An Interview with Governor Jim Edgar Volume II (Sessions 6-10)

Interview with Jim Edgar
ISG-A-L-2009-019.06
Interview # 6: June 10, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

DePue: Today is Wednesday, June 10, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I believe this is our sixth session. I could be wrong on that.

Edgar: I trust your count.

DePue: Good morning, Governor.

Edgar: Good morning.

DePue: We are with Governor Edgar again, and we just got you to the position of legislative liaison for Governor Thompson. So I thought it was appropriate—and we've talked about Thompson quite a bit—to take a step back and have you just discuss, a little bit, his political career and how he ended up being governor; and then we'll go into some of the specifics about the relationship that you had with Governor Thompson.

Edgar: Jim Thompson had grown up in the Chicago area. I think he grew up in Oak Park—Oak Park?

DePue: Oak Forest?

Edgar: No, it is Oak Park, yeah. I think in that area, on the West Side of Chicago. His father was a physician, and he went to school at... I think he spent a little time at Illinois on the Navy Pier campus, if I remember right, but he ended up getting his degree from Washington University in St. Louis; then he went to law school at Northwestern. Apparently, was a very bright student. Thompson was always very bright—he is very bright. And I don't know when he started working. He worked in the attorney general's office under Bill Scott for a little bit, but the guy who was his real mentor was Judge Bauer, who was U.S. attorney. I can't remember Bauer's first name. But when he became U.S. attorney—and this would have been during the Nixon years—Thompson went to the U.S. attorney's office with him. And then

when he stepped down to become a judge—I think this is the sequence—Bauer recommended that Thompson be appointed in his place. That's really when he burst on the scene and was very visible.

But what I didn't appreciate till I was working for him, was he had spent some time in state government when he was working for Bill Scott, who was a unique character to work for, in many ways. So Thompson had a little bit of involvement in state government prior to becoming governor—because one of the concerns we all had was, Here is a guy who's never been around state government, never really been in politics, and he's now governor. And I did not realize he had spent a stint with Bill Scott.

But where he got to be known was when he became U.S. attorney. And as U.S. attorney, the case that really brought him to the forefront was he prosecuted Otto Kerner, the former governor of Illinois, and was successful in that prosecution. [He] then went on, and under his leadership—he didn't do the cases, all of them, himself—several public officials were indicted and convicted during that period.

DePue: And when you say "several," a lot of those folks were people within the Daley administration, were they not?

Edgar: [Thomas] Keane, who was the—and again, age is catching; I'm forgetting his first name—most powerful guy in the city council. He ran the budget process, was a big ally of Daley, and he got indicted, convicted—and I think a couple county officials. Keane was probably the most important because he was a real power in the city council, back when the city council had power, and he was also close to Daley. He wasn't subservient—Daley and he were allied, but in my understanding, Keane was independent in his own right. So that was a big coup for Thompson, as well as the Kerner thing. The Kerner thing is what most people knew him for. So he had this image of being a tough prosecutor.[1]

There was some speculation that he might run for mayor. I don't think that was real serious. But then in 1975, he announced for governor and was elected in 1976. And that was the same year I was elected to the legislature. So on the political scene, as far as partisan politics, he was pretty new. I think he got appointed by Nixon, so he was viewed as a Republican, but he wasn't an active, partisan Republican running for office. So to go from U.S. attorney into the governor's office was somewhat unusual; though we've had other U.S. attorneys make it to the governor's office, often there's something in between.

I think Dwight Green, who was governor 1940 to '48, came straight from the U.S. attorney's office. I can't remember if he ended up being state's attorney for a while in Cook County, but I think he might have come straight from the U.S.

---

[1] Otto Kerner was convicted in February 1973, six years after resigning as Illinois governor, for accepting bribes, while governor, in the form of horse racetrack stock from Arlington Park manager Marge Everett. See Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, March 4, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 37-38, for Lawrence's assessment of Kerner.

attorney's office. He's the one who prosecuted Capone. He got elected governor, Republican governor, in 1940, and his administration kind of ended in some scandals. So it's somewhat ironic that some of these people who came with this image of fighting corruption—their administrations get caught up in it a little bit, too.

DePue: I'm curious. Timing is always important in politics. Thompson's timing is good in the sense that he had done some things that I would think certainly antagonized the Daley administration; but Daley wasn't in the picture when he—

Edgar: Oh, no, he was. Daley was still alive.

DePue: But not by the time you got there, at least.

Edgar: No, not by the time I got there. But when he [Thompson] got elected, Daley was still alive. But what was more fortunate for him, timing-wise, was that the Democrats had a huge primary; and to this day, it haunts the Democratic Party. We're sitting here in 2009, and there's speculation, will we have a Democratic primary battle? And one of their arguments against it is that Mike Madigan still remembers that Howlett/Walker battle and the fact that they then lost the governorship for twenty-six years, or however many years afterwards. So that primary battle was brutal, and many thought that that gave Jim Thompson the opportunity. When Thompson announced, because Howlett and him were kind of buddies, he didn't know Howlett was going to run. But when Howlett finally got talked into running, everybody thought, The election's over; Howlett will just win in a walk, because he'd always won the other offices. He'd been state auditor back then, and then he was secretary of state. And he was well-liked by everybody—a lot of Republicans liked him—so they just figured Howlett would win. But, Walker didn't go away quietly. Walker proved to be a lot more resilient than people thought, in that primary, and that was a pretty tough primary. So by the time Thompson faced Howlett, Walker had bloodied up Howlett pretty much as an old-time politician.

So timing was good for Jim Thompson. Timing's good for anybody who usually wins. And the fact that he'd come off this clean, crime-buster, root-out-corruption-in-government image against Mike Howlett, who, by the time the general election came around, looked like the epitome of an old-time politician. We've mentioned before, several times, that picture that had both Daley and Howlett in black hats—which people wore back then, hats—and laughing on St. Patrick's Day, and their jowls; it just looked like these were old-time politicians. So that helped, I think, Thompson a lot, too. Besides the fact Thompson turned out to be a good campaigner and was a smart guy.

DePue: How much did Thompson benefit from the fact that he wasn't Walker? And Walker had such an antagonistic relationship with the press, with the legislature, certainly, and obviously with the Daley folks up in Chicago.

Edgar: You mean as governor?

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: A lot. Walker was a confrontationist, and Thompson; that wasn't his style. Thompson was very good at getting publicity; and I mean this in a positive sense, because that's an important part of this process. And he was good at not coming off as a snob or anything like that. I think it hurt him in the end; like drinking the schnapps from the plunger at the parade, and stuff like that.

During the campaign for governor in 1976, he picked up this Irish setter pup and bought it—I think it was called Guv—and he took it with him on the campaign. And one of the worst things on the campaign staff was to be the guy who got stuck with having to take care of Guv, because Thompson would use it for the photo then turn around and (DePue laughs) hand it to the poor staff guy. I know pups have quick digestive tracts and all kinds of things, and an Irish setter is a little, some people think, dumb. I had one; I always thought he was just free-spirited, but he probably wasn't very smart.

DePue: On the lively side, at least.

Edgar: And as a pup, too. I used to hear from the campaign that that was the worst job; he'd turn around, and you'd get the dog. Thompson was very good at those kinds of things, but he was not a confrontational guy. As I mentioned the other day, one of his real strong characteristics—he was not paranoid. People could say nasty things about him, and it didn't soak into him. It just ran off his back. He just didn't keep book, which is unusual in politics. And when you'd meet him, he was extremely friendly—kind of like Clinton, too—had that ability to look at you, and you think, oh, he knows you, and everything like that; and he may not remember you five minutes later. But Thompson did have the ability to adapt, whatever his environment—sometimes too much. Sometimes we used to think he was a little phony. He'd come down to southern Illinois, and he'd start talking in a southern accent; and we just knew that wasn't real, but he would always try to relate to where he was.

But if you disagreed with him, he didn't get in a fight with you; he just disagreed, and he'd try to find some other way you could agree. Whereas Walker—that was his style; it was my way or no way, and that wasn't Thompson's style at all. So after all the turmoil of Walker for four years, Jim Thompson was definitely a breath of fresh air, and people enjoyed him. He was newly married, had a dog, later they had a baby, and they were a master at how this got given to the public. And he got along with the press very well. The press liked him. His press people, for the most part, were former press people, and they had ties in the media. But Thompson was very good. As U.S. attorney, he was very good. He used to always leak things. U.S. attorney's offices are known for leaking all kinds of things, and Thompson was a master at it; so he already had a pretty good rapport with a lot of the Chicago media folks, which is what matters most in this state.

DePue: I've heard several stories of reporters who were working the state house beat—that it wasn't unusual for Thompson to suddenly step into their office and just sit down, and the story always includes things like putting his feet up on the desk and start chatting with them.

Edgar: Yeah, he did. He would go down a lot to the press room and kibitz with them, and he'd go down and have a beer with them. He was great at that. But that wasn't an accident; that was all planned. His press guys were very good at understanding that part of it. Now, they may not have understood much of the issues, the press guys, but they understood getting along with... And particularly after Walker, who the press didn't like, Thompson was 180-degrees different.

DePue: How about his relationship working with the legislature?

Edgar: I think at first, the legislature was a little hesitant, because here's a guy who had tried to prosecute some of them. Some legislators he had prosecuted had gone to jail, and the rumors always were he was looking at—including some of the leaders. So I think there was a little bit of, let's wait and see, and this guy, he's going to come in; he doesn't know anything about state government. We're going to have to show him and teach him. But the Republican side, I think, for the most part had run with him, and he had run very well, and it had helped them, probably, in many cases. So they were not as apprehensive as the Democrats were.

Of course, when he got elected and before he was sworn in, Mayor Daley died, and so then you kind of had a vacuum in Chicago. Thompson was able to be a bigger player on the state scene because he didn't have to compete with the mayor of Chicago, really, throughout his term. Harold Washington a little bit, but Thompson had that opportunity to be the big person in the state. And by "the state," I mean, you got to take into consideration that Chicago media is two-thirds of the state's population, and their number-one priority is the mayor of Chicago, not the governor of the state of Illinois. So when you had a caretaker mayor, the caretaker was an old politician; and Thompson was young, a little more interesting to cover, and much better at working the media. Mayors of Chicago for the most part have—at least Mayor Daley and Bilandic, kind of—ignored the media. They didn't want to be in the media so much. Thompson wanted to, and he knew how to do it and took advantage of that opportunity.[2]

The legislature, I think, came around. He turned out to be kind of a fun-loving old-time politician in some ways. He liked to have a drink with them, and he didn't go after them—there wasn't that confrontation with Walker they dealt with. Sometimes the staff would promise things and didn't deliver—that made them [legislators] mad—but Thompson himself; I think they kind of liked him at that point. I think later on, there were times they felt like he didn't work that hard, or he wasn't—again, I think they blamed more on his staff. Though sometimes

[2] Richard J. Daley died December 20, 1976, and the city council named Michael Bilandic as his successor until the 1977 special election. Bilandic won the election and served until 1979, when Jane Byrne defeated his reelection bid.

Thompson had a tendency to—he never lied to anybody, but he would tell you kind of what you wanted to hear, and you'd walk away thinking he'd agreed with you, but he hadn't. I used to sit in those meetings when I was legislative liaison and think, He hasn't quite gone over the line yet, but those people are going to leave thinking he's going to do what they're going to do, and he's not going to do what they want to do. So after a while, I think that began to catch up with him, with legislators, too. But I think initially, he had much better relationships with the legislature than the legislature had thought when he was running for governor.

DePue: When he selected you as his legislative liaison, what guidance did he give you in terms of how to work the body, so to speak?

Edgar: (laughs) He didn't. He figured I knew more about the legislature than he did. He was still new. I went to work for him—he'd been governor a little more than two years, and he didn't yet consider himself a legislative master. Later, I think he felt he was a legislative master. And he did not sit down with the leaders on a regular basis, like they do today, back then. The liaison kind of took care of that. He'd meet with them individually, but you didn't have those summit meetings as they have now, which are more for show than anything else. He dealt with the legislature, but it wasn't as much as he later did. Again, he didn't really give me any instructions.

I did tell him, "Now, Governor, I'm not going to do anything that's going to be illegal." And he said, "I don't want you to do anything— I'm not going to do anything..." There had always been a sense that some of his guys would tell the legislators some things, and it didn't happen. And I just said, "I'm just not going to do that." He said, "That's what I want. I want somebody who's going to be honest with me, too, and tell me what's going on." But for the most part, he figured I knew more about the legislature than he did. He didn't give me any instructions, *per se*.

You've got to understand, too: Thompson—smartest guy I've ever known in state government, by far. Smarter than Arrington, smarter than Madigan. Not as focused as those two, but just pure smarts, the smartest. But because he was so smart, he didn't have to work twenty-five hours a day. He would work, but then he would take time off. There'd be days we wouldn't know where he was—he was out antiquing or he was up in Wisconsin or whatever. Now, when we got into it, he'd stay up during the night and late sessions, and work things, but he didn't necessarily punch a clock. And the whole administration, when I went, was kind of like that. The chief of staff was a very bright guy, a guy who I'd been an intern with, Jim Fletcher, who's a lobbyist now, and a very successful lobbyist. But he wasn't your typical manager. Thompson sure wasn't a manager, and Fletcher was the chief of staff, and he wasn't really a manager. There really wasn't any managing going on. I did not appreciate that when I was in the legislature. We just knew here was the governor's office and all that. When I got in there, it was—I won't say chaotic, but it wasn't organized as I thought it would have been.

DePue: He was a more spontaneous kind of personality?

Edgar: The right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing. Sometimes the right hand was fighting with the left or conniving against the left hand. (DePue laughs) I had directors say they were so glad when I became legislative liaison because they used to worry that they were getting undercut. They'd go up before the legislature and find out their own administration's trying to sabotage them. When I was there, I said, "You can do this; you can't do that. And if this is what you need, I'll go to bat for you."

That's how Art Quern—who later became Thompson's chief of staff—and I became really good friends. He was director of public aid, and there were a lot of issues that first year I was legislative liaison, and I spent a lot of time with him. I had spent some time, when I was a legislator, handling some of his bills; but as the legislative liaison, I spent an inordinate amount of time, that first year, on his budget. At the end of the session, we pretty much got everything he needed the way he needed it, and he just thanked me and said, "Before, I used to think I had to fight with the legislature; I couldn't trust them, and I couldn't trust the governor's office, either." He said, "This is the first time I've felt like we were on the same team."

But there was a lot of Machiavellian stuff going on; and it wasn't nasty, it was just kind of the way... First of all, Fletcher kept his eye on the big picture. Jim Fletcher was great at cutting deals, like on Crosstown—this was an expressway in Chicago that's never been built, but they cut a deal twice on it with the mayor of Chicago. He was good at that, but he didn't worry about (laughs) running the staff. So you had Bob Mandeville, who was head of the Bureau of the Budget, and he had his fiefdom. Then you had Paula Wolff, who was program, and she kind of had her things. Now, Fletcher was a little more allied with Mandeville, but they weren't necessarily allied with Paula Wolff. And then Zale Glauberman, who had been my predecessor, had been kind of with Fletcher and Mandeville, and not necessarily with Paula and some of the directors. So when I came in, the guy who was right off the bat the guy I really enjoyed working with the most was Thompson's chief attorney, Julian D'Esposito; who, by default, started trying to bring some management sense, like, let's get together in the morning and talk over things, know what everybody's doing. And Julian had a little more management or orderly approach, but it really wasn't his job; he was chief counsel. But Jim Fletcher, for the most part, didn't care.

That's kind of what I walked into, and Thompson would just (laughs) float in and out. It wasn't like—as I was always accused, I was pretty hands-on. I probably wasn't as hands-on as maybe the rumors were, but I was probably much more hands-on than Jim Thompson was; it was just the nature. But he could walk in and in five minutes figure out what was going on; it might take me five days. But I was there, so I didn't have to spend five days. I always said part of Thompson's problem—he was so good that that was a problem, because he knew he was good, and he knew he could just kind of drift for a while and always catch up. And the other thing: Thompson was really good with people. People would come in and he'd just charm them, and he knew that; and sometimes he would get himself in so much trouble, thinking he could charm himself out of it—and most the time he did.

But the longer he was there, the less that charm worked, particularly with the legislature and with the public. You look at his popularity numbers: they just continue to decrease during his governorship.

DePue: There are stories that I've also heard—Thompson going and talking to the press in a very one-to-one kind of—just popping into their office sometimes—but he also apparently did that occasionally on the floor of the legislature.

Edgar: Not as often as the myth is. He did go down. The famous time he went down to get the White Sox—

DePue: But that's quite a bit farther down the road here.

Edgar: Yeah. I think he only went on the floor once, when I was the legislative liaison. First of all, I did not think it was proper. The governor shouldn't be on the floor in the legislature. I remember seeing pictures of Huey Long on the floor of the Louisiana legislature, and I always thought that was no good.

DePue: Why?

Edgar: They're separate branches. I just don't think the governor goes down and personally lobbies the legislature on the floor. He didn't testify in front of committees. If you ever get that going… I think there's got to be a little bit of separation. That was my feeling. I remember seeing Huey Long down, running the Louisiana legislature, and I think any legislator should resent that. Now, a lot of legislators liked to have Thompson down when he did go down later on, but I think the leaders at times got a little frustrated. And then where are you going to draw the line? You go down on one bill. The next bill, that's not important to you, and you're not down there? Are they going to expect you down? Just for a whole host of reasons. I never would do it, and I got criticized because Thompson had done it some, but I just said, "Hey. I'll meet them in my office, or I'll even go to the caucuses or meet… But," I said, "I'm just not going. I just don't think the governor belongs on the floor of the legislature, as I don't think legislators belong in the deliberation of our staff and the governor when we're trying to decide what we're doing. You've got to have some separation."

Now, he socialized with them. Back then, they used to have functions at the mansion. You had Greek night; the Greeks would put on this dinner, and it was a big party. And it was in the springtime. You might have some of those things. He'd have legislators over at the end of the session, and they'd have—Phil Rock and he were well known for sitting down and having drinks. They'd sit down and solve the problems. But rank-and-file members I don't think came quite as much in contact with Thompson as the myth is. I think the leaders did on a social basis. Not so much, till later, [were] the four leaders sitting down with the governor at the end of the session. I did that when I was the legislative liaison. I would shuttle back and forth with the leaders. Sometimes I'd take them down to see Thompson, but usually if there was going to be a get-together of the four leaders, it would be the four

leaders and me—which was a little difficult because Bill Redmond was more of a figurehead. He might be there, but it wasn't like he could deliver.

But again, Thompson worked enough. He wasn't a Rod Blagojevich, who was never in the office. Thompson was in the office, but Thompson would disappear at times. But Thompson could come into the office and in two hours understand and make decisions on things that might take other people three or four days. It never struck me that Thompson laid awake at night worrying about what he'd already decided. But the most important characteristic about Thompson, to me, was he was not paranoid. To this day, it strikes me—and I'm not around him much anymore at all, and he might be a little more sensitive—but criticism just didn't affect him back then, which is a great trait to have.

He had a great political sense when you laid out the facts to him, and his political judgment was very good. His judgment on people was excellent. I think one of the other strong suits of Jim Thompson: he had a knack for bringing young people along, and I'm including myself, who a lot of folks wouldn't take the chance with. But he had a good knack, I think, of bringing people on and putting them in positions. And even people that he liked, he wouldn't put them in certain positions. I'm not going to mention the name, but for his chief of staff one time, there was one person who was very close to him, who everybody thought would probably get it. I didn't think he'd get it because I didn't think Thompson would pick him, and he didn't—though he was very close to him. He just kind of knew this guy wasn't the right guy. And he always did that. Occasionally he would maybe make a mistake. We all make mistakes—you make a lot of appointments. But I always thought, again, that one of his strong characteristics as an effective governor was his ability to pick good people. He wasn't real good at firing people. I don't know if he ever fired anybody himself. Fletcher had to fire people, or Art Quern, later, had to fire people. But he kind of knew, I think, when people needed to move, too; he wouldn't necessarily move them—have somebody else do that.

He was great to work for. My only complaint: sometimes I had a hard time finding him. But for the most part, he knew the legislative stuff was very important; if I needed to see him, I always got in to see him, and he would take the time to do what he had to do in the legislative stuff. Now, he wouldn't call me up all the time and say, "What are we doing?" or try to meddle, but if I went and said, "You need to see this guy," he'd see that guy; or if I said, "I need thirty minutes on this matter," I always got the thirty minutes. Sometimes the gatekeeper, who was Greg Baise, would give me a hard time, but any time Thompson saw me around and said, "Do you need to see me,?" I got in to see him.

So I always felt accessibility when you're working for a person like governor is very important, and I always had pretty much instant accessibility, which I appreciated. Because I really wasn't part of his—he had his inner sanctum, his staff that had been there. Many of them had gone through the campaign with him. I was kind of an outsider. I had always got along with Thompson's people, but I wasn't with him in the campaign, and I was the outsider—not their, necessarily, pick for

this job, either, because they had other people in mind. But people said, "You're going to get middled." I never felt like I got middled, and I think part of it was because I always felt comfortable. I knew I could go to Thompson, and Thompson cared enough about what was going on in the legislature. There's some things he cared about more than other things. There's some things that just aren't your priorities, but the legislature, and what was happening there, was a priority.

And the other thing that's extremely important for the liaison—this is something that I did not appreciate—is at the end of the legislative session, you are the legislature. It has just shifted from the legislature, where you're down there lobbying legislators on bills; now they've all passed, and they're all on the governor's desk. And the governor in Illinois has a huge amount of power. He can not just veto or sign a bill; he can amendatory veto, which is a huge, huge power.

DePue: Something that the 1970 constitution—

Edgar: That '70 constitution gave the governor of Illinois, which no other governor has. He can rewrite a bill, basically—much broader than what they intended in the 1970 constitution, but that's how the courts interpreted it.[3] So the legislative liaison is the guy who has all those bills; and I would sit down with Governor Thompson on every bill. I didn't leave them; I sat with him, and we went over every bill. And people knew that. So I went from where I was, down groveling with the legislature as the governor's legislative liaison and having lobbyists fighting with lobbyists who were maybe on the other side, and they all had to come to me. Legislators who, a month before, I was down there trying to lobby, had to then come and lobby me to try to get me to get the governor to sign their bill or maybe do a bill-signing ceremony in their district, which is very important to them.

But the key was, I had a deadline, and I had to sit down with Thompson. Well over a thousand bills, the two sessions I was there, and have to sit down with him. That's tedious work, it's summertime, you've been through a session, and you just kind of want to get away. I used to have to go—I'd go to Wisconsin. I flew up to his farm. I went to the racquet club at the West Side Club, in Chicago, a couple times and caught him in the locker room after he was playing racquetball, and I went to his house in Chicago. I caught him wherever I could. But he was pretty good. He knew he had to see me before those deadlines.

DePue: What was the deadline before pocket veto would take place?

[3] The Illinois Supreme Court has held that governors may not use the amendatory veto power to replace legislation with wholly new bills. But instead of marking the line between permissible use and unconstitutional substitution, the court has reserved the power to judge amendatory vetoes on a case-by-case basis. See Joe R. Ourth, "The Illinois Amendatory Veto: Defining and Enforcing the Limits," *University of Illinois Law Review* (1987): 691-729 for a detailed discussion of court rulings on this power, Thompson's frequent use of it, and the unresolved constitutional issues the power raises.

Edgar: It wasn't pocket veto. If you didn't sign it, it would automatically become law. And that just never happened, and he didn't ever want to do that. He didn't want any bill to become law without his signature.

DePue: And was there a timeframe for that, then?

Edgar: You had roughly ninety days from when the bill passed. It said sixty, but the clock starts when they send it to you, and usually there's about thirty days you can just tell them to hold it and don't send it to you yet.

DePue: A thousand bills sounds like an overwhelming number.

Edgar: Oh, it is. It is.

DePue: How many of those actually had meat on them, percentage-wise?

Edgar: You had to research every one of them, and you had to hear from the lobbyists and the interest groups, and you had to understand them. I'm not sure I understood them all. This part of the job was all Greek to me, and I was just overwhelmed. Now, I'll go back. The first year I was legislative liaison—you got to understand the setting. I'm new. You got an administration that's a little loose; (laughs) would be the nice way to describe it. We had all kinds of issues, and we'll talk about them more specifically, but most nothing got done. We couldn't get the taxes; we couldn't get—I did get some of the budget through; but even that, a lot of that didn't get done. We'd come to the end of June, and everything is still hanging.

So we've got to be in almost constant session between June and the end of the year—I think the end of the next year. It had never been like that before. But I still have a thousand bills that have passed. Imagine—and this is a lot of paperwork. This is a lot of bills, files, just sitting on my desk. We're remodeling my offices at the end of the session. That end of the capitol building's being vacated, and they're going to redo everything. So we have to move out of that to temporary quarters, and here we just got chaos and things aren't done, and we got bills laying around. So I thought I was going to go out of my mind.

The biggest pressure, though, was that we just didn't get all those issues done by June thirtieth. The Democrats were holding out—they weren't going to go along—and George Ryan and some of his guys were causing problems in the House side. Senate Republicans were okay. But we just couldn't get agreement. And the highway package, which was going to be the gas tax, the Democrats didn't support that. Then you had an internal fight going on in the Democrat—Jane Byrne cut Mike Madigan's patronage from him, and all this stuff, because she was mad; she wanted something done there.

DePue: Was she mayor at that time?

Edgar: Yes. She had got elected mayor about two months after I took over as legislative liaison. She'd upset Bilandic in the primary.

DePue: And that was the famous snowstorm that—

Edgar: Which had also forced Thompson to come back the night he called me. But she was feeling her way. She was a unique person, too. I didn't have that many dealings with her, but just observing. But it made it a little tough for Thompson and Fletcher because they were up there dealing with… You never knew where she was going to be, so it was tough to cut the deals there to get the Democrats in Springfield to respond—because the tradition always was you'd make the deal with the mayor, and the mayor and the Democrats then go along. But the Democrats won't go along in the legislature until the mayor makes the deal. You had a new mayor who was a little hard to pin down to make a deal, and she changed her mind, as Jimmy Carter found out in the 1980 presidential primary. She was for Jimmy Carter, said wonderful things about him, then two weeks later endorsed Teddy Kennedy. And Carter still won that primary, but—

DePue: What was the impact on Madigan, though? Because you said she was trying to cut him out of the loop.

Edgar: She cut him out. She cut his patronage. (clears throat) Madigan made up with her real quick, and then Madigan became—that's how I got to start working with Madigan, because they'd cut a deal on the Crosstown Expressway again. Crosstown was an expressway they were going to build on the west side of Chicago, and I forget when they made the first deal. Fletcher had cut the first deal to build it for Thompson, and then they needed the money and didn't have that much, so they cut the second deal to abandon the Crosstown, so that freed up money.[4] Because in his office, he had headlines on the Crosstown deal and the scuttling of the Crosstown about four years later, and he was involved in cutting both those deals. (laughs) But Thompson and Byrne kind of worked out a deal on transportation money and a whole host of things. So Madigan, to get back in the good graces of Jane Byrne, agreed to support her agenda, which put him in alliance with us; and then I worked with him a lot on a variety of issues. One of those issues put Madigan in confrontation with Rich Daley; that was the sales tax cut.

But that first six months in the legislative liaison, I wasn't real sure I'd made the right decision (laughs) about coming there. And actually my biggest problem in the legislature was not the Democrats; it was George Ryan and the Republicans in the House. George Ryan, if left by himself, would have probably been okay, but he had some guys under him: Sam Vincent, who had been in the legislative liaison, was now a state representative; Ed McBroom, George Ryan's county chairman from Kankakee County. They were always pestering him about patronage. George Ryan's district, Kankakee, has a lot of mental health facilities; and that creates a lot of jobs, that creates patronage, which the county chairman—and George was part of that machine—cared a lot about. So their main priority was jobs in Kankakee. Sam Vincent had Lincoln, Logan County, in his district, which also had, at that time, a

[4] See Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, for role of public protest in killing the Crosstown.

mental institution. It didn't have any prison; I think it was just a mental institution—and so he always worried about jobs. So McBroom and Vincent were always bugging Ryan about, we need more jobs, hold up the governor's bills until we get more jobs. On the other side of the equation, the Democrats and the Senate Republicans knew what they were doing, and they didn't want to give them more jobs. You had to put it in the bill. They didn't want to give more jobs to Ryan, and so that would cause fights all the time.

And also, Art Telcser, who still was George's main assistant leader, was always a little Machiavellian. I remember on the gas tax, he told George he ought to table the bill because he [Ryan] was going to get blamed for this tax increase. So without telling me, without telling any of us, one day—we have the squawk box; we'd listened to the House—George Ryan got up and tabled our transportation bill without telling us. And I remember Thompson called me because he happened to be listening, and said, "What's going…?" I said, "I don't know." I went down; I said, "George, what are you doing?" And he said, "This could be too hot to handle." But it was Telcser. So by himself, George would have done all right, but George had these guys who were all… I spent 75 percent of my time with George and 25 percent of my time with the other three caucus leaders—and they were the minority.

So that was all that first year. I had come from being a legislator on the other side, and… But Thompson himself had a rather loose work style, but he was very good. Whenever I needed to see him, he was there. If he needed to talk to somebody… The other thing about Thompson, he's smart; he's a quick study. You give Thompson a piece of paper, and in five minutes he's digested—in five seconds, he's digested—and he can then sit down and carry on a two-hour meeting with somebody and be just as cogent on the facts as anybody in the room—guys who live with it all the time.

So I always used to use Thompson—he was the last reserve. I didn't want to use him too much because I think you could overdo that; but if you really had a problem with a legislator or some issue, then you'd have him go down and talk to the governor. But I kind of limited it. Now, that was fun. The politics was fun. That's a lot more fun, sometimes, than figuring out what are you going to cut in a state agency and how are you going to deal with Medicaid. So the politics, the give and take, is fun, and I think the longer he was governor, the more he liked to be involved in that fun. The two years I was there, for the most part, he was involved, but only when I got him involved.

DePue: You mentioned in Arrington's case that whenever he entered the room, wherever he was, he was going to dominate that room. It strikes me that Thompson was very much that kind of an oversized personality as well.

Edgar: He was oversized, physically. (laughter) That was what I always thought. I don't think it was personality-wise. He went into a room; he didn't take it over like an Arrington did, but when he walked in—what is he, six-seven? I mean, huge. So he always stood out in any room. I wouldn't say he was shy, but he was not boisterous

or domineering—and Arrington wasn't boisterous, but he just walked in and kind of took it over. Thompson didn't necessarily do that, but I think by his size, a lot of people—and also, he was governor. The governor, most settings he went into, he was the governor.

DePue: So the deference that you're going to get anyway.

Edgar: Yeah. You could have been a four-foot-three mute, and if you're the governor, you're probably going to get some deference. But Thompson, I always thought his size helped him. I thought that was a big plus, because he did stand out. But it was a different aura than Arrington. Arrington, when he sat down at a meeting, you knew. The stories they would tell me—Thompson, at the Governors Conference [National Governors Association meeting], he'd get there and go off antiquing or something. But Arrington would walk into those meetings, sit down, and everybody knew Arrington was there. Now, Thompson, when he had to be on, he could be on, but he wasn't one who was automatically on; Arrington was just automatically on. There was a difference in their persona.

DePue: I wanted to go through the other three leaders, because you talked quite a bit about George Ryan. And the interesting thing is you spent so much time working with Ryan because he was the difficult one to manage, apparently; and he's the minority leader in the House.

Edgar: Right. No, it was crazy.

DePue: Let's go to Bill Redmond, then.

Edgar: Bill Redmond was Speaker, but he was kind of a token Speaker. He really didn't make too many decisions. Mike Madigan was more the power behind the throne. And the House Democrats—they weren't as unified, maybe, as they are now; The leaders didn't have the control. That was very much true in the Senate, that leaders didn't have the control; but in the House, they didn't have the control they have today. George had pretty good control over his members—but he didn't have the majority—because he was pretty good at taking care of their needs. And it was difficult because you couldn't exclude Redmond from the meetings. But if you had Redmond and Madigan, and you only had one or the other, it made a problem, a little bit.

One time, about halfway through that first session, which was a very difficult session, Thompson had been invited by the Legis/50 group—

DePue: Legis/50?

Edgar: Yeah, this was one of the national legislative groups.[5] I think it was Legis/50—I don't think it was NCSL—some group, to come and speak at a forum of legislators,

[5] Founded in 1964 to promote localized reform of state legislatures, the Citizen's Conference on State Legislatures changed its name in 1976 to Legis/50, the Center for Legislative Improvement. The organization

and it was going to be in Telluride, Colorado. And Thompson, the possibility of running for president someday was always in the back of his mind, I'm sure. So I said, "This might be a good opportunity for you to get some exposure outside the state, and this would be..." I forget who else was on the panel. I think maybe Governor Lamm from Colorado might have been. Who was the guy that wanted to cut off things for old folks? The white-haired guy. Anyway, the governor of Colorado, I think either at the time or had just left the office. I can't remember if he was still there. So he said, "Yeah, I'll do that."

[John] Deere provides their jet plane. I said, "You're going to go to the legislative group. Why don't we invite the legislative leaders? That'd be a great opportunity for you and the leaders to get away and fly out there and spend some time together." I was kind of hoping we could get a lot of things worked out on this flight; that was part of the reason to do this. And I guess after we talked about the leaders, Deere agreed to give us their big plane. So we had a nice corporate jet to fly everybody out to this meeting, it was all legit, and we stayed overnight. We flew in and came back the next day.

I just remember at that meeting, I had Redmond, but we invited Madigan, too, because we really wanted to try to get something done. I think all the other—Rock and [David "Doc"] Shapiro and Ryan were on board. I'm pretty sure George was there. And we actually got some things done. I kept pushing them in the conversations, to talk about this issue and that issue, but we actually began to get some consensus. It didn't resolve by the end of the session, but it was the first time we'd got everybody together—it was an informal basis—and got everybody talking about the same thing. Because the only value of those get-togethers—it was not to work out the deal; you got to do that by kind of running back and forth individually—but to get them all in the same room to have them all shake their heads, Yes, I agree, and have everybody see them say they agree. [The leaders] know they see you, so they can't back out. That's the advantage of having those get-togethers: it's not to thrash it out; it's usually to get everybody to officially say, yes, I agree to this. But it also helped at this point—this was early on, and the first time we'd ever tried this—to get them to start talking about the issues and see where they really were and if we could get some consensus.

The key was, we brought Madigan along, because Redmond—and I like Bill Redmond, he was a nice guy—just wasn't the power. He was from DuPage County. He'd been put in as a compromise. He never was from Chicago, and so they didn't trust him; plus, he was in his sixties by then, if not seventies, and it just wasn't his nature to be a leader.

DePue: I guess that's what I'm curious about, because normally people in those kinds of positions have outsized egos, and yet he's clearly deferring to his majority leader.

---

decided to change their name after moving to Denver in 1975, in order to distinguish itself from the National Conference of State Legislatures. Clarence O. PeCoy, "Guide to the Holdings," The Legis/50 Collection (April 1984), Auraria Library, Denver, CO. Available at http://archives.auraria.edu/legis50/main.html.

Edgar: One time after he became Speaker and there was some big issue that came up, he sided with Daley over Walker. Walker had originally supported him before Daley did—I don't know if it was that or he'd put in committee chairman or something like that—and people said, "It looks like you're just going along with Daley," and he said, "You dance with the guy that brought you." I think he was smart enough to know that he didn't have the control; he needed them; that's how he got there in the end, so he would go along. But his nature just wasn't a guy you'd go in and say, "All right, you've got agreement here; can you deliver your votes?" He couldn't deliver the votes, so you'd go deal with Madigan. And Madigan was very careful and tried to be deferential to Redmond, but that's who you knew you had to go to, to put together votes. Now, he couldn't necessarily put together all the downstate votes, but he could definitely put [together] the Chicago votes—and Madigan could usually do the downstate votes.

DePue: Up to this time, we've been talking a lot about the House, and it's time to transition to the Senate, but let's start by asking you how you had to deal with the House differently than the Senate, and then we'll go into the personalities.

Edgar: The problem was just because of George. He just was a guy who took a lot of time. He was always calling, wanting directors to come to his office so he could chew them out in front of the members or his constituents, to look like he was delivering. You never knew for sure where he was going to be on things, whereas you knew if Shapiro said he was going to do something, he did something. He [Shapiro] had trouble with his members, and we knew that, but he wasn't the problem; it was more some of his members. But George was the—which surprised me, because I had been allied with George, and I got along with George pretty well. I was just dumbfounded by how difficult he was to deal with. He'd rant and rave, then he'd tell me later, "Don't get mad; this is all an act." And I said, "I don't like being dressed down in front of members." I said, "I just don't like that, and I don't like you dragging in my directors and threatening them and all that. If you got a problem, tell us, and we'll see if we can work it out; if we can't, then we'll disagree, but you don't..." But that was just his style. As far as calling the office and wanting things, complaining about things—George loved to be in everything. He just liked to be in the deal. I don't know if I told you this story already, but early on, we had bills in appropriations committee. Did I tell you this story?

DePue: I don't believe so.

Edgar: Oh, well, you have to listen to it twice if you have. It wasn't the big approp—it was just a few bills, but it was the first bills of the session. And that's something we worried about in the governor's office, our appropriation bills. They were very important, and you didn't want to get the budget all screwed up any sooner than you had to. I run into Pete Peters, who is the Republican spokesman on appropriations. He says, "Hey, why don't we get together with Gene Barnes"—that's the Democratic chairman of the appropriations committee, an African-American from Chicago who I'd served under when I was on the appropriations committee. He said, "Let's get together and see if we can work out before committee so we

don't…" And that was pretty traditional; you'd work out the committee chairman, before committee; see if you could get things agreed to so you didn't have a lot—you might have a lot of debate, but in the end, you knew what was going to happen. So I said, "Fine."

So Barnes and Pete and I sit down, and we work out these bills. And I can't remember if they wanted to add or wanted to cut, but the total probably was about—it cost us, different than what we really wanted—five million dollars. Fine. And then Pete says, "Now, don't tell George we had this meeting because he'll get paranoid." George was very paranoid; that was the other thing. That was the contrast with Thompson. (DePue laughs) George is very paranoid, very sensitive. He said, "Don't let George know we had this meeting. He thinks we're meeting behind his back, and it's just..." And I said, "No, I'm not going to say anything to him." But we had it all worked out, and the meeting was going to be in a couple of days.

Next day, I'm walking on the rotunda, and Ryan sees me. He said, "Hey, we got bills up in appropriation tomorrow. Let's get together and work it out." I couldn't tell him we've already worked it out. I said, "Okay." He said, "I'll get Barnes and Pete and have you down, and we'll work it out." So we get in there, and I know Gene Barnes is going, what's the deal? I've already done this, (DePue laughs) but he fortunately didn't say anything either. And of course Pete didn't say anything. We're sitting there. Ryan says, "So what do you got here?" So we go through what we got. "All right, what do you want, Barnes?" And Barnes went back to his original position. He said, "Fine." It cost us another ten million dollars. (laughs) It was a terrible... He did not negotiate; he just kind of gave Barnes what he wanted. And I know I'm looking at Pete, and Pete is looking at me, and we can't say a word; just shaking our head like, eh.

But that was George. He never worried about the details of what he was bargaining; he just wanted to be in the deal. He didn't know what the deal was and didn't so much care about it, so George was not a good guy to have (laughs) go make the deals; but he loved making deals. And he loved it as governor. He'd always make deals, but he never paid attention to what the deal was, so much. But George just took an inordinate amount of time.

On the Senate side, you had Phil Rock, who was a prince of a guy, and Doc Shapiro, who was a prince of a guy. Neither one of them could deliver that many votes.

DePue: And we should mention that this is a Democratically-controlled Senate, as well.

Edgar: Democratic-controlled Senate. Phil Rock had just become the Senate president, taking over from Tom Hynes, who had gone to Chicago to be the assessor, which in Illinois politics—Cook County assessor is next to being mayor, which is much higher than being a state Senate president.

DePue: What had happened to Cecil Partee?

Edgar: Partee had left. I can't remember where he went. He eventually got to be state's attorney, but I forget what—he left to go do something in Chicago, but he was gone. And Tom Hynes had taken over for a couple years. Hynes and Rock were the young up-and-comers we'd identified back in 1970, and Hynes was closer to the mayor and got picked to be the leader over Phil Rock. Then when he left, Phil Rock got picked to be the leader. And Rock was just—I guess it was his—how long had he been leader? He might have been leader for a while. I can't remember. No, he hadn't been leader; he just became that.

DePue: No, his first term was '79–'80, according to my records, at least.

Edgar: That's when I was there.

Yeah, I was thinking later, when I was secretary of state, he was leader. But the trouble was, in the Senate, you still had much more the barons, the committee chairmen.

DePue: Is it more collegial in nature?

Edgar: No, not so much collegial. I wouldn't call it collegial, but they were much more independent. Committee chairmen—Howie Carroll was the Senate appropriations chairman, and Rock couldn't always get Howie to do what Rock wanted. It was very difficult. Howie liked to do it himself. And then the Republican spokesman was a guy named Dave Regner, and Dave Regner could be as cantankerous as Howie, and Doc Shapiro couldn't necessarily get Dave Regner and the Republicans on the appropriations committee to go the way he wanted to go or the way we wanted to go. So I had to spend—my people had—I didn't spend as much time, because the last few years, I'd been more in the House. Now, I knew Regner because he served in the House, and I knew those guys, but my Senate guy was pretty good. I had three guys under me. The Senate guy was a guy by the name of Terry Bedgood, who was very good, and he spent a lot of time working those guys. I would go over, but more often I'd go over to see the leaders, or I'd figure out how to get around those guys. They were individually difficult, but it wasn't from the leadership.

I remember at the end of the first session, public aid—Art Quern's department at that time—they were just messing around in the Senate with his appropriations, big-time, and the Republicans were in league with the Democrats on this. Howie and Dave Regner would get together, and they'd kind of dream up ideas and things. One year—it wasn't when I was liaison—one of the tricks the legislature would do—and it's why we got in trouble; I came in as governor and I inherited it—at the end of the session, they'd want to spend so much money. They then would make up revenue estimates to fit how much money they'd spent, as opposed to having revenue estimates and then spending up to that. And one year, they were trying to justify their spending on what the revenues were, and they were looking at things,

and they said, "How much...? Who knows, let's come up with a number." They came up with a number, and the last three digits were the birth date of Howie Carroll's oldest daughter. That was how they came up with that number. (DePue laughs) But they would do things.

And Howie Carroll was a very smart guy, but they had no checks on them, these two, especially when Regner and Carroll would get agreement. So I had to figure out how to get around them on the public aid appropriation. I remember there was a House Democrat named Mike McLean. He was from Quincy. He's now a lobbyist. We were pretty good friends when I was in the legislature. We were similar ages—I might be a tad older than him. His dad was one who had died during, I think, the ERA debate, and he'd taken his place. But he was close to Madigan, and I just said, "Boy, I'm really having trouble." Because he'd helped me in the House on that appropriation. I said, "I'm really having trouble in the Senate. I don't know how to get around Howie Carroll." And he said, "Why don't you go talk to Madigan, because he's got guys over there he's close with."

So that's one of my first conversations with Madigan. I said, "Can you help me? I need to try to get something done on the public aid bill in the Senate." He said, "Let me check," and he called back and said, "Go over and talk to"—[Frank] Savickas was the name of the guy who was his senator, but he was the ward committeeman, so Madigan was more important in the world scheme of things than Savickas was. And a couple other guys. He said, "Go talk to those guys." So I went and talked to them, and they all swung around. Long story short: we got public aid done almost exactly the way Quern wanted it, and a lot of it had to do with the fact that I got help from Madigan to go around what Howie Carroll wanted to do.

But I personally didn't spend as much time, because Bedgood could deal with a lot of those personalities and was pretty good at it. I would kind of go in for the big things. But in the House, Ryan just always insisted—he didn't want to deal with my two people working the House. He didn't like them. He'd deal with me and then want to see the governor. But Rock—you go talk to Rock, and he was good.

One of the big issues of the first session was the sales tax. Rich Daley, who was then a state senator, had put a bill in to eliminate the sales tax on food and drugs. At that time, they thought we had a little money in the treasury, a little surplus, so they wanted to spend it; and so his suggestion was we were going to eliminate the sales tax on food and drug. And we couldn't afford that. Mandeville, the Bureau of the Budget director, said, "That's too much money out of the revenue stream. We might have a little money now, but it's not going to last, and that's too much." So we fought it, but Democrats passed it anyway. We didn't have a deal with Jane Byrne at that time. This was during the regular session, and they passed this sales tax exempting all food and drugs. I forget how many hundreds of millions of dollars it was going to cost us, but Thompson vetoed it. We didn't think we could hold the veto, because we thought we were going to lose some Republicans. So he vetoed it, but we also put an alternative bill in to do it gradually, one year at a time, so we had some time to adjust to it. That was our compromise.

DePue: One year at a time?

Edgar: Meaning that you'd take one cent off one year, and the next year—

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: That would be four or five cents at that time. And so when they cut the deal with Jane Byrne on transportation money, that was part of it, the sales tax. She supported that [Thompson's] position. So that meant Madigan was now allied with us on that. Daley wouldn't go along. Daley wanted the whole thing. And what we did: we put the new bill in, and it was going to be voted on before the override, because we wanted to get that passed; then there wouldn't be a need for the override. We could hold the override if we had the other bill. The people who wanted sales tax exemption immediately, knew if they killed the bill we had, then they would get the override; but they also knew they couldn't kill the bill. What they wanted to do was amend that bill to make it like the vetoed bill. It was a parliamentary procedure.

So we first were going to vote on it in the House because it felt stronger in the House—and this underscores something about the four leaders. Of course, Ryan's on board. All four leaders are on board, but the first show is going to be in the House. So I'm talking to George: "How many votes you have? Who are they?"; and he tells me. I talk to Madigan: "How many votes you got?"; and he tells me. And he also knows how many Republicans there are. I said, "That's a little different. Ryan..." And he said, "Trust me." When the vote comes, I'm standing with him, and he has his roll call marked how he thinks everybody's going to vote in the House; and I've got mine, based off what he told me and what George Ryan told me. George Ryan was off three or four; Madigan had them exactly right. He had the Republicans as well as the Democrats all right, to a person. We won pretty handily there, but we knew the problem was going to be in the Senate.

So I talked to Doc Shapiro: "How many votes you got?"; and he tells me. I'm working it, people are working it. I talked to Phil Rock, and he said, "This is how many votes I got. Don't worry, we don't have any trouble. We'll win this by six or seven." I said, "You sure?" "Yeah, yeah. Don't worry about it. Don't worry. Don't bug..."; kind of like I was bothering him. He said, "Oh, don't worry about it." So Madigan called and said, "How you doing in the Senate?" And I said, "I think I'm doing all right." I said, "I'm not sure. Rock tells me..." He said, "He doesn't have that many votes." He said, "It's going to be real close in the Senate." So I met with him. I said, "Tell me what it is," and he tells me. And I said, "Boy, that's not what Rock says." He said, "Rock can't count." (DePue laughs)

And the vote is on this amendment that they're trying to put on the bill to make it like the bill that was vetoed. So if we defeat the amendment, the bill that does it gradually will pass, and that will solve the problem. But if they put the amendment on—if we don't call the bill, they'll vote for the override; if we call the bill, then it passes and it's just like the override. So we got to defeat the amendment. A tie vote defeats an amendment, so in a way, we were in an easier position,

because they had to get one over. If we had an even tie… So we're checking the roll call, and on the Republican side, we think we know who everybody is, but it's not all that many. If Phil's right, then we're fine, but if Madigan's right, we're in trouble.

And in the Senate, you don't have as long; you don't have an explain-the-roll-call at this point in the Senate. So they vote; they vote like that, (snaps) and that's it. You can't get over and change a vote or go find somebody that's walked off the floor, like you can in the House. Instead of taking two hours, it takes about five seconds. So it's there. And so take the vote. It's a tie vote. And the only reason it was a tie vote—Pate Philip, who was not going to vote with us, said he wouldn't vote with us, at the last minute switched and voted with us; and that's the only reason that we tied. Rock was off by six votes, at least. I walked over. Phil said, "Boy, that was a lot closer than I thought it was going to be." (DePue laughs) I'm about ready to strangle him. Madigan had it exactly right. Shapiro pretty much had his guys. He knew where he was. He didn't know what Pate was going to do, and a couple other guys he wasn't sure. And I kind of knew—we all had Pate voting the other way, and Pate, at the last second, just changes his mind.[6]

But I walked away from that: the guy you can count on is Madigan. Everybody else, they might mean well, but nobody can count like Madigan; and to me, one of the keys of being an effective legislative leader is being able to count. Now, he could also persuade, but he could count. But part of it was Phil's members. He was the Senate president, but he had about five guys he could count on. The rest of the guys were very independent-minded, and you didn't have the strength in the city hall that you used to, to back whatever the leader was doing, particularly if it's what the mayor wanted done. Even though Jane Byrne was on this, that didn't mean all these members were going to follow from Chicago.

DePue: This is more Chicago politics than Illinois, but it's tough to separate the two. You've got Madigan, who used to be Richard J. Daley's guy; and now you've got Richard M. Daley, who is a legislator in the House, correct?

Edgar: Senate.

DePue: In the Senate.

Edgar: He's a senator.

DePue: So they're not really competitors in that respect?

Edgar: No, but what happened during this: this had got to be a big cause to Richie, and he'd gone around during the interim, after the session was over and after Thompson vetoed it, trying to stir up support. He went to senior groups and all that. But he also went into Madigan's ward. Now, you got to understand how these guys think. Their wards are their independent—you don't tread in my ward.

[6] The 27-27 vote in the Senate happened November 7, 1979. *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 1979, 3.

DePue: That's their turf.

Edgar: Yeah. And he wasn't even—he was a senator from another ward, and he came into Madigan's ward and stirred up the seniors. And I remember Madigan was enraged over that, and I don't think he's ever got over that. (DePue laughs) Because Richie and Madigan had been roommates in Con-Con, and I think Madigan viewed this as an encroachment on his territory, and who did Richie Daley think he was? So I think on that sales tax, while this was Madigan's official position because Jane Byrne had signed on, and Madigan wanted back into good graces of Jane Byrne, I think halfway through this, it was a personal thing; he wanted to beat Rich Daley on this.

And I member later on, when I'm governor, and how we break the first logjam. Richie was then the mayor, and he was kind of getting involved, and Madigan said, "To heck with that. I'll cut my own deal with Edgar instead of letting Daley cut a deal and go around me." I think it all started back in that sales tax battle, because there are certain things he's very touchy about, and his ward—because that's the basis. For a downstater, I never appreciated that. What's a ward? It's like a county. Who cares? But that's the foundation of the political power in Chicago, those wards, and the ward committeeman is the most important person in the political apparatus, not an elected official, but the ward committeeman. And when you start messing around in somebody's ward, you're really hitting home. I think that caused some tension between the two of them. They get along, but Madigan does not work for Daley. Daley has got to go to Madigan, and he either has to trade or convince him.

DePue: You're saying even today?

Edgar: Oh, definitely today. Yeah.

DePue: It's fascinating to think about, because we're talking about 1979, 1980, and who are the two most powerful politicians in Illinois today? You can arguably say Madigan and Daley.

Edgar: Yeah. And I, from that experience with Madigan—I left the liaison office a few months later, but till I left, I could work well with Madigan. And I remember, it was probably a couple years after I left, I was at some function in Chicago, and Madigan was there with his wife, and I went up. I think I was secretary of state then, and I didn't deal with Madigan all that much. So I came up and said, "Hello, Mr. Speaker." And he said, "Oh, hi, Secretary. Oh," he said, "Shirley, you know, when he was legislative liaison, I could trust him. His word was good. It wasn't like those other guys who lied to me." And I always did keep my—a lot of times I wouldn't say yes to him, but if I said yes, we did it. That's another thing to Madigan: keep your word. If he thinks somebody's lied to him, he just writes them off.

DePue: (laughs) Think about the last six or eight years.

Edgar: Yeah. Exactly, exactly. But that was an indication to me right then that, what's he talking about? Not, "Well, you know, he's a good guy; we worked together on this or that," or whatever. [Instead:] "He didn't lie to me. His word was good. He wasn't like those other guys who lied to me." He thought some of the governors' liaisons before and after me didn't tell him the truth, and I think that hurt Thompson, because Thompson and Madigan had a very contentious relationship. They now get along great, but back then... Of course, Madigan always thought he had to challenge Republican governors to some extent, but he made life, I thought, really miserable for Thompson for no reason. He made my life miserable for some of the time, but other times we got along, and at the end, we got along fine. But it goes back to a lot of that experience in that sales tax battle; and that was a huge victory for us, because most people didn't think we'd prevail on that.

Then that first year, the other big issue that we had: the 1970 constitution had eliminated the corporate personal property tax, but they gave us eight years—or I forget how many years—to replace it. Maybe it was ten years, and this was '79, so it was coming due; we had to do something on it. It's a tax on corporations, but you had to make it up some way. And we couldn't get it—again, nobody wanted to vote for a tax increase. We went through that session without getting it resolved, and I remember—I think I'm at the legislative conference that year, and we're trying to work it out with some of the members there; I'm talking to some of the legislators there. And Doug Whitley, who was the head of the Taxpayers' Federation; we got him involved and floated some ideas, saw what he... So what we realized: the Democrats knew they had to do something, but they didn't want to do what we wanted to do. If we wanted to do it, they didn't want to do it. So we knew what we could live with, and we talked to Whitley and got him to float it as his proposal. The Democrats then agreed, because it was the Taxpayers' Federation; it wasn't the Republican governor's proposal.

DePue: I'm a bit unclear, and maybe I just wasn't listening closely enough. What was Thompson's position?

Edgar: The constitution said, in ten years, you have to replace the corporate personal property tax. It's going to go away. So we had to replace it, and it was a big chunk of money. We had to come up with a tax, and corporations would have to bear it for the most part, but how you did that… I remember the Democrats wanted a tax that was going to about put Caterpillar out of business. I remember having Madigan in the office with the CEO of Caterpillar, and they got into it. Madigan didn't back down and just thought they were all a bunch of rich people. But that had gone on and on, and that was a big thing we had to get resolved. That got resolved in a special session; I want to say in September, it seemed like. We had a special session on that.

DePue: September of '80?

Edgar: No, of '79. I think we were in session for thirteen straight months. I know I wanted to renegotiate my salary with Thompson after we got done. And we got it in

September. When the session ended and we didn't get things done, the first big thing we got done was the corporate personal property tax replacement. Then the next thing was the transportation package. We cut this deal with Byrne, and I forget how we funded it, but it made possible—by doing away with the Crosstown, that freed up a lot of money. And I can't remember if we did a gas tax or... But with her support and the Democrats'—and again, it's good as you're giving out highway projects and all that. That's an easier thing to pass. We passed that. Then we had the sales tax issue came up, and we won on that. So after just being a disastrous first six months, we started winning everything.

And you'd have a different alliance on each issue. But I just remember the taxpayer federation doing a thing on the corporate personal property tax. And then later, Doug Whitley, I took him from the Taxpayers' Federation to be my director of revenue. He was a Democrat. Doug was known as a Democrat, so that kind of helped us with the Democrats, too.

DePue: That's a curious position to be in, or a curious party to be affiliated with, when you're the head of the Taxpayers'—

Edgar: The guy who had really built that up was a guy named Maury Scott, and he'd been a Democrat—not a party—but he voted Democrat.[7] But you forget you got southern Democrats in this state, or you did. And basically, they represented corporations that worried about taxes, particularly property taxes and other things.

DePue: Can I go back and—

Edgar: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Again, it's my ignorance here. I think I understand what you mean, what a corporate personal property tax was—

Edgar: I'm not sure I know what it means either, but go ahead.

DePue: But it's being replaced by, basically, a corporate income tax, correct?

Edgar: No, it wasn't a corporate income tax. I can't remember for the life of me—

DePue: I know that before the 1970 constitution, there was personal property tax, and people would come to your house and count up how much property you had, and they'd (inaudible).

Edgar: Yeah, corporations had the same. And they did away with individuals' right away. We didn't do that with corporations' for ten years, because you had to figure out,

[7] For a detailed profile of Scott, who worked for the Taxpayers' Federation of Illinois from 1947 to 1977, see Douglas Kane, "Maurice Scott: The Taxpayers' Man in Springfield for 30 Years," *Illinois Issues* (September 1977): 13-15. Available at http://www.lib.niu.edu/1977/ii770913.html.

how do you replace that? And I cannot for the life of me remember how we replaced it. (laughs)

It seems like a combination of things. I have to pull out news clippings, but in the end it was by Doug Whitley kind of floating it, and the Taxpayer Federation. And the other thing on the legislative process, we'd get out there on limbs, and we don't want to get off the limbs; we can't get off the limbs. So Democrats are on one limb and Republicans are on another limb. They just won't come in off the limbs. So you need some common ground for them. That's why you never want to paint your opponent in a corner where there's nothing for them to wiggle out of, a little bit. Everybody knew we had to do this corporate personal property tax, and everybody kind of knew, yeah, we've probably pushed this as long as we can; we got to do something. But how do we get down off these limbs?

Then you had this kind of neutral—it's not the Republicans' program, it's not the Democrats' program; it's a neutral one that we can all say is a compromise, and then everybody can be for that and we can all vote for it; we don't lose face, and we get the job done. And that happened many times on big things in Springfield. You've got to find some common ground, and everybody can save face as you reach a compromise. If you just have one clear winner and one clear loser, that loser is not going to want to do that; and if he does it, if he's the leader, he's probably not going to be around much longer. So everybody's got to have something they can say—and what, on this corporate personal property tax allowed us to have that, was this third entity that was neutral; and that was Doug and the Taxpayers' Federation, even though, to be truthful, it had been worked out between Doug and the Bureau of the Budget about what he was going to go float.

DePue: Yeah. I probably should have brought this up a long time ago, before we got into this kind of a discussion, but I did want to put all of this into context. Nineteen seventy-nine—budget is a huge issue. What's going on in the national economy at the time? We're talking about the tail end of Carter's administration in terms of unemployment, inflation, interest rates, and things like that.

Edgar: The interest rates were a problem. Unemployment really hadn't been a problem yet in Illinois. We always kind of lag. When we really got hit was in the early eighties.[8]

DePue: Eighty-two, '83 timeframe.

Edgar: The '82 election could have been a disaster for us. Also, Caterpillar was on strike, and that's our... But at that point, because we'd had some good years, the Ford years, and then a couple years after that, things hadn't come down yet, we had some money in the treasury. Unfortunately, when you have a little money in the treasury, they want to go spend it, as opposed to saving it. And I remember Mandeville said,

[8] For example, the national annual average unemployment rate in 1982 was 9.7 percent. The unemployment rate in Illinois at the time of the November 1982 election was 12.7 percent. The 1982 annualized federal funds rate was 12.24 percent. Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/lau/#tables, and Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, http://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/h15/data/Annual/H15_FF_O.txt.

"Hey, it's not going to be here long," and the Democrats—and the Republicans—all wanted to go spend it, whether it was tax relief, like the sales tax thing, or new programs. So I don't remember at that point, in '79, the national thing meaning that much. Now, in '80, it meant—only because I was working for Thompson and we had presidential primaries. You had a pretty wide-open presidential primary, and we were very much involved in that. But the economic problems didn't really hit Illinois big-time until '81, '82.

DePue: How about a gas tax? Was that part of the discussion in '79?

Edgar: Yes, originally it was a gas tax, and I can't remember what the final compromise was, if there was a gas tax—for some reason, I don't think there was. I think by freeing up the Crosstown and doing a couple other things—but again, it's been several taxes ago, (laughter) and I can't remember the details. I just remember the key was the Crosstown freed up a lot of money that they could use in lieu of having to go out and get additional revenue.

DePue: This is probably a terrible analogy, but it's like talking to a combat veteran, trying to figure out, okay, was it in this battle, in this engagement, or was it down the road a little bit?

Edgar: Later on, in the eighties, we raised the gas tax and license fees, because I was secretary of state at that time. Oh, part of it was license fees, too, and Alan Dixon, who was secretary of state, was vehemently opposed to the license fee increase, because he administers that. The reason I remember is that was the part that really got shot down. I know we didn't get that, because later on when I was secretary of state and they did another road program, I went along and let them—I didn't fight that. I fought the second one they didn't tell me about, but I didn't fight the first one because there hadn't been one in a long time. But a license fee was part of this, too; and really, the license fee is where the state gets more of its money than the gas tax, because gas tax, you divide up with locals, too. All the license fee money goes to the state.

DePue: And it's pretty much all earmarked, too, is it not?

Edgar: It all goes to road.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: All this was road stuff; none of this was general revenue. But the license fee, all of that comes to the state for the road fund.

DePue: Some of the other issues here, and just kind of go down the list. I'm sure you're going to be thinking of a lot more than I'm going to have identified, but one of the fights, as I understand, was over the minimum drinking age, raising that from eighteen to twenty-one. Were you involved in that, or was that prior to your time?

Edgar: I remember it. I was for it. I think I was a liaison then, because I seem like I remember wandering over to the Senate when that was being debated, at least in my mind, but I can't remember. It wasn't something that took a lot of time. It didn't take a lot of my time, involvement. I just vaguely remember it, yeah.

DePue: And we've kind of alluded to it, but road construction, road issues. Finding money to do that.

Edgar: Yeah, that was the big... When Thompson named me, he'd already said he was going to propose raising the gas tax and the license fees, so that was going to be my number-one concern. And unfortunately it took us to the fall to get it resolved. We got the money, we got the road program, but we didn't get it the way we thought we would; we get it because we basically did away with Crosstown, and that freed up money that was already set aside.

DePue: At that point in his governorship—I know later on he made a huge name out of Build Illinois—

Edgar: That was later, and that was bond money.

DePue: —was he already thinking about making that kind of a mark, though, and wanting to do a lot more to rehab roads?

Edgar: No. Every eight years or so, you've got to do a road program because they run out. There's not an ongoing fund; you bond it, then you spend that money, and after so many years, that money's gone. So you always have to, about every so many years, do a road program and go through that. This was just a road—road programs were important politics, and Thompson liked the bill, there's no doubt, but I'm not sure—Build Illinois was just a name that Jim Reilly, who was chief of staff at that time, thought up, I think. It was a great name. It was just pork. (laughter) Wasn't anything unique about it. Maybe to start with, a little bit, but by the time they got done, it was the forerunner of what we now see as capital bills spending money—What are you spending money on that for? Somebody wants it. So I can't say that Thompson laid awake at night thinking he wanted to make a great building empire.

As I said, they had that building program and everything figured out before they came up with "Build Illinois." That was just a term somebody figured out. And it was a great term, probably one of the greatest. It also underscores that to be successful in a lot of these things, you need a simple message, and you need something that's going to catch people's imagination. I think "Build Illinois" is probably the best of all the phrases that were out there on anything. People still talk about Build Illinois today. In the end, Build Illinois was little more than just a pork-barrel thing. There were some good things, but there was lots of pork. But that came afterwards—I was secretary of state then—I'm involved in that only because of the state library, and that was part of that and how we fund that. But that's secretary of state days.

The other issue that came up that first year was Thompson again on this—goes back to his attempt on the Thompson proposition on capping property taxes. He wanted to do that, and that's one thing we never were successful. Everything else he wanted in the start of the year I went to work for him, we got, except property tax caps.

DePue: I know that was on the ballot in '78, I believe, but there was nothing binding about it, correct?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: So that was a measure that was being pushed in the next—

Edgar: He was pushing, yeah, to do it, because people said, what are you going to do about it? He had to do something. I don't think his heart was in it, but we had special sessions and everything. The Democrats just weren't going to give on that because that was going to cut their local government too much. Just never happened, but we spent a lot of time on it and didn't get very far. Also sprinkled in there, we had ERA.

DePue: (laughs) The ongoing ERA battle.

Edgar: Yeah, (laughs) the ongoing ERA battle, which we were not successful at; never had been, never would be.

DePue: That's interesting, because when we talked about it before, it was kind of the beginning of that ERA fight, back in the '72 timeframe.

Edgar: Right.

DePue: And advance to eight years later, we're towards the end of this battle.

Edgar: You're toward the end, but you still had three more years, because I had the end when I was secretary of state and I had the chain gang and all that stuff in the capitol. But this was probably the apex in some ways, as far as really trying to pressure the governor and getting him to do it. I remember the guy who put together *All in the Family*—

DePue: Norman Lear.

Edgar: Norman Lear, yeah. He came into the mansion with, I think, Ellie Snell or whatever her name was, head of one of the women's group, big-time at that point, and a couple other women. We were sitting in the TV room in the family quarters downstairs, and I remember him saying, "We've got money—whatever it takes," and I'm sitting there thinking, these novices, think you come and buy something. First of all, we told him that didn't work; and secondly, that members have—this is a vote they just won't change on, because this has been a big issue every campaign. That's the first thing you ask, questionnaires and media and everything, and people

just aren't going to change their vote on this. The only way you might get a change, if you got new members, but you're not going to change existing members' vote on this. And we always fell about two or three votes short. As I said earlier, if we'd just needed a constitutional majority, we would have passed it, but because we needed three-fifths in Illinois, by the constitution, we always fell short on that.

But that was always there, and there was always a lot of media coverage and a lot of consternation on the House floor about that. It was a very emotional issue. And we used to kid that it seemed like every time it came up, Thompson's back went out on him, (DePue laughs) because we were meeting over at the mansion because he could hardly get out of bed. And I remember taking a couple legislators in to see him in his bedroom. You just never went in the family quarters, just never did that, but he was in his bed because of his back and—

DePue: I don't know that we've been very explicit in terms of where Thompson was on the issue.

Edgar: He was for ERA. Most Republicans were probably against it, and several Chicago Democrats and some downstate Democrats were against it. It wasn't just a partisan issue. But the Religious Right, the Mormons' groups were very much opposed to it. Phyllis Schlafly, who was from Illinois—they were very opposed to it. So it generated a lot of emotion; again, when candidates took positions, even after they got elected, they weren't going to change positions, because if you had changed your position on that either way, you'd just run a real risk the next time you ran. You knew you won however your position was, but you didn't know, if you switched, if you're going to win. And people felt strongly on it. I always thought it was probably more symbolic than anything else, but a lot of people—and a lot of members had pressure from their wives one way or another.

But it was like, we've got to worry about running state government here, and then, oh, here comes ERA, and everything's on hold; and we go through these long, long debates on the House floor, everybody gets mad, there's all kinds of accusation, the press dwells on it, you get thousands of people in the rotunda, and you can't get people to think about the budget and these other things you got to do to run state government. So I always viewed it as just the last thing I wanted to come—because I knew we weren't going to get the votes. Short of ten members dying and replacing them with people who said they were going to be for ERA, it wasn't going to happen. And so it was just a nuisance in a way. But that was always sprinkled in with all this other stuff, but—

DePue: This might be a good time to talk about another emotional and symbolic issue, the Pledge of Allegiance.

Edgar: It wasn't a huge issue, but it underscored Thompson's—sometimes you'd think he wasn't paying attention or he didn't have a feel, and he did have a pretty good feel. For some reason—and I had lost track of it—people decided not to do the Pledge of Allegiance anymore. The time I grew up, you did the Pledge of Allegiance every

day at school. I remember the day, third grade, when they changed and put "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. I can remember—

DePue: During Eisenhower's administration.[9]

Edgar: Yeah. I can remember the principal walking in and telling the third grade teacher, "They've got a change here in the Pledge of Allegiance," and had to insert "under God." So I did not know they didn't do Pledge of Allegiance anymore; I was just enough out of it. And found out they didn't. So Jim Reilly, in fact, had sponsored the bill—my friend from Jacksonville, University of Chicago law school graduate—passed this bill saying that schools must have the Pledge of Allegiance. And I get the bill analysis from the chief counsel. Gary Starkman, who had been with Thompson since the U.S. attorney days, tells me, "This is clearly unconstitutional, and the governor must veto it." And Jim Reilly called me and said, "What are you going to do on the Pledge of Allegiance bill?" I said, "Starkman's got a thing in here saying it needs to be vetoed; it's unconstitutional." Reilly said, "Oh, gosh," said, "You don't know; I got the DAR and all these groups just nuts over this thing." He said, "Tell Starkman that's what you have a supreme court for, (laughs) to decide those issues." So he said, "Politically, it's crazy to veto this bill." I said, "I agree with you," but I guess I wasn't a legislator anymore, and I had not been up on all the—but the grassroots were a lot of people really upset about this Pledge of Allegiance because we didn't have it. So I talked to Starkman again. I said, "I think Thompson ought to sign this bill." "Oh, no, he won't," he said. "It's clearly unconstitutional. He won't do it." He said, "I'll bet you a dollar." This was a big deal.

DePue: Why was he saying it was unconstitutional. What was his argument?

Edgar: His argument was the court decision was you can't force people to do that.

DePue: Because of the phrase "under God" or just because of the Pledge of Allegiance, period?

Edgar: The whole pledge. It wasn't the "under God," it was just the pledge. You can't make people do a pledge like this that's not—I forget which freedom they were pinning this on, but anyway. (DePue laughs) And Starkman's kind of a law-and-order guy on criminal stuff and things, but he said, "I'll bet you a dollar," and I said, "All right," so we have a dollar bet on this. It's the only one we did that session.

So I catch Thompson, I think, at the racquet club at the West Bank up in Chicago, and I'm going through all these bills, and I said, "All right, here's the Pledge of Allegiance bill. Let me just give you a little background. Jim Reilly's the sponsor. He said he's just getting all kinds of flak from DARs and all these women groups and patriotic groups about this Pledge of Allegiance. Now, there's a veto message in there from Gary Starkman saying it's unconstitutional. Reilly's comment is that's what you have a supreme court for." I said, "My take is you

[9] In 1954, Congress added "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance.

ought to sign this bill. I don't understand the courts on this. I don't know where this is infringing on anybody's right," and I said, "I just don't think it's worth all the political flak downstate, and you've got enough problems." Because at this point, downstaters weren't all that excited about Thompson after about three, four years. The brightness had kind of worn off, and his numbers weren't that good.

Oh, he had his traveling aide—Thompson always had these traveling aides—and it was a young kid who was playing racquetball with him. They had been playing racquetball. So the guy's sitting there, and he's probably in his mid-twenties. He said, "Pledge of Allegiance? Boy, is that old-fashioned. Jiminy, that's so out of date." And Thompson looked at him like that. I knew I had him. Thompson took the veto message; he changed three words, signed it. He said, "Here, this is a signing message." He signed it, but he changed the veto, and he said, "All these arguments, but they're not valid," (laughs) and he signed it, and that was it. There were a couple editorials that said, Hey, you shouldn't... But it underscored to me: Thompson had the ability to prioritize things and to see through—but it was also, when that kid said—that kid later became a director at one of the departments years later— "Ah, that's old-fashioned," Thompson right then knew that's the problem—these kids don't understand. Of course, he's like me. He went through school where you did the Pledge of Allegiance. That's just part of going to school: you should say the Pledge of Allegiance. And when you've got kids saying, that's out-of-date, old-fashioned, then you know you have a real problem. That's why you got to have that in there. (DePue laughs) And Starkman just was thunderstruck. He said, "I don't believe it." (laughs) He sent me the dollar.

DePue: Did you avoid mentioning the kid's name on purpose, or...?

Edgar: Yeah. I think I remember which traveling aide it was—I'm sure it's one who became a director at one point—but I'm not positive, so I don't want to mention his name. But it was an age thing, and it was just a generational thing. But I'll never forget Thompson looking over his glasses, and I knew—looking at him like, what in the...?

DePue: One of those leering looks, huh?

Edgar: Yeah, and I knew I had him then. I said, I'm going to win this dollar bet. And Thompson would do that. He'd look through every one of those bills and think through—and that's one of the things that I appreciated working with him. Sometimes you couldn't find him, sometimes he'd be off antiquing and hard to get him to meet with—he didn't want to meet with people, which I don't blame him; I appreciated that later on (laughs)—but on my stuff, he found time to do it, and he was on. He didn't do anything haphazard like this; I mean, he knew this was serious stuff.

And it also taught me, because later on I took every bill very seriously, too. I'm not saying I didn't sometimes think of the political consequences, but there were some really silly bills the legislature passed. And they were going to override

me if I vetoed them, but I wasn't going to have my name on those bills, and I'd veto them, knowing I was going to get overridden. And Thompson was kind of that way, too. But I came to appreciate the importance, responsibility. It's your name on that bill, not somebody else's. You're not one of 177; you're the governor. It's one thing to vote for a goofy bill; it's another thing to sign it into law. Thompson was, I thought, very good on that, and he took that very seriously, and that no doubt had an impact on me later on, realizing that's a serious thing to do. And I'd always sit down with my staff and go over the bills.

DePue: This is probably a good point to kind of back up a little bit in terms of process here. Was Thompson generally pragmatic in his approach to governance, or was he more philosophically based?

Edgar: No, he was pragmatic. He was a moderate. He was, of his generation, a moderate. He was not an ideologue; he was much more pragmatic. He was pro-choice, pro-ERA—that put you in the moderate wing of the Republican Party. Wasn't opposed to taxes. He tried to raise taxes—wasn't very successful in most cases because of his Republican membership. He was a builder; he did like to build. He did not believe in little government, necessarily. Law and order—he was pretty tough on that stuff, but he was not way overboard.

DePue: But this Pledge of Allegiance issue, he wasn't making that vote necessarily, at least the way you described it, for political reasons as much as—

Edgar: No.

DePue: —that's the position he believed in.

Edgar: Yeah, he believed in it, and he knew that it was needed when he saw this kid who worked for him didn't think it was needed. If this kid had said, "Oh, yeah, Pledge of Allegiance, that's really important," maybe he might have—but when he heard that kid, it was just like when he heard that (snaps)—I could tell he was thinking about it. He knew the legal questions that Starkman had raised and all that, but when the kid said that, it was just like, That's why we need it. Now, Thompson was great—like we all have to be—you got to rationalize a little bit, and maybe that gave him his reason to rationalize it. (DePue laughs) But you could just see the light—it was just instantaneous, and it was one of those fond memories I have of working with him, when he looked over those glasses, and I knew I had that dollar won from Starkman. And it amazed me, because Starkman knew Thompson very well on legal issues—he was as close as anybody had been over the years with him—but he was wrong on that one. But Thompson was pragmatic. I think that's a good way—much more pragmatic than an ideologue.

DePue: Here's one thing he is sometimes criticized for: the overuse of the amendatory veto.

Edgar: You can criticize every governor on that, I'd think.

DePue: It gives the governor quite a bit of power.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: What was the initial intent of the amendatory veto?

Edgar: In fact, I wrote a paper on it at the time for class, that they better not be abused, that it's only to make technical changes. Like if you leave a word out or something; instead of vetoing the whole bill and having to go back through the process, the governor could just make some changes. And if you look in the constitutional convention, the transcript—because I looked that up in that—

DePue: You're pointing over here to your—

Edgar: My transcripts from the proceedings of the constitutional convention. I haven't read them in years, but the time I've read them is to look up that thing when I did that paper. And I think it's pretty clear to me as a layman that it was to be for technical changes, but Ogilvie in '71, '72—he did it on a parochial aid bill—funding for parochial schools. He took a bill and broadened it considerably, changed it to help do something for parochial aid. And the courts didn't strike down the amendatory veto; it was challenged, that he went too far, but they said, no, he has the power. They interpreted the constitution differently than I think the intent of the delegates. And every governor kind of expanded from then on. Thompson was governor for the long period of time, so there were a lot of amendatory vetoes.

I do remember lobbyists coming and wanting amendatory vetoes, but I know there'd be times when I was governor that legislators would come down right after they passed the bill and say, we need an amendatory veto on this. I said, "It was your bill. Why didn't you amend it?" Oh, it would have been too much flak on the floor. I'll let you do it. And I said, "Oh, you want me to take the flak?" Or I'd have lobbyists come and say, we need you to amendatory veto this bill. I said, "We checked the records. You didn't oppose this bill in committee." "We didn't want to make them mad."

DePue: Did you have occasions—and you're in this position especially, maybe; you were the one who was screening these—where a bill passed and then maybe somebody still wanted to tweak the bill, so they would go to you and say, Could I get you to convince the governor to amend this in such-and-such a way?

Edgar: Yeah, often. That's why I said, what I became was the legislature, because they all had to come to me—Thompson, really, but I was the person, and I'd take the bills to Thompson; and there were only two people, usually, in that room, Thompson and me, when we'd decide what he was going to do on bills. And for the most part, he went along with the recommendations that the staff had put together, which I had screened on—in very few cases did I ever go against what the staff had recommended, because I thought they had more of an expertise. The case with Starkman, I did; a few times, say, "I don't agree with the staff." Usually if I didn't agree, I'd prevail with him, but for the most part, I'd say 95 percent, were what the staff had recommended. And the staff and I, maybe, would meet and talk about

bills. We'd say, hey, this interest group raised this point; this member wants this or that. So there was give and take on that stuff, but yeah, they would come to me or my office, and they would lobby it.

Again, I got a big kick, because these are the people who a month before were being rude to me, and lobbyists who were badmouthing me; and now they had to come, hat in hand, and be real nice to me. That went on for about three months, and it turned out to be kind of fun, except I was just inundated with too much stuff. And then the amendatory veto was often one of the things they wanted you to do, sometimes an outright veto. Often, as I mentioned, members would want a bill signing ceremony, particularly in their district, but if not, just in the capitol, so they could have a picture and publicize back in their district how effective they were as a legislator. I wanted that as a member. They knew you were the guy who was going to go to the governor and say, "You ought to do the bill signing ceremony," and if they couldn't convince you, they weren't going to get anyplace. So they had to be nice to me to get that bill signing ceremony—or to get the bill signed, because in some cases, they didn't know if the governor had signed the bill or not. We might have been opposed to it.

I tried to have the governor take less position on bills. I didn't think we had to take a position on every bill. Let's wait and see till they get to our desk. Now, if they're something affecting the budget or they affected the way state government worked, we had a strong feeling, but a lot of these bills were, in the overall scheme of things, pretty insignificant. And why get involved in every bill that if you take a position, people expect you to work the floor and make sure you prevail? And some of them weren't worth using up IOUs on, and we had the final say. And for most cases, if you vetoed a bill, chances were greater than not that you had sustained your veto.

DePue: This is a timing question, I guess. I'm wrestling with understanding how the process works. Let's say you've got a budget bill—and maybe it's different for a budget bill than other kinds of bills, but a budget bill. You go right down to the end of the clock. June thirtieth, you finally get a budget passed; July first, the budget goes into effect. Can the governor amend that in the next ninety days?

Edgar: No. You sign it, you're done; and you've got to sign the budget right away. And you can't do an amendatory veto to the budget; you can do a reduction veto, or you can do a line-item veto. Now, both of those are kind of useless. A reduction veto does not take three-fifths to override you; it only takes a constitutional majority, so it takes the same number of people that passed it to override your change. So a reduction veto, more times than not, doesn't stick. A line-item, you just take a line out, and that takes three-fifths; but the legislature, at least by the time I was governor, got smart. They stopped putting any of the controversial things in a line item; they put it in with something they knew I couldn't veto, (DePue laughs) and I'd have to veto the whole thing. So you have that, and you can use those, but those are not used as much as people might think. The threat of a veto... Now, if it's a

budget bill for one of your agencies, that's why you got to work it out pretty much in the legislative session.

When I was the legislative liaison, I'd get these directors, particularly new directors who hadn't been around state government, and they'd go to the legislature, and legislators would want things—they'd want jobs and whatever—and they'd threaten their budget, say, "We're going to hold up your budget if you don't put that facility in my district." And they'd come to me all worried. I said, "Listen, these guys have never not funded a state agency. Don't give into them, and if you give into them, we're not going to go along with it. Just don't give into them. Just answer their questions, but don't give them things for your budget, especially outlandish things, and don't add things to the budget to make them happy, because we can't afford it." But some of these directors just would be convinced they weren't going to have a budget. I said, "All right, come July one, they don't appropriate money for you—who's going to look fools, you or them? They're going to look foolish." Because in the end, they always did. Now, you may not like the budget, but they gave you a budget. They never did not fund a state agency unless they just didn't do the whole—sometimes we went overtime. But I had a hard time convincing—these directors would be scared to death; these legislators would just hold them up. And especially the new ones, the new directors, they would hold up because they figured they could intimidate them. And I'd spend most of my time with directors just saying, "Don't. Don't do that." I said, "You go in there, testify, and if they want to make changes, if you can live with it, let's talk about it. But if they're adding money, no, and if they're trying to demand jobs off of you—if there's one job and it's not that hard or whatever, fine, but," I said, "don't worry that you're not going to get a budget. You're going to get a budget. You may not like it, but you're going to get a budget." But these guys were convinced (laughs) they weren't going to get budgets.

So as legislative liaison, I spent a lot of my time holding the hands of the people in the administration who had to go to the legislature and also trying to help them. I felt my job was to be their advocate, not to play games on them, like apparently had happened before. And if they came in and wanted something, we just said—I remember we had a secretary of transportation who would promise everything to guys, and he couldn't deliver on half of it. So we needed to do a road program, or do something, and we told him to stay off the floor. I told his guys, "Keep him off the floor. I can't afford to have him on the floor because he'll go make promises and he won't keep them; then we'll just get everybody mad at us." But he loved to make deals. He just loved to make deals. Nice guy, but he'd get on the House floor and we'd have more problems afterwards because he'd promise roads, and nothing ever happened.

So a lot of my job was not only working with the four leaders and the rank and file—as the head guy, I worked with the leaders more than the rank and file; I had three guys under me who worked more with the rank and file—but to work with the directors of the agencies and make sure that they were getting taken care of, that they were getting the straight… We were trying to help them and explain

what they could expect and be an ally to them; to be a help, not another hurdle they had to jump over.

DePue: All of this explains how important that budget fight was each and every year, because I'm sure that devoured a huge percentage of your time.

Edgar: It did, it did. Probably part of why I've always cared about the budget. To me, that's the basis of state government, and that's the basis of the governor. He's got to have a budget that he can live with to provide the basic service. If you don't have that, you might have all the great philosophical ideals in the world and have all this vision they talk about—which I think is the worst word there is—but you can't manage. And if you can't manage, then you can't be an effective governor, and the budget is probably the single most important issue. Now, when you have money, usually the budget is not quite as difficult; you argue over how you're going to spend it. But when you don't have money, then the budget becomes very contentious.

DePue: We've been talking about the budget fights in kind of a general sense. Any distinctions between the budget process in 1979 versus 1980 that you can recall?

Edgar: Between '79 and '80?

DePue: Yeah. Those would have been the two budgets that you would have been—

Edgar: Seventy-nine was just a much more difficult year. Eighty was pretty—I had agreement among the four leaders. We could have got out a week early for the first time in anyone's memory.

DePue: In 1980.

Edgar: In 1980, but George Ryan screwed it up.

DePue: George Ryan again.

Edgar: Yeah. No, he screwed it up. We had met in Doc Shapiro's office. Doc Shapiro was the Senate Republican leader. He was a dentist from Amboy, Illinois—very nice guy. Not the strongest leader, but a nice guy. We were in Shapiro's office, and we had the four leaders, Rock and Redmond—and Madigan had come to that meeting. I think that was one of the first meetings Madigan had come to of the four leaders. And I had everything worked out. I had met with everybody, had everything, but George was still fussing he wanted more jobs for Manteno, just his usual complaining.[10] So we're sitting in there, everything's agreed to, and he said, "Well, how about my jobs from Manteno?" George is—kind of gruff voice. And Phil Rock, who is a guy that gets along with everybody, said, "George, we can't do it. Our caucus—we've talked about it, and they won't go along. They're not going to

[10] Manteno, Illinois is located in Ryan's home county of Kankakee and was the site of Manteno State Hospital, which closed in 1985.

give you any more jobs for Manteno. No." And George said, "Then we don't have a deal." And Doc Shapiro, who is the nicest guy (laughs) in the world, uttered more profanities at George Ryan than I had ever heard. (DePue laughs) He called him everything in the book and got up and stormed out—and it was his office. Rock left. Redmond, he left. And George said, "Well, I guess I'll leave, too," and he walked out. And Madigan's sitting there, and he looked at me and said, "Jim, are all the meetings like this?" (DePue laughs)

Doc Shapiro later died.[11] He had cancer and his health wasn't all... I was afraid he was going to die right there. And this was a guy who never raised his voice or anything, but he was so frustrated because we'd been in session the previous year for thirteen straight months and just dealing—and we haven't talked, but the other big issue was the Chicago schools in this period—and here we had this session, we had everything pretty well put together early. I had everybody agreeing, and we were signed off. It was just a few jobs for Manteno—and he already had some jobs, but he wanted more—and also for Lincoln, for Sam Vincent. Vincent and McBroom were just needling him, to get him to do this. And George couldn't understand why everybody was so mad. I knew they had talked about it in the two Senate caucuses, and they refused. Later, Thompson even went into one of those caucuses, the Senate Republican caucus, and they about threw him out, when he was trying to get jobs for George because he was trying to get the session over. But I just remember Doc—I didn't know how Doc Shapiro was going to make it the rest of the day after it, because he unleashed on George Ryan. And I know he'd probably felt this way for a long time, (laughs) but he finally just let him have it.

So that year, really, the budget—everything was running smooth. That year, 1980, was like night and day compared to '79. I had things pretty well—we were moving right along. And unfortunately if it hadn't been—I think we were two days over, and I think that was the time when Thompson had to come down. He was supposed to be taking Jane to Florida for vacation, which she was counting on, and he had to put it off for a day to come down to Springfield and try to help George get those jobs. And he came down; he spent the day meeting with guys to no avail. Nobody was going to budge to give George more jobs, and finally we adjourned without those jobs.

And (laughs) Thompson came on the floor after the session to thank everybody, because things were pretty well done, and he went over to George, and George said, "Well, no thanks to you" or something like this to Thompson. Thompson, who never gets mad, exploded. He came off the House floor, and Greg Baise, who was his aide, came in and said, "Boy, the governor's livid at George." That was the maddest I ever saw Thompson. He was just furious with George because (laughs) he had taken Jane's wrath for postponing their vacation (DePue laughs) so he could fly down to Springfield, after they were supposed to be done,

[11] Shapiro, a Republican from Amboy, first entered the General Assembly as a representative in 1968, and served as Senate minority leader from December 1976 until his death August 1, 1981. *Chicago Tribune*, August 2, 1981, 1. See Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 13-14.

and go in there and try to get more jobs for George. And he tried. I went with him over to the Senate, and they just wouldn't budge. He spent all day doing that, and then George just said, "You didn't really try." Thompson—as I said, the only time I ever saw him—just exploded. Then he left and he went off the floor, but he was just furious. In fact, the couple times I saw Thompson get mad, they were always about George. (DePue laughs) Later, too, when I was secretary of state, a couple times, and stories I heard from other people—any time they ever saw him get mad, it was about George.

DePue: Isn't it interesting he ends up defending George years later?

Edgar: I'll tell you stories later, but no, that was amazing. I think he looks back... And the thing about George was, that was just George. The next minute, he didn't understand what he did, and he was just going through a role. But many a time later on, when Thompson had him as lieutenant governor, he made his [Thompson's] life miserable. But that session, '80, was pretty fun, actually, compared to—'79 just went on... (laughs)

The other issue we didn't talk about yet, which I think, of all the things I've been involved in in state government, was interesting and maybe as important, was in 1979. The Chicago schools were having their biennial meltdown. Every two years, the Chicago schools would go broke and come to Springfield and want us to bail them out. And this year, in '79, they were in trouble. The banks said they were going to have to close the schools down.

DePue: Can we take just a second here, and you can explain the relationship between the Chicago schools, the superintendent, and the amount of control, or lack of control, that the mayor would have had?

Edgar: The mayor had marginal control. He appointed the school board, but the school board traditionally was pretty—I won't say independent, but they were notorious mismanagers—this is Chicago schools. The state provides money to schools—not as much as they would like, but provides money. And every time the Chicago schools would get in trouble, they would come to Springfield and want a bailout. And the Chicago schools were in trouble again in 1979. They couldn't meet their budget. Probably had given the teachers a pretty healthy increase, as they did every two years, because the Chicago Teachers Union is an important part of the Chicago Democratic machine, and they weren't going to make them mad. They just said the schools were going to have to close, and they needed a bailout. First National Bank of Chicago, First Chicago, was the banker for the Chicago schools, and their number-two guy—I forget the guy's name, but he's very obnoxious—was the guy who handled that and said the state needs to bail out. Everybody in the state—both politicians and people in the street, in the suburbs and downstate—was adamant we don't bail out Chicago schools again, because we bailed them out all the time.

And I remember Thompson talking about he was in parades and was hearing that, and I was getting feedback from members: There's no way we're going to vote

for anything for Chicago schools. And Thompson, again, he wasn't in that good of shape downstate. He'd won the '78 election, but by '79, this was beginning to have some impact on him. So I told him, "Governor, I don't know what you're thinking about doing, but we cannot pass a bailout for the Chicago schools unless you're going to do something for everybody. And I don't think we got the money to do something for everybody, but you just can't do something for the Chicago schools; it won't pass." And he said, "I'm picking that up in parades. People are yelling things like that." And I said, "Yeah, my sense is people know about this, and they just don't want to"—because the media was playing this up, and people were saying, we don't want to bail them out. So the bank said, "Well, you have to. The state's the only—they've got to come up with the money." And I can't remember if they finally shut the schools down. I think they might have shut them down. This was around—was it after Thanksgiving, or was it the first part of the year? It was cold; I just know it was cold outside. So what were we going to do?[12]

Finally decide we'll have a summit on the Chicago schools; we'll bring all the principals down and work this out. And so this was a fascinating—it was the only time I've ever seen it happen in my experience in state government. They brought the principals down; the Chicago Board of Education came—the chairman; the head of the Teachers Union; most importantly, the guy from First National Bank, who was calling the shots for the schools. Several lawyers came down; you had the state superintendent of education, who was kind of irrelevant because he didn't really have a whole lot of say over all that; you had other players. We did not allow any legislators there—it was just to be the governor meeting with these people so they could come up with something to take to the legislature—so I spoke for what I thought was doable in the legislature, in our inner circles, not at the meetings. And there probably were—for lunch and dinner, we had everybody around the big dining room table—forty people there. It went on for three days. We ran out of food at the mansion.

DePue: What time frame are we talking about here?

Edgar: I can't remember if it was right after Thanksgiving or if it was right after the first of the year, but it was in the winter. It was just cold out, I know. And we basically locked everybody in. They could go out at night. We put some people up in the mansion and other people in the hotel across the street. But nobody could talk to the press, we didn't have any legislators there, and we'd have these little meetings going on. And I just remember the state treasurer was there, Jerry Cosentino. They played cards. The head of the Chicago Teachers Union and the head of the school board and the treasurer and somebody else were playing cards the whole time because they were irrelevant. The only person who was relevant, really, was the governor and the head of the Chicago Bank, because that's who you're negotiating with. They had to—something that they'd sign off on. And as consultants, we had

---

[12] Thompson held his "summit conference" from Thursday, January 3, to Saturday, January 5, 1980. For press coverage of the event, see *Chicago Tribune*, January 6, 1980.

Felix Rohatyn's firm, Lazard Frères; they sent a couple bright young guys in to advise us.

DePue: Felix...?

Edgar: It's one of the big investment firms. I'm trying to think. Felix Rohatyn was the guy who ran it—that's who Thompson dealt with—but he sent a couple of his staffers. It's a well-known investment firm. And literally, people were locked in for three days. They could go out and sleep, but they all ate there. We ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner there. And one of the guys—Newt Minow—I don't know if that means anything. Newt Minow was the head of the Federal Communications Commission under Kennedy. He's the one who coined the phrase "TV is a vast wasteland."[13] He'd been a Stevenson guy. He'd worked for Adlai Stevenson. He's an attorney in Chicago—became a good friend of mine. In fact, that's why I went to the Kennedy School later on. But here I'm just a staffer, and he's kind of a legend already.

This had gone on for a couple days. They'd have these small meetings, like the bankers and our people would sit down and talk about this and that, and then we'd break. Then the governor's people, we'd meet. And they'd come up and say, "They want this and that." I said, "Governor, we can't pass that." My job—I just kept saying, "We can't pass that. We cannot pass a subsidy for the Chicago school. Now, if you want to do it, fine, but don't plan on us getting it passed." Mandeville, the Bureau of the Budget, he pretty much agreed with me, and we were the two. Others were kind of, maybe we got to do this. By that time, Art Quern was the chief of staff, and he said, "We got to do something." I said, "I'm just telling you, Art, you can't pass this. You can do it, but it's not going to happen." And finally Mandeville began to kind of say, "Maybe, you know, we got to..." Because Mandeville, he would give away the store—not the store, but he sometimes would do some things. And I was the last. I just said, "We're not going to pass it."

So we're sitting at lunch one day, and I'm sitting next to Newt Minow, because we'd sit at random. I happened to be sitting next to Newt Minow, and he was talking about, "I used to work for Adlai Stevenson. I stayed in the governor's mansion when I worked for him because I lived in Chicago, and I'd come down here." He said, "I didn't bring enough shirts." I forget the name of the men's store—"Is it still downtown?" And I said, "Yeah," and he said, "I need to go get some new shirts." And he said, "Yeah, it was interesting," and I said, "I bet it was," and we talked about Stevenson. Then he said, "You know Governor Thompson is going to have to give in on this. He's going to have to give us the money. There's just no alternative." I said, "Well, Mr. Minow, I'm not going to argue about the merits, I'm just the practicality. I know the legislature, and there's absolutely no way the legislature is going to do a subsidy, a straight subsidy, for the Chicago

[13] In his speech to the National Association of Broadcasters, Minow told his audience that if they were to watch television for an entire day, without distraction, "I can assure you that what you will observe is a vast wasteland." Newton Minow, "Television and the Public Interest" (address to National Association of Broadcasters, Washington, DC, May 9, 1961). http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/newtonminow.htm for audio and transcript.

schools. It's just not going to happen. Now, if you can figure out something else, a loan or something like that"—which they'd said, no, no—I said, "But you can't get a subsidy. It's just not going to happen." I'm not trying to threaten him, just I know the legislature, and I know on this issue, because I'd spent a lot of time talking to them on this—and it's not just Republicans; every downstate Democrat is the same feeling. It's not going to happen.

We talked a little more, then we all went to our caucuses. And our guys are about ready to cave, and I just said, "It hasn't changed any. We're not going to pass this." They went back in, and the other side blinked first. And I never knew if Newt Minow went back—because he was a pretty savvy guy—and said, "Hey, maybe we better..." Because what we finally agreed on was something that Lazard Frères—our guys—had come up with: it was a bridge loan. You get a loan based off anticipation of things coming in and doing some other things; then you put in a spending control. I forget the name of it. It just went out of existence a few years ago. We put in that control. And they were business guys. We had a guy named [Jerome] Van Gorkom who was going to be put in charge of this and kind of administer how they spent money, because they just spent money like it was water.[14] But it would be a loan. They were going to pay it from their revenues coming down the road. There's not going to be any state money permanently going to Chicago, and the loan was guaranteed by future revenues coming in, because property tax, you can kind of predict pretty accurately what's going to come in. So it was complicated, but it all worked. But it wasn't a subsidy from the state.

After three days, they agreed to that; then I had to take around the bankers to the caucuses to explain, and (laughs) I remember I said, "Do I have to take that obnoxious one?" (DePue laughs) I said, "He'll blow it." And I think I ended up taking the presidents. I took Perkins from Continental, and I don't know if that guy went or not. I can't remember who was president at First. I think [A. Robert] Abboud was president. I don't think he went, maybe the other guy went, but they shut him up. But I took them around to the four caucuses, and they explained what they were going to do—and took Van Gorkom, too; he went with them. (laughs) And I remember Van Gorkom coming out—he was from Lake County, north of Chicago—he came out and said, "That guy was nuts. He's my state senator. I've contributed to his campaigns." (DePue laughs) He said, "I can't believe how bad he is." I said, "Yeah, you'd be surprised how these guys act." Because this guy was just ranting and raving and didn't understand.

But in the end, the legislature passed it and the Chicago schools reopened, and it actually kept things going for another decade. Now, that authority, eventually we did away with it. You didn't have the same quality of people later on. But it did get us out of that. It was a fascinating time for me because I have never experienced anything like that, that gathering. We were basically locked in there until we got

[14] The school-funding plan approved by the legislature created the Chicago School Finance Authority. Thompson named Jerome W. Van Gorkom, who had been a highly successful tax attorney, accountant, and businessman, to head the authority. *Chicago Tribune*, March 19, 1988, 12.

something agreed to. And I felt good because my opinion prevailed as far as we didn't do a subsidy. And I'm convinced if I hadn't have been sitting there every day just saying, "This will not pass," I think our guys would have buckled, and we'd have done something different. I don't know what would have happened. But—

DePue: It wouldn't have passed the legislature, though.

Edgar: No, no, and then we'd have been in a mess. That happened until—it seemed like every two years they came down and continued to—until we did Chicago school reform.

DePue: I know this is going to be a very important chapter when we get to your gubernatorial years, but was there any thought at the time, in this particular discussion, to do something on the managerial side, restructuring the management?

Edgar: At that point, actually, the mayor had control of the board. Later, he began to lose it. There were some reforms that happened in the eighties, Thompson's time, where they created these school councils, and they created ways that the mayor's hands were tied on who he could appoint to the board. He'd be given a list of names, and he had to pick from that. Back then he still had more control over the board. So the changes that were made later that were so-called reforms, I think made management even harder, and it took responsibility away from the mayor. The old mayor Daley always felt the schools were his responsibility. Of course, his solution was to have the state pay for it. (DePue laughs) Old Mayor Daley always though the state ought to pay for everything, and if you look, Chicago does pretty well off the state of Illinois compared to other states. A lot of that had to do with Daley. It was just, that's what those legislators are down there for. That's why he sent those guys who worked for him, who were double dippers, to go down there and get money for the city.

But that school thing was, I think, a fascinating time. In fact, one of the two guys from Lazard who came out was a young African-American who later was the guy they had at Fannie Mae when it all fell apart. (laughs) He didn't do that, but...

DePue: Oh, wow.

Edgar: For a while, he was Clinton's budget director. I want to say Rank, and that's not right. I'm looking right at him. And I had forgot all about him until I was a governor, and I'm going to a governors' meeting. Every year, we go over to the White House. And I went over one year when Clinton was president, and he sat next to me and says, "You don't remember me, probably, Governor, but I worked with you. You were a legislative aide for Jim Thompson, and I was the second guy"—I remember the other guy more than him. There were two guys who came out from Lazard and worked on it. I said, "Oh, yeah, now I remember." But he was then head of the office of whatever we call the Bureau of the Budget in Illinois—the budget guy for the president. Then he went over to Fannie Mae and did that, then

left; and then a couple years later Fannie Mae fell apart, and I think they made him give back some of his bonus.

DePue: Oh, I know who you're talking about, too, but I can't recall his name. [Franklin Raines]

Edgar: But he's an African-American.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: He's very articulate. Yeah. But anyway, it's funny. And then, as I mentioned, that's how I first talked to Newt Minow. Later, at the end of my governorship, Newt Minow came to me and said, "You know, you ought to go to do the thing at Kennedy School. They bring people that are finishing up in politics, spend a semester, and you're a fellow." Of course, he had ties, and he had it wired if I wanted to do it, and I got in. Now, that was the best semester I probably ever had. But what's been interesting throughout all these—there are people you deal with and then you don't see them for twenty years, and all the sudden they're back in your life in some way or another; or, like the Madigan thing, people you deal with and you're dealing with them for the next twenty, thirty years.

But that school thing to me was one of the—it wasn't your typical thing, but it was something that really—it worked. We kept the Chicago schools going for a few more years and kept a little order for a while, and also, I think, avoided a huge problem trying to do something in the legislature other than what we did.

DePue: It would have been right back in their lap again because it would have failed.

Edgar: We'd have been there for weeks, and who knows what would have happened. But that incident, of all the things that occurred, to me was one of the most unusual, and actually the most positive, because in a three-day period, we actually did solve something, and it was negotiations and back—it was just a very unusual situation.

DePue: It's interesting. Having just said that, you're the legislative liaison, but you managed to solve a problem without going to the legislature.

Edgar: Yeah. And I was adamant, too. I did not want the legislative leaders over there. I did not want anybody from the legislature because they would have grandstanded, and it would have made it, I think, extremely—and who would you have picked? If you didn't pick the right ones, the others would be mad. We just told them none of them are coming. We're going to work on this; we'll get back to you. And I used to tell the leaders, I said, "You don't want to be over there, because if you're over there, you're going to get—this way you can wait and see how it goes and not have to be doing..." That was my excuse. (DePue laughs) But it was very bright people around the table on both sides. But it was interesting—I think Jane Byrne was down, too, now that I think about it. I think she was playing cards, because Jane Byrne used to smoke, and she'd blow smoke out of her nose and just—not very ladylike. And she was down for a while, but I think she was playing the card game,

now that I think about it. Because I was sitting there and I went, here's all these guys playing cards, and they're in there trying to work this—but they had no real say; they weren't the people making—it was the bankers. It was the two bankers, our bankers and their bankers, and then our saying we can try to get this passed.

DePue: Let's go ahead and shift gears here and go back to Thompson. Again, it's kind of an economic question. Perhaps all of this really came into fruition the years after you moved on to the secretary of state, but this is the beginning of some very tough years economically and for businesses in the state of Illinois. What was Thompson doing in terms of trying to promote business and industry in the state?

Edgar: One, I think: we made sure we did a corporate personal property replacement that wasn't going to do damage. What Madigan was going to do was going to have a real negative impact on Caterpillar. At that point the Japanese were beginning to put some plants in the United States, and Thompson was very much involved trying to get one of those plants in Illinois. Later he got one, but early on, the first round, we weren't that successful. Now, he went to Japan, trade mission. He went over to Japan a couple of times when I was working for him.

DePue: The purpose of going to Japan, though?

Edgar: The main purpose was to try to get one of those auto plants.

DePue: It wasn't to convince the Japanese to change their tariff laws to purchase Illinois agriculture products?

Edgar: No, not that I'm aware of. There might have been something like that, but it was mainly about trying to work on the auto plant thing. I can't remember. He went a couple times. The first one might have been a general trade mission, but the thing I remember most was trying to get the auto thing. And he could have been talking to them about the farm tariff. That didn't get much publicity, and I wasn't involved in that part. Just he was gone, and then we had to worry about he's gone if anything happened that we needed him. It was an issue, but it wasn't as big an issue as it became in the eighties. In the seventies, you still didn't have what you were calling the Rust Belt, in the Midwest. That all happened in the eighties, and in '81, I left. I think the only trips he took while he was governor in the 1970's were the ones to Japan. I never thought they sounded very luxurious, and I didn't have any desire to go to Japan myself. When the guys who went with him got back, they were always cranky and tired for a while, so it didn't sound like—and when I did go to Japan, I didn't view it as a fun trip.

DePue: And the jet lag in going to Japan.

Edgar: Yeah, and Japan just wasn't my favorite place to go. I'd much rather go to Europe. Asia just wore me out. But, no, I think the biggest thing, probably, on the national thing ["thing" isn't clear here. Is scale or scene what you meant?] was the involvement in the presidential election that year.

DePue: Before we go there, I want to ask you one other question on 1979. I think it's October 4, 1979, when your old mentor passed away.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Russell Arrington.

Edgar: When Senator Arrington died—in fact, I can't remember if I brought this up earlier, but when I did decide to leave the legislature to go take the job with Thompson, I did call Senator Arrington because I knew he wouldn't be happy. This would have been in early '79. And told him that I'd made a decision to go work for Governor Thompson, there might be some things down the road, and I just thought for the family it was the best thing. And he just said, "Okay, Jim, good luck." It was over the phone, and it's not really easy to—but I dreaded that call because I knew he would think that I was abandoning the legislature. When Arrington died, Mike Arrington, his son, asked Jim Thompson to speak at his funeral, and Thompson agreed. And Thompson had only met, I think, Arrington once, and that was late and just to say hello. He really didn't know him. So he said, "Why don't you come with me that day?" And I said, "Oh, I'd like to; I'd like to go to the funeral." And he said, "Come along with me. Maybe you can give me some thoughts on what to say." I'm not a speechwriter, and I thought, oh, shoot.

He had to go to Zion for Adeline Geo-Karis—I think it was a parade or something that she wanted him to do. I don't know if she was a senator or representative at this time, from the northern part of Lake County. And he had a couple of other stops, plus the funeral. So he said, "Just fly along with me." And I didn't usually travel with him unless I had some bills I had to get at him, and I didn't have any bills then. We fly up, and the first leg, he said, "Why don't you sit with me?" So I sat with him, and he said, "Talk to me a little bit about Arrington." So I talked to him, and I told him the story about the morning after we didn't do the CTA, which I think I've told you before, and Mike Lawrence mentioned again in a column the other day when he was talking about the needs in Springfield. I go through this and a few other things, but this is the main thing I tell him about. I said, "I think this is a good example of Arrington." And then he's looking out the window and just not paying any attention. I thought, Thompson's mind's wandering, because he didn't know Arrington, and it was just another thing. I said, "Do you want me to jot down an outline or something?" He said, "No, no, no, that's fine; I got enough." So then we go to Geo-Karis's thing, and that's a lot of hullabaloo, and we do a lunch; and just forty-eleven different things after I talked to him.

Then we go to Evanston for the funeral, and the place is packed. There are three speakers: Clem Stone, W. Clement Stone, who is Combined Insurance, which Arrington helped start—multi-billionaire who'd known Arrington for fifty years; Chuck Percy, who was then the U.S. senator, who knew Arrington and had come from that area; and Thompson. The place was packed, and we got in there right before it started, almost when it was starting. So I just sat down and didn't get a

chance to talk to anybody, and I thought, I wonder what Thompson is going to do, because these two guys really know Arrington, and he doesn't know him at all, and I don't think he was paying any attention to anything I said.

Clem Stone gets up, and Clem Stone is always this guy on positive mental attitude, and he had this little speech he used to go out and give. He gave the same speech every time he ever talked. He gave that speech at the funeral. I'm sure Arrington would have had a fit if he'd known (DePue laughs) he was giving that speech, because he used to have fits about Clem sometimes. And then Percy gets up and starts talking, and he has his facts wrong. He's talking about Jim Fletcher working for Arrington—Jim Fletcher never worked for Arrington—and he just had some facts wrong, but it was just **flat…** Neither one was very emotional. They were fine, but not...

Thompson gets up and gives a speech, and he uses the story about Arrington. "We're here to solve problems, and we didn't solve them." He uses that in the main part of his speech, and there isn't a dry eye in the place when he gets done. In fact, I'm—and it was Thompson at his best. I'd say a lot of those people in there were old-timers in politics, and they weren't real sure about Thompson. The old-timers never were sure about Thompson. And I remember Arrington's secretary from Springfield—her name is Denisha Bastas—was there, and she told me afterwards, "You know, I never really thought much about Jim Thompson, but that speech, that was really"—you could tell it really got to her. I was amazed. Again, it just underscored his ability to take a little bit of information, digest it, then be able to go back and... I couldn't have come close to making a speech like that. And then, of course, when we leave the church—and I'm choked up—we get across the street and get in the car; three kids come up and say, "Hi, Gov.," and he rolls down the window, shakes hands with them, turns around to me and says, "Been a pretty good day, hasn't it?" (laughter) And I'm still choked up. Thompson could turn it on and turn it off. I'm sure when he was giving that speech, he kind of got himself into a trance where he's—but most of that is—he could have been a great actor.

DePue: How did you deal with that personally, with Arrington, your mentor, the guy who had such a big role?

Edgar: Oh, he was—his time. I forget, what year was that? That was seventy...

DePue: Seventy-nine.

Edgar: Seventy-nine. He was born in 1905 or something.[15] He was... I think we were all amazed he lived as long as he did because he had a bad heart—and I think he died of a heart attack. He just fell over (unintelligible; both speaking)—

DePue: This would have been eight, nine years after the stroke.

[15] Arrington died October 3, 1979. His memorial service was held the afternoon of Monday, October 8. *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1979, Section 4, 12.

Edgar: Yeah. I don't think any of us were real surprised, shocked. I had not been around Arrington. I wish he could have lived at least to see me be secretary of state if not—governor would have been great. If he could have lived to see me be governor and feel like it was all worthwhile, all that effort. As I said many times about Arrington, I did not appreciate Arrington until after there was no longer an Arrington in Springfield, and I realized that he was unique.

DePue: Those days were gone.

Edgar: Yeah, he was unique. It wasn't automatic. You were going to have people making those kinds of decisions. But I think I probably thought more about Arrington when I became governor, had to make some decisions. But I was still probably—I was a little nervous when we got there almost late for the funeral. I was afraid he was going to rise up and say, "You're late."

DePue: (laughs) It's like those morning breakfasts—

Edgar: Oh, that's right, that's right.

DePue: —at the hotel.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Let's take it at a national and international level here and get your reflections on some things as we move into 1980 and the campaign that year. Jimmy Carter is president. November 1979, Iranian students seize the U.S. Embassy—and go ahead and respond to any of these if you'd like.

Edgar: Of course, I was devastated when Gerald Ford got beaten by Jimmy Carter, because he's one of my heroes. I really think he stepped in and saved America; he saved the presidency. I got to know him later, and just a quality guy. And I thought Carter—because after Walker, I thought he was another Walker; he was a little phony. Now, Carter did come to Springfield and address the Illinois General Assembly in joint session when I was a member. Redmond had him out. And I remember I brought Brad over. You could have one guest, and I brought Brad and had him sit with me. People could bring their kids and have them sit with you, and had him sitting with me to hear Jimmy Carter. That would have been about '78, and Brad would have probably been eleven years old. I've never asked him if he remembers that, what he thinks about it. So Carter was there.

But the Iranian thing—when it initially happened, you didn't think as much about it as you did a year later; as long as it kept dragging on, it kept being more and more of an issue. I had followed international politics, and you'd watch the Shah—I never knew who Khomeini was. And I never really thought the Shah would fall; I thought that he'd some way hold on. So that all... And Carter, I thought, was pretty weak on foreign policy. I just didn't think there was a whole lot of strength there. But I have to tell you that, for the most part, I was so busy in '79 worrying about all these legislative sessions we were having, special sessions in the

governor's office, I didn't think too much about that *per se*. I remember—I think it was some time in the spring—things nationally were not going well, and I remember Thompson had been in bed with one of his back things. He had been reading *Time* or *Life*, and he was just so disgusted with Carter about how everything was really screwed up and we really needed to change presidents. He really had to—

DePue: Is that spring of '80?

Edgar: I think it was spring of '80. *Time* or *Newsweek*, one of those, had just done a litany of all the things that were wrong in the country and how Carter had lost grip. But Carter just, to me—we didn't have many dealings to speak of because that was a Democratic administration, and I didn't really know anybody in the Carter administration to speak of.

DePue: How closely did you follow the Republican primaries?

Edgar: Very much, very much, because Thompson was a player in the primaries. In 1980, people wanted Illinois. Illinois was an early state in the primaries. Jim Thompson was a possible VP candidate. Illinois was a player, and there was a group in Illinois, a group of Republicans—George Ryan was part of them; you had Harold Smith, who later became the state chairman—a bunch of them, who decided they were going to be for John Connally. Connally had been Richard Nixon's choice [for vice president], but he couldn't get him confirmed, so he went with Gerald Ford.

DePue: From Texas.

Edgar: Yeah. He was the former Democratic governor and secretary of the navy under Kennedy, who became secretary of the treasury under Nixon. Then there was a milk scandal. He had a typical Texas politician checkered past. But he was running, and a lot of party folks in Illinois, including George Ryan, were for him. Thompson decided to invite the presidential candidates to come to Springfield to speak; kind of do an audition. And Connally was the first one.

DePue: This would have been Connally, Bush, and Reagan?

Edgar: It was Connally, Bush—Reagan wouldn't come. I don't know if he didn't get invited—I think he wouldn't come. Connally, Bush, Howard Baker, John Anderson. Was there anybody else? Those four, I know, because I went to those four. And then he'd invite some of his key staffers, some party leaders, business people, and had it at the mansion. The first one was John Connally, and everybody thought Thompson was for Connally. I never heard him say he was. We'd have some meetings, and there would be meetings that I wasn't around, but I never heard him say he was for Connally. But Connally came first, and it was sometime still in '79 when he came, because Jim Fletcher, I think, was still chief of staff. I remember Connally came into his office and waited for Thompson to come. But we'd sit around and talk with him, four or five us on the staff and him—and talk about it.

And while there was a lot of pressure coming, to be for Connally, Thompson never said he was there.

But the thought was he had people in each camp. He had Sam Skinner, who later became secretary of transportation and chief of staff for George Bush, kind of in the Bush camp. You had the people in the Connally camp; they thought Thompson had given his blessing to go be in the Connally. So they thought he had people in all these camps. I don't think it was quite that organized. But we'd have these dinners, and people would come in, but Thompson still didn't indicate who he was going to be for. And everybody thought he would be for Connally, but he never did say that publicly, and in these meetings that I was in, he never indicated that he was for Connally. Then Connally began to stumble and not go anyplace, just kind of go down in the polls.

And then in early '80, Bush pulled the upset. He won Iowa, and Reagan looked like he could be in trouble. Part of the problem Thompson had with Reagan was Reagan's people in Illinois—they had been there in '76, and these were a lot of the right-wingers, people who weren't Thompson's people; they were people who gave Thompson a hard time most the time. So there was no love lost between Thompson and the Reagan people in Illinois. As a result, I'm sure the Reagan people in Illinois said to Reagan, "Don't go to the mansion; that's beneath you. You don't have to do that." So Reagan didn't ever come, but all the others did.

After the Iowa primary, Thompson was ready to endorse Bush, but he was going to wait for New Hampshire, and then New Hampshire went the other way. But he had pretty well decided—it was obvious Connally wasn't going anyplace. I forget how many millions of dollars Connally spent for a half-delegate. I think that's all he ever got. And John Anderson, of course, being from Illinois, you had to be a little careful about that. But ideology-wise, Bush and Thompson were probably in synch as much as anybody, because at that point, Bush was more of a moderate. He viewed supply-side economics as voodoo economy, which I think it is. And I have to say, I was for Bush myself, so I was always pushing those meetings; and Bush made more sense for Illinois.

There was never any talk about him being for Reagan. Either he was going to be for Bush or he's not going to be for anybody. If you wait too long, or did you wait too long? Do you need to, if you want to have an impact, get in now? He almost did it before the New Hampshire primary but decided to wait. Of course, Reagan wins the New Hampshire primary, and then Bush just kind of falls away, and it's going to be Reagan. And then the question is: all right, Thompson's going to be for Reagan, but the Reagan people don't really care. In Illinois, they're kind of... So they finally work out a deal where he will endorse Reagan, and then the question is: what role will Thompson play in Reagan's campaign? And they got to work through that and put together a coalition or agreement where Reagan's people would be doing things but Thompson would also be involved. And that happened later, in the spring, when that finally got—that was kind of uncomfortable because you had to eat crow a little bit there.

But the dinners were interesting. I remember Howard Baker came. Brenda would go with me. Brenda is not real political, and she never says anything negative about people. But when we got home I said, “What’d you think?” and she said, “He’s too short to be president,” about Howard Baker. And she doesn’t like me to repeat that, but I always thought she was very perceptive, her reaction to the different candidates and stuff like that. Connally always made a good impression. He was forceful, but he just never caught on. I think there was always too much suspicion about some of his dealings in Texas, and worrying about that. Bush, to me, seemed to—he wasn’t a great speechmaker, but he just had the right resume.

DePue: Was Thompson possibly aligning himself with somebody like Bush in part—the philosophy was correct in terms of the positions in the party, but was he also thinking about, if Bush is the winner, I’ve got a good chance of being the vice-presidential candidate?

Edgar: Oh, I don’t know. I’m sure he was hoping that in all of them. I don’t know if he would think any more with Bush. The thinking with Bush, if it would be Bush, was he’d probably need a little more conservative than somebody of his ilk. But I think he wanted to guess right. If you’re going to endorse, you would like to endorse somebody who’s going to win. And I think also, the thought was that Bush would run well in Illinois. But he finally endorses Reagan toward the end, and he’s going to be somewhat involved in Reagan’s campaign, but it’s not going to be his full campaign, like it later would be with some of them.

Go to the convention then, and that’s the first convention I ever went to. I went—not as a delegate; Thompson took some of his staff with him.

DePue: That was in Detroit.

Edgar: That was in Detroit, and we were out in the suburbs. And I remember it was so far away. I only went down one time to the convention center in Detroit. But two things out of that convention. One: I didn’t know that in six months I was going to get named secretary of state or become secretary of state, but it gave me a chance—one thing that’s good about the convention is all the players from the state and the party go to the convention, a lot of them, and it gave me a chance to get to know them and meet them. There were some legislators there, and I’d have breakfast with them, and they’d introduce me to some people from their area. I remember, there was a guy—his brother was senator—his name was Bud Hall, and I played tennis with him—who later worked for me. But there were a lot of people at that convention whom I met and got to know a little bit, or they moved me; so when a few months later, out of the blue, I become secretary of state, they know who I am. That kind of helped, not knowing at the time.

The other thing that was really interesting was that there was a lot of question: who was going to be Reagan’s VP? And they had a group of people, including Thompson—it was about six or seven, I think; governors, some senators—who Reagan was meeting with to talk about who they thought. But then the

speculation—and this group didn't bring it up—started about Gerald Ford being his VP. It was a big discussion about that the night before. So that starts gaining momentum, and Thompson is coming back and telling us about these meetings, and the night that they were going to pick, he said, "I think it's going to be Ford. I think this is really going to happen." He said, Reagan asked us what we thought, and it got to me—they knew Ford was being considered, and he said, "I think it ought to be Ford." And he [Reagan] said, "Governor,"—now, this is what Thompson always says— "even though you could be a possible VP." And he [Thompson] said, "No, I know. I think it ought to be Ford." Now, that's the only time I know that Thompson ever said that anybody possibly said it, but it was after the fact, kind of like, you could be considered.

So that night, if you watched television and listened to Walter Cronkite and everybody, it was going to be Gerald Ford. It was a done deal. And I drive down to the—that's the night I go to the convention, the night they're going to announce the VP, or they think they're going to. That was the night they nominated Reagan, they officially nominated Reagan. So all the way down, I'm listening to the radio, and they're talking about it's going to be Ford, and this-and-this has been worked out, and he's going to have certain responsibilities, it's going to be like a co-presidency; and they said they're really glum at the White House, the thought of Ford being on the ticket, too, and that this will be just very formidable and blah-blah.

So we get down there, and we just get on the floor, and they said, "Nope, that's fallen through; it's not going to happen." And we said, "What's going to happen?" And then all of the sudden Reagan came out and announced it was going to be Bush. So that was an interesting time. In retrospect, it would have been, I think, a mistake to do the Ford thing; I don't know how you would have separated power like that. But it was intriguing that night, and I thought, boy, talk about the Democrats really are in trouble. My sense is, and I think the polls show this, if Ford had run for president in '80, he would have beat Reagan in the primary, at least starting out. There was this huge kind of regret feeling about Gerald Ford, that he hadn't got elected, and Carter had been a disaster. But my thinking was, anybody was probably going to win that election that year. I think Ford would have won it bigger than Reagan won it.

DePue: And it was a historic landslide victory for Reagan.

Edgar: Yeah. I don't know if it was historical landslide. It was a big victory. He won—

DePue: He won forty-eight or forty-nine—

Edgar: Yeah, he won a lot of the states. The popular vote, I don't know.[16] But the key was, people thought it was close until the last debate, and I think there was a lot of

---

[16] Reagan defeated Carter by a margin of 8,162,000 votes and 440 electoral votes; however, John Anderson's independent candidacy helped hold Reagan to only 50.5 percent of the total vote. U.S. House of Representatives, Office of the Clerk, *Statistics of the Presidential and Congressional Election* (1980). http://clerk.house.gov/member_info/electionInfo/1980election.pdf

undecided. There were a lot of people who hadn't decided, is he going to be okay, or is he too conservative? It wasn't that anybody said, "I'm not going to vote for Carter, and I'm going to vote for Reagan." I think there was just a lot of undecided who at the last said, "I can vote for Reagan; it's okay to vote for Reagan." That last debate, I think.

DePue: And the continuing problems with the hostage crisis...

Edgar: Oh, there's no doubt. Carter had everything: the economy; the Iran thing made him look just weak as could be. Yeah, if he hadn't have had the Iran hostage, I don't know if he could have won or not; it would have been a lot closer. You got to admit, he did beat Kennedy in the primary. Now, I think Teddy Kennedy is probably one of the most overrated people in a lot of ways, and he sure is overrated politically. Who will ever forget the interview with Roger Mudd when they asked him, "Why do you want to be president?" and he didn't have a clue (DePue laughs) why he wanted to be president. It was downhill from then on. That's one of those turning points in American politics. But I was surprised Carter won the primary. I thought if a Kennedy gets in a Democratic primary, it's automatic, but Carter surprised me on that.

And the Reagan people were good at politics. They were good. Of course, I was pleased that... Two things had to happen in that election for me to be secretary of state. One is Alan Dixon had to get elected to U.S. Senate, but at the same time, it made it a lot easier if we had control of the House. We'll probably get into this another time.

In 1980, Thompson had me out at the National Governors' Conference in Denver, and I was there with him. John Anderson was running then as an independent for president. And they invited the candidates, but only John Anderson accepted. Why would the Republican and the Democratic candidate want to come and talk to the Governors Conference when they were the party nominees? Everybody knew how those other guys (laughs) were going to vote in there. But Anderson came. And I remember sitting behind Thompson, and Anderson starts to speak, and a guy got up from the audience and threw eggs at—it could have been a bomb for all we knew at that point—but he got up, started yelling, and threw eggs at John Anderson. And this is at the NGA meeting. They'd had dogs; they didn't sniff out eggs, though, apparently. (DePue laughs) But that was kind of a scary moment, just because you thought, oh, shoot, they're going to shoot him. Maybe he's got a bomb. What's happening here? And it was eggs thrown at John Anderson.

DePue: Let's get it back down to Illinois politics. This is kind of a curious question, but here's an election that you're not running in.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Your feelings about that, and maybe Brenda's as well?

Edgar: Oh, I'm sure Brenda was happy. (laughs) I'm sure I was disappointed not being a candidate for something. I can't remember a lot of anguish; just I was involved somewhat in watching the legislative races and trying to have the governor's office so we could help the Republicans where we could. I think I spent a lot of time trying to mediate between feuding Republicans and Republican districts, and making sure that both Republicans got—I think of the one down in deep southern Illinois between C. L. McCormick and Bob Winchester. C. L. McCormick was a legendary legislator who had stepped out of the legislature for a while but was coming back to run again, and he and Winchester—of course, they didn't get along because it was the same district. His son Mike McCormick works for me still, and there's still bad blood there…in what happens in southern Illinois politics. Some of the governor's people were closer to Winchester, and I wanted to make sure that C. L. got his fair help, because we needed them both to get control of the House.

DePue: What was his first name?

Edgar: C. L. It's initials: C. L.

DePue: Oh, C. L. The other thing on the ballot was—

Edgar: You had the Cutback Amendments.

DePue: And we hadn't really finished that story yesterday. So it appears on the ballot in 1980. What was Thompson's position on that?

Edgar: Oh, he was opposed to it. Everybody was opposed to it, except the voters. (laughter) All the newspapers, I think, all the interest groups—everybody came out—except *Peoria Journal Star* was for it because they had harangued for years on it. But most everybody I know of in politics was opposed to it. Of course, you didn't want to change the status quo, and the governor didn't want to have all the legislators mad at him if he wasn't against it, so—he didn't go out and use up a lot of capital, but his position: he was opposed to it. Everybody was opposed to it.

I had mixed feelings because I always personally liked it. As a legislator, I would have rather had a single-member district, I thought. I wouldn't have such a big district; I'd be the big duck in the little pond as opposed to being one of three ducks on a little pond. And I thought there was more accountability. I thought there were arguments you could make for it. Now that we've gone, what, thirty years without it, I have to say that I don't think it works very—cumulative voting probably served Illinois better in a lot of ways. Neither one's perfect. But my sense was it was going to pass. The polls—

DePue: Do you recall the margin that it won by?

Edgar: Oh, (laughs) it wasn't even close. I can't remember, but it was seventy-thirty or something. It was huge.[17] And as I said, everybody was—except Pat Quinn and his band. They didn't sell it on the merit of single member; they sold it as going to basically get rid of, what was it, eighty-nine politicians? No, that's not right. Fifty-nine. So you had 177—

DePue: A hundred and seventy-seven divided by three.

Edgar: —to 118. Yeah. You were going to have that many fewer politicians, and that's what passed it. People just wanted fewer politicians. If that had been to reduce the legislature to one, it would have passed.

DePue: So the results of the election are: the Cutback Amendment wins by a huge margin; Reagan wins by a sizeable margin, wins most of the states—got a new president; and, you already mentioned, Alan Dixon.

Edgar: Again, my mind's pretty focused on the state, so more importantly, Alan Dixon gets elected, but we also get control of the Illinois House. And it looked for a while like we were going to get control of the Senate. In fact, I remember (laughs) going to Thompson, and first I said, "It looks like we're going to have control of the House," and he said, "Okay." And I said, "Governor, I don't know if I've got good news or bad news: I think we're going to control the Senate, too." And he said, "Oh, good heavens." (DePue laughs) Because that might be too much. In the end, he only had the House, and just barely, so that meant you'd have a Speaker of the House. But also, it meant, more importantly, from my perspective—well, that was important because at that point, I didn't know what would happen on the secretary of state—that he was going to appoint somebody secretary of state. That started a lot of speculation immediately, I'm quite sure.

DePue: We're closing in on three hours. My druthers, I guess, would be to have you talk about that phone call and the selection to secretary of state, and finish off that way for today.

Edgar: Okay, let's do that. As soon as the election was over, the—of course, in Illinois, once one election is over, everything focuses on the next election, and the next election was really his selection of who's going to be successor to Alan Dixon.

DePue: What were you thinking at the time?

Edgar: I thought at the time I might be in the running, but there's no guarantee. He never said, "You're going to be my choice for secretary of state." And you knew a lot of people were going to be interested in that. We'd already begun to have discussions in the staff. Art Quern became chief of staff the year before, sometime after that first session, in the fall of 1979. That was important to me because Jim Fletcher and I had known each other for a long time—and I thought he was very smart—but we

[17] Illinois voters approved the Cutback Amendment 2,112,224 to 962,325; a margin of 1,149,899 votes. http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lrb/conampro.htm.

weren't necessarily close. His style was a little different than mine, and we hadn't dealt all that much together. Art Quern and I developed a pretty good relationship when he was director of public aid, originally as a legislator, handling his bills, but more importantly as the legislative liaison. I really protected him and spent a lot of time, and he was very appreciative.

When it came time to pick a successor, there was a lot of speculation on who it's going to be. There was talk about, we'll create a political person, deputy governor kind of thing, and they had ideas on that, and I think Fletcher wanted to kind of put his guy in as he left to go off to lobby. So there was a lot of speculation, and also there was the possibility of somebody like Art Quern, who came out of management and had been with Rockefeller before he'd come to Thompson. He'd worked for Rockefeller in Albany, then later in Washington when he [Rockefeller] was the vice president, and worked with Ford, too.

And there was a lot of talk about that. So Quern was in to see me, and I said, "What are your chances? Are you interested in this chief of staff?" and he said, "Yeah." And I said, "I hear this thing about this other thing, and I think that would be a mistake. Thompson doesn't need some political guy there, because the legislature already thinks he doesn't know much about politics. He doesn't want to have another Jim Fletcher who is the guy that you go to to get the deals; Thompson just kind of flutters about." I said, "I think that hurts him." I said, "It'd be far better to have somebody like you manage. It's obvious you're not the political guy; you're the manager, and we need a manager about this place." And Julian D'Esposito, I think, felt the same way. He'd been trying to do it as chief counsel, but we needed somebody to hold everything together and manage.

So I saw Thompson a few days later to do some bills, and he said, "Art Quern was in; I talked to him." He said, "You had some thoughts on the chief of staff." He said, "We've got a funeral"—and it was a legislative funeral he was going to go to. He said, "Why don't you fly with me, and we'll talk about it?" So I thought, "Oh, great." Because I hadn't been there all that long; I think maybe I'm intruding where I shouldn't be. But when we were flying, he said, "I'd like to know your thoughts." So I kind of said, "I think it ought to be Art," and not this other concept that I thought wouldn't serve him well. I thought Art would be ideal because, I said, "You need somebody to..." I said, "This place, there's no management around here. It works all right, but you need somebody to bring everything together. I was really surprised when I walked in and realized there's no cohesive overall management in this administration. And that's not your thing. That's just not in your nature."

DePue: When you say "administration," you're talking about...?

Edgar: The governor's office.

DePue: The governor's office, not secretary of state.

Edgar: No, this is all in the governor's office. And I said, "So I think Art—I've been impressed working with him, and I think he'd be a good guy. I don't want to try to tell you how to do your thing, but that's just my take on it." Lo and behold, about two weeks later, he names Art Quern as chief of staff, and then Art and I work well together. So this is a year later—this is into the fall of 1980—and Art starts talking about it. He said, "How about after this session's over—after the election, we might reorganize and have you come in to do all the out stuff, be the guy people communicate with. You'd go around the state, kind of be a deputy governor. We'll bring back the deputy governor title"—which they'd done away. Jim Fletcher had had that, and they had eliminated that, and Art Quern was chief of staff; he wasn't deputy governor. They didn't have a deputy governor. He said, "You become deputy governor; I'll be chief of staff. And then I'll take care of all the in stuff. But just a lot of the out stuff, dealing with the legislature, but not as a legislative liaison necessarily, in groups around, and do all that, with the idea that in two years, you run for lieutenant governor when he runs for reelection." So Art and I talked about that for a while, and I said, "Have you talked to Thompson about that?" and he said, "Yeah, he thinks that might work." So we talked about it—and that had happened right before the election.

So then the election comes, and everybody's clamoring, wants to talk to Thompson about being secretary of state, and there's all this speculation. There's speculation it could be a woman; a lot of the congressmen might want to come back; and George Ryan wanted it. And there's just all kinds of speculation. And about a week after the election, Thompson calls me down to his office. He said, "Let's talk about secretary of state." He said, "You've got that." He said, "I know Art's talked to you about the lieutenant governor; you've got that. What would you rather do?" I said, "Probably in some ways, the lieutenant governor," but I said, "Practical—you have the secretary of state to offer. Lieutenant governor may or may not happen. You'd have to dump your current lieutenant governor, and you're not good at dumping people." And I said, "You know, a bird in the hand's worth two in the bush. I don't know what your other choices are." I said, "I know George Ryan's being mentioned," and I could tell he did not want to do George Ryan. And I said, "You don't have to do George Ryan. You don't have to do me. You don't have to do anybody. You can do whoever you want. You don't owe it to anybody. This is not a payback; this is an important appointment because it's going to reflect on you."

I said, "But no, I would like to be secretary of state; if that doesn't happen, that doesn't happen." And he said, "Some of the guys don't think you're political enough." I said, "I was always the political guy. I was the political guy in the Senate and the House. I think I'm more than just political, but I think I understand politics." And I said, "I have run and been elected, so."

DePue: So what did he mean by that comment?

Edgar: The fact that some of the party guys and some of the guys in his office didn't think I was partisan enough. I was too much in the issues. That was kind of the rap. And I

always had that rap. I had that rap for several more years, and it was interesting because I had been the political guy in both the House and the Senate and the staffer—

DePue: Any outsider would say that's a good thing.

Edgar: Yeah, right. But these were the politicians. The party guys were worried about, who's going to be secretary of state? They're going to give us jobs, because they had all these jobs. But we talked for a while, and I said, "Look, I'd like it, but if it doesn't happen, that's fine. You've been very good to me; I'm happy doing what I'm doing, and if what we're talking about comes about, that'd be better." I said, "But you don't owe it to anybody. Just remember that, in this whole thing. Don't feel like anybody, you owe it; you pick who you feel the most comfortable with."

So we left, and a few days later, Bill Cellini calls me—and Bill and I have known each other for years. Not close, but we'd gone to dinner with them and stuff; they'd invite us to things over the years. He said, "I'd like to have lunch with you," and I said, "Okay." And I thought, eh, something about secretary of state, because this was all anybody was talking about. So we had lunch, and he said, "I think Thompson wants to name you to secretary of state." He said, "I was in the other day for something and he kept me, just the two of us, and we just talked about secretary of state, and from talking to him, I think he'd like to name you. He doesn't want to name George, not excited about any of these other names, but the concern is, are you political enough?" So I went through it. "Bill," I said, "I was always the political guy in the House and the Senate staffs." I said, "I think I understand politics, but there's probably more to me than politics. I served as the party treasurer back home; I've been a precinct committeeman. I think I'm political enough. I work with county chairman. I'm not going to do anything illegal, but," I said, "I can work with folks." So we talked for a while, and he said, "We'll see what happens. But I think it's what he'd like to do," he said, "if he can just get over…"

Then I'd say for two weeks, I didn't hear boo about anything, but there's all this speculation. There's talk about Tom Corcoran, who was a congressman, who I'd worked with on Arrington's staff. He'd come back to talk to Thompson—he wanted it. Found out later Ed Madigan wanted it. He didn't come back and ask him for it, but he would really like to have it. He was a congressman. There was speculation about women. There weren't that many women to pick from, but there were women out there who were being mentioned. Jane Hayes Rader, who was on the U of I board of trustees, was a name mentioned one time. She was in the paper, anyway.

I remember there were stories in the paper, and they'd maybe have ten pictures, and my picture was there. I was being mentioned, as... Because Greg Baise had mentioned to somebody a year before, when Dixon first announced he was running for the Senate, that Thompson—they were speculating—he said, "You might be surprised. Thompson might pick somebody like Jim Edgar." And this reporter—he told me later they'd been drinking—he didn't think he'd remember it.

He remembered it. (DePue laughs) So that's how my name got in the mix. And some of the guys, legislators—people just thought it was a possibility. So my name was in the mix, but nobody thought—I was one of the also-run, not in the leading candidates.

DePue: Who would have been the leading candidates?

Edgar: George Ryan. Everybody knew he wanted it and thought he would get it. I didn't think he would get it, because I think Thompson didn't want to name him. I knew that, and Cellini had reaffirmed that. Thompson told me that wasn't who he—and it didn't make sense, really. Of course, then he had the excuse—now that you had a Republican House, you could tell—Oh, no, we need—George needs to stay as Speaker. That was the story that was used. But it made it a lot easier, too, to George, just because, yeah, you need to be Speaker. Because if George had left, there would have been a battle for Speaker, and who knew who would have won. Now, Pete Peters, who had a good shot at maybe being Speaker, told me not to take this job; I ought to stay where I was. (laughs) And I said, "Pete, don't tell me that." I said, "You just tell me that because you want to be Speaker of the House, because George could be..."

So for two weeks, I didn't hear anything, and the speculation was a lot about a woman or a congressman; that's kind of where it had got to. And it was a Friday night. I knew Tom Corcoran had been back to see him, and I kind of got the word that he might be ready to do something. And this was the Friday before Thanksgiving. I remember driving home that night thinking, it's not going to be me. I haven't even heard from Thompson. I haven't heard anything, and the speculation's on these other people. And I was discouraged because you finally get to the point where you're kind of hoping to get it. So I remember I stopped to get some milk at a filling station, and I put the milk on top of the car to get my keys out to unlock the car; and I was so distracted, I forgot the milk was on top of the car, and I drove off. (laughter) I got home, and Brenda said, "Where's the milk?" (DePue laughs)

And it's Friday, because I remember what I was watching on TV. I'm watching *Washington Week in Review*, which I watched every week I could—and I still do if I happen to be home on a Friday—to find out what's going on nationally and internationally. I was watching it, and that comes on, what, at seven o'clock? And so about 7:15, the phone rings, and Brenda said, "Jim, it's the governor." And I thought, he's calling to tell me it's not going to be me. So I take the phone, and I said, "Yes, Governor?" And he said, "Still want to be secretary of state?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "It's yours."

The first thing that went through my mind? I've got to get an unlisted phone number. (DePue laughs) Actually, that's the first thing that went through my mind: I got to get an unlisted phone number. And he said, "I want to talk to George tomorrow and tell him." He said, "Why don't you come up here Monday, and we'll go over and announce it Tuesday down in Springfield?" I said, "Fine," and I said,

"I'll see you Monday, then." So I hang up, and I said, "I got it," so I was just floating. But I did repeat to Brenda, "We got to get an unlisted phone number." (DePue laughs) I'll tell you a story: We did get an unlisted phone number, and they gave my number to somebody else who just moved into Springfield, and the poor guy got inundated with all these calls (laughs) with people wanting jobs, because I knew what was going to happen.

And I was supposed to go the next day over to Champaign to be interviewed for a—the Rotary in this area was going to send somebody off to Norway for a three-month thing. You would live in Norway, and it was like a visiting professional. I'd go over... And I'd talked to Art, and he said, "Yeah, if you get that, we'll work it out some way. You can get three months off to go to Norway and do that." Because my chance to go overseas. I'd never really been overseas. I guess the only thing at that point, I'd been to Canada. I don't think I'd ever been anyplace but Canada. And it was going to be picked—I had it wired. (laughs) I checked—because I knew enough Rotarians in the area and talked to them, and who was on the committee. And it was pretty well: if I show up and interview, I was probably going to get picked for that job, but I had to come over here on Saturday and get interviewed. I figured, I can't go; I'm going to become secretary of state. So I called and cancelled that. And the next thing I did, I went out to White Oaks and bought a new suit because I needed a new suit. I went and spent a lot of money, and went to Famous Bar—it was Famous Bar then—and bought a new suit, so I was ready.

DePue: Let's finish up with this one, then.

Edgar: I'm not done, yet.

DePue: Oh, I'm sorry.

Edgar: I'm sorry, you got to live through this whole weekend with me. So I've bought a suit and cancelled. Sunday, I get a call from Thompson. He said, "I talked to George. I got it finally worked out: it's going to be you." I wanted to say, (laughs) "Wait a minute, you had it worked out Friday night. (DePue laughs) I bought a suit and cancelled my trip to Norway." He said, "Come on up here," so I go up Monday, and we go through everything. I said, "How was George?" and he said, "He wasn't real happy. They really wanted it, and I just said, 'No, you need to stay in the House, and I'm going to put Jim Edgar in.'" He said, "Now, I told him, I said, 'It could be in two years. Jim Edgar could run for lieutenant governor and you could run for secretary of state.'" He said, "You mean if Edgar screws up as secretary of state, then you'll move him over to lieutenant governor." He said, "No, if Jim Edgar screws up, I'll just move him out, period; he won't have anything." And I'm sitting there thinking, listen to this, I'm thinking—because there had been the talk that maybe I'd serve as secretary of state for two years then run for lieutenant governor—wait a minute. I better just get in there and take care of myself. But I said, "Okay," and we do this.

The next day—it's a Tuesday—Thompson announces I will be his secretary of state. Then I remember the next day, we drive down to my mother-in-law in Anna. This is southern Illinois, where jobs are king. I drive into her driveway, and we go and have Thanksgiving dinner, and halfway through dinner, here comes this family in to see us. And Brenda's mom said, "Oh, I forgot to mention. That's so-and-so. You went to school with him, Brenda. I saw him at the store, and he wondered when you were going to be in town. He was interested in a job." (laughter) I said, "I don't believe it! Thanksgiving dinner, and they already started." And from then on, just inundated with people.

To finish up the whole thing about whatever he told George; about three weeks, four weeks later, I'm trying to recruit staff, and George is putting out, "Edgar's only a caretaker; he's only going to do that for two years, and he'll run for lieutenant governor, and I'll run for secretary of state." And I thought, ugh. I just sent word to Thompson. I said, "Forget this." I said, "There's a possibility I'm staying here," because I couldn't recruit people. Everybody thought you were only going to be here for a short time; who knew what was going to happen? And also I remember that comment about, "Well, if you screw up..." And I thought, I've been given the opportunity; now I'm going to have to make the most of it, but I'm not going to rely on some other job or something else.

But Thompson—it goes back to that first talk with him at the mansion. He was good to his word: he put me on the statewide ticket. Of course, he didn't know at that time that Dixon was going to vacate the secretary of state. And that was my chance. I've had a lot of breaks, but that's the biggest break, because at that point, when I got named, there was a lot of speculation I wouldn't survive a primary, let alone a general election, because there'd be a lot of other people wanting that job in a primary, better known. But it was a great opportunity. (laughs) We did get an unlisted phone number, I did get to use my new suit, and I didn't regret that I cancelled my interview to go to Norway. Even though Thompson told me Friday night, then he told me again (laughs) Sunday night he'd just finally worked it out, and I was glad he didn't waver too much in that meeting with George on Saturday.

But the story was that George—"Say you want to stay to be Speaker, and you declined it. I offered it to you, but you declined it." Now, nobody ever believed that because everybody knew he wanted it, but it made it a lot easier. If he hadn't have got the speakership, I think it would have been tougher for Thompson to tell him no, because he really wanted it. And I will say—and we'll get into this later—that during my time as secretary of state, especially when George was Speaker that first two years, George was very—anything I needed, he was always very supportive. He did not hold it against me that I got it, at all.

DePue: Last question for today then is: now that you know you're going to the secretary of state's office, how does that change your plan, because you've always been a guy who had a plan?

Edgar: It put me back in a plan. I really was in limbo. It's kind of like when I lost that first election. I was in limbo until I got on the ballot again in '76—when I knew I was going to be the nominee. Basically, when they closed filing back in December of '75, I knew I was back on track. Now I knew I was back on track, on track to be governor. I had a golden opportunity here; if I didn't mess it up, I could be the heir apparent. So I felt very good about knowing I'm on track; I've got a future. Where, in the governor's office, things were going pretty well. After that first six months, which was really tough and rocky—after that, things really went well. There was articles written about how I'd done a good job, and I could pick up feedback that I was doing well; I knew Thompson paid attention if I had recommendations on things, whether in his legislative stuff or about chief of staff, and Art and I got along fine—Julian D'Esposito was still there, and the three of us got along very well. I felt very good about all that, but it still wasn't where I wanted to be, and the secretary of state put me back on track to... And also controlling your own destiny. You had an opportunity; now you had to make the most of it.

In fact, even the night before—I think it was that Sunday night—I pulled some people together to start planning on transition to secretary of state, because this was different than if you got elected in November, first November, then you went to about the middle of January. This was the latter part of November, and I was going to get sworn in on January fifth because that's when Dixon was sworn into the U.S. Senate, so you had a little more than a month to—now, it wasn't the same as becoming governor, but you had a little more than a month to start putting together what you were going to do. You did know you were going from a Democrat to a Republican administration, which has never happened under the code, so there were all kinds of issues; and you also knew that, politically, you had to hit the ground running, and I knew that from my own experience in office. There were just a lot of things I had to do. And because most people didn't know me, how I started out was going to frame their opinion of me, so all that was very important that I get off to a good start. So while I was in euphoria, I still knew I had a lot of work ahead of me.

And (laughs) one other story about this. I guess it's when I was sworn in, Thompson hosted a party for us over at the mansion, and he—we had all our people in from all over, and a lot of people from my legislative district over for that. Brad had a basketball game that night; the party was from six to eight, and Brad's game was at seven. So at about 6:45, I went up and thanked the Thompsons very much (laughs) for the party. I said, "I've got to go. Brad's got a basketball game." And they're kind of looking at me like, "What?" (DePue laughs) And I just remember Thompson saying, "You might have left, but all your friends from back home..." He said, "For a teetotaler, you have more drinking friends..." (DePue laughs) He said, "They were there to one o'clock, drinking us..." And he said, "I went to bed. Jane stayed up with them to be polite, but I went to bed." I was long in bed by then, but I said, "I'm sorry." I said, "Brad had a ballgame. I don't care. I'm not missing the ballgame." (laughs)

DePue: And they didn't mind drinking the governor's liquor.

Edgar: No, no, they didn't mind drinking the governor's—they sure had to drink up, because—I don't know if they knew, but when we got there, they didn't get to drink off me.

DePue: Thank you very much, governor; and next time, the secretary of state years.

(end of interview 6)

Interview with Jim Edgar

ISG-A-L-2009-019.07

Interview # 7: June 15, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

DePue: Today is June 15, 2009. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. And Governor Edgar, good afternoon.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: This is our seventh session.

Edgar: Getting to know each other.

DePue: Yeah, that's great. And we have gotten, up to this point, to just you taking office as the secretary of state.

Edgar: I think we just got to the point of it being announced that I would become, because there was a lot that happened in between the announcement and the swearing in as far as getting ready.

DePue: Okay. Well, good that you corrected me. So let's go ahead and start with that discussion, then, and what you did in that window of preparation.

Edgar: Well, the window was not as long as usual from an election, plus usually, an election, you've been running for a year, so you've been thinking about it and everybody else has been thinking about it. But when I was named in that Monday before Thanksgiving in 1980, a lot of people were very surprised. The main

comment was, who's Jim Edgar, you know, because I had been a state rep in downstate Illinois for a term and a half, but other than that, I had not held an elected office. People inside state government knew me, but the average person outside of that legislative district didn't have a clue who I was. So I understood that I was going to have to move pretty quickly, both governmentally and politically. Governmentally I had to figure out, what am I going to do, try to put a team together, and also politically, I had to get myself established so I didn't right away have a primary challenge, which most people thought I would, and undoubtedly have a very tough time in the general election.

So the first thing I worried about was kind of putting together a small group of people to advise me to get ready to assume the office, which was going to be in a little more than a month. One of the things I quickly did was put together a transition committee, and the people I had originally to kind of help me, I had—her name was then Joan Shelf, later to be Joan Walters, who worked for me in the legislative office; Terry Scroggins, another person who worked for me in the legislative office; and Phil Howe. Those were the three people at that time working under me in the legislative office. I asked Zale Glauberman to take part; he didn't seem too interested. He was also kind of close to George Ryan, and so I think he—so he did not. I think he came maybe to one meeting and that was it, but the other three were there, and I think at some point, I probably got Jim Reilly involved, too, who was at that point still a state rep, who was a good friend of mine. And we tried to figure out, all right, what are we going to do? First, we had to put together a transition committee.

Now, part of the transition committee was to get people who could advise me, but also to use it to get people who would feel some identity to me as secretary of state or some support, thinking if you put people on a transition committee, maybe six months down the road, when somebody wants to run against you in a primary, these people might say, well, no, we're with Jim Edgar. So we tried to put together a group of people who could advise me on the office, and also, I have to say, they'd be politically helpful. We asked Pate Philip to be on it, because there was talk he might want to run. His brother at that point was very sick. I don't think he ever came to a meeting, but he did agree to serve on it. Dan Webb, I had on there. Dan Webb had been director of law enforcement under Thompson, and he'd worked in the U.S. attorney office under Thompson and later, after this, became U.S. attorney. But I wanted his input, because we knew we had a lot of legal and questionable law enforcement issues in that secretary of state's office. And I can't remember who all was on it, but we didn't have a whole lot of time. The one I remember most is probably Dan Webb, because not too long after he came on and we were talking about what do we do about the secretary of state police, which has always been a controversial thing. You remember earlier in our discussion, I'd written a paper saying why you ought to do away with it.

And the other thing we were a little concerned about was, too—not a little, a big concern—was I'd be the first person to become secretary of state that inherited an office that was coded. Before, any time a new secretary of state came in, he

could remove anybody because nobody was—they didn't have a code for the office. But Alan Dixon had put a code in, partly, I think, to kind of calm his employees when he was going to go run for the U.S. Senate because they were very worried. He's in the middle of a term, he runs for the U.S. Senate, you got a Republican governor, he's probably going to name a Republican, (clears throat) and they're all worried about their jobs. So to kind of calm that a little bit, he did put through a code that the Democratic legislature approved that pretty much all except those at the very top were coded in.

So I was going to be a Republican secretary of state walking into an office that was 99 percent Democrat, and not just any Democrat—these in most cases were the most active Democrats in downstate Illinois, because Alan Dixon at the time had the only office Democrats had of any size. Now, Roland Burris was state comptroller, but that maybe had fifty jobs. This office had four thousand jobs, and they were scattered all over the state, and so in most cases, particularly downstate where you didn't have all the jobs like Cook County Democrats had, like city hall and county government, the most active Democrats who wanted a job worked in the secretary of state's office. So I had a lot of Democratic county chairmen and a lot of key precinct committeemen. So we knew we were walking into something that they probably weren't going to be all that excited about Jim Edgar.

Now, on the other side, in this interim, the Republican county chairmen wanted to meet with me because, who is this guy, and I had to go convince them that I understood politics. As I said the other day, there were people who didn't think I was political enough to be secretary of state, because that was viewed as a political office because of all the jobs. And historically, the people that had been there had not been necessarily Harvard graduates; they'd been more the old-time political warhorses like Paul Powell, John Lewis, Mike Howlett, and even Alan Dixon. So the county chairmen were very interested to talk to me, and of course, they wanted me to fire everybody. I tried to explain to them, "Hey, these people are coded. If I fire everybody, I'm going to end up in court, and that's not really what I want to do."

DePue: Can we go into just a little bit more of a discussion about what you mean by coding, because I'm—

Edgar: Coded in civil service, basically, for state employees. Now, you began to have it some other agencies, but the secretary of state office had not had it until Dixon was secretary of state. Now, you'd had Paul Powell, you'd had Howlett, then you'd had Dixon, so you'd had Democrats for a while in that office, but you got that code passed that—so everybody was supposedly protected. Just because a new secretary of state comes in of the other party, he couldn't get rid of them.

DePue: But if that job became available, then—

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: —the normal hiring procedures would come into play—

Edgar: Right, right.

DePue: —and it wouldn't be what the classic patronage position was before?

Edgar: Right. At that point, because you didn't have some of the decisions that came down the road after that. But at that point, you could hire pretty much whoever you wanted.

DePue: Now, if I remember correctly, that had been a Democratic-controlled constitutional office for well over a decade, right?

Edgar: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The last time a Republican had held it was—well, Charlie Carpentier was the last one elected, and he was elected in 1960, the last time he was elected secretary of state. Then John Lewis filled the vacancy after Paul Powell died. Now, Lewis was a Republican, but he didn't run for reelection, and the Democrats got it back in the next election. So Republicans had it for about two years in the early seventies—November '70 to 1973, January '73. But from then on, for the eight years prior to me assuming the office, it had been held by the Democrats, so there were mainly Democrats in it. And they just weren't any Democrat; these were the party—the leaders in downstate. But the Republican county chairmen, on the other side of the coin, wanted me to fire them all. And I said, "Well, I can't do that," and that didn't make them happy. So we knew we had to deal with that issue.

The other thing we had to figure out: all right, I'm going to be secretary of state. I'm going to take over January fifth. I've got to hit the ground running, so I've got to think about what am I going to do to make people take notice. Now, our view was, after we talked about it, was service was the main thing from that office. What most people know the secretary of state's office, that's where they get their driver's license. There's a lot more to it than that, where you get your license plates, but it's also the state librarian, which had been pretty much ignored, securities department, corporation department. The archives is there. It's not with the historical library, (laughs) and it's separate under the secretary of state. So there's a whole host of things. Plus, the secretary of state is the keeper of the capitol. I always said I was the head janitor. But the capitol complex is under the control of the secretary of state.

DePue: To include security, I would think.

Edgar: Well, security, which was not a big thought then. I had a secretary of state police force, which, as we have talked earlier, did not have the best reputation as being a stellar law enforcement group; it was viewed as a lot of political people given guns. So the first thing, we thought, okay, we've got to project that we're going to provide good service, and we also knew the key to that was personnel. Now, this is a normal—and we didn't have a whole lot of time. And all of a sudden, about two weeks before I was going to be sworn in, Dan Webb came to me and said, "We

need to go talk to the U.S. attorney." And I remember looking at him. I said, "I haven't done anything wrong yet. I haven't even been sworn in. What are we...?" (DePue laughs)

So we go talk to the then–U.S. attorney—I think his name was Sullivan—who was an old Democrat, who had got it from Mayor Daley, and he tells me that they've been investigating a scandal in the secretary of state's office for several months of selling driver's licenses. And, of course, being a good Democrat—though he claimed he wasn't partisan—he hadn't brought any charges till the election was over and Alan Dixon was safely elected to the U.S. Senate, but he said that he expected that they were probably going to indict a lot of people in the secretary of state's office. So here I'm going to take over, and right off the bat, they're going to indict a bunch of people in the office. But I remember him saying, "How will you fill these vacancies?" I said, "Well, you know, probably county chairmen will send me names, and I'll take a look at them." "Oh, that's terrible," he said. "That's what's..." And I wanted to say, "Well, how did you get to be U.S. attorney? (DePue laughs) You got picked because you got signed off by Mayor Daley. I just thought he was a little too righteous. I told Dan Webb after, I said, "Boy, that's guy's righteous." But he wasn't going to be there much longer because Ronald Reagan was coming in as president in January, and there'd be a new U.S. attorney. And it might have been Dan—I can't remember when Dan Webb got it, but he got it. But anyway, so we knew we had that coming up, so we had a lot of challenges, we thought.

Now, Alan Dixon was very cooperative in the transition, and he came to me and said, "Now, the directors are not coded. If there are any of those directors you want to resign so you don't have to fire them, let me know." And we looked through the directors of their agencies, and we actually kept most of them, and the reason was they knew what they were doing. The last thing I wanted to do was take over an office that thousands of people come to every day and not be able to provide service. And Springfield's a small town in many ways, and so we knew people who had worked in the secretary of state's office, who was working in the secretary of state's office, that our people socialized with them, and so, you know, they could put aside the partisanship and find out who there was good and who wasn't good, who was just a political hack, or who had some talent. Like the person who headed up the data processing: well, he was a Democrat, but he understood data processing, and we needed that. Now, the guy that headed up building and grounds, he was pretty political. In fact, he had run for state rep the election before and was just known—and I didn't think actually the capitol building was all that well-maintained, and I thought that's one thing I wanted to make sure, the capitol building was—so I knew I wanted to bring my own person in there. But the library—we left the same state library and securities. You go up and down, I think there was maybe only two or three directors we wanted to change, and then there was two or three key people that were going to go with Dixon to the U.S. Senate, so for the most part, we didn't have to ask him to ask many people to resign. But we were nervous about getting off to a good start.

Now, the other thing is—this was very unusual, to have a new constitutional officer named this way. Ty Fahner, who had filled the vacancy when Bill Scott, the Republican attorney general, had gone to jail, the July before had been appointed by Thompson, and we didn't think he really got a whole lot of fanfare for being the new attorney general, so we thought, okay, we need to have an inaugural ceremony. You know, everybody looked around. We had never had an inaugural ceremony except for the governor and all the constitutional officers, but they'd never had one just for one person, but, you know, no reason why you couldn't. So we planned an inaugural ceremony for January fifth in Springfield. And, again, it was a way to invite a lot of people, get people kind of—feel like they have some ownership or they were tied to me. So we had it in the house chambers, and I remember we couldn't spend a whole lot of money but we wanted to have some music, so we got a chamber quartet, and they played classical music, and I always thought how ironic to have classical music being played in the house chambers. It was about the last place you would expect.

DePue: Let me interject here and get you off your narrative. I apologize for that, but what you've just described with the inaugural is something one would expect of someone who had distinct political ambitions beyond that point. Now—

Edgar: I did. I wanted to get elected secretary of state. All we were worried about was holding onto the job in the next election. We had two years. We had about a year before filing—less than a year—about a year before filing and maybe having a primary opponent. So yeah, we were concerned. We hadn't been elected. I hadn't been elected, so nobody knew me. I had to try to get established to fend off a primary challenge and also be prepared for a general election challenge, because we knew everybody wanted that office. This, next to the governor, was the most sought-after state office, and so we were very conscious that we had to hit the ground running.

DePue: The other part of that question is—now, this is something that I guess growing up or living in Illinois our whole lives, we kind of take for granted, but this is a constitutional office, that it's elected separate from the governor—although you're appointed by the governor in your case.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: But otherwise, it's separate. Now, what's the rationale in the constitution for having the attorney general and the secretary of state and the comptroller and these people being separate entities from the governor's office itself?

Edgar: It's the way they've always done it. (DePue laughs)That might be the best—that's not—the argument is that you have a check and people can hold them accountable. And I was saying, the secretary of state's office, there's not a whole lot of heavy policy decisions there, but most people who deal with the licensing process in Illinois, even in Chicago, will say it's still a lot quicker than in other states where you deal with some bureaucrat who's about ten levels down; it's buried under the

governor someplace. And I think it's because the secretary of state in Illinois's name's all over the place, and if you mess up the driver's license procedure, then people are going to remember who you are, and that's about all they have to vote on. So I always argued to some extent that it provided for a much more efficient secretary of state's office. Most motor vehicle administration offices are the jokes in states about the ultimate bureaucracy. And while we had problems in Illinois, for the most part, it ran pretty smoothly. I had more people say they moved in from other states, and they were amazed at how easy it was to get a driver's license and how quick it was to get things. Now, not everything when we came in. Titles were very slow, and there were other things, but for the most part, the office is much more personal than it is in those states where it's buried someplace under the bureaucracy. Now, you can make a case, I think, for—attorney general, I've always personally thought, causes some frictions you don't need between the governor and the attorney general. The attorney general's supposed to be the governor's lawyer, but most attorney generals want to be governors, so you always have that problem.

The secretary of state and the governor's office, there isn't all that much dealings. After I got named, I very seldom saw Jim Thompson. Maybe we'd see out on a campaign thing or someplace, but our business didn't really—I had my niche, and he had... Now, the attorney general and the governor come in contact a lot, the state comptroller. I think the comptroller needs to be independent just as a check and balance. That was something that came out of the Orville Hodge scandal.

DePue: The person who's signing the checks.

Edgar: Yeah. The treasurer's office—I think you could probably combine the treasurer and the comptroller's office together, but I think they need to be elected. That office needs to be elected and be separate from the governor. Secretary of state probably could be in the governor, but I think the service would suffer. I spent a lot of time being state librarian. I don't think the governor would take the time to do that, but I could kind of pick and choose. I got involved and we rewrote the securities law, corporation law. I took personal involvement because I didn't have that many other things competing for my time. The war on drunk driving, which we'll talk about. That took a lot of my time. Well, I don't think a governor would have had the time to spend on an issue like that. He might be for it, he might make a couple of speeches, but he wouldn't just be seven days a week out there just—and I think that's what it took.

If we were starting the state over again, you probably wouldn't have as many elected offices, but we're not, and I've learned a long time ago on reorganization is don't get too hung up on where the boxes are; worry more about what's in the boxes and how they act. But anyway, in Illinois, the secretary of state's office is unique compared to any of the other states. We by far have the largest secretary of state's office. In fact, I think you could almost combine all the other secretary of states together and they wouldn't have as many employees as the Illinois secretary of state. I think there's only two other states that do motor vehicle administration: Michigan and Maine. Maybe three other states are state librarians. Maybe one or

two have securities. Most all the secretary of states' office in other states just do elections—something we don't do in Illinois because we have a state board of election.

But as a result, the office in Illinois has always been viewed as a very important political office because those jobs—and not just because there are so many jobs, but they're scattered all over the state. In every county, there's a secretary of state facility, so you have jobs. And it's a visible office because everybody pretty much knows who the secretary of state is because they go get a driver's license and the name is plastered all over the place. One newspaper used to get onto me about that name, and I said, "I can take that name off, but I think the service will suffer, because I know my name's on there, and I'm going to really make sure my people do a good job." And it was a rationalization, (DePue laughs) but I do think there's some truth to that, that—

DePue: Well, you are hardly unique in having your name up there.

Edgar: Oh, no, everybody had, but this paper, just kind of when I was there, they—I said it would cost a lot of money to take my name off, (coughs) but they volunteered to pay for it. (DePue laughs; Edgar coughs) In fact, that was one of the things that amazed me. When I became secretary of state, I was sworn in at noon on January fifth, and I walked over to what we then called the Centennial Building—George Ryan renamed it the Michael Howlett building—where all the secretary of state people are, and I walked over there at two o'clock, and my name was on everything. Boy, they'd (claps) changed it like that.

Anyway, but the preparation to the office, we did give it some thought, and we got a pretty good ride off of it. We got a lot of publicity off the inauguration. We had a lot of people there. And I think we got a pretty good sendoff, which is important politically. Now, governmentally, I think we started out pretty good because we didn't make that many changes. Now, I have to say all the employees were scared to death; they didn't know what was going to happen.

Now, the second day I was secretary of state, I was going to fly to Chicago and hold a news conference—we had already planned this out—to talk about—in Chicago, anybody who gets a driver's license, it takes longer than downstate. It used to be—and might be still today, but we got it down a little bit when I was there—you'd have to take a day off work to go renew your driver's license because it was that many—you only had three big facilities in the city of Chicago, and it took forever to get your license. Now, downstate, if somebody had to wait more than thirty minutes, they'd start burning the place down, because downstate, you don't have the crowds; it moves much quicker. But thought, well, if we can improve the service and we can make it quicker, and you don't have to wait forever to get your driver's license, that was something people would notice, and that would be an achievement.

So I was going to go up and hold a press conference the second day I was secretary of state and announce that we were going to do something about these lines. There was a driver's facility that was in the old State of Illinois Building, and it was downstairs in kind of the basement floor, and there always was lines there. And I'd been there the week before, and I'd seen the lines, so I was going to do a news conference on the top floor of the State of Illinois Building where the pressroom was and then take everybody down and show them the line and say, "We're going to get rid of this line." So I go up—I think it was the eighteenth floor of the old State of Illinois Building, have my news conference, announce that our number-one priority is to reduce the lines. And I had all the TV cameras there, and I said, "I want you to come down with me and see the lines, and it will be the last time you'll see these lines because we're going to get rid of these lines." So we take them all down. We go down to the basement. There are no lines. People are getting (snaps) their driver's just like that. Nobody's waiting in line. And I knew I had been done in by my employees. And one of the TV guys said, "Well, where's the line?" I said, "Well, we've already worked so quickly..." (DePue laughs)

So the guy who headed up the Chicago facility—name was Bob Guzlus. He'd been there since Paul Powell's time. We called him in and said, "What'd you do to us?" He says, "Well, we got wind that you were going to do this, you were going to make a big to-do about the lines, and we thought that was going to be an excuse you had to fire everybody because you had cause. You know, you're looking for cause to fire and say how inefficient we were. So," he said, "I called everybody in off vacation; I brought people in from other facilities around Cook County, so we were overstaffed and there would not be a line all day." (laughs) And I just laughed, and I said, "I'm not going to fire you." I said, "If you do your job..." But they didn't believe me. They just couldn't believe that we weren't going to fire them all, that we're Republicans, they're Democrats, and we weren't going to try to figure out ways to get rid of them.

DePue: Well, how many of those had gotten their jobs because somebody else had been fired when they first got there?

Edgar: Well, most of them had. Now, the case of Guzlus, he actually worked through the two years that John Lewis was secretary of state, but there was this fear because they were Democrats and they'd been involved in Democratic campaigns, and even though there was now the code, they didn't trust it; they just figured we'd be finding ways to get around it, which other administrations in other offices had done that. But I just said, "No," I said, "if you do your job, you don't have anything to worry about. To me, the best politics is good government. If you guys do your job, then I'm not going to fire you. If you don't do your job, I'll fire you, but I'm not going to fire you just because you're a Democrat because I can't." And I said, "And if you do your job, I don't want to. If you do your job well, then that's going to reflect well on me, and that's the best politics there is."

So Guzlus—finally we convinced him, and I think he convinced enough other people. Guzlus is an example of a guy who when we went in, he was very leery of

us; we were leery of him. He ended up working for us all the time I was secretary of state, and I took him to the governor's. And a lot of those guys, I did. Now, those I didn't, it's because they wanted to stay where they were in the secretary of state's office. We went out of our way to try to get their loyalty or at least get their support. Now, not expected that maybe they were going to become Republicans—I didn't care if they became Republicans. I didn't want them out campaigning against me if they were working for me, but I wanted them to do their job. And in most cases, they knew how to do that job. And we didn't want them sabotaging us, so we didn't want to mistreat them.

One of the places I did put in a new director was in motor vehicles, because that director I think went with Dixon, and that's where Al Grosboll went. And Al was very good at working with his employees and making them feel like they were part of the team and probably had the best track record of kind of co-opting all the people there to make them feel like they were part of the Edgar team. George Fleischli came in as head of buildings and ground. When somebody first suggested his name, I said, "Well, he's just been a football coach." Well, he turned out to be very good. He's a great people person—he knew everybody—and he brought along with him a gentleman named Bruce Clay, who was his deputy, who was very good at making sure day-to-day everything... I think you could eat off the capitol floor when those guys were running that—I thought that all went very well.

The secretary of state's office, it's a lot about Springfield because so many of the jobs are in Springfield, and it's a local—a lot tied to what happens locally. Some of the people we kept and some of the people we brought in I think could reassure the Springfield community that we weren't going to fire everybody.

DePue: Well, that's interesting—

Edgar: That was a very important thing to get done. Now, this is the second day I'm secretary of state I go through this. I think the third day—maybe it was even the—I don't think it was the first day, I think it was the third day—I have Channel 7—the ABC TV station comes in to talk to me, and they say they've been doing an expose on the secretary of state's office, and they've found all this scandal, and they're going to do this story on how scandalous the secretary of state's office is. This is about my third day in office.

DePue: Is this Channel 7 from Chicago?

Edgar: Chicago, yeah, yeah. But they were afraid that I was going to fire everybody. They got wind because they knew the U.S. attorney was looking at it, too, and they were afraid I was basically going to step on their story, and so they were trying to come in to work a deal: if I wouldn't step on their story, that I'd be part of their story in a positive sense. This was all... (DePue laughs) And I didn't say anything about the U.S. attorney to them because I wasn't supposed to. Then about two days later, the U.S. attorney dropped the bomb and indicted about twenty people in Chicago.

Now, the good thing from my perspective was I was the new secretary of state. It was obvious it wasn't my people, it was all these holdovers, and it hadn't happened on my watch, so it did enable me to come down very hard on everybody and say we cannot tolerate any shenanigans around here, and if anybody gets caught, they're going to get fired. And those people that were indicted, I think we suspended them all, and most of them got convicted, so we got rid of them, and that sent a pretty quick message to the rest of the workforce that, hey, maybe in the past, you took twenty dollars to pass somebody that you shouldn't have passed or whatever. You don't do that anymore. You're going to lose your job, and they can't pay you enough in bribes to offset what you make in your jobs.

DePue: The attorney general coming out and doing this, I would think to a certain extent, that's another big favor, because your agency doesn't have to do the dirty work itself of rooting out these problems. Is that correct?

Edgar: It was correct, though, as it proceeded—and this didn't go away immediately—usually it was our people who found it, our internal security. I brought in a guy named Jim Redenbo, who I'd actually known at Eastern—not well, but I knew him at Eastern. He was with the state police, and I'd asked the state police to send me somebody over that was a good investigative type, and they sent Jim Redenbo over, who headed up my internal security force and put together a very good internal securities force, which job was to basically go around and police what was going on in the secretary of state's office. But there's no doubt part of the con—

DePue: That was part of the secretary of state police, though?

Edgar: No, we kept it separate, because we weren't sure about the secretary of state police at that point. We had moved maybe a couple of guys over, but that was a different—in fact, they looked at the secretary of state police because there had been stories about the secretary of state police because they go around and regulate car dealers and things. I got a sheriff from Warren County. His name was Dave Watkins. He was a disabled Vietnam veteran, medal-winner, who had got elected sheriff in Warren County, and it was viewed as one of the real professional, up-and-coming young sheriffs in the state. And I got him to come in to head up the secretary of state police, and he headed it up the whole time I was secretary of state. And during his time of heading up the secretary of state police, we started to require that all secretary of state police had to go through the state police academy. In fact, our people ended up, test-wise, score-wise, doing better than the state police did. We had a merit board that interviewed. I did not get involved; I did not let political recommendations have anything to do with picking secretary of state police. We took that completely out of that. And so I think secretary of state police became a much more professional—I think a very good police force. They had a bomb squad. We had the only bomb squad statewide, so we handled bombs. They were auto theft—we did a lot in auto theft.

So I think in the police part, but the key in a lot of ways was that internal security force. And sometimes I thought they were pretty ruthless, but everybody

knew they were there, and they didn't want to get caught. I'm not sure that everybody became honest because they wanted to be honest, but they became (DePue laughs) honest because they didn't want to get caught in some cases, and whatever. But I think that we didn't eliminate all the hanky-panky, but reduced it considerably.

And it wasn't just in driver's license; we also, when we started to crack down on drunk driving, we started knowing that we had problems, that some of our hearing offices would take money to give driver's licenses back to people who'd lost them for DUI, and we cracked down on that, too. I remember we had this one tape, this guy—we had a lawyer that came to our internal affairs groups and said, "My client's being hustled by one of your hearing officers." Hearing officers are people that we would hire. They'd be quasi-judicial. They'd go out and hold a hearing on whether someone ought to get their license reinstated or not. And, you know, driver's licenses are very important to people, so these people had a lot of power. Then they would recommend back, and usually their recommendations would stand up. But they said, this guy is shaking us down.

So our people wired his client, so his client went back to the hearing officer and said, "Well, what would it take to get my license back? I have a DUI." And he said, "Well, that will take ten thousand dollars." He says, "Ten thousand dollars? That's a lot of money." He says, "Oh," he says, "this Edgar's tough. I'm not taking a chance for anything less than that." (DePue laughs) So I said, "Can we use that tape in the next election campaign?" (DePue laughs)

But anyway, we spent a lot of time worried about that, because the secretary of state's office had had that reputation, and we wanted to eliminate that. But I think also because right off the bat, I knew the U.S. attorney was about ready to indict employees, and Channel 7 did this big exposé on the secretary of state's office. So I think you're kind of conditioned by what happens early on, and I was very much conditioned—I've got to keep an eye on my employees.

DePue: What was different about the secretary of state's office, or what your office was charged to do, versus some of the other state agencies in terms of it being so susceptible to corruption? Or maybe that's overstated.

Edgar: Well, people had to come and get licenses, driver's licenses, and people, yeah, come and get maybe some other licenses, but they're—it's not eleven million people coming and getting those licenses. And you lose a license, particularly when we started cracking down on DUI, which was a new phenomenon, people realized it was very—they didn't want to lose their license. It was hard to get it back, so there was probably more possibilities people would pay big dollars to have that. But I think historically, particularly in Chicago—it's not as true downstate; we didn't have as many problems downstate—but in Chicago, it was pretty common. People would tell you, yeah, go get your driver's license, you just got to give them twenty dollars. That's all you got to do. I don't know what—that was the culture in that, but it had been through several secretaries of state, and times were changing, and

particularly we were looking at DUI things. We did not want those people back on the road. And we knew, as we found out on this one tape, there were people willing to pay a lot of money to get those licenses back.

The other thing is that phony driver's licenses was a big problem. Two groups: underage kids—and kids were smart. They knew how to make fake driver's licenses. We'd come up with some new driver's license that had safeguards, and they'd figure it out pretty quick. And the mob. The mob wanted it for false identification. And we used to have to worry about—and every so often, our facilities would get broken into and somebody would steal our cameras where you make the license plates off of. So it was an interesting combination of teenagers and the mob that we had to try to keep ahead of on our driver's license.

But a lot of those things that I got to say I never thought about. I don't think most people think about. But when you're the secretary of state, and I think particularly because Dan Webb took me over early on and saw the U.S. attorney, that you had all these things right off that bat, you were very conscious of making sure that you kept things honest in that office, and historically, it had had a reputation, particularly in the Chicago area, of maybe not being as honest. Then you'd had Paul Powell, who had been the secretary of state just ten years before, who when he died, they found all that money in shoe boxes. Everybody kind of laughed when they found it. They said, oh, you got any shoe boxes, you know, because that office kind of had that reputation. I wanted to change that for governmental reasons and political reasons, too.

So right off the bat I think we were kind of under the gun on the personnel or on the ethics issues, and I think we handled it well. Far better the U.S. attorney did it then than, let's say, six months into my term. Then I think people would say, well, you're the secretary of state. It's not Alan Dixon's fault; it's your fault. But it happened in the first week, and so everybody knew it wasn't my fault, and it also gave me an opportunity to be pretty righteous out there and to be tough on that. You could get Republicans fired up about talking about, well, we're going to clean that office up and make it honest. You didn't have to go in and say, "We're going to give you all the jobs," which they wanted to hear, but at least they were happy that—because we all knew the Democrats were crooks anyway. That's always been kind of the attitude, particularly in Chicago, so here was just another indication, and we were going to clean it up.

So that took a lot of our time early on, and the whole personnel issue, the whole trying to get control of the agencies and understand what they do, make sure we're doing a professional job, that the employees feel like they're part of the team—it may not sound like a big policy thing, but it's very important in executive branch of government. It was important when I became governor, too. It's something you don't hear talked about, but if the executive branch is going to work right, if these big administrative offices are going to work right, the key is the personnel, and it's important that you spend time. Fortunately, I had people around me who had a sense for that. They understood that. I can't say that I dreamed this

all up. I'd never run anything; I'd just been a legislator. But we had some people, and I remember I had a guy who worked for me named Steve Schnorf, who later, when I was governor, after Joan left the Bureau of the Budget, became the head of the Bureau of the Budget. He used to read books on management things, and he knew all this theory and stuff. But all that stuff I think paid off and is something we early on started to do.

DePue: I did want to ask you to elaborate a little bit more on what you were just talking about. Here you had spent your whole adult life in the legislature. You know, you were learning under the tutelage of some of the best in the business, necessarily, but legislation has got to be dramatically different from being a manager and executive.

Edgar: That's why I think legislators make lousy governors. That's part of our problem here the last ten years in Illinois. Not that legislators can't be, but they got to change their attitude. It's a whole different discipline, whole different attitude. I went into an office that wasn't known for being well-managed. I don't think anyone ever accused Alan Dixon of—he had a guy named Gene Callahan who was his aide who really ran it. Mike Howlett had somebody who ran it, though Mike Howlett probably is a little more hands-on. Paul Powell, he probably kept an eye on it (laughs) because he was making a lot of extra money. But it never had been considered a well-managed—and that gave us an opportunity, I think.

And then also we had this whole dilemma which nobody had ever dealt with: you had all the employees scared to death of their boss because in most cases, the employees were people who had helped the boss get elected, and here it was just the opposite in a way; here all these active Democrats and now they had a Republican boss. So we had to spend an awful lot of time kind of calming them down and getting them to feel comfortable. Now, a few just said, you're fine, but we just don't think it's right to work for a Republican because we're going to try to beat you in the next election. John Gianulis, who was still, I think, a county chairman in Rock Island. He's very (laughs) old now, but he worked in the secretary of state's office, and he volunteered after about three or four months to resign. And we said, you know, you're doing all right. And he says, "No." I remember, he says, "You folks have been good to me," he said, "but I'm a Democrat, I'm a Democratic county chairman, and I just don't think it's right that I work for a Republican because I'm going to go out and work for your opponent in the next election, and I just don't think I should work for you when I'm going to be for your opponent, because I'm a Democrat." Now, most of them weren't that way; most of them didn't want to lose their jobs.

The classic story on that is right before the '82 election, I was getting ready to run, and I had a few of my former colleagues in the legislature came to see me; they were Democrats. And one was Mike McLean; he was kind of the leader of the group. Or maybe he just—well, I think some of the others came, too, but he was the main one speaking. He said, "We're really upset the way you're treating our employees," because he was from Quincy; he had people in the secretary of state's office in Quincy that were his people. And I said, "Well, what do you mean, Mike?"

I said, "We've treated them well." Said, "We haven't fired anybody unless we caught them stealing," and I said, "A lot of them got promotions." He said, "That's the problem." He says, "You've been too good to them." He says, "We can't get them to do anything for the party anymore." (DePue laughs) He said, "We go to them and say, hey, we need help, and they say, 'Oh, no, no, no.'" Says, "Edgar's been okay to me, and we're just going to stay out of this next election. We don't want to get him upset." And he said, "It's not just they won't help against you; they just won't do anything anymore." And I laughed, and I said, "Well, good. We've succeeded, then." (DePue laughs) But I think that again—how you handle your personnel...

The same thing when I became governor. It was a little different because most of those people had been hired by a Republican—Thompson had been governor for fourteen years—but still you've got to get the confidence and make the people who are working in the ranks feel like they're part of a team if you're going to administer properly, if you're going to be able to provide the services those agencies are supposed to. That's a whole different mentality than trying to pass a bill. I used to, back if they'd have asked me, you could either be governor or lieutenant governor, dumb me, I would have said lieutenant governor, thinking because you're involved in the policy and the big issues. The fact the lieutenant governor has absolutely no influence over anything, I didn't appreciate, and I thought, well, the secretary of state deals with these mundane issues that—who cares? Well, everybody cares about their driver's license, especially if they might lose it. They care about their license plates. I never appreciated how much people care about license plate number. Very wealthy, sophisticated people want a low license plate number, and they care about that. So those issues maybe aren't the front-page issues, or they aren't the major issue in a legislative session, but to the guy on the street, that's kind of what they think about when they think about state government, particularly the secretary of state's office, they think about my driver's license. So you need to make sure you're doing a good job providing those services for people to think state government works.

Now, in the governor's office, it's a much broader, but it's the same thing to a great extent. We get caught up on taxes and all this and that, and most people are kind of worried, are you going to have the parks open? Is the state fair going to—are you going to raise the fees, or do I have to pay more for my hunting license? Those kind of things is what get a lot of folks excited, not your philosophy on revenues or what type of tax you put in or school reform, to be very truthful. Most of it, it's pretty basic. And again, that was an education for me. I'd always thought about the big issues; I hadn't thought about these other issues that really affect people until I became secretary of state.

And I did a lot of, right off the bat, trying to use the office to get known, again to try to remove the chances of a primary. And I was all over the state early, and very quickly it became apparent to me that people cared about certain things in the secretary of state's office that I never thought about. Now, just trying to get that office to function. And we looked at every area to see if there were things we could

do, promote, whatever. In the securities department, the corporations department, they were governed by laws that were pretty antiquated, a bit old, and so we put together an advisory commission in the securities to look at revising the securities law—which is very technical, but it's very important. Corporation law—anybody that's incorporated. And we named these committees, and they were people from the industry, and they were blue-ribbon, but again, it was a way to make those people feel like they were a part of what we were about. And about every one of those blue-ribbon committees we put together that came forward with proposals, we got them enacted. One of the things I was very proud of, and the same thing happened when I was governor—contrary to what I read in the paper the other day, the state names a lot of commissions, but nothing happens. Not everything happened on every commission we ever named to come up with legislation.

But one of the things I also found: most of the people in those agencies, though they were Democrats and a lot of them had been there a long time, particularly in Springfield. Out in the facilities, they were maybe not as professional—they were okay, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist to run a driver's license facility in the county. But in the libraries and securities and archives, you've got to have some expertise, and for the most part there were some pretty talented people there, but they all appreciated the fact we asked them their opinion: What do we need to do here?

DePue: Well, that gets back to, I guess, the question I asked quite a while ago, and maybe I'm belaboring this, but being a legislator is one thing; being an executive is another. I wonder at that point in time, or even looking today, where did you think your innate talents lie? Did you feel like you had a real sense of being a good manager?

Edgar: Well, no, no. In fact, I've realized I wasn't prepared to be a manager. What I did have, fortunately, was the good sense to have some good people around me, and that's critical in the executive branch. Legislator, maybe you don't need that, you just need to have a gift for gab or whatever, but if you're going to run something, you've got to have some good people because there's no way that you're going to have the time or you're going to have the expertise to do it all yourself. And I think I had some good people, and I thought I had a pretty good sense of who I picked. And the other thing I felt that—I don't know if I knew at the—I don't necessarily at that time, but I think I had the ability to get across to my key people what the parameters were. You know, I'm not going to tell you how to run your agencies, but you don't do things like this or you don't do that, and that, I think, was important. Also I think I tried to be careful myself, and they knew that, so that kind of carried over to how they ran their agencies. People that worked for me always said, well, we knew we'd better not because Edgar wasn't going to tolerate this. He was straight-laced, and maybe he wasn't as political as some people wanted, but he was going to call us on the carpet if we had somebody messing up on ethics stuff. And I think that helped. That's not something I ever dealt with before but it's something you had to deal with, and you learned who you could depend on. And you might

have a good friend, but that person couldn't handle the job, then you didn't want to put them there. There were people I had to move around.

When I first came in, I think the saying was, "Well, to get a job with Edgar, you have to either be an Eastern graduate or be from Charleston." I said, "That's not true, but it sure doesn't hurt you any," (DePue laughs) because I wanted people I kind of knew, but I wanted them because I knew them and I thought what they could do and I trusted them. But we had a lot of folks in there that I inherited from Dixon that were Democrats that I got to trust, and they trusted me, and they stayed with me for years. One of my favorite stories is—this all happened in January of '81. This data processing director is an example.

Fast-forward to 1997, sixteen years later. I'm having I think the last fundraiser as governor. I had it out at the state fairgrounds. And I hadn't decided what I was going to do, so I had a fundraiser. I think tickets were a hundred dollars a person, which to me is a lot of money. (laughs) And I'm standing there shaking hands with them. I met about three or four thousand people, probably, out at the fairgrounds for this fundraiser, and I'm shaking hands with people coming through. Here comes through this guy and another guy that had worked—I think the guy had maybe been in one of the auditing offices. These two guys came through. And they had been retired from state government probably for eight years. They weren't even working in the state government anymore. I said, "What are you guys doing here?" I says, "You don't even work for state government anymore, plus you're Democrats." They said, well, that didn't matter. You were good to us, and we'll never forget that, and we're loyal to you. And here they were, sixteen years later, coming in, paying a hundred dollars—they didn't have a state job; they weren't going to ask for a state job—but they just felt like I'd treated them okay, and they were... And so that always made me feel like, well, we did a good job trying to get across to our employees, it doesn't matter if you're a Republican or Democrat, just do your job. If you do your job, you're going to be taken care of, and you're going to get promoted; you're going to do okay. I think that enabled us to be very successful in the secretary of state's office. I think the ten years we were there, that office ran as well as it ever run. If you talked to folks—I've had a lot of people come up to me who had worked for several secretaries of state, and they said, That was the best period by far. We really felt like we were appreciated, and we'd get things done, and we knew that you weren't going to expect us to cut corners and people that did weren't going to get rewarded for it. But I think it goes back to the people you have around you, but you have to set the parameters. You have to set the guidelines and kind of maybe serve as a role model to some extent. And listen—we learned a lot. I remember Al Grosboll, he'd spend a lot of time with all these people he inherited over in Vehicle Services, which was the license plate division, and most of his ideas, he got from people who had been there twenty years but nobody had ever asked them, and that's true in a lot of the other agencies. I didn't know that to start out with. I didn't have a sense of putting a budget together and all that. But the secretary of state office, I think, definitely prepared me to be governor.

If I'd have gone straight from the legislature to the governorship, I don't think I'd have been as ready. I don't think you're ever... I read a quote today. Thompson says, "The only time you're prepared to be governor is the day you leave," and that's very true. It's sure not the day you walk in. But I do think the secretary of state's office—and I think we got off to a good start, and fortunately some of those things that happened early on made me very—it's like later when I was governor, I always worried about the budget because when I first became governor, I had a bankrupt state, so that made an impression on me. Well, same thing in the secretary of state's office. I walk in and find out particularly the Chicago facilities, they're all under investigation; we're having people indicted right and left. It made me very conscious that we've got to watch that—advice I gave my successor, George Ryan, but he didn't pay attention to it. (DePue laughs) But anyway, that was the first few.

Now, the other thing: when I first became secretary of state, you know, you're looking for issues, and the one issue I thought we ought to really go heavy on was drunk driving, because we knew Illinois had weak laws. My predecessor, Alan Dixon, had been arrested for drunk driving a year before he got elected to U.S. Senate out in California. Didn't hurt him—he got elected. Now, today, think about it. Today, it'd probably end your political career, particularly if you were the motor vehicle administrator.

DePue: Uh, yeah.

Edgar: But back then nobody thought you could anything about drunk driving. It was kind of a joke. It was the Dean Martin joke, you know, drinking and driving. So I remember a lot of people told me, says, well, you're wasting your time, plus you're going to lose a lot of votes. All these people that drink are going to get mad at you. I said, "I don't care." I said, I remember Charlie Carpentier when I was growing up was the secretary of state, and traffic safety was his big thing as secretary of state. No secretary of state had really pushed that heavy since, though they did have a traffic safety bureau in the secretary of state's office. But I said, "That's what I want to emphasize, and it's the drunk driving thing is where I know we're weak, and I don't drink, so I'm not going to have to worry about somebody pulling me over, and it's something I just feel like we ought to really crack down on."

Now, we did that in January, and we put together some legislation. There was some legislation that had been floating around for years but never could get out of committee. But—now, I'll go on to talk about DUI a little more—but timing's everything. You know, I do this, and about three months later on the national scene comes this group called Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and it catches all kinds of attention. Now, we were already into this before MADD came on the scene, but fortunately MADD came on the scene about the same time I'm starting my war against drunk driving. And it also caused the new president Ronald Reagan—you know, they want to do some things that didn't cost money, so he creates a commission on drunk driving and I get named to it because I knew somebody in his staff.

DePue: I wanted to go into a little more depth in terms of the motives, because listening to you right now, I'm hearing a couple different motives. One, you thought it was the right thing to do, but also I'm saying, here's a real political opportunity.

Edgar: Definitely I thought it was the right thing to do, but I think the right thing to do is usually pretty good politically long term, maybe not short term. And there was a lot of argument short term this was not a good thing.

DePue: Why did you feel so strongly it was the right thing to do?

Edgar: I just think drunk driving is—a lot of things you can't prevent, a lot of tragedies, but you can prevent drunk driving. Nobody has to drink and drive. Now, people are going to have heart attacks; people are going to even make mistakes driving; but you can eliminate drunk driving by having people not drink and drive. So to me it was something that doesn't have to be, and it's something that just causes all kinds of havoc. Now, my father had been killed when I was little. I have no reason to think he was killed by a drunk driver. Knowing my father, he probably might have been drinking. I don't know. But I knew the loss of what a traffic fatality can do to a family. To me, it just seemed like something that was needed in Illinois, and also it was something that was more than just worrying about issuing a driver's license on time. To me, this was a little bigger; this was a little more meat to it. And as it turned out politically—while I had people tell me, this could hurt you, I didn't think so. I thought there would be enough people out there—but also I thought it would be an issue that people would say, w ell, here's a guy coming in as secretary of state, and he's doing something. You wanted something you did so people could remember you in a positive sense. So yeah, there's no doubt politically, but it wasn't as obvious being a political plus as it turned out to be, because a lot of people stayed away from it because they thought there was too much political liability, because you'd have all the people in the taverns mad at you, and they remembered you on election day.

DePue: Had you heard the comments that, well, Edgar's doing this because his dad was killed by a drunk driver?

Edgar: Yeah, which was not true. There's no indication the guy in the semi that hit my dad was drunk. In fact, my dad, the evidence is he came over the line, whether he had a blowout or whatever. As I said, my dad drank. It's very possible he might have stopped in Kankakee and had a beer or two before he went on. I don't know. But no, drunk driving—it never crossed my mind that drinking and driving had anything to do with that accident, but that was always the story out there. That just wasn't it. I did understand somebody being killed in a car wreck can impact a family.

DePue: This was not a short-term battle for you. You were waging this campaign for many, many years. What was the first thing?

Edgar: First thing was just to get our laws changed, because our laws were so weak. Nobody got penalized for drunk driving. Nobody ever lost their driver's license for

drunk driving. So we needed to get it where that if you failed the Breathalyzer, you were going to lose your license. There had been bills—the insurance groups and the people worried about traffic safety had tried it before, but they never get the bills out of—because they always got assigned to judiciary committee instead of maybe transportation, and the lawyers always killed it because of their clients—and that was definitely what it was. So we got the bill—we introduced it in the House, and that's where I went to George Ryan, and I mentioned in the other day, George Ryan could be bitter because I got to be secretary of state and he didn't, but when I went, he said, "What do you need?" and I said, "I need this bill put in transportation committee and not judiciary committee." He said, "All right," and he put it in transportation committee, which was made up of people who paid more attention to what the secretary of state said for a variety of reasons, and there weren't any lawyers in that committee to speak of.

DePue: You had friends in that committee?

Edgar: We had friends, but transportation committee—those members usually handled the secretary of state items, and it was just—there was a tie. Same thing in the Senate. There was a senator named Charlie Chew, a black senator from Chicago, who was a character, but transportation was his thing, so he had an affinity towards the secretary of state's office, and I built a close relationship, and when I ran the first time, he endorsed me. He had a headquarters for me down in the South Side of Chicago, and he's a Democrat. But a lot of that had to do because I was secretary of state and I knew he cared about that office—and he had a few jobs too. But the transportation committee had people that cared about the secretary of state's office and dealt with the secretary of state's office on legislative matters and handled their bills, so it was a natural. And we argued this is a transportation issue; this is highway safety—that's where the highway safety bills would go. So anyway, it came out of transportation committee in the House. We knew if we'd get it on the floor, we could pass it; it just had to get out of committee. And so it passed out of the House.

But that gave me something to talk about, and that's how I got to be on the Bob Collins show. And if anyone knows anything about my political career, you got to understand the Bob Collins show. The Bob Collins show originally was an afternoon radio program on WGN radio during drive time—most listened to program during drive time in the afternoon in the Midwest. He later went to the morning show. Most listened-to personality in the Midwest of anybody on radio. But Bob Collins would have me on throughout that first year on drunk driving. I think I first went on his program sometime in May. I'm going to take a little time because it's very important—Bob Collins is a very important part of my career. And secretary of state, you did get on the media, and I knew free media, name recognition, you wanted to do that, so any time I could get on television, radio, I did it. And we were championing these issues, and drunk driving was the main issue.

So sometime in May, I go on the Bob Collins show. They say, you're going to go on the Bob Collins show, and I said, "Well, what kind of music does he play?"

(DePue laughs) because I didn't listen... And they said, No, it's talk radio. I said, "I don't like talk radio." And I didn't; I just wanted to listen to music when I was in the car, and I only wanted to listen to oldies, too, and if it wasn't oldies, I didn't—that's why I like Clark Weber and people like that, who I later dealt with too. But anyway, they said, no, it's a good program. So I go on. He's very nice to me, and we talk about traffic safety. He's a big motorcyclist, but he was for helmet laws, and he was real concerned about drinking and driving. He said, "Well, this is an important issue." And I thought, "Well, that's fine."

Well, I leave that program probably about four o'clock, and I had to fly to the Quad Cities or someplace over in that part of the state. I was doing some party function that night. And I get there, and these farmers come up and said, "Oh, we didn't think you'd be here." And I said, "Why not?" They said, "Well, we heard you on Uncle Bobby." That's what they called him. I said, "You guys listen to the Bob Collins show?" "Yeah, every afternoon. We're out in our combines. (DePue laughs) We got radios, you know, on our tractors. We listen to Uncle Bobby. Oh, we never miss him." I said, "Oh."

Well, the next day I was over in my old legislative district, Marshall, Illinois, over on the border on the Wabash River near Terre Haute, Indiana. And a guy who had always been my guy in that county, a good friend of mine, was a dentist there. And so I go in to say hi. I hadn't seen him. He said, "Oh, I heard you on Uncle Bobby's." I said, "You listen to Bob Collins?" He says, "That's all we listen to every afternoon here. All my patients have to listen to Bob Collins." He said, "Yeah, I heard you on it." I think, hmm. Then I'm in Peoria, and they said, "We heard you on Uncle Bobby." And I remember telling my staff, I said, "Anytime Bob Collins wants me on his show, I'm going." (DePue laughs) I said, "It's all over the state. It's not just in the city, but in the suburbs." Just his listening audience...

DePue: So you get them on the drive back and forth to work; you get the farmers; (laughs) you get all these other places.

Edgar: Everybody. To this day—this has been twenty-eight years since I first went on the Bob Collins show—I still have people—I'll be someplace—I remember I was in an airport in Arizona about a year ago, in Phoenix, and I was talking to Brenda on the phone. I got done; a guy came up and says, "You're Jim Edgar, aren't you?" I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, I thought so when I saw you, but when I heard your voice, I knew who you were." I said, "Did you listen to me on the Bob Collins show?" And he said, "Oh yeah, all those years. I listened to you every..." And I was on the Bob Collins show during that DUI thing for dozens of times.

But the key time was, we get the bill out of the House, and we've got all these Coalition of Traffic Safety, and we have editorial support, but we don't have the Bar Association—we don't have the lawyers. They're out to kill it. And it goes to the Senate. Well, the Democrats control the Senate. They sent it to judiciary committee. (DePue laughs) And sure enough, it gets held up in judiciary committee. Well, Bob Collins is checking, and he says, "How's this going?" I said, "Well,"

I said, "It was going fine except it got held up in judiciary committee in the Senate. The lawyers won't let it out." So Phil Rock, who was the Senate president, used to take a break in the afternoon, and he'd go back in his office. Well, what does he listen to? He listens to Bob Collins. That's his favorite thing, to listen to Bob Collins. He turned on Bob Collins, and Bob Collins is haranguing against the Senate Democrats for bottling that bill up in the judiciary committee, and people ought to call Phil Rock and those Senate Democrats. The next day, that bill came out; it got retransferred to transportation committee, and it passed. And I remember it passed right at the end of the session.

Of course, passing a law is fine; enforcement is just as important. It took effect January first. We were down in Florida over the Christmas holiday, and I get a call. There's a new program on ABC called *Nightline*. (DePue laughs) It had been on for about two years. It started because of the Iranian thing; that's why they started *Nightline*. And Ted Koppel, they wanted to interview me on the night before New Year's Eve about the new DUI law. They had the head of MADD, and they had me. That's who they were going to have. So I flew back from Florida to Chicago to be on TV that night on *Nightline*, and then I flew back the next day and caught up with my family so we could drive on home. And we're driving home, and on New Year's Eve, the next night, I remember we're in Chattanooga. My family had gone up to Disney World, and that's where I caught up with them. Then we drove from Orlando to Chattanooga that night, and I'm doing the Bob Collins show as I'm driving into Chattanooga on New Year's Eve.

But Collins had me on a lot, and it was about DUI. But later, I was on Collins just all the time. Collins—we became good friends. He would emcee a lot of my functions, fundraisers. He always emceed the inaugural ceremonies in Springfield. In fact, the week he was killed—I talked to him the day he was killed. He was coming down that Saturday, he and his wife, to spend the evening with us and go to the U of I basketball game; instead, we went to his funeral that Saturday. When I left the governorship—he had a place out in Arizona. I had two dogs. He said, "Hey, you guys"—because I was going to take some time off. I asked him about a realtor to find a place. He says, "No, use our place." I said, "I got two dogs." He said, "I know your dogs. I've been at the mansion. They're good dogs." So we took his place for the winter for three months with our dogs. Now that's really a good friend. His widow and Brenda are still very close.

But anyway, that was something—DUI was something—it gave me an issue to talk about, but also I think we did a good job of promoting that issue and making people aware of it. And one of the things I learned from DUI: you don't just mention an issue one or two times; you've got to just keep repeating, repeating until you're sick of hearing it. But it takes twenty times, I think, before the average person catches on about something, so you've got to just keep harping on it. And we harped. Most the time I was secretary of state, I was out there talking about drunk driving. And we had different changes over the years.

Then when I was on the national drunk driving commission, I was the person in the commission that pushed them to make the recommendation that we have a unified national twenty-one-year-old drinking law, which I had to fight the beer people who were on that commission. I beat them by one vote. And that was interesting, because the commission wouldn't have done it if I hadn't have—but I did it, because Wisconsin had a eighteen-year-old drinking law; Illinois had twenty-one-year-old. We'd had twenty-one for several years. We'd raised it back when I was an aide, I think, in the Senate. But what happened, all the young kids would drive up to Wisconsin and drink and then drive back, and kill people. The *Waukegan Sun* put out a special edition; they called it "Blood Border" because there were so many more fatalities along the Illinois-Wisconsin border, particularly in Illinois, of people getting killed by drunk drivers coming back from Wisconsin.

And I remember I took that special edition to the drunk driving commission and handed it out and said, "We need to take this issue up." And yeah, yeah. And there was a guy who represented the beer industry there—he was a very savvy guy—and nobody wanted to take that up, just because they didn't want to make him mad, and they didn't want to rock the boat, and states' rights, and all this and that. So the showdown comes, and he's pretty well convinced he's got it bottled up. And a Congressman who was a member who hadn't come very much, he showed up, and so the chairman said, "Well, Congressman, maybe you would like to speak on this because I'm sure you can tell us why this will never happen." And the Congressman says, "Well, I don't know if it will ever happen, but it should happen," and he had a vote with us, and we carried it by one vote. Even Candy Lightner from MADD didn't vote for it because MADD was getting money at that time from Budweiser, to show their goodwill, so they didn't want to—and she didn't vote for it that day, and she was the original president of MADD. But anyway, the guy at the head of the National Safety Council, he was there, and he was allied with me. Anyway, we got it.

So the commission report goes to Reagan, and the one thing Reagan's staff said, well, there's no way we'll do this twenty-one-year-old drinking. You know, some of these other things, but this one, there's no way we'll do that. Well, that got the most publicity because it's kind of simple to understand instead of all these complicated, you know, how courts will handle certain things. So I remember I was on *Crossfire* that night, on radio, when we made the report about the twenty-one-year-old drinking. And I think I had both the liberal and the conservative guy on *Crossfire* attacking me. (laughter) The conservative—I don't know if it was Sununu—it wasn't Sununu then. I don't know who it was. I think because it was too—

DePue: Buchanan, was it?

Edgar: —it was against state's right. Huh?

DePue: Was it Buchanan still?

Edgar: I don't know. This would have been in 1982, or '82, '83. But anyway, I just remember I was getting it from both sides, but I didn't care. I was really into this. Because in Illinois, you could look at the statistics along the Illinois-Wisconsin border, and those counties in Illinois had higher DUI fatality rates than other counties, and the same was true in Illinois with Iowa, where they had a lower drinking age. Those counties had higher DUI fatality rates than other counties in the state because you had those kids driving back drunk. So I didn't care; to me it was the right thing to do, and politically it was the right thing to do in Illinois. I could see why they didn't like it in Wisconsin, but (laughs) I wasn't secretary of state in Wisconsin.

But the staff knew Reagan wouldn't—this was against his states' rights principle. You can't tell the states... Well, Elizabeth Dole was secretary of transportation, and she had followed the proceedings a little bit, and I think she'd come and testified once at the commission. The chairman of the commission was John Volpe, who had been the secretary of transportation under Nixon, former governor of Massachusetts. So we didn't hear anything. Then I got a call saying that Reagan was going to come out in favor. Turned out Reagan, he thought it was a good idea, because Reagan's father was an alcoholic, and Reagan had a thing about drunk driving. And Elizabeth Dole, when they were getting ready for the '84 election—this would have been in '83—and of course they're trying to make Reagan look a little more human because he was always against social service programs because it cost money, and this is a way to sensitize him a little bit or make him look human.

DePue: Plus, it doesn't cost money.

Edgar: Doesn't cost money. That's what—she went in and made the argument to him. And the staff didn't want to do it. She went in and made the argument to him: "This is a great issue"—and she made it to the staff, too. "This is a great issue for him to look like he has a heart, but it doesn't cost money." So Reagan came out in favor of the twenty-one-year-old drinking law, and I went out and spent a lot of time with Elizabeth Dole lobbying Congress to get it passed.

The beer industry was just going nuts at this point. And I remember when we did a rally out on the Capitol steps in July. I was just drenched in sweat. And the guy that still—I think he's now still the U.S. Senator from New Jersey, Lautenberg. He's an old guy. He was a key guy in the Senate then, and we got him on board on this, and I got to know him back in the eighties. He dropped out for a while then came back in the Senate.

But I always felt like there is something I do feel like I had an impact, because I am convinced the commission would have never recommended the uniform drinking law of twenty-one; it would have never happened because it wouldn't have been in the report, the president wouldn't have got on that. I think going out and dealing with the Congress—I had some influence. The key was getting the president for it because then you knew, not only he wasn't going to veto it; he was pushing it,

and his people started to push it. And when that passed, the first year after that passed, we could start seeing fatality rates drop along the Wisconsin border and along the Iowa border. You could see the difference. But that, I always felt like— and I know our fatality rates in Illinois just plummeted, compared to what they had been, after we got the tougher DUI laws.

DePue: I want to go back to—when you first got into office, you got this legislation passed. As far as I can tell, you went through both the House and the Senate in May of 1981. This is only four, five months after you got into office. How did you manage to pull it off so quickly?

Edgar: That was our number-one priority, and we put the whole secretary of state's office behind it, and the secretary of state's office has a lot of goodies. Members don't want to make the secretary of state—Republican or Democrats. It's not just jobs, but they might want to get a low license plate for a constituent, or somebody's having a problem on something or whatever. It's not a partisan office; it's not one— secretaries of state have always been able to get along with people in both parties. Also, I had a pretty good understanding of the legislative process, as most secretaries of state have had. Most secretaries of state except Mike Howlett in my time had come out of the legislature.

DePue: Who was your successor?

Edgar: Who was my successor? George Ryan.

DePue: No, no.

Edgar: Predecessor?

DePue: Your successor in the legislative liaison office.

Edgar: Oh. I think it was Bob Kjellander.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: Yeah. They didn't get involved. Thompson was going to sign it, but they weren't involved; they didn't have anything to do with passing it. But secretary of state— like the Charlie Chews of the world—no reason they'd be really big on drunk driving except I was pushing it, and he gets along with the secretary of state's office. So those legislators dealing with motor vehicle matters deal with the secretary of state's office; our liaison people know them and they've dealt with them, so there's a natural constituency there from the office that you can rally. Alan Dixon never pushed DUI laws. He got arrested for DUI; it wasn't something he could go push. In fact, they tried it because they'd had this—and the liaison said when they went to committee they just laughed at them in committee because, what are you talking about? Your boss was arrested for DUI, you know. (DePue laughs) But being from the legislative process helped me. I knew the committee problem. I knew how you had to bring some pressure to bear and things like that.

But the other thing was using the bully pulpit. The bully pulpit is extremely important to bring about change—probably is as important as the facts and reason and even sometimes political leverage. A bully pulpit—if you can get the media on your side—it's like that story about Phil Rock going back and turning on—now, I heard this third-hand. Phil Rock has never confirmed this, but I heard it from pretty—and all I know, the bill got switched on like that, and I know Collins had really gone on him hard. But again, that bully pulpit is something I learned on other issues. Particularly if you're having trouble, you got to just stay out there and just keep the pressure on.

DePue: Was part of the change in this legislation changing from 1.0 to .08?

Edgar: No, no.

DePue: That came later.

Edgar: That came a lot later. A lot later.

DePue: Okay. So this was strictly just the tightening up?

Edgar: This was strictly if you failed the Breathalyzer—first of all, everybody got court supervision. Court supervision meant absolutely nothing; it just meant don't do it again. And then if you did it again, there's always loopholes to get around it. I forget. It's been a while. We did it in phases. We kept strengthening the law. In fact, we went from probably the weakest in the nation, but when I left office, MADD [Mothers Against Drunk Driving] said we had the toughest in the nation. I read in that pamphlet you had said second before election. When we actually left office, it was the toughest. And that wasn't .08; .08 came later. Point oh-eight is—it's good, but it's a minor factor in all this. The key is you got to convict people. If people don't lose their driver's license, they're not going to worry about drinking and driving, and people were not losing their driver's license in Illinois for drunk driving until that first law. And then there was still some loopholes, and we kept tightening it up.

DePue: Al Grosboll suggested that the biggest thing was the administrative suspension, which I believe came later as well?

Edgar: That came later, yeah. That came I think about three years later. That was a lot tougher because that basically said that you're guilty,(laughs) and you don't have a trial. It's not a trial on it. We took it out of the court thing, because the argument was, this isn't a right to drive. That's why you go to court. If you lose privileges that are rights, a court has to do it. We argued that driving was a privilege, and that could be administered by an administrative court proceeding versus a judicial proceeding, and so that's—that basically just said, if you're arrested for DUI and you failed the Breathalyzer, (snaps) you've lost your license. We're not talking about a trial. The first law, you had to go to trial, but it was pretty clear-cut: if you failed the Breathalyzer or if you refuse to take the Breathalyzer, you're going to lose your license, but it was a trial.

DePue: But that was the catch-twenty-two before: if you refused to take the Breathalyzer, then they wouldn't be able to make you take the breath test and then you'd be able to get off in the courts?

Edgar: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Didn't have any evidence, it was just a... So he's right, and that was a much tougher, and that really did—after that, you just started seeing—people that got arrested for DUI were losing their license. But still, that first year, it did cut—it put us kind of where a lot of states were. Administrative procedure put us in the forefront, and I remember (laughs) I was at the Sangamon Club New Year's Eve when that was going into effect, and Jim Reilly and a couple other guys came by, and they said, yeah, we're going home now because, shoot, with the way you're going, we won't be able to drive after the New Year. (DePue laughs) I said, "Well, just don't drink, you know." They were not happy with the new law, I remember, that night.

But the DUIs—if I had never been governor and I had died fifty years later, I knew they were going to put on my tombstone: "Jim Edgar. He was against drunk driving," because that's what everybody knew me for in the state, because things like the Bob Collins show. I was just always on talking about that. And that first legislative session, we put the whole power of the office and all the things people wanted behind DUI. Plus, legislators, they were getting stuff from people back home, too. This was going to be a hard one for a lot of them to duck, plus they were going to make me mad. Unless they were a trial attorney, it probably wasn't worth it. It passed, I think, pretty handily after we got it on the floor. We knew if we could get it out of committee... But the problem had always been it never could get out of committee. So getting it out of judiciary committee into transportation committee was the key to getting that bill passed.

DePue: It seems to me that the subtle but significant language change from calling this a right to a privilege is very important. Do you know where that came about, whose idea that was?

Edgar: Oh, I can't remember. There had been a lot of things kicked around nationally about this. I don't think there was anything that we thought up, that we thought up. I think we probably picked... Now, in some cases, we were in the forefront, but there had been a lot of—the insurance companies and the National Safety Council, which is funded by a lot of the insurance companies, too, had been working on this for years. I got hooked up with their people in Washington, and of course the headquarters was in Chicago for the National Safety Council. But I had their people involved a lot on the commission is how I got to know them, and then they helped us in Illinois a lot and put us in touch with a lot of people. So I'm not sure who originated, but I don't think it was necessarily somebody in my inner circle. We agreed with it, and since we were mostly non-lawyers—lawyers had a hard time with that concept, but we felt pretty strongly on it. There were people who had been working on it for years in Illinois, but they could never get the guy with the political clout to really put the full force behind it, and, you know, I did.

And then also timing, as it turned out—not so much that first bill but later bills, having MADD out there and all the publicity they got. Then you had groups in high schools called SADD: Students Against Driving Drunk. Now, if anybody had told me two years before that we'd have teenagers forming clubs to convince other kids not to drink and drive, I would have just said, "Well, that's ridiculous. We'll never get that far." But we did. Now, they didn't say, don't drink, just don't drink and drive. And we had those all over, particularly in the suburban communities, we had those. Driver's ed teachers were starting those. And I was kind of allied with driver's ed teachers, too, because I wanted to keep driver's education, and they were looking for a way to justify driver's ed, and a lot of them got very supportive on things like SADD and traffic safety issues.

But to me, traffic safety was a natural for the secretary of state's office, and it was an issue that I thought that needed to be promoted, particularly the drunk driving stuff, and I also thought politically, long term, it would show, you're here, somebody getting something done that's going to save lives. But short term, most the politicians thought I was nuts to get into that, plus they didn't think I could change attitudes. They just thought, people are always going to drink and drive. And you think today—drunk driving's a serious offense. People don't just drink and drive. They have designated drivers. None of that was thought about back in the early eighties; it was just taken for granted: people drink and drive, and nothing you can do about it. And that's one of the things where you've seen the culture completely turn around 180 degrees. Young people today, when I talk about this, they look at me and say, why would anybody think you could drink and drive? But again, it just wasn't considered a serious problem or something you could do anything about; it was just human nature. So it's always been interesting for me to see something that you can change culture, you can change societal attitude, but it takes a pretty concerted, focused effort, and that's what we did.

And that's one of the advantages of being secretary of state over being governor: you could pick an issue like that, and you could concentrate on it, and you could take all the power and the energy of the office on that issue. Governor, you don't have that luxury. Governor, you're usually reacting to some crisis. There might be something like when I wanted to raise the income tax and lower the property tax and do that. That was our priority, and we spent a lot of time on it, but we still had to worry about a lot of other things. I was worrying about budgets in '93, and all of a sudden, along comes the flood, the greatest natural disaster the state's ever had. So a lot of times—or you had the flooding in Chicago, you had a Chicago school crisis or whatever. Things you can't control come up, and you've got to react to them. Secretary of state, for the most part, you can decide where do you want to put your time. You could put your time on the golf course, which a lot of secretaries of state did, because the office ran itself pretty well, driver's license and all that, so you didn't have to come up with those issues. But if you did come up with those issues and you really wanted to go all out, you had the time and the luxury to do that; you didn't have to worry about forty-eleven other crises happening, and you could concentrate on that.

In my case, as governor, I'd have certain issues, but my number-one issue always was the budget, so in the end, I often had to trade off on some of those issues or give up on them because I had to deal with the budget, or something happened that I couldn't control. But as secretary of state, whether it was DUI, later it was literacy, mandatory auto insurance—those were all issues I could really just zero in on, especially mandatory auto insurance. Another one like drunk driving legislation—been around, never could pass, but we were able to bring the full force of the office behind that because I didn't have to use those chips up someplace else; I didn't have to use my time. I could be out there on the bully pulpit that year talking about mandatory auto insurance, and is it fair for you to get hit by somebody without insurance and your insurance rates go up? Is that fair? I don't care what the lawyers say, that's not fair, the insurance companies... I actually had the lawyers on my side on that one. I had the insurance companies (DePue laughs) against me on that one. It was different allies. But again, that was something about the secretary of state's office that's different than the governor's office. And in Illinois, because the secretary of state's office was so large and involved in so many things, it gives you that leverage that doesn't exist in most states, but fortunately, you don't have to deal with all the crisis that a governor has to deal with.

DePue: Well, I'm going to be the guy who steps in now and says we're going to hold off that discussion about mandatory auto insurance—

Edgar: Okay.

DePue: —and a little bit more about some of the DUI legislation till probably the next session. But I did want to ask you about another thing that seems so miniscule but apparently was a big issue, at least if we are to listen to what Al Grosboll is saying, and that's the manufacturing of license plates in Illinois. Do you remember that issue?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. It was a great commercial.

DePue: It's small potatoes, I understand.

Edgar: But it wasn't controversial. It was just one of those things—and of course he likes it because he was involved in coming up with it, so you've got to remember his... But it was probably one of those things you do in government that nobody can criticize, and everybody says, boy, that's really good. It's just one of those—for years, plates had been made not in Illinois prisons—we hadn't made them in a long time. We'd contracted it out to Texas and—I used to have a joke—it's Texas and Mississippi—just one of the prisons was more reliable than the other, so I said if you're ever going to get something from a prison—I can't remember if it was Texas or who the other one was, but one of them was more reliable.

But we were going to get ready to replate. Dixon had not had a replating plan. They came into a multi-year plate, but they never thought about what they were going to do at the end or how long. And I don't know how many years it had been,

but we knew we needed to replate. So this was towards the end of my first two years, and so they came up with this—they put it out for bids thinking, well, maybe we'll make it in Illinois prisons. That's what we wanted to do. And Corrections came in with a bid, but then the Decatur Rehab Institute came in with a bid that was lower, and we got checking and thinking, well, they'd probably do a better job. And the prisons were—yeah, they wanted to do it, but it wasn't something they had to do, and they had all kinds of hassles and things you had to go through. So we decided to do it at the Macon County Rehab. But that happened right before the election in '82, and to be very truthful, we didn't use it, (laughs) but in '86, one of the commercials we had in that campaign was about making license plates and how... That kind of efficiency, that kind of... But that was something that made you feel good, and to this day, they still make the license plates in Decatur. And I forget how many—you know, maybe a hundred people work over there because they make the license plates. I remember going over there, and they were telling about how the workers—these are disabled, mentally retarded, challenged people—how proud they felt that they made the license plates, and they'd go out, and they'd see their work being driven around town. They said it just did wonders for the morale of the employees because they were making something that everybody knew about and they could see and take pride in.

Anyway, it's one of those things that doesn't often happen in government but just makes you really feel good. And nobody complains. Now, I feel good about the twenty-one-year-old drinking law. There were a lot of people that didn't feel good, like the liquor industry (laughs) in particular, and they tried to take that out on me a few years later, but the license plate thing was good. I remember we signed the contract right before the election in '82. I'm trying to think what else early on that was the—how you handled your employees, how you dealt with that...

I'm out trying to get to be known. And this is probably the fourth day I was secretary of state. I went down to the Metro East area around St. Louis, and I was to speak at—they had a high school assembly. Anytime you'd go someplace, they'd throw together a high school assembly, and you could talk on traffic safety. Because teenagers paid a lot of attention to the secretary of state in Illinois—

DePue: Oh, yes, yes.

Edgar: —because this is the guy that gives them their driver's license. Ask me when I was a teenager—I knew who the secretary of state was. I knew the governor, but most my classmates probably didn't know who the governor was, but all of us knew who the secretary of state was. Otto Kerner might have been governor, but we knew Charlie Carpentier, because that was the guy—his name was on the book we were... So you got pretty good response when you went to high school.

So I went down to Granite City High School to speak to an assembly on traffic safety. Now, as I said, I've been on the job three or four days, and my first trip down to Metro East, so all the St. Louis TV stations are over to cover the new secretary of state. And I get done talking, and you know, I talked about traffic

safety, but heaven knows what I said, but the kids, they didn't cause riots; they just sat there for the most part. I get done, and I'm walking out of the gym—it was in the gymnasium, and I was out on the middle of the gymnasium floor, and I get done, and I'm walking over toward the door, and the superintendent's walking with me, and here is this elderly gentleman walking up to me with a big smile on his face, and all the TV cameras are around me. They're going to do probably an interview. And the superintendent whispers into my ear, he says, "That guy coming up to you, just so you know, that's Orville Hodge."

Now, Orville Hodge, you wouldn't know, but Orville Hodge was the state auditor who in 1956 was indicted (laughs) and sent to prison for embezzlement of state funds. And I grew up; we all knew who Orville Hodge was. He was this crook, and he'd gone to jail. He was elected state auditor—state—what was it? State auditor then, and we changed it to comptroller—is that how...? Yeah, he was auditor. And he was a Republican, and it was right before the '56 election, and the scandal broke out. The *Chicago Daily News* broke the scandal, that he was basically writing checks to his own concerns. So he'd gone off to jail. But he was the biggest state politician in my lifetime who had been convicted and gone to jail, and so we all knew who Orville Hodge was. Well, that's not who I wanted to be photographed with in my first visit to the Metro East area, (laughter) was Orville Hodge. I just kind of mumbled when he walked up.

Then I had a fundraiser about a month later, my first fundraiser in Springfield. I remember Thompson didn't come—he was out of town—but Jane Thompson came, and we were standing there shaking hands (laughs) with people coming in, and here comes Orville Hodge. And he's coming. And I look over to Jane Thompson, and I said, "Jane, just be ready. This guy coming?" She said, "Well, yeah?" "That's Orville Hodge." She says, "Oh, no." (laughs) But anyway. There weren't any cameras around that time. So I just remember that was something I chuckled about. I don't know if I ever went back to Granite City after that.

But I was all over the place those first few months, both governmentally... One of the things, the secretary of state's office, you were the state librarian, so I'd visit libraries. I loved that part of the job, and no secretary of state ever paid much attention to libraries. And so I'd go into a community and I'd go by the library, and you'd get a picture in the paper being at the library—nothing negative there. Or, we also had—banks in the state sold license plates and then they sold stickers—renewal stickers. That's how a lot of people got their plates. They changed it. From just getting it from the secretary of state's office. So I'd go into a community. We had these plaques—anybody who'd been in the program for ten years, they'd get a special plaque from the secretary of state saying this is their certificate of good service for ten years, and I'd hand it to them, and we'd get a picture. Well, no newspaper, especially in small towns, ever turned down the bank call to say, would you come and get a picture? The secretary of state's going to be in to hand us a certificate of appreciation. Well, of course they showed; that's one of their big customers. So I'd go into these little towns, and I'd always have my picture in the

paper handing this thing to the bank. So there were all those kind of things as secretary of state that gave you free visibility.

DePue: On the state's dime.

Edgar: On the state dime. And it was legitimate, because you'd go in and especially the libraries, and the banks too, because we didn't want to have—it was great for us that the banks did this because it was cheaper for them to do it than have us do it, and it was a loss leader. They got traffic, so they were happy to do it. And of course they loved having the secretary of state come in and fuss over it, and they got some positive recognition in the paper. It was just one of those win-win situations. But I'd go into a community; I'd go to the library; I'd go to the bank. I might be there that night for a Lincoln Day dinner. You'd do a lot of things. I was on the road all the time.

On the political side—county chairman weren't real happy about the fact that I wasn't going to fire all these Democrats, but at the same time, we did have openings, so they knew that there were jobs every so often. I wasn't going to fire anybody that was coded, but early on they came to me and they said, we have these hearing officers, and they're contracts in most cases with local attorneys, but they're not employment, and you can cancel them at any time. And I said, "Well, who are they?" They said, well, most of them are the Democratic lawyers in these counties. I said, "Well, they're not coded?" No. And I said, "And they're at my pleasure?" I said, "Well, let's cancel them. Let's start over." And they went through, and we found some, and we canceled. The day I canceled, when the story came out, I go down to my dentist. I still went to my dentist in Charleston who was a friend of mine I played tennis with, and he and his wife—they were from over around the Quad Cities. She was from the Quad Cities; he was from—oh, what's the town right across from Peoria? It's not Pekin. But anyway, he's from that area. So I'm down there—and they're good friends of ours, and I'm in the chair, and he's just getting ready to drill, and he says, "Oh, by the way," he said, "you fired my wife's father." (laughter) I said, "What?" And of course, the husband's name is this woman's name, and I didn't know what her maiden name was. Well, her dad was an attorney who had been a Democrat attorney up in the Quad Cities, and he was one of the hearing officers, and he was one of the guys let go. I didn't know that was her dad. I said, "Oh," I said, "I feel terrible." And Tom—that's the dentist—he just laughs and said, "No, no." He said, "No." He called and told me, said, "No"—I guess they read it in the paper or something. Said, "No," he said, "that's politics." He said, "No, no, you ought to; he's a Democrat." He didn't care, but I said, "Oh, we'll put him back on," and I think I did find (laughs) some way finally to help—but I met him later, and I didn't know him, and he just laughed and said, "No, no"—

DePue: Did he make this comment right before he starts the drilling?

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. (laughter) But he didn't do any damage, but that got real personal then. But right off the bat, I'm trying to ingratiate myself with the county chairman. Well,

besides jobs being important to county chairmen, their Lincoln Day dinner's important, because that's their main fundraiser, and that's in February, but it starts in January and it goes into May. We celebrate Lincoln's birthday as long as we can in the Republican Party in Illinois. And so I start getting requests to come and do Lincoln Day dinners. You know, the new secretary of state. Thompson didn't do many of those. He was already elected, and he didn't like—he would go to the big counties, maybe one or two, but he didn't do many. Well, all the little counties—all the counties—were asking me to come to their Lincoln Day dinner. And I thought, Well, this is something important to them. It's a way for me to get in front of the party folks, and I'm trying to hold off a primary, and so I think in about a forty-five day period I did thirty-something Lincoln Day dinners. I mean, I was on the road every night doing Lincoln Day dinners, and during the day, I'd be out going to my driver's—because I had driver's facilities all over the place, too, and these people, they were Democrats and they didn't know me, so I'd go around to the driver's facilities, meet my employees, see the facility, do the library, do the bank, and then that evening, do a Lincoln Day dinner.

Now, Ty Fahner, who had become attorney general, like I said, about six months before I did, had not been in politics before. He'd worked for Thompson, but he'd never run for elected office. And I noticed, and I think in hindsight he would probably admit, he didn't hit the ground running. He was attorney general, and everybody said nice things to him, and he just took it for granted everybody was happy with him and he was there, but he didn't get out and do all the party functions quite as much. And when I did thirty-some Lincoln Day dinners, I think he did three. Well, the county chairmen always have a meeting, oh, a spring meeting, they call it, a late winter meeting. They all get together in Springfield sometime in late March. Well, when they all got together in late March in 1981, one of the things they all talked about, of course, politics—who's going to run for what. And they all said, well, that Edgar, boy, he was at our Lincoln Day. Yeah, he was at ours, too. And they said, well, did you see Fahner? I haven't seen Fahner. Unfortunately, me doing thirty-something and Ty only doing about three, and they started comparing, that really hurt Fahner because they said, he just doesn't understand. Edgar does. He understands the politics. So I never had any more of that political stuff complaints. I had some, but nothing—because by that time, everybody I went and did a Lincoln Day dinner, they were for me, and if I was going to have a primary battle, they were going to be for me.

DePue: Did that have the added advantage of going out to all the local driver's bureaus, license bureaus?

Edgar: It helped on name recognition. It helped on publicity. But the party folks, that didn't do anything with them.

DePue: I don't mean the party side of it, but your ability to truly manage—

Edgar: Oh, it helped a lot.

DePue: —the agency.

Edgar: It helped a lot to get people to know who Jim Edgar was and associate. See, I have a theory, too, that you can have all the great ideals you want, but if people don't know who you are, you can talk all you want about issues and all that, but they're not going to remember who you are; they won't remember the issues. They've got to know who you are first. Name recognition is the number-one, first priority, and not only you've got your name on the wall, but you're there; they see your picture. It's another time, and after so many times of hearing your name, it sticks. And once the name sticks, then you can start talking about issues and those issues.

Now, DUI we talked about twenty times. Every one of these towns I went to, the press always asked me about DUI. If you're the secretary of state and you go into any downstate community smaller than Champaign, you're the front-page story. Now, you wouldn't be in Champaign and you wouldn't be in Peoria, but if you go into Arcola, or let's say you go into–some other little towns you might be familiar with—Taylorville—you're going to be in the local paper. If there's a radio station, you're going to be on it. Now, often they would ask, what's going—drunk driving would be the thing we'd talk about. They'd have the picture in about the bank. They wouldn't talk about it—oh, you gave the bank—they wouldn't talk about that; they wouldn't talk about libraries; they'd talk about drunk driving usually, and that gave me something to talk about. But the key was it gave me a news story, a picture in the paper, and people just got reinforced: Jim Edgar—he's everyplace. We know him. It was a little tougher in the suburbs because you don't have as much media exposure, though you do have weeklies, and they had a lot of pictures of me in libraries and giving banks certificates. That's why the Bob Collins show was so important, because that's how you get—and all the Chicago radio—because that's how you get to the suburbs is through the Chicago electronic media. But all that accumulated, helped. But with the party folks, it was the Lincoln Day dinner that helped the most because I helped them in their big thing, so they felt like they knew me. I was there; I helped them. So there really wasn't much talk after that March county chairman meeting of me having a primary opponent.

DePue: Well, let me ask you a question that might be—well, I'll just see what your reaction to it is. What you've been explaining right now, I'm getting this impression that what's really motivating you in this job as being secretary of state isn't to be the hands-on manager and make the secretary of state's office work, but it's to get your name out and to position yourself so you can run successfully for secretary of state and then potentially for future positions as well.

Edgar: Yeah, it's both. There's no way you don't think of politics if you're in elected office. You just don't, especially when you only have less than two years to keep the job. You've got to worry about your next election, but my theory always was, the best way to worry about next election is do a good job where you are. Now, you also got to do the political things, but you don't ever take your eye off doing a good job, be it don't have your employees all arrested, or clean up that mess, show people that you can get things done, that you're out there to make—traffic safety. I

believed in that, but it's also showing you're doing something positive; you're just not sitting there holding the office as a lot of secretaries of state had done and just had name recognition, but they really didn't change public policy in any way. But you got to do both because if you don't do the politicking, you're not going to be around to do the public policy, but if you don't do good public policy, it's going to hurt your politicking and you're not going to be—so you got to do both.

DePue: Where was your heart?

Edgar: Well, my heart was—I wanted to do the drunk driving, but I also wanted to get reelected. My heart's both places. But I wanted to feel like I was getting something done. You go home at night; you want to feel like you got something done. It's like the license plate thing, it's like the DUI, or just having employees coming up and say, "Boy, we appreciate you asking for our input," or having people say, you know, I want that—we opened up some new driver's facilities in the suburbs. Now, it was good politics because it was going to provide better service, but people would come up and say, oh, it's nice; I don't have to wait as long. So you felt like you're achieving. I think that one of the things as a public official, you want people to feel like government works. That should be one of your goals. And if people think government works because of you, there's no better politics than that. So it all intertwines.

But what is unfortunate is if all you do to get elected is to get reelected and you don't really worry about getting anything done in the meantime unless it's just to get reelected, then I think that's a waste. But if you get something done that's positive, then I think that's going to help you get reelected, but also, it makes it worthwhile to get elected in the first place. My complaint is too many guys, the only reason they get elected is so they can get reelected. Well, you want to get reelected, but you also want to do something in the meantime is my feeling. And I feel like we did things, but you always kept your eye—particularly that first two years when most people didn't think when I first got named I could avoid a primary or win a general election, and I wanted to win and show them. You definitely, everybody—you're always ambitious; you always want to move on or you want to be successful where you are. How are you judged at being successful? I think at public office, you're judged as being successful by public attitude a lot. In a democracy, if people think you're doing a good job—if they don't think you're doing a good job, think you're a lousy public official, then maybe you are a lousy public official.

DePue: They'll tell you at the voting booth, right?

Edgar: Yeah, but part of that is—I think one of your jobs is to make people feel like government works, and in the case of the secretary of state's office, there's no doubt in my mind that office, by the time we left, was working as well, and it was involved in more things—not anything compared to being the governor, but as far as other secretaries of state, I always thought we did it the best, and we got into areas like DUI, literacy, a whole host of things—a lot of things that never got a

whole lot of coverage—things we did in the archives and we did in security and all that stuff that I think was very successful.

DePue: I want to spend quite a bit of time, and I think you do, too, on the election in 1982. We've been building up to that anyway. But before we get there, a couple other issues, and you've mentioned literacy a couple times. Anything that you did in that first term?

Edgar: No, not really. We did libraries, mainly. My emphasis was on the library. I did get money, first time ever construction money for libraries. It wasn't a huge amount, but I got Thompson to do it over Mandeville, the Bureau of the Budget's, objection. Thompson was very good at giving me that. We were able to give out fifty thousand dollars to—I don't think we could ever give more than fifty thousand to a library, but we'd do a new library or reconstruction. So we spent a lot of time in the libraries, but we didn't do literacy. Literacy came after I heard Barbara Bush talk about it sometime in the mid-eighties, and we just took it up from there.

DePue: Okay. Well, you had mentioned literacy grants offline before. That comes later, then, in your time as secretary of state.

Edgar: I don't think I've mentioned—did I mention literacy grant? The main thing, libraries. Literacy grants were later, and they were smaller. Yeah.

DePue: Okay, okay. Any other issues in those first two years?

Edgar: Well, trying to show that we were cleaning up the office and the office was not corrupt anymore; if it had been, we were changing that. The DUI. DUI took a huge amount of time. Spent time with the library community. I enjoyed that. I went to the American Library Association meeting, national meetings. I was the only elected official there. They loved having—they were so excited to have an elected politician there. And what was fun about that group—most librarians, they're all Democrats, and here I was a Republican, and I was their champion, and so that was always fun. But I spent a lot of time in the libraries; the DUI; just traveling around the state and the offices, the driver's facilities, trying to work on getting that cleaned up. And we moved some facilities. We had a facility in East St. Louis they kept bombing. They'd firebomb it, so we had to move it.

DePue: "They"—who's "they"?

Edgar: The locals. Some people. Who knows in East St. Louis. (laughs)

DePue: They were upset about something, obviously.

Edgar: No, they wanted to bomb, (laughter) burn. They thought there was some money in there or something like that. But I'll never forget the first time they took me to East St. Louis. I had heavy security that trip. I was trying to think. I don't know in the first two years if we got too much into auto theft. That might have come more later. I think we were mainly just trying to clean up the secretary of state police. A lot of

that first two years was working on internally strengthening the office, getting good people in, encouraging other people to volunteer their thoughts. But DUI was the main emphasis, really.

DePue: Inspector general's office came later then, too?

Edgar: Well, that's part of what Redenbo reported back we ought to have. There always had been an internal security. I think he called it inspector general, maybe. I'm not sure what we called it. Internal affairs or something like that we called it more than inspector general. We didn't have an inspector general that looked at how you handed out license—we looked at somebody was taking money for license plates and things like that. But they'd had that before. I think we upgraded it and make it much tougher, much more efficient—something unfortunate, I think it lagged with George later.

DePue: Where was Brenda in terms of your new schedule? You talk about coming home at night and feeling proud about things. It had to be an awful lot of very late nights that you were coming home.

Edgar: A lot of nights I didn't get home. I stayed in a lot of funny motels around the state. You didn't get the best suites when you weren't the governor. And we drove everyplace, too. We didn't fly hardly at all; it was all driving, so we were gone a lot. Two things. Brenda felt like her role was—she wasn't Mrs. Secretary of State, she was a mother of Brad and Elizabeth, and I wasn't going to be home, and she took care of the kids. She did not get involved too much in what I did.

The other thing, I remember this was early on, and Brenda was involved in and when I was secretary of state, she spent a lot of time speaking to a group called Christian Women's Club. She'd go out and talk, travel around the state. And that politically probably helped, too; people knew her from that. But especially central Illinois, she was all over. But she had this Bible group she was involved in early on. I hadn't been secretary of state too long. And we were getting good publicity and stuff. Anyway, one time I came home and she said she's had some of her Bible study over, and they were just talking about how wonderful I was. And she looked at me and she said, "You better not do anything to disillusion them." (DePue laughs) I just remember it kind of hit home because people expect more of you than the average politician, so you better not do anything...

I just remember—because Brenda never got—but for the most part, she did Christian Women's Club—she traveled and did that—but other than that, she pretty much stayed at home, took care of the kids. She'd go to functions, but most of the time I was on the road. She didn't go to Lincoln Day dinners and that stuff. But she did not get—not anything like she did when she was the First Lady. That was a whole different role. She was very active, and she always said that was a huge transition. It wasn't as much of a transition for her when I became secretary of state as compared to when I became governor. Then for her, it was a huge transition. But she was home most the time, and she did spend a lot of time out in the Christian

Women's Club, kind of on the circuit out speaking around, particularly central. She'd go up to the Quad Cities; she'd go down to southern Illinois. She might have done some of the suburbs, but not too much. She would go then sometimes on weekends or if we were going to maybe spend a weekend, going to do some ethnic things or festivals in Chicago. Parades—she didn't really like parades. She got the first time in—no, let me think a minute. Yeah, in '82. That was election year. Oh, we did not talk about ERA, and we need to talk about that before the '82 election.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: As the keeper of the capitol, I was in charge of the security of the capitol. We had the ERA demonstration in 1982—that was the big final push on ERA.

DePue: The deadline was coming.

Edgar: Yeah, the deadline was coming. So Illinois, of course, was one of the few states that hadn't ratified it people thought should ratify it. And we had in the rotunda every day probably the last month, six weeks of the session, hundreds of women, pro and con. And my fear was they'd mix and have a fight. So we had to keep it open so people could walk and stuff, and that was tricky. But then, about two weeks before the end of the session, we had this group of women from Champaign who came over and chained themselves to the Senate door, and they wouldn't leave, and they were just very disruptive. So I had to move them out, and we'll talk about—do we want to talk about ERA now? I guess I'll talk about that—

DePue: Yeah, I think this is good.

Edgar: —and then I'll lead into this other incident. So they wouldn't leave, and it was really disruptive. Again, this goes back—I knew enough about the legislature that somebody chained right to the Senate door, people coming and going, that's just too disruptive. And the Senate was really upset about it, and they wanted us to get rid of them. Then they had a sit-in one time in the governor's office, too, and they wanted us to get rid of them. I said, "Well, you got people there." "No, you're in charge of that." (laughs) They didn't want to take the fall for that. And I remember we were trying to decide, well, what are you going to do with these people, because I said, "They just can't stay locked. I don't care if they're someplace in the rotunda, if they want to chain themselves to one of the statues, but not the Senate door or the House door; that's just too disruptive at the end of the session." I said, "We got to move them." They said, yeah, but you know they just want the PR of us carrying them out. And I said, "Yeah, and I don't want TV showing that." So we decided we'd do it at three o'clock in the morning on a Sunday night. And that evening, I remember—and I could tell around the state this was really beginning to boil, because people knew about this, and they didn't like it. A lot of people, maybe even pro-ERA, they didn't like these women chained to the House; they just thought that was...

And I remember I went over to Boys State—I always did Boys State, secretary of state and governor. And I went over—it was a Sunday night—I went over to speak, and I'd left the staff, and we were going to get together when I got back, about eleven o'clock. But I went over there, and I remember the boys at Boys State said, "What are you going to do about those women? Get rid of those women." (DePue laughs) I thought, jiminy, it's even filtered into the Boys State.

So we came back, and eleven o'clock, I said, "All right, you can move them over to the Centennial Building. It's the same marble, same kind of marble. (laughs) Just put them on the floor over there, and so they can stay there." Well, at three o'clock, they did it, and the locked the capitol doors. And the media got wind of it, and they were—I remember Ben Kinningham, who used to do—he was a very mild-mannered guy—(laughs) he was just enraged that we had locked the capitol doors and they couldn't get in. I think by that time we actually had them over at the Centennial Building. But we moved them out, and there was no pictures of them being moved, so I felt good about that. And, you know, there was a ruckus about me moving them out in the dead of the night and all this and that, but they got me off the hook because they went then and got blood and threw it all over the House and the Senate chambers. I think it was pig blood or something they got from some butcher.

DePue: Inside the chambers?

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. And at that point, I just hauled—I said, "Arrest them and send them to jail." (laughs) Because before you couldn't arrest them because it was argued they were petitioning their government. I said, "That's fine, but you can't chain yourself." So we couldn't arrest them, we didn't think, but when they did that, I said, "I don't care—arrest them and haul them off to jail." I think they finally bailed out. But anyway, at that point, everybody was on my side. When they threw the blood, they just went way too far.

But I was pro-ERA, and I had Phyllis Schlafly, who was anti-ERA. She was always on me, but when I threw them in jail, she was very happy with me. So I was worried I could lose both sides. In the end, the pro-ERA couldn't condone blood and the anti-ERA thought I had been firm, so I kind of was walking a tightrope there between both sides and also constitutionally. I thought it was ludicrous that I couldn't throw them out of the capitol, but there was some question, so the argument was the Centennial Building—the reason we moved them over to the Centennial Building, we said, "It's still the capitol complex, so we have not removed you from the capitol. You can petition there just as well as the capitol." That was the rationalization for the Centennial Building versus just throwing them outside. We couldn't just throw them outside. But when they did the blood, we hauled them off, and a judge held them in jail and finally let them out on bail. So that was my ERA involvement, but that was a little tricky because again, this is one of those issues that had huge headlines around the state about these women chaining themselves, and it was on TV every night.

DePue: Didn't it get national headlines as well?

Edgar: I think it did, yeah. Of course, we had a woman that got real sick and almost died, that was fasting. The fasters, they were all right. We tried to take care of them. They had a space in the rotunda, and we didn't try to move them out. We did hope they'd eat something so they wouldn't die, but they weren't clogging up like these—and these women in this chain gang was really not a nice group of women—they were foul-mouthed and everything—whereas these ladies fasting, they were very nice. They were pro-ERA. But anyway, that got a lot of headline, the fasting. We were afraid she was going to die. So I was juggling all that.

But anyway, this happens like right at the end of June. Well, four days later is July fourth parades. I said to Brenda, I says, "Now, it would really be helpful if you did some parades downstate and I'll do parades in the Chicago area." So she's going to end up doing the Champaign parade. (DePue laughs) And we didn't even think about the chain gang or anything like that, just it's a pretty good parade, and it's near home; she can go do that from Springfield; she could do this—she did a couple others. But back then, it wasn't like we had people driving her around. She was driving—we had this Maverick, this gold Maverick painted up with "Edgar for secretary of state," and so they were going to drive it through, and the kids were going to march in front and wave and all that. She comes over here—and it's 110 degrees.

I'm in the suburbs, and I remember I'm hitting five or six parades. And people in the suburbs clap for you. Downstate, even in my hometown, people who are going to vote for you, they just stand there and stare at you, maybe wave, but they don't clap and cheer. Suburbs, they'd clap and cheer, so I loved doing suburban parades. They were clapping and cheering for me, and I'm feeling good.

So I call home that night. I'm staying—Fourth of July fell on a weekend, so they had parades for three days, and I'm up in the suburbs doing parades for three days, and I remember I was staying at the Sheraton Hotel, or it was maybe a Hilton then, next to Arlington Racetrack. I call home, and I'm in a good mood. I'd been out, and they'd been cheering me, and I feel good and all that. I call Brenda, and I said, "Brenda, How'd the parades go? Parades really went good up here. How'd they go down there?" She says, "I'm never doing parades again." I said, "Well, what happened?" She said, "Well, we go over to Champaign; they stick us in the back of the parade. You're the secretary of state; you get up front. I'm just the candidate's wife; they put me in the back. So we got to sit there in the sun and wait and wait, and then we take off, and then we go by these obnoxious women who are yelling these profanities at us."

The chain gang, because they were from here, and they're there someplace, and they're all out there. Of course, I'm enemy number one. And she's got Brad and Elizabeth. Now, Elizabeth—how old would Elizabeth have been? She would have been about seven. Brad, he was just holding a sign. He was hoping they didn't know he was my son. But there were a lot of words that—now, Brad might have

heard it. He was in junior high by that time, so he'd probably heard—or high school. No, just junior high. Had heard some of those words, but there were a lot of words—Brenda had never heard some of those words they were yelling at her. (DePue laughs) So that was just a miserable experience.

Then they get in the Maverick after the parade, and they're in Champaign; they're going to drive down to Charleston to stay with my mom over the weekend while I'm out parading. It's Route 130, and there's not a whole lot along Route 130. After you go past Villa Grove, there's nothing until you get to Charleston. Well, halfway down, the car conks out. Here it is, 110 degrees, kids are—everybody's just tired, soaked, sweating and everything, and they're in the middle of nowhere, and the car won't work. And of course, you don't have cell phones back then; it's just the three of them. And she walks the half mile to some farmer's house, and finally they get help and they get down to Charleston, so she had just got there when I called her, and I'm in this upbeat mood, (DePue laughs) and she just...

So Brenda was a trooper, but she did not like those parades, and she had a similar incident when I was governor over in the Quad Cities. But she wasn't big on parades. Later on, when I was governor, she got to go do the suburban parades one time, and she understood—she said, "Well, from now on, I'm doing the suburban parades; (DePue laughs) you go do these other parades." But again, she just felt like she needed—because the kids were—Elizabeth was probably about eight at the time and Brad was maybe fourteen, and...

Oh, then—I think it was during this period too; it was right when I started to crack down on drunk driving—we got a threat that somebody was going to kidnap Brad. Some guy in a bar had said he was going to get the secretary of state's son—somebody that had lost his driver's license. And turned out that guy was just drunk and was just talking, but needless to say, Brad then had state police taking him to school, and he was just furious about that because he didn't want...

DePue: Well, I would imagine Brenda didn't (unintelligible; both speaking)—

Edgar: Oh, Brenda was just beside herself because they'd patrol the house and stuff. Turned out—I think Brad was already lifting weights at this point, and he was bigger than this guy was. But, you know, it just reinforced the fact that it can come back on the family. It's not great on a family. Politicking, office-holding is great for the candidate and great for the person who gets the applause, but the family, sometimes it's not very good.

Another story Brenda told me and she said she agreed with—sometime around—I don't know if it was right here; it might have been a little later—but Barbara Bush—no, it was early on. She said that—and Brenda never had any interest in being in politics, never had to be the person to get up and make the speech, didn't want to make the speech—it was fine if I wanted to do that—but she said she started finding right away that I was getting all this glory, and she began to, you know, kind of jealous in some ways, and she's the last to care about this. So the

point was that just even on a person like Brenda who did not want to be in the limelight—I could be in the limelight; she didn't want to be in it—after a while, even she began to resent a little bit I was always in the limelight, and everybody wanted to see me, and I was so wonderful. Barbara Bush has the great line about, "The lady in the blue dress get out of the picture." She was with her husband one time, and they were going to take pictures, and they wanted her out because she was blocking the picture and something like that, and just that kind of feeling like you're excess baggage. Some women want to be in the limelight, so they'd really resent it maybe if their husband was getting all—but Brenda had no desire. She did not want any of this, but even she began to—said early on, began to realize she kind of resented that I was always—everybody thought I was so wonderful and all this and that. She knew the truth about me. (DePue laughs)

So it wasn't as tough as when I was governor, running for governor. Running for governor on the family, I think, was the toughest. Fortunately, Brad was gone; Elizabeth was about ready to leave. Now, on the kids, I don't think the secretary of state thing—outside Brad had to have state troopers go with him to school for about two weeks when this one thing occurred—they didn't get much flak from kids at school.

DePue: What was the school?

Edgar: They went to Glenwood Chatham. It was a company town. They're in the Springfield orbit. Some of their kids at school's parents worked for me, or maybe worried about not working for me.

DePue: Were you living in Springfield or in Chatham?

Edgar: No, we were in Springfield.

DePue: But in the—

Edgar: Well, we were in the city limits of Springfield but in the Chatham school district. It was a very small town.

DePue: The South Side of town, then.

Edgar: Yeah, Hyde Park. Very small area. Great, though, because we had the Chatham school district and we had Springfield utilities.

DePue: (laughs) Anybody who knows Springfield politics understands that comment.

Edgar: Yeah. And that was an accident. We wanted to be in the Chatham school district, and we bought that house, because I wanted Brad to play football, and I didn't want to live in Springfield, necessarily, school—because we'd lived in Chatham before, and when I'd come back to be legislative liaison, we picked that house out to be in that school district, but I didn't realize we were in the Springfield city limits. And I got my first utility bill, and the house was twice as big as the house we had in

Charleston, but in Charleston, we were on Rural Electric, and it was Rural Electric that was paid on Clinton's nuclear power plant, and their rates had just gone sky high. And twice as big a house—our utility bill was half what it was in Charleston, and it was just dumb luck. The other thing was the constitution requires that a constitutional officer maintains a residency in the state capital. I didn't have to have a place in the state capital because I had my home. Now, everybody else got the state to pay rent. I couldn't get the state to pay rent for my house. (laughs) But anyway, it was just...

But they were around kids—the secretary of state's office meant something because some of their parents worked there. But the kids didn't get harassed or get—later when they got their driver's license, they felt pressure—they always felt pressure on that. And Brad, fortunately the kids he ran with were pretty good. They knew he had to be extra careful, and they always went out of their way to make sure when Brad was with them that they didn't get in any more trouble than they usually did. (laughs)

DePue: This is probably a good point, then, to pick up where we'd been heading in the long frame, anyway. And you've mentioned the primary, that one of the things you wanted to do was to avoid a primary fight. So let's start the story of the '82 election with that.

Edgar: Okay. Well, when I got named, the speculation in all the political columns was that, well, Edgar will without a doubt have primary opposition and will have very serious general election opposition, may not make it past the primary because he's unknown and untried, and it's going to be difficult to hold onto that office. So avoiding the primaries kind of is the first political goal, and my feeling was if I could demonstrate that I'm doing a good job as secretary of state, that I'm electable, that would—because there's a tendency to go with an incumbent among party folks. Also, if I could be a good trooper, do these Lincoln Day dinners and all that, that would help that as well. So by the end of March in 1981, three months after I was sworn in, I pretty well felt like I'd—and most the political speculation, the columns written, said, Edgar probably won't have primary opposition. Fahner might. And you did have Lee Daniels, who was the Republican leader—was he—he wasn't Republican leader yet in the house—George Ryan was still leader. But Lee Daniels was talking about running for attorney general against him in the primary, and he actually went around to some of the political events. In fact, that's how he met his wife. He was in Whiteside County. Because I swore in the guy who had taken Doc Shapiro's place in the Senate—and I know him as well as I'm sitting here, and I just went blank. But I was up to swear him in, then they had a golf outing, Republican Party, and I went out there. And Lee Daniels was there, and that's the day he met Pam, who was working that event, and they later got married.

DePue: I think—

Edgar: So he didn't get the attorney general, but he got a wife out of all that.

DePue: I think James “Pate” Philips is the other one you’re talking about, who replaced Shapiro?

Edgar: No, he did as leader, but not the state Senate seat.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Edgar: So anyway. And there were other people talking. There had been a little talk about Bob Blair might run for secretary of state, come back. He’d lost the comptroller’s primary, I think. No, I think he lost something before, but he was talking about coming back. Anyway. Because I can remember one of the things I did too was Ed Madigan, who was now Congressman, Madigan from central Illinois—I remember going out to Washington and seeing him, and Blair and him were pretty good friends, but when I went out there, he just told me, he said, “If there gets to be a primary battle, I’m with you even if Blair runs.” And I tried to line up some people like that just to make sure that anybody who I thought might run would think, I’m taking on an incumbent, and this guy here who I was counting on, he’s going to be for Edgar, so—and so I tried to spend time on that. So anyway, by the end of March, it was pretty obvious that I had done my political chores and I was doing well enough in the job nobody was probably going to challenge me in the primary.

The general election, though, Democrats were lining up, because that’s a good office. Neil Hartigan was talking about he wanted to run for that or AG; he just wanted to run again. He had been lieutenant governor, then had lost when Walker lost in ’76, but he wanted to run again. And Jerry Cosentino, who was the state treasurer, he was running for secretary of state and apparently had Jane Byrne’s, who was then the mayor’s, support. In the end, Hartigan, they slated him for AG. He’d rather run for secretary of state, but they’d slated Cosentino for secretary of state. Jane Byrne had made this promise to Cosentino she’d support him for secretary of state.

DePue: That’s a significant “they,” meaning that the machine is still working, the slatemakers are still working to a certain—

Edgar: There’s still a slatemaker, yeah, as much—there’s still slate. I guess you could challenge. There hadn’t still been successful challenging. It didn’t mean as much in the general election, but they still was slating, yeah. And they did slate that year. They did sit down and slate, and Cosentino got secretary of state and Hartigan had to settle for AG—which is unusual. Usually people think AG, but—in this case, and Hartigan was right. He had the right instinct, and of course, that was a better office, but Cosentino had lined up—he was a township committeeman, whereas—and Hartigan had been a ward committeeman but never had been perceived as a heavyweight as a ward committeeman. He lost his wards a few times. And Cosentino had worked—and he was in office. He was treasurer, whereas Hartigan was out of office; he wasn’t anything like that. Now, I was glad because I thought Hartigan would be a lot tougher than Cosentino because he still had a lot of name

recognition left over from his days as lieutenant governor. And Fahner ended up getting Hartigan, and I got Cosentino.

Now, in the end, Fahner didn't have primary opposition, but you didn't know right up to filing that he wasn't going to have, and that kept gnawing at him and causing, I think, more negative press about his political chances. I think that hurt him to some extent, whereas I didn't have that problem. I was going to be the Republican nominee for the secretary of state. When it is obvious who the Democrats were, and we knew who the Republicans were, the feeling was that Hartigan was going to be tougher than Cosentino, and I think that was true, but a lot of people thought Cosentino, being the state treasurer and been elected in his own right and coming out of Cook County would be very difficult for me to win. I thought I could beat him, because he, I didn't think, would be a very good campaigner. He didn't have a clue about the office. He owned a trucking firm, which I thought was a conflict of interest, if you own a trucking firm and you're going to head up the office that regulates trucking. To me, it was a natural conflict of interest. He came up with the solution that he was going to put it in a blind trust. I says, "How do you put a trucking firm in a blind trust? That's like putting a sheet over an elephant, and you say you don't know what's under that sheet. That makes absolutely no sense."

But Cosentino was a character. It came out during the campaign—he was renting this campaign headquarters. It turned out the guy that owned that was involved in auto theft. (laughs) Cosentino also didn't like to fly, so he wouldn't fly anyplace, so he very seldom ever went downstate. But saying all that, going into it, everybody thought, well, that will be a tough race, too.

Nineteen eight-two, you know, I'd never run statewide, so it was a whole new venture for me. I convinced Carter to take a leave from the senate—

DePue: Carter Hendren.

Edgar: Hendren. To come and run my campaign. He had worked on Bill Harris—Bill Harris had run for secretary of state against Mike Howlett, which was kind of a kamikaze thing, a few years before, but he'd been involved—he didn't run it, but he was involved in the campaign. And he was doing campaigns at this point some, and so I felt comfortable with him and I thought he knew something about secretary of state's office and statewide election a little bit. Jim Reilly, who was still in the legislature, was my downstate chairman, and he got involved in the campaign. We tried to put together a blue ribbon committee. I think George Berta, too—had been a legislator, had been considered one of the real ethical legislators—I think was my overall campaign chairman. He didn't do a whole lot, but it gave me a good name in the Chicago area.

One of the advantages again of being the incumbent secretary of state: in the secretary of state's office, there were people from all the ethnic groups. They all had jobs; every group had representation. Secretaries of state in the past, they'd go

to the Polish group, and somebody from the Polish community, they'd have a job there or for this—so I had all these ethnic groups that had people in the office, and we gave tests in Polish and several other languages besides just English and Spanish. And when I became secretary of state, these people all worried about their jobs. Well, they wanted to endear themselves, and really, their main function, though they had a job, and we did suggest they should show up and do a job, but their real function was kind of to be the liaison with the secretary of states and their group. So they naturally said, well, come to our group, and they'd take me to their group.

And I had this one secretary of state policemen whose name was Tyrone. I forget Tyrone's last name. But he belonged to one of the big black Baptist churches on the South Side. So he invited me to come to their dinner, and I went to their dinner, and they fussed all over me. It was a congregation of four or five thousand people—a big church—so I got to know the minister, who actually had been a Republican. He was African-American, but he had moved up from the South, and he'd run as a Republican at one time. No longer was, but he... So that's back when you had—years and years before me, blacks were Republicans in Chicago. They changed in the thirties, some, and they all changed by the time I was running. But I got to develop a relationship with that minister and that church. They kind of adopted me as their guy.

But a lot of the ethnic groups. So I had spent a lot of time in—and I knew I had to spend a lot of time in Chicago and Cook County because I'm a downstater, and I had to kind of crack that world up there and not get wiped out in the election, so I spent a lot of time in those ethnic communities and in the churches where I got invited and stuff. Now, a lot of people thought I was kind of a waste of time, but again, I thought every vote counts.

So come election time, while I'm a downstater, I had spent a lot of time in groups in Chicago; I had visibility from things like the Bob Collins show; and I thought that would help me kind of counteract the fact I'm a downstater and a Republican. But we spent a lot of time going to ethnic picnics. The Lithuanians, the—every ethnic group had festivals, and I went to all of them. The festivals were big in Chicago area and these ethnic groups, so we did a lot of cam—but I'd done that for two years. I'd done that long before the election season started, and so I think that kind of got me off to a good start. We had to raise money. Jerry Cosentino was a millionaire, and he was going to spend a lot of his own money. And as secretary of state, again, being the incumbent, it wasn't that hard to raise money. I was able to raise enough money—raised more than probably Cosentino did. So that went okay.

And just campaigning was—Thompson was at the top of the ticket, and he was running against Adlai Stevenson III, who had to be the dullest candidate I—I heard him speak early in the campaign at the Illinois Bankers Association, and I've heard a lot of speakers who put people to sleep. He's the only speaker I knew who I thought he went to sleep during the speech. (DePue laughs) But he had a good

name, but I thought, he's just not much of a candidate. And he didn't prove to be a very good candidate. He alienated a lot of his own constituency and didn't get a lot of excitement out there.

So early on, I thought, Thompson's going to run well; I think I can beat Cosentino; Fahner's going to probably have a tough time with Hartigan, but we should be okay. Well, it's the off-year election, and we have the White House, and traditionally that's not good for the party that has the White House.

DePue: Plus some very tough economic times.

Edgar: The economic time has begun to hit Illinois. Particularly, you go into Peoria—I think the strike was already on at Caterpillar, and it was just nasty in Peoria. So you have that problem. Also, in Chicago, you have a new county chairman named Eddie Vrdolyak, who was all ready to—he was a very smart guy, a hustler. This is his chance to prove himself. We had straight party voting in Illinois, and he came up with the slogan "Punch ten," and that's straight Democrat. And they got Harold Washington to come back from Congress—he was in Congress, and then he'd come back and go into particularly the black area and push "Punch ten." Everybody was pushing "Punch ten."

Now, as I had mentioned earlier, this Charlie Chew, who was a state senator, South Side, black, he'd opened a headquarters for Thompson and me. I had a couple state reps who were for me in the south—Democrats—in that area that were for me. I don't know how much good it did, but I had a little bit going there. Chew took me around to the black churches. Now, that was a new experience for me. I had grown up an American Baptist. American Baptist is a little more moderate Baptist, and a lot more moderate than a Southern Baptist. I always like to explain the difference between an American Baptist and a Southern Baptist in political terms: Nelson Rockefeller was an American Baptist; Strom Thurmond was a Southern Baptist. (DePue laughs) But Baptists, at least American Baptists, at least at that time—and still are—strong believers in separation of church and state. You don't talk politics in church. Now, Southern Baptists got away from that, but American Baptists, you don't. So Charlie Chew took me up to do the churches on the South Side, and so I remember the first black Baptist church I'm—and most of them are Baptist. I get up, and they said, "Why don't you come out and talk?" So I get out. So I can't talk about running for office; I'll talk about Martin Luther King and the importance of civil rights and whatever, you know. So I'm talking about that, and they said, no, no, we want to hear what you're going to do for us when you're in office. What's your campaign platform? What are you...? So I'm thinking, well, that's not... So I start talking about that, and that's just a whole different thing for me.

I remember they take me over to this one church, and it's not Baptist; it's—what's the Egyptian? It begins with a capital C—Christian Church. They claim to be that, but it was—and they were all dressed, and they had headbands. It was really not your typical Baptist church. This was really strange and... All black. And I get in there, and I just remember (laughs) there was one other white guy, and he was

representing the Democrats running for judge—and it didn't matter; they were all going to get elected, but individuals representing all the judicial candidates would go out to these, and he was to come here, and he was the only white guy, and I walk in. He was so happy to see me, (DePue laughs) even though I was a Republican, he didn't care; he was just glad to see me. Because these guys were dressed strange, and I'm sure he was probably Irish-Catholic, and he didn't know what kind of religious group this was. I wasn't sure what it was. But I just remember I got there, and the guy said, "Well, we'd like to have the secretary of state. He is a friend of Senator Charles Chew, and any friend of Charlie Chew is our friend." (laughter) And I get up and made my short speech.

Then the last weekend of the campaign, we're down to this black Baptist church, and I had gone to their dinners. Reverend Daniels was the minister of, that Tyrone had introduced me to. So I'd been down there a couple times. But Thompson was there. For some reason Thompson was there. So we meet with the minister before, and this minister says, "I don't want you guys to say anything. I'm just going to introduce you here and say you're good people. I don't want to get into partisan politics here. We've got a lot of Democrats here, and I just don't want to do that. We don't do that here." He says, "But I'll just indicate that you're good people." He says, "You don't need to say anything—but I don't want you to say anything." I said, "Fine, fine." So Thompson and I go out and sit. And so the minister gets up, and he starts talking, and he kind of talks a little bit of almost a southern kind of flow or just the flow—in black churches, there's a lot of music and a lot—sermons are a lot more rambunctious than they are in a white protestant church, let me just say.

And he gets to the point where he's going to introduce the two of us. And he says, "And we have here these two fine gentlemen, two fine public officials that are up for election. They're come today, and I just want to introduce them, Governor Jim Thompson and Secretary of State Jim Edgar." And right then, Thompson grabs his microphone from him—oh no. And Thompson gets up and starts giving this speech, and he's talking in this southern kind of slang, you know, (DePue laughs) and he's swaying back—of course, we'd had one song, we'd swayed, and Thompson had no rhythm, and he was swaying the wrong way, and I'm standing there next to him, and I'm getting beat by guys going... Anyway. Thompson gets up, and he starts trying to talk like a black minister. And all the TV cameras are there. Reverend Daniels, I could tell, was not happy, but there wasn't anything he could do. Thompson had grabbed the mic and started talking about the CTA and all these needs and all these things he had done.

So anyway, we get out of there. That night, Channel 2, the CBS station in Chicago, has a special on the election, and they spotlight Thompson down at this black church trying to pretend he's a black minister. Well, the blacks were all insulted by it and the whites were all mad about it. I heard more complaints in the next three days about that than anything in the campaign.

And of course, that election, we're going in feeling pretty good. All the polls have Thompson in the lead, and what polls you could tell on secretary of state, I had a good lead. And about four days before the election, all of a sudden Stevenson started coming up. The Monday before the election—no, that's when I heard it. The Monday before the election, Channel 3, the Champaign station here, WCIA, had done a—had always been good on polling. They came out with a poll that said that the gubernatorial race was almost dead even. Now, the last poll had had Thompson up about twelve points, but this was the Monday before the election, so they'd taken it over the weekend. And I'm in my office in Springfield, and we all feel pretty good about things. I'm having lunch with Thompson's chief of staff, Art Quern, who's a good friend of mine—we'd worked together—and he about has a heart failure. We're just having this leisurely lunch. He leaves, goes over, and starts checking around. But it was obvious that everything was coming together for the Democrats: the economy, the fact we had the White House was hurting us. This minister thing had really hurt. Later on, I had more people tell me they switched their votes; they just resented that. And it got widespread. CBS morning news had it, I think, too, the next morning, so it got all over the nation, because I was getting people from other states I knew talking to me about it. But this "Punch ten," too.

So we go into election night. We're a little nervous, but that poll could be wrong. That's the only poll showing that. And the returns start coming in, and we're just getting wiped out in Chicago, Cook County. This "Punch ten" has just taken hold. And downstate, I'm running pretty well. And I remember talking to my people downstate, and they're celebrating. They're already celebrating the election victory, and I said, "Hey, don't celebrate too soon. We're getting killed in Cook County." I said, "Check around these other big cities downstate and just see how are we going to run?" So we're behind up there big-time.

Finally by midnight, I had enough of a margin built up downstate, and I was running better in Chicago than Thompson was—not a whole lot better, but I was running a lot better downstate than he was. So I thought it looked like about midnight I would win. We weren't sure about Thompson, but I thought Thompson would win by maybe fifty thousand votes, but I thought I'd win by a couple hundred thousand, and we didn't think Fahner would win. I remember I went to bed and I woke up the next morning. It was obvious Fahner wasn't going to win at that point, and Thompson was behind, and I was a little bit ahead. But when all was said and done, I think I won by about two hundred and fifty thousand votes. Thompson won by, what, five thousand, three thousand votes? It was some (laughs) minuscule number, and they didn't settle that for, you know...

DePue: Several days.

Edgar: Well, several weeks. It was right before the inauguration the Supreme Court finally ruled, and fortunately the one Democrat, whose son had worked for Thompson in the U.S. attorney's office, and who Adlai Stevenson had refused to appoint as a federal judge, cast the deciding vote for Thompson. But that whole election turned there at the last, it seemed like, and that "Punch ten" almost did us in, and the

economy and just everything. You know, two weeks before, we thought we were home free; we thought we were going to win pretty handily. But I don't know. The campaign—it was long, and we were all over the state forever, it seemed like, but that was a big relief to me to finally win in my own right. I hadn't expected to lead the ticket, but it was—because for two years, you know, you're sitting there, and you don't know if you're going to hold onto it and you're going to be able to win statewide or whatever. So that was a huge victory for me, not only because it meant I kept my job, but it also meant that I was viable as a statewide candidate, and I think most people felt at that point I was the heir apparent. Now, we weren't sure—I might have to be the heir apparent a lot quicker. A lot of people didn't know if Thompson was going to make it. I thought all along he would make it, though it was a lot closer than I thought it was going to be. Looking at the results that night, I thought he would win by a little more than that.

DePue: Well, yeah, you already mentioned that the Thompson-Stevenson race, it was a dead heat. A couple days after the election, the *Tribune*, *Chicago Tribune*, had you up 55 percent to 44, so a significant victory on your side.

Edgar: Yeah, and I don't think it was quite that much when it was said and done, but I remember Cosentino wouldn't concede. He kept saying, "No, it's close. I'm not conceding." And we'd gone a week and he still wouldn't concede. And I remember I did a press conference. I said, "Well, this is nuts." I said, "Here are the results." And then Phil Rock, who was the Democratic state chairman, they asked him, and he says, "Yeah, Edgar won. He's right. I don't know what Cosentino's talking about." (laughter) But again, Thompson—I remember we certified his election, the secretary of state certified, did that so it could look like it was official and all, but it wasn't until that supreme court final decision, and it was a four-three decision.

DePue: Where were the contested votes?

Edgar: Well, they were all over. You were looking at votes down in southern Illinois; you were looking at some in the county. There were votes that—I know particularly some counties along the Wabash River, there was a lot of activity. I wasn't so much involved because I was kind of home free, and I didn't worry about it. The poor governor's people—a lot of their wives had gone up that day and gone shopping thinking they were—and then that night they thought they were going to have to take everything back the next day because they weren't going to have a job. Yes? (woman's voice says something unintelligible) Okay, just a second here.

DePue: We'll pause.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Ready to get started?

Edgar: Yeah. I'm ready. Can you hear me? Yeah.

DePue: Okay, we took a very quick break. To emphasize what you were talking about in terms of how the voting went, just to read a couple other numbers here—in Chicago itself, you pulled in something like 28 percent versus Cosentino's 72 percent, so (laughs) I guess that would qualify as kind of being walloped in Chicago, and you had hoped to do much better, I'm sure.

Edgar: Was that Cook County? I didn't think I did that good in Chicago.

DePue: Chicago was that.

Edgar: Was it?

DePue: Now, Cook County—I assume that's excluding Chicago—you got 61 percent versus Cosentino's 39, so for the rest of the county, you pulled very well.

Edgar: Yeah, which today you couldn't do, but yeah. But we got walloped in the... But what saved me was in the areas, those other areas, I ran well; I ran ahead of the ticket. In downstate communities like—I remember calling around that night; they'd call around like in Rockford and Peoria—I was running way ahead of the state ticket. And I think that had a lot to do with all those times I had been in those communities for the two years, not just the campaign. Secretary of state probably never should get beat, an incumbent secretary of state, because it's such a great visibility office, state treasurer's not, and Cosentino wasn't a very good campaigner. He didn't do what you need to do. Didn't know the office too well. But that was definitely a Democratic year in the state.

DePue: Well, to emphasize that, if I can throw out some other numbers—the national unemployment rate in that month, November of '82, was 10.8 percent. I think it might have been a notch or two lower than that in Illinois, but still very high.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Six percent plus inflation rate, and the other astounding figure is interest rates would have been sky high just a couple years before. We're still pegging at about 16 percent. So three tough economic numbers to be running against as well. But let's go at a different aspect of financing, and that's in terms of the scale of the campaign. You had run as a legislator before, so you were certainly experienced in running elections, but I got to believe that this is a completely different ballgame. So what surprised you about the scale of the campaign that you had this time around?

Edgar: Well, the state is such a big state. How much you just go and go and go and go, and you still got a lot more to go. Money never was a big worry. I mean, we worried about it, but it wasn't like we ever felt like we were behind. I can't remember what we spent. I want to say three, four million dollars on that race.

DePue: Did you have to pick up the phone and make a lot of personal appeals?

Edgar: No, no, I never have. See, I was always spoiled in that. Now, the secretary of state's office was a well-oiled machine when I got there. Again, we had all these employees who were used to selling tickets for functions and raising money. Even though they were Democrats, they just kept doing it because they wanted to keep their jobs, and they thought they needed to do it.

DePue: And at that time, that was just fine?

Edgar: Yeah, that was acceptable as long as—we just said, now, you don't trade tickets for driver's licenses. We catch you, you're going to get fired. And you don't break any of the rules. Now, yeah, you can go sell them to people you deal with, but do them in off hours and make sure you're not trading on something. Now, let's face it. A guy that car dealers would come, and they would get helped out—not anything illegal, but they'd do it with a certain person. That person come and say, "Hey, I got a fundraiser coming up," or the bank guys that went out and serviced the banks that did the sticker stuff, they'd go talk to their bank guys, and they'd always give money. But there was never anything we could—if we ever found it. Now, occasionally we'd find guys that were maybe cutting corners to sell tickets to give them a license, and we'd say, no, you can't do that; if you do it, you're going to get fired. Now, was there some of that going on? There probably was, but we tried to make sure—there was a lot less than there ever was before, I'm sure of that. But it was interesting because the people there, whether Republican or Democrat, they were—I mean, the Democrats, you're the secretary of state, and as long as you're not firing me, I'm going to help you, and they did.

So the raising the money, I did not ever have to go ask anybody. My first big fundraiser was in Chicago; it was out in the Martinique in the southwest side. In fact, we've lost the picture, unfortunately. It was a picture of Stratton, Ogilvie, Thompson, and me, and some way that got lost. [W. Clement] Clem Stone, who was the chairman of that event, sat next to Brenda. Now, Clem Stone, as I think I mentioned to you at Arrington's funeral has a tendency to—he always gives these speeches about positive thinking and all this and that. It turned out—he's got a lot of money, but he's a terrible fundraiser. He won't ask anybody for money, so he wasn't the greatest person to have as chairman of the fundraiser. But Brenda sat next to him; I sat between Ogilvie and Thompson, and Ogilvie was mad at Thompson about something that night. I just remember I sat between them. That was a cold night. But Brenda sat next to Stone, and she was scared to death he was going to ask her to repeat the ten points of his remarks, (DePue laughs) going to give her a test. She said, "Never have me sit next to him again." I remember that night, too, we had seating assignments but somebody screwed up the seats, so the seating assignments and the tickets didn't match, so that was all screwed up.

But the fundraising part, we spent time worrying about, having the fundraisers—we did the fundraisers—but we didn't have a fear that we weren't going to raise enough money, I don't remember. Now, Carter might have had a different—because I didn't spend much time worrying about that or thinking about that; my main thing was just to be on the road, whereas when it was a legislative

race, I worried about everything; I ran everything. Now, I tried to micromanage this campaign, but to a great extent I didn't.

We did TV commercials, which I'd never done before, big-time TV commercials—and that was an interesting experience, to go through that. I don't memorize things well, and I can't see well, so they'd do cue cards, and they had to write the letters—because I wouldn't wear my glasses back then—they had to write the letters so big, so they never was sure (laughs) I'd get through the commercials. But that was a different thing, doing the TV, because I didn't do that in the state legislative races.

The debates didn't amount to anything. The League of Women Voters did debates for the lesser offices. I remember we did it out at the Marriott out by O'Hare on a Saturday, and I don't think it got any attention. The attorney general, the secretary of state, and—who else was running that year? Comptroller, I guess, and treas—anyway, we did debates, but I don't remember much coverage of that at all. Again, debating with Cosentino wasn't that difficult because I knew the office; he didn't.

DePue: What were the issues that Cosentino was using?

Edgar: Boy, it's been so many elections ago, I can't remember.

DePue: I've got some quotes to help you out here if you'd like.

Edgar: Okay, yeah.

DePue: This one wasn't necessarily coming from Cosentino, but I'm sure he was willing to jump on this one. I found an editorial by David Axelrod, of all people, in 1982, who was writing for the *Tribune* at the time, and here's what he said about you when you took over the office of secretary of state: "Edgar wasted no time in cementing his base, using all the prerequisites of his patronage office. Party leaders and their followers were accommodated with jobs; workers in the many secretary of state facilities throughout the state were issued Jim Edgar shoulder patches," *et cetera*, *et cetera*.

Edgar: Well, now, what's wrong with all this? (DePue laughs) It was a political column he wrote—

DePue: He was a political columnist.

Edgar: —and that's a plus, because I solidified...

DePue: Well, it was an interesting column because he was also talking about Fahner, and the essence of the column was that you were doing much better—

Edgar: I did the political things, yeah.

DePue: —than Fahner had done.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was a lot earlier than '82, though, wasn't it? The election? When was that? What's the date on that?

DePue: This was something that was published in 1982.

Edgar: Early in '82? Because Fahner—the reason Axelrod—

DePue: March, perