was so proud, after he got out of office, he said he remembers that that's one of the best things he thinks he ever did.

If you ever see the guy on the wheelchair that pushes his wheelchair with his mouth, that was our hire. It really stepped out. He really stepped out on that, and it's a great thing. It's a great thing.

DePue: I've worked in state agencies myself, and at least I've heard and am aware that there are some positions that, within the institutions, are kind of regarded as, "Okay, that's one of those patronage spots." And once the person gets

16 David Dailey (1955-2015) was the Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator for the Illinois Department of Transportation, Bureau of Civil Rights. He was a founder of IDOT's Student Professionals with Disabilities (SPWD) program, which provides an environment for young people with disabilities to be able to experience real work settings. (https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sj-r/obituary.aspx?n=david-brent-dailey&pid=176425453&fhid=7772)

there, they really don't do anything; it's just kind of a reward. How would you respond to that allegation?

Cellini: I would respond to that this way, because you asked me, what did I do at Children and Family Services. This is a great way to answer that. I was hired in a job at Children and Family Services because I was **qualified**, had the grade. But because I came in, in their view, politically, I was given an office with another woman, and for the first six months sat with nothing to do, even though I had a master's degree; I had ten years of educational experience with children, ran a truant program.

I would say to you, is it one of those jobs that patronage gets, or is it one of those jobs that somebody who views patronage in a bad light refuses to give somebody who came that way, to give them any kind of job to do? Both of those arguments are valid. I'm not going to say that that probably doesn't exist, what you described. But having been on the other end of that… I was young. I wanted to work. They could have kept me there all night, but they didn't. And I was at such a low level that I don't think anybody much cared.

DePue: Your assumption was that the management assumed you were damaged goods from the first place, and they wanted nothing to do with you?

Cellini: I think so. I think so. Not everybody there, but I think they hesitated, "What are we going to give her to do?" Can we take a short break?

DePue: We sure can.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Shall we get started again?

Cellini: Yep, let's do it.

DePue: We took a very brief break. I guess now I should decide what question I want to ask you next (laughs), Janis.

Cellini: All right, go for it.

DePue: How did the job, your position under Edgar, change when he went from secretary of state to being governor?

Cellini: Well… I always say it was like going from kindergarten to graduate school. It was that much of a difference, for me personally. I wasn't a product of the legislative process or the budget process; I was always in personnel. So, for me it was a big change, and it changed drastically in the way that...people's perception of a Patronage Office.

People perceive that the patronage person and the Patronage Office was in total control. I would say to you that the numbers were so huge, the choices were so many, the fingers in the pie of any hire was so uncontrolled, that there was very little power; there was very little control. There was

probably more hiring done (laughs) outside of patronage than in patronage. I'll give you an example.

In order for an agency to hire somebody—let's say, Corrections wanted to make a hire—they'd have to put paperwork in. That paperwork would have to go from their Department of Personnel to the Department of Central Management Services Personnel to ask for the job to be filled, all right? Then you have all these people—let's say it was for a correctional officer—all these people would have to have tested for a correctional officer. So they have to wait for the list to be called, okay? And then in CMS, where the lists and the Personnel Department was housed, there would be like five people that would have to handle that paperwork before that list could be generated and backed down through the department again and out to the agency, and go through their Department of Personnel.

Now, let's talk about patronage here, okay? First of all, do you think anybody in Corrections would have had anybody they wanted to fill that job? Yes. Do you think anybody in Central Management Services who saw the job would have said, "Oh, I know somebody who could fill that job"? (laughs)

DePue: Pick up the phone and make a call?

Cellini: I don't know about that. Let's just talk about the process for a minute. Do you think that the person who generates the list, who saw that that was an opening, okay, to be posted… There would be all kinds of people who would know that that job was open, okay, and available to be filled. And all those people would have known twenty people, and then ba-da-da-da-da-da-da.

So, for people to have believed that I would have controlled or been able to assign a person to that correctional officer job is a absolute hilarious joke, because first of all, it's Rutan covered, and it wouldn't have been a job in my purview. Only, most people didn't believe that. Most people thought, if you got to the Patronage Office, they can make that happen, okay? And for the most part, we couldn't.

DePue: Most people would think that you're constantly on the phone, calling Department of Corrections or calling over to CMS [Central Management Services] and saying, "Here's the person we want to have for that job. Make sure it happens, or else you're in trouble."

Cellini: Okay. Let me correct you there. Most of the time, it wasn't a demand; most of the time, it was a begging whine (both laugh). [That's] because I would know, first of all, those would be jobs that we can't really input. But there was nothing wrong with my saying, "Here's a man that's qualified; take a look at him if you want," okay? But I would know that everybody… It's human nature to hire the people you know. It's human nature.

I would know that, if a job came open and somebody called me, a county chairman called me, two weeks after the job was open, I would know

he's called too late, really, for me to even help the guy have input or to say to somebody, "Hey, I understand this is a good guy. I don't know if you're going to interview him or not," because you couldn't interview everybody with an A anyhow. There'd be 500 names on the list for some of the jobs that came open. So they'd have to randomly select; you couldn't guarantee that that person would even be randomly selected.

DePue: But I think I did hear you say that it wasn't improper to pick up the phone and make that call.

Cellini: I could if I wanted to, to say, "Look, I don't know this guy; I don't know the first thing about him, but a couple of people have called, whom I do know, and they're saying this, this, and this."

DePue: Did you ever get incidents where you heard feedback from Governor Edgar or the chief of staff or somebody, "Hey, I heard you were putting a lot of pressure on so-and-so to get this person hired?"

Cellini: Probably in my life. I'm sure that happened. I don't recall a specific instance. But probably it was generated because somebody had somebody else they wanted hired. Do you know what I mean? I was never very heavy-handed. Maybe that was part of my problem, because you probably get more with honey than you do with vinegar.

DePue: You say, part of your problem. Let me start with this. How long did you serve as Edgar's director of personnel?

Cellini: His whole tenure.

DePue: So apparently he thought you were doing a pretty good job.

Cellini: I had to get more balanced (laughs). I had to get more balanced.

DePue: That was the feedback you got from him?

Cellini: No, I **had** to get more balance. I knew I was a zealot; I knew that he was more balanced, and I had to... Now, if I truly believed that somebody in one of those Rutan-exempt positions would do a good job, I would battle for it. I would battle for it. I'd go to him and say, "Please consider this person."

DePue: Just by the nature of the way most people's perception of patronage works… And how many counties in Illinois?

Cellini: You're asking me ten years after I've been out of the business, 102?

DePue: One hundred and seven, something like that? You must have been getting calls from a lot of different places and a lot of different people.

Cellini: Well, sure.

DePue: What was your work day like?

Cellini: It was long; it was very long. But so was everybody's that worked for Jim Edgar. He was a workaholic; he was a **work**aholic. And you had to keep up to stay. Believe me when I tell you, if you give me names, whether it was Joan or Al or Nancy DeMarco or the scheduler or...everybody, we all worked long hours, and we all loved it. He was easy to believe in, and he was... You felt proud working for him.

DePue: Was he an easygoing boss to work for?

Cellini: He was difficult. He was very (laughs) precise; he was very detailed; he, wanted your T's crossed, your I's dotted. He'd ask you… You could stay up all night and anticipate a question, and he'd ask you the question that you didn't anticipate because he was that... He wanted to know; he wanted to know; he wanted to know.

DePue: It wasn't a matter of gotcha?

Cellini: No, huh-uh. His style was he wanted to know, and all of us who represented each of these little areas for him, he wanted us to go out and... Much of his life was government, good government, and governing, okay? And that was a whole group of people on the programmatic side. When it came to the actual politics, he had a group that he really depended on. I would say that would have been [Hendren]Carter and all those people that go by the statistics and who's going to win this election and those people.[17] That's not me.

DePue: Which side of the fence would Mike Lawrence be on in that equation?

Cellini: Oh, probably both, probably both. Mike was a confidant of the governor's. Probably both, I think. But I think Carter played a huge role in all of that. He was a stats guy and a very good campaign manager. He was good for Edgar. He handled Edgar very well. But I wasn't one of those people who was involved in those programmatic things.

DePue: But you also described yourself as not one of those people involved with the inner circle of the political advisers.

Cellini: I'm not; I wasn't. I was more… How can I say this? Edgar became governor because he wanted to govern. He really, as a more introverted personality, didn't like the functions. He didn't like having to raise money so much because it would put him out where he'd have to be sociable and talk to people.

I often thought that oftentimes I was the person that he would use to be his social side, if you will. You know, I don't meet a stranger. It doesn't

17 Hendren Carter ran two successful campaigns for Jim Edgar, the first in 1982 for secretary of state and then, in 1990, a tight governor's race against Attorney General Neil Hartigan. Carter also served as the chief of staff for Illinois State Senate Minority Leader James "Pate" Phillip (1987-2003). (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/oralhistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/pages/hendrencarter.aspx#:~:text=Carter%20Hendren%2C%20a%20graduate%20of,against%20Attorney%20General%20Neil%20Hartigan.)

embarrass me to walk into a room where I don't know anybody, and I can get to know people fairly quickly. I think he saw that skill, if you will, as a plus for him, because he didn't like to do that. And maybe you might run that by him. It's my guess that I… I would maybe sometimes go in front of him, as most people who worked for him did, because they knew he didn't really like to, like he wouldn't maybe remember somebody's name, which he should remember, or something like that. I think I was just more or less his people side. I was more than that, but my ability to deal with people probably put me in the job I had.

DePue: You described him as something of a...

Cellini: And it didn't hurt to be Bill Cellini's sister, by the way. I'll have to throw that in; otherwise whoever's listening to this will think, it's all BS (DePue laughs).

DePue: You described him as something of a taskmaster.

Cellini: He was.

DePue: Was he willing to be challenged?

Cellini: Yes. That's how he made his decisions, really.

DePue: So he wanted to hear dissenting voices.

Cellini: Yes, definitely. He wanted to hear everything. He wanted to hear everything. And you'd have to argue. If you felt strongly, any of us, we'd all have to argue. If we felt strongly about something, he'd make you argue and argue and argue and argue.

DePue: Do you think it was...

Cellini: And still make his own mind up.

DePue: Do you think that was a process of sorting things out in his own mind?

Cellini: Yeah. Oh, definitely, definitely. That was his management style. It worked for him.

DePue: We talked about this a little bit, but what was your own workday, in the sense of, were you able to leave it in the office when you walked out the door?

Cellini: No, because I had that social side. Maybe the best thing… I think that anybody who worked for Jim Edgar had to put up with the same thing. I think, if you're perceived as being close to someone who could help you get to a goal, then you're always going to be asked. You can't go out and have dinner or lunch without that coming into your life.

I think, whether it was Carter or maybe to some less extent… Maybe the people perceived on the political side had a little bit more of that happening, maybe not. I don't know. I don't know what the programmatic people would have to go up against. Maybe they would be bombarded with

requests for programmatic changes, much like we would be bombarded with requests to help the party, to get a job, to do the things that we…

DePue: Does that mean that you'd get home, and you'd get the late-night call, and a county chairman would be appealing to you to take a look at this guy and help him out? Or you'd go out to a restaurant, and somebody would come up and ask you if you could help? Did that happen? (laughs) I know it did.

Cellini: I told you that I dated a man who wasn't political. When he first started dating me, which was sixteen years ago… What would that be?

DePue: That's about the beginning...'92, somewhere around there, '93?

Cellini: He was in shock that we would be at a restaurant, and somebody would come up and pull up a chair and say, "Can I ask you a favor?" He would be in shock, because where he came from, that was, I guess, considered rude or something—I don't know—that you just don't really do that.

[Finally] he said, "I can't do this. I don't know how I can do this." And I said, "You know what?" I said, "Here's how you do it. You do it because, if you had a goal, if you had something you wanted to get done, whether it was getting somebody hired, help with an issue, a sign on a highway, whatever, a stop sign in your yard, whatever, you would do whatever it would take. You would use your energy to get to whoever it would take to get it done." I said, "That's all you have to do, is view it as that" because whether it was somebody whose son was out of work or whether it was somebody who needed a stop sign at an intersection where they felt people were getting hurt, it didn't matter; they thought it was important.

I always thought, You know what? It's part of my job. However, I will tell you this. I stopped going out as often as I used to. I didn't go out. I would go to the office. I would stay. I would go home. I would do more paperwork. But I wouldn't go out so much. I was more a recluse. It's because you can't even process it all. I don't know how the governor possibly… I don't know how any elected official ever processes. I was a small fish in a… It's hard to do.

DePue: But at least, it sounds like, pretty well-known in certain circles, as the person you need to go to.

Cellini: I guess everyone knows…as all of us were in our areas. You'd know you have to get to Joan if you wanted to get more money in something. You'd know you have to get to [Al] Grosboll if you wanted to talk about wind power.[18]

18 Allen Grosboll, Legislative Director with the Environmental Law & Policy Center, served as the Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor on environment, education and natural resources issues to Illinois Governor Jim Edgar and as the Chief of Staff for the Illinois Secretary of State. (http://elpc.org/staff/allen-grosboll/)

You'd know to see Howard Peters if you wanted corrections legislation… It's the nature of it.[19]

DePue: You asked me, when we first met, that I should ask you a question or two about the Labor Advisory Board and your first Labor Advisory meeting. We haven't talked about (Cellini laughs) that side of the job at all yet. So let's start with what that side of the job is.

Cellini: Okay. It's again the people side of it. Edgar felt, when he was secretary of state… Does he get to hear all of these, by the way?

DePue: Oh, I'm sure he'll have opportunities to listen to them all.

Cellini: Okay. When he was secretary of state—and this is a true story—he knew he wanted to run for governor, and he knew that labor officials—this was his view—that they weren't very different than he, that they were elected and had to answer to their people just like he did. But he knew, because he was a downstate Republican candidate, that he didn't have much going in the labor community, the bulk of which was in Chicago. Sort of running side-by-side to me… Did you interview Steve Schnorf at all?[20]

DePue: Not yet.

Cellini: Okay. Steve, an old friend of Jim Edgar's, very, very bright; very, very bright. Oftentimes, we were kind of pitted against each other. I have a lot of respect for him. He was very good at what he did and still is. He was the head of CMS. When I told you before that the paperwork would come through and go through and do all of that, that was the power (both laugh), not me. I was taking the hits, but he was doing…

Anyway, Edgar felt that if he was going to run for governor, he had to get something going in the labor community, and he had no relationships going, basically. Because I am the personality that I am, I suspect, is why he chose me, and I'll tell you a story about that.

He made an announcement that I was responsible for getting a Labor Advisory Committee together, to advise him. This was when he was in secretary of state, okay. There's two stories to this. One is what happened internally, and one is what he did as a result of that. He said, "I would like

19 Howard Peters III served as deputy chief of staff to Gov. Edgar from 1995 through June 1997 and was responsible for overseeing operation of the State's Human Services, Public Safety and Government Administration agencies. In 1997, Edgar selected Peters as the first person to lead the Department of Human Services. (https://news.siu.edu/2004/02/021204pr4014.php#:~:text=From%201995%20through%20June%201997,the%20Department%20of%20Human%20Services.)

20 Stephen Schnorf worked on all of Jim Edgar's campaigns for state representative and joined Secretary of State Edgar's office in 1981. He worked with Edgar for the next sixteen years, serving in various capacities, including policy director and budget director during Edgar's governorship. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/OralHistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/SchnorfStephenB.aspx)

Janis to head that up, officially." I was gun-shy of that because I knew that a couple of the other people on staff wanted it and felt that they deserved it, and they probably did, basically. They had been doing a lot of work.

I went back to him a couple days later and said, "I would prefer not to have that." I said, "You've got so-and-so who would like to have it, and you've got so-and-so. I just think it would make for better relationships if you didn't pick me." He said, "Janis," he said, "I picked you because I want you to do it," and he said, "Part of it is you're Italian." He said, "Half of them are Italian. The other part of it is you're a woman." He said, "Most of us talk to guys all day. And the other part of it is that you're the one I'm picking, and you're going to do it."

It seems like an easy task, but it wasn't. It was a difficult task because most of labor really was Democrat. So I went about the business of, "Hi, I'm Janis Cellini. I work for Jim Edgar." This is when he was secretary of state. They didn't have to come out front too much. But as I got to know people, we sort of formed a very good group of core people who I was trying to… He wanted to hear what they had to say.

So we have our first Labor Advisory Committee meeting, after a year of forging relationships, trying to get it together. I asked Grosboll, who was always my buddy through a lot of things. He was the programmatic side. My whole body and mind was crammed with CMS applications and resumes. I had no room for anything else, and I didn't want to become an expert in any… It just didn't matter to me. I say to Grosboll, "Why don't you go with us, because I know he's going to need your insight on a lot of things?"

We fly to Chicago, and it was a cold winter day; it was a cold winter day. I think we flew; maybe some of us drove; maybe he [Edgar] flew. We get to the old Bismarck Hotel. And it was nerve-wracking for me because I didn't know if it was going to work or not. I didn't have any idea how they were going to act to him. He's not the kind of guy who would take his jacket off, roll up his sleeves, like Jim Thompson, throw his coat over his shoulder and say, "Hi, how are you? Let's have a beer." He wasn't that kind of guy.

DePue: We're talking about Edgar here.

Cellini: Right, right. We go into the room—I'm sure he was a little bit nervous about it—and he starts getting a little bit upset by the fact that the tables were arranged in a U or something. That's when Al Grosboll came up to him and said, "You really shouldn't be pointing your finger at her like that because it doesn't look good (laughs) for..."

DePue: He was pointing at you?

Cellini: Yes, yes. It didn't even dawn on me because I was like, okay. I said, "It's okay; it's okay. It's going to work okay." Anyway, he was that kind of guy. He was down to how the seating arrangements were going to be, the minute

detail; who's going to sit where; what was going on. Usually we would have to brief him pretty specifically.

But as it was, it turned out well, and we kept having recurring Labor Advisory meetings, not as many as we should have or maybe we could have, but… We didn't get a lot of labor support, and he always said to me, "Janis, we may not get their support," he said, "but maybe we could get some of their workers and maybe raise a little money with them." To me that was very pragmatic, and that sort of helped me define my role a little bit. But, as I said, the internal part of it was difficult because there were a couple people who thought they should have had that role.

DePue: Is the director of personnel and labor relations, which was your specific title, is that a job that every administration has, or do new administrations kind of repackage and restructure things?

Cellini: I think they do. I think they repackage and restructure, probably for the same reasons that many of us would do. If you had a staff, and you knew their strengths and their weaknesses, you would probably gauge the roles, depending on their strengths, I would think.

DePue: You've talked about quite a few of these people already, but I wanted to kind of flesh this out a little bit more, in terms of the personalities that you dealt with. Al Grosboll is one that's come up quite a bit. Mike Lawrence.

Cellini: Loved him. At first, I was a little… I didn't know him; I didn't know him. But as I watched him work...We always joked that he was really the consciousness, the conscience of the administration. He would help keep things balanced. He was very bright. He knew how the media was going to respond. He was a very hard worker, great sense of humor, great sense of humor.

DePue: It sounds like, from what you've described already, that he gained a little bit different perspective on what patronage really was all about, over time? Did you get a sense of that?

Cellini: Yes. Yes, I did get a sense of that, and I would ask him if I were you. But I would look at that article, because I can remember that he wrote it, and he even said to me once that he changed his perspective on it.

DePue: Well, we definitely want to get that included into your interview itself. That would be part of the public record once we get to that point.

How about the various chiefs of staff? I know he had four, starting with Kirk Dillard, who's currently beginning his own campaign to be governor.21 Kirk Dillard for the first three years or so, and then Jim Reilly during that year that Edgar's running for reelection, Gene Reineke, and then Mark Boozell. I would think you would work pretty closely with the chiefs.

Cellini: The first two, not so much, because Reilly and Edgar had a very good… I think they were friends.[21] I just never dealt with him much at all. Not so much with Kirk. Kirk was a legislative creature. A lot of the chiefs of staffs' work were done with the legislative side. I think if anybody had party questions, they would go to Carter. I wasn't of that high rung; let me say that.

DePue: But the last two, Gene Reineke and Mark Boozell?[22, 23]

Cellini: Gene I worked a little bit more with because I knew him more. Mark Boozell, I worked a little bit more with because he was the head of legislation. Oftentimes we'd have to talk about the legislators and what they were… But not really did they do much with personnel.

DePue: How about some of the director positions? Now we're getting into the positions where it's much more programmatic. You've already said that Edgar was all about good governance and interested in their programs and how to make government work, but also it's the place where all these jobs were that you were trying to fill. How was the relationship with some of those directors?

Cellini: It depended on who they were and where they came from and what they… Most of the time… We'll go back to the issue of who's got the control. Probably the agency directors could do whatever they wanted. As I said, most of my calls were whining and begging; they weren't like, "You're going to do this" because they ran their agencies. That's the myth about somebody who does patronage; they think you just pick up the phone and make it happen. It doesn't work like that.

DePue: Let's throw out a couple other scenarios because, again, we're getting at the heart of why patronage oftentimes has such a nasty reputation. Would you at times go to Governor Edgar and say, "It would really help if you called your director."

Cellini: He wouldn't. No, he wouldn't. I wouldn't put him in that position. No, no, no, no, no. No, if I couldn't do it, shame on me, if it was necessary or needed or...

21 Jim Reilly was elected to the Illinois legislature in 1976, where he forged a strong friendship and professional association with Jim Edgar. In 1983, Governor Jim Thompson selected him to serve as his chief of staff, a position he retained through 1989. Reilly also served as Governor Jim Edgar's Chief of Staff during the 1994 election campaign. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/oralhistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/ReillyJim.aspx)

22 Gene Reineke, who served for nearly twenty years in the public policy arena, worked as Governor Jim Edgar's Chief of Staff and as a member of his cabinet. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/OralHistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/ReinekeGene.aspx)

23 Mark Boozell served for over two decades in both the legislative and executive branches of Illinois government. Most of that time he worked for Jim Edgar, first as a legislative liaison while Edgar was Secretary of State, then in a variety of positions when Edgar was elected governor in 1991, including another tour as legislative liaison. Boozell served as Edgar's Chief of Staff during his final year as Governor. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/OralHistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/BoozellMark.aspx)

A lot of times, it didn't work. That's why… A lot of the agency directors would have a relationship with Steve Schnorf, and they could work out what they wanted. It was not as it appeared. It is not as it appeared.

DePue: Any particular anecdotes that you remember during the time that you were especially working for **Governor** Edgar, in terms of relationships with some of the directors?

Cellini: I believe we talked about one. We had just appointed a director, and he happened to have... He was one of those that had offices everywhere in the state; his agency had that. Right after the election, Mrs. Edgar's best friend in high school, who was a teacher—this is somebody who helped her through the whole campaign—called and asked… Somebody came to me and said, "Mrs. Edgar is wondering if there was anything available." She was from Union County, I think; yeah, Union County—there's a mental health center down there; I just told you who the director was. I hate to use names like that—Would we be able to maybe see if there was anything she could fit in a job down there.

I picked up the phone and called the director and said, "This is what's happening," explained the whole story, and said, "[Mrs. Edgar] wondered if there was anything you could maybe look at." I didn't say, "Here's Mrs. Edgar's best friend; hire her or you're gone," like people think we would do. He said to me, "We don't work like that." I said, "I'm sorry? I'm sorry?" What I was hoping is that he would say, "You know what? Give me a resume, and maybe I'll have somebody call her," at least give some effort to help her maybe learn how to test for something or, you know, just do something nice, what anybody would do. But his response was, "We don't do that." I think, maybe it was because I called, and I was the patronage chief, and he thought that's what… I don't know. I don't know.

DePue: Was there a certain tone of condescension in his voice or…?

Cellini: No. Condescension? Not at all.

DePue: That's the wrong term.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: How would you describe his reaction?

Cellini: (pause) Ridiculous and unhelpful, really. And plus, this was not a person I was asking him to… It was not like a major policy making decision job. That always floors me, too. It's like, "Now I'm just calling you about this job that might be a mental health assistant, which might be changing bedpans. So you can't help somebody get tested to do that because…?"

DePue: Any other stories that kind of illustrate your job?

Cellini: Yeah. This is a good one, and I've thought about this once since we talked. I remember one of the county chairmen (laughs) called me up and said, "Janis,

there's going to be an opening down here, and we want so-and-so to be considered for that job." And I'd say, "There's no opening." He said, "No, there's an opening." He said, "You're going to have to trust me on this. There's an opening." And I said, "Well, you know what? Okay, I'll trust you," I said, "But I don't see..." And he said, "No, no, no." He said, "You know I'm a doctor, and I just read somebody's X-ray, and he's not going to make it." (both laugh) I was like, Oh my God! And that's a true story. (both laugh)

DePue: He was wasting no time to fill that position.

Cellini: He was wasting no time. (laughs) I was like, Oh, this is… (laughs)

DePue: That's a good story.

Cellini: I knew you'd like that story, and it's a true story.

DePue: Well, where should we go from here? Edgar's reelection in 1994. Again, any involvement in that election campaign or still the same mode?

Cellini: Still the same mode. I was on staff, and I did my job there.

DePue: Now, right in the midst of that campaign, July of 1994, suddenly Edgar is diagnosed as having very serious heart trouble and finds himself in the hospital with I think a bypass surgery.

Cellini: I remember that because the night before, or the night that he went to the hospital, was a night that we… It was so nerve-wracking because we were… He was delivering a speech to the Chicago carpenters, and it was a big deal to get him in front of the carpenters. They're very traditionally Democratic. He delivered the speech, and he got done. I said, "How do you think it went?" He said, "I think it went fine." And he gets in the car, and he pulls away. The next thing I know, they're calling me, telling me he's in the hospital.

DePue: You were up in Chicago then.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: What were your thoughts at the time, do you remember?

Cellini: Oh, I was… It was terrible. Well, first of all, I had just seen him, and he didn't appear to have anything wrong with him. It was difficult. We were all pretty floored. It was scary.

DePue: I've been corrected in an interview that I suggested this was a heart attack; and "It was **not** a heart attack."

Cellini: What was it? Was it a heart...?

DePue: Well, he had heart bypass surgery.

Cellini: Oh, okay. Whatever it was, it was serious; it was serious.

DePue: Was there ever some thought that this might end his political career?

Cellini: I think we were more afraid that he was going to **die**. I don't know about ending his political career, at least at that moment. Of course, in politics you're always vulnerable if you're sick. You're always vulnerable.

DePue: Dawn Clark Netsch was his opponent in that particular election campaign, and she had come out for… Some would say she had made the mistake of coming out for higher income tax, and that was certainly something that Edgar and his team picked up on. So he won by a fairly healthy margin, a much wider margin than he had in his first campaign with Neil Hartigan.[24]

Cellini: That's because every person on his staff did a great job for him. (both laugh)

DePue: To include yours truly?

Cellini: Not necessarily. There were so many people that worked really hard for him. I wouldn't say me… I'm forgetting so many people, that I have not named, that just spent their whole… Everybody spent their whole lives. It was like being married to the man. You know, you'd be married to the man.

DePue: To the administration, at least.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: One of the things I'm sure you understood was that you were supposed to conduct your business in a way that would cause no embarrassment to the administration during that campaign. In your particular position, it was the place where the news media, especially, would probably love to dig up some dirt. Did you feel, that going into the campaign?

Cellini: Not really. Not really; I didn't feel that.

DePue: Did you feel that the news media treated you and Governor Edgar, in general, fairly?

Cellini: Yeah. Well, me. I can't answer that for him. I think he fared very well with the news media, overall.

DePue: If you don't mind, let's talk about the one timeframe when he found himself in some hot water, certainly with the press, and the word "scandal" being kicked around. That was MSI, Management Services of Illinois scandal.[25]

24 In 1972, at the age of 34, Neil Hartigan became the youngest lieutenant governor in the nation. A major political force in Illinois, he later served as attorney general for two terms, before running in a tight race for governor against incumbent Jim Edgar in 1990. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/oralhistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/Hartigan,-Neil.aspx)

25 In August, 2000, Management Services of Illinois Inc., a major political contributor to Governor Jim Edgar, was found guilty of bilking the state out of $12.9 million on a contract it held with the Department of Public Aid to cut welfare costs by identifying insurance coverage for public aid recipients that would replace government-paid health-care benefits. (https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2000-08-24-0008240442-story.html#:~:text=The%20firm%2C%20Management%20Services%20of,that%20would%20replace%20government%2Dpaid)

Were you involved in that at all? That really came to a head in 1997, but I think had been percolating for quite a while before that.

Cellini: I will say this about that, and this is all I'm going to say, okay? I was in the headlines of the paper as an unindicted co-conspirator in that case. I did jobs; I did not have anything to do with contracts, thank God. I do not know how I got to be an unindicted co-conspirator to this day. I don't understand it. I understand it to a degree, because of who I am, I guess. But I don't know anything else.

DePue: Who was putting the case together? Was that the U.S. attorney or the state's attorney?

Cellini: The U.S. attorney, I think.

DePue: And nothing ever came of that, as far as you personally are concerned?

Cellini: Well, I spent a lot of money (laughs), defending myself. But I don't even know the result of that because I kind of blocked all of that out of my mind. That was **not** a good time in my life.

DePue: You had also mentioned that boards and appointments was something that caused some challenge.

Cellini: Yeah, that was under the personnel and labor relations, right.

DePue: And I know that at the very end of the administration, there were some issues involved with some appointments, toward the end of Edgar's time. Could you talk about that?

Cellini: What I could say about all… The general public probably doesn't know that probably 5 percent of those board and commission appointments are paid. The other 95 percent are sheer volunteer, people loving the issue, the topic, the board and its goals. So, for some of the media to get hyped up about the board and commission appointments, unless they can make a story out of it… Five percent of those boards and commissions even have a salary attached to them. Most of the boards have to have an equal amount of Republicans and Democrats, with the office in power getting the extra one. You want Democrats, Republicans, Independents, by law. They'll say, "We need two Democrats," whatever.

I didn't do the day-to-day. There was a young woman who worked for me, by the name of Janelle Hilgers, and she did the day-to-day, a massive, huge job, just an incredible job. I feel bad to this day that I didn't serve Jim Edgar well. It was such a paperwork nightmare. It's kind of like you see Obama, and they talk about Obama's vetting process, and how could these people have ever become czars, because what kind of vetting process did they have?

Well, it's vetting; it's checking out people's credentials; it's seeing who's served on the boards prior to. All the terms are off. They're not all up in

2002 of January. Every board has a myriad of terminations on the board terms. It's a logistics nightmare, number one.

Number two, you're in the governor's office, and you don't have enough staff. You don't want the staff to be bloated, so you're down to, what, one or two people to handle… I don't even know how many boards and commissions there were, but there's a board for everything, for everything.

So, the job was a full-time job. I still feel badly that we were so hell-bent on trying to keep up with the appointments that, when we made an appointment, somebody got vetted, and everybody was clear, and everybody thought that was a great appointment, and everybody signed off on it. We never, ever put anything in place where the person who served for years got a nice note, and we were usually pretty good about that. Edgar wanted to always thank people for their service. We got a couple of them out, but not in a way that did something that I'm proud of, to have done for him, because it was such an overwhelming job. It was just... You couldn't do it all.

The first few months, we got behind. Then we started to get criticism for it. So then we really stepped up, trying to do the appointments, trying… Now, I understand, there's a whole bunch of appointments that haven't been followed up on. To do it right, it would require just a tremendous amount of people, to keep them all filled, the terms current, people informed, people thanked, people… It's just so many people.

DePue: And there was basically just this one woman who was doing it?

Cellini: There was this one woman; I think she had a secretary, and there was a couple of interns that maybe she had, in and out. There was no consistency for her because the interns would try to get credit and everything.

And yes, there was a group of people that got in under the radar with the legislature on some early appointments, and then there were about twenty that they turned down.

DePue: Are we talking about right at the end of Edgar's term?

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: Can you speak to any of the details about that?

Cellini: I'm not a person who knew the legislative process. Probably Mark Boozell would be a better person.

DePue: Well, I've already talked to him about it.

Cellini: I don't really know. I was glad to have the paperwork done; (DePue laughs) let me just say that, thanks to Janelle, because it was a lot. It was a lot.

DePue: We've spent quite a bit of time already talking about this. What haven't I talked about that you'd like to address, before we wrap some things up?

Cellini: (pause) I just hope and pray that the people you're interviewing include all the people that worked, because it took a team. It wasn't just me; it was the people that worked for me that were efficient. It was the secretaries; it was… It really took a lot of people to keep him informed, so that he could make good decisions. And I attribute a lot of that to his ability to pick good staff, not me, but a lot of good staff. A lot of them didn't like me, but I can still say nice things about them. They were all bright and good.

DePue: What do you attribute as the reason that some of the other main staff players didn't like you?

Cellini: I think just for a couple things. I think, first of all, because of the whole issue of what patronage has come to mean in the media, through the media, and maybe the abuse of patronage in some cases. Also, too, who gets the credit for the hire. If I'm going to do it, then who's going to get the credit? If they're going to do it, they're going to get the credit. It's all about that also, although we should have all been giving the credit to the boss. And a lot of people just didn't like me because I'm obnoxious sometimes (DePue laughs). I don't know (both laughter).

DePue: Maybe that's an unfair question to ask.

Cellini: Yeah, I don't know. I think again that division of program versus politics sometimes is a stark one, where it doesn't have to be. I think Edgar did a lot to pull it together. I think Thompson did too, maybe.

DePue: But it strikes me that you're neither program nor politics; you're stuck right in the middle of it.

Cellini: No, no, no, no, no. I am whatever the perception is. You are what you're perceived to be.

DePue: And for those who are on the programmatic side, you were seen as on the political side?

Cellini: Oh yeah, oh yeah. And I was. When you talk about what my role was, I was the county chairmen's sort of sounding board, their voice, et cetera.

DePue: But you've also described—and I don't want to put words in your mouth here—but you've described a scenario where maybe, as Governor Edgar saw it, he compartmentalized you from the people who would be advising him on his political future and how to run the campaign.

Cellini: Yeah, yeah. It was his choice; however, he wanted to run it was his choice. That's fine. Yeah, he may have… He probably did that to all of us at some point, depending on what decision he had to make.

DePue: Was Governor Edgar good at giving you positive feedback and giving you guidance?

Cellini: (laughs) Let me say this. I tell them all, "It's a good thing I met Governor Edgar before I met my Bernie, that I date now," who's a good, staunch German. If you were there to get feedback and a pat on the back, you were in the wrong job. (DePue laughs) You just have to know you're doing a good job. So I would go in about once a year and say, "Okay, you're going to have to tell me I'm doing a good job. I just…" And he'd say, "You're doing a good job." That's how he said it.

That was practice for me, because now, with Bernie, who's kind of a stoic German, I'll say to him, "How would I even know that you care about me?" And he says, "Well, I'm here, aren't I?" So it's kind of the same… (laughs) It's the same whatever. If you were looking for that, I don't think you were going to get too much of it, even though you knew, if you were there, he liked what you were doing.

DePue: Was he the kind of person, though, who could share the credit when something went well?

Cellini: Yeah, I think so, sure. He was kind of an amazing… He was an enigma to me. He was exactly my age. We came out of the same generation. I'll tell you a story about a labor meeting in Chicago. You'll like this.

This was when he was the secretary of state. I get a small gathering of labor people to agree to meet with him. He's secretary of state, up and coming, so a few of them said, yes, the first initial group that we had tried to get going. We have it at a place called the Como Inn in Chicago—I think it's still there, even—anyway, most of them were Italian or Irish. They give the menus out, and people are ordering chicken cacciatore; "I'll have some pasta;" "I'll have a pizza;" "I'll have this;" "I'll have that." It gets to him, and he says, "I'll have the chicken casserole." I was like…(laughs). I thought to myself, Oh dear God, I forgot to talk to him about ordering food (both laugh).

We get done, and we have the meeting, and we're getting ready to go back to the office, and we're in the same car or something. I said, "You know"—and he got spaghetti with it on the side—I said, "You know, listen. You're just going to have to…" I said, "You don't just not eat your spaghetti. You know what I mean? People are...especially Italians, they're going to look at you like, 'Can't you…?'" He goes, "Well, I don't like spaghetti." And I said, "Well, could you learn to just play in it a little bit?" (both laugh)

Another one was, we were talking about something, and I kept saying... I couldn't believe where he was coming from, and I go, "Wait a minute," I said. "Your grandparents spoke broken English; didn't they?" And he said, "They were from Kentucky" or Ohio or whatever they were from. I scratched my head. I was like, Oh my God, his grandparents were like… They spoke American. Those differences for me, of a guy who was my age… And he always said to me, "Janis, I was married when I was nineteen, and I had a child." Because I'd say, "You never had one beer in your life?" He'd say, "I

was married. I had a child. I had to make a living." We were different, you know; it was different.

DePue: Speaking of being married, how well did you know Brenda?

Cellini: Well, very, very, very well.

DePue: And what would you say about Brenda?

Cellini: Very classy, very kind, very religious, took second place to her husband's career and did it with a lot of style. I wish I could do that sometime, in my relationship. She just was a very good lady, very good wife to him, very good mother. I can't say one bad thing about her, not one bad thing. I admire her. I admire her to this day. And I think, since they've been out of office, she's kind of gotten a little bit more independent.

DePue: It was about summer, August, September timeframe of 1997, when Edgar was wrestling with what he wanted to do in the next step of his life, whether he wanted to run for reelection for governor again in '98 or perhaps a run for the U.S. Senate, or just plain old retire. Were you involved in any of those discussions?

Cellini: Probably on and off a little bit. But by that time, I probably would have said, "Don't do it. Don't do anything." It is glamorous to be a high-level politician, whether it's a governor, a senator, or a president, but it is very, very difficult and takes its toll on one, physically, more than anybody could possibly imagine. If you look at his pictures when he got elected governor and four years later, how gray his hair was. And he's serious; everything about the job, he took seriously. I can relate to that because I'm an extrovert, but I'm also serious. Eight years is enough to be a public servant, I think.

DePue: That obviously had implications for your own personal future, because you're obviously not going to be part of the Edgar Administration when he's no longer governor.

Cellini: I was ready to do whatever. It's okay (laughs). Most people, I think, who had a patronage role probably stayed in that role for maybe four years, five years at the most. I certainly overdid my stay.

DePue: You had sixteen, eighteen years?

Cellini: More like twenty. And, it got to me after a while. It affected my health. I was ready to… Whatever decision he wanted to make was fine: I was ready to end the public side of it. And he's so private himself, really; that was an unusual job for him to go after, if you look at his personality. You know what I mean?

Janis Cellini and Governor Jim Edgar With Humorous Parking Sign

DePue: Do you remember anything special about the last few weeks or days of his administration?

Cellini: I'd have to think about that. (pause) I'd really have to think about that one hard. (pause) It would be colored by my desire to just be done with it, in terms of I was ready to move on to something else. So nothing jumps out at me right now.

DePue: What did you move on to?

Cellini: I was...Education, Labor Relations Board. I got appointed, early on, in the early set of appointments.

DePue: At the end of Edgar's Administration?

Cellini: Yes. I had done the work with labor, and I had been an educator, and I was fifty-four, maybe, fifty-four years old. I did ask him if he thought I would be a good board member, and he agreed that I would.

DePue: That's one of the paying boards?

Cellini: That's one of the paying boards. I knew which boards were paying (DePue laughs). It wasn't like I was silly about that. But interestingly enough, I was only there for a year, because the early retirement came out, and I chose that.

DePue: Would that have been under the [George] Ryan Administration?

Cellini: Yes, yes, but it was passed on by the Senate under Edgar. I think there were about ten that went through then or something. I can't remember the number.

DePue: Ten specific people?

Cellini: Different people, yeah. Then on that last batch, there were more like twenty, and they didn't get voted on.

DePue: Oh, in terms of appointments.

Cellini: Appointments, I'm talking about.

DePue: What have you been doing the last few years? You're smiling.

Cellini: Well, I (pause) lived in a house that was very secluded, and it still is to some degree, but I've cut down a lot of bushes to make it a little more open because I was trying to hide out. When you have a job like this, you hide out sometimes because you just want a little bit of quiet before the phones start ringing. I went to work for my family, part-time, very part-time. And then I had a little business on the side, which I don't have anymore, a consulting business. I do not have that. Right now I'm semi-retired. I'm retired from the state, and I have a part-time job.

DePue: But you're not ready to retire full-time?

Cellini: Who can afford it in this economy (DePue laughs), seriously. In this economy, really, you can't. You thought you could because you had some money saved, but it's quickly… The stocks and things that you thought were going to be good are not, so you've got to be practical.

DePue: Let's just ask some general questions to close things up, then. The first question is just an overall assessment of the Edgar Administration and Jim Edgar personally. I think you've done a remarkable job of talking about Jim Edgar as a person and his character. How would you characterize the administration overall?

Cellini: The administration overall… The first thing that comes to my mind is, I'd give it an eighty-five, but I can't dance to it (DePue laughs).[26] No, I would say, if I'm going to give it on a scale of 100, I'd give it eighty-five to ninety. I think that, as it changed… Remember I told you, you go from secretary of state; you've got a nice sense of community, and then you have to grow bigger and include more people. So, it changes the dynamics of the group a little bit. I think, for the most part, even the people who were sort of opposites, programmatic versus political, I think there was a healthy respect for the fact

26 "It's got a good beat and you can dance to it" continues to be a running joke decades after the demise of *American Bandstand,* a popular '70s television show, in which host, Dick Clark, would ask a boy and girl to grade up-and-coming hits on a scale of 35 to 98. (https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/bp/12-memorable-american-bandstand-moments-003645394.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAGn-5L6ya-Jgx8MRf1t8rIQeyaJL4EEicpLPHVpoZETH22Z_xCtqhVL9xNERqkhuLOwBnLrZa9q6yPjwXNKp7Dgj1qvFAuNe1Bu7OpImG6eZTxqI7q_8gxTezfyE8indApJD3W1kUWPB2gktr206cZgxAXIqWgaOY4iWfeI-qoXS)

that Edgar chose them for their knowledge and their ability. So I'd give it an eighty-five to a ninety, but I can't dance to it.

DePue: I get the sense that you're answering the question based on the personalities and how effective the personalities were in working together.

Cellini: You don't want that. You want, how did he accomplish his…?

DePue: Yeah.

Cellini: Oh, I would say 95 percent, and the other 5 percent probably [was] because he couldn't...because of maybe not being able to get everybody on board.

DePue: And you're answering the question based on ten years removed from the administration and two very interesting governors since that time, three now.

Cellini: Un-huh, un-huh. I think, if you look at his reputation, I think he did a fantastic job. I think he did what all of us would want. He sort of treated the state like we would treat our own checkbooks. He didn't overspend; he was frugal. That works for me. I don't know if it works for everybody, but it works for me.

DePue: It would be a different approach than what we have right now, perhaps.

Cellini: I'm not going to comment on what's going on right now. I've removed myself from politics, except I'm a precinct committeeman (both laugh).

DePue: How about, what would be the accomplishment, either personal or the administration overall, that you're most proud of?

Cellini: I think for him, I think I'm most proud for somebody who held—and I'd give this to Joan too, because Joan had to be his "no" person a lot—that he lived within the budget. I think that is really an accomplishment in this day of not saying no to anything.

DePue: Maybe this would be a different one for you. What would you like to be remembered for?

Cellini: You ask that of everybody?

DePue: Mostly. In your position, people remember you as, "Oh, she was his patronage chief," and they're not necessarily saying that as a compliment.

Cellini: You know what? I like that, though. I would like for somebody to say, "She was his patronage chief, who did a fair job, who did a good job." You know, "She didn't abuse it, and she didn't…" I don't know; I don't know. They don't have to remember me; they have to remember him (laughs). That's all.

DePue: Fair enough. What closing comments do you have? Any final comments for us?

Cellini: Well, I guess I would like to say I appreciate the opportunity to speak, although I do not feel very articulate. I've always thought that I should write a

book—being an old English teacher and not bad at composition—but it would have to be fiction (laughs). One other thing, there were so many people—and I've only named a few—that did such a good job, that I feel like I'm not giving you views on people in his administration, that each of them, each of them because I know what they did. It's just that I don't know that you asked about them.

DePue: You've kind of mentioned this before, but I know the governor, in putting together a list of people, wanted to get beyond just the top personalities and get a real sense of how government actually works, the nuts-and-bolts, day-to-day operation of it all. That's obviously why you were right at the top of his list of people that I needed to be interviewing.

Cellini: Well, as he said, I was the only real Democrat on his staff.

DePue: (laughs) Well...

Cellini: He says that, only because I was violently opposed to the seat belt law and whatever.

DePue: And you went to hear Timothy Leary talk.

Cellini: Yeah, but he doesn't know that. Oh, and he let me go to massage school, after we won the first gubernatorial election.

DePue: Now, there's a story there.

Cellini: Well, I'm...you know. I said, "I've always wanted to go to massage school. I've always wanted to live in Santa Fe. They've got a six-week program; I would love to go. What do you think?" And he said, "Okay." He said, "I suspect somebody on staff ought to know how to do massages." (DePue laughs) And he let me go. I went; I was so thrilled. I was like, Oh my God, I get out of this… (laughs)

DePue: In Santa Fe, no less.

Cellini: Yes. He introduced me to that place, actually. My brother that I spoke of earlier, was forty and came down with lung cancer. I was working for Edgar at the time, and I was having a hard time with that one. There was a conference, a Secretary of States' Conference. I had never been to Santa Fe in my life, but he had always had sort of a timeshare up in Red River somewhere. Anyway, he needed a staff person, and he said, "You know," he said, "I think maybe, if you want, you should staff this," because I think he felt that, not only could I staff it, but that it would get me away a little bit and give me a little bit of a break. I fell in love with the place, been back every year, sometimes twice, forever, since he introduced me to it.

DePue: Well, Janis, you've said a couple of times, here on record, that you wish you could be more articulate.

Cellini: I do.

DePue: But let me tell you, this has been a lot of fun, for me to interview you.

Cellini: Really?

DePue: I've thoroughly enjoyed it, and I think, hopefully, people will pay attention to what you're saying and get a different picture of what the patronage piece is really all about.

Cellini: Well, you didn't let me say my general story.

DePue: Oh, well, go ahead.

Cellini: If you were a general, and I was a general, and you won, wouldn't you want to give all of your troops (laughs) something after you won?

DePue: Now, see, you're trying to put me on the spot. In my profession, (Cellini laughs) I try to avoid…

Cellini: No, I was trying to not put you on the spot; I was trying to just do a parallel to patronage.

DePue: Sure.

Cellini: You know, "To the victor goes the spoils," that kind of thing, but...

DePue: Let me close by saying this, and I probably shouldn't, but I'll mention it anyway. One of the people that I interviewed is Governor Walker. Of course, Governor Walker's whole thing was the Daley Administration, the evils of the Daley Administration, the patronage abuses of the Daley Administration. Then he found himself being governor, and people were asking him about patronage there. It wasn't in my interview; it was another interview that he said, "Well, I wasn't against patronage. I was against the evils of patronage." (laughs)

Cellini: I guess in his mind that is a distinction, huh?

DePue: Yeah.

Cellini: He's still writing books; isn't he?

DePue: He still writes articles. He wrote his autobiography recently. It came out about two years ago.

Cellini: He wrote his auto... Down in Mexico, I bet he wrote it too; didn't he?

DePue: Yeah, yeah. Well, thank you very much, Janis.

Cellini: Yes.

(end of transcript)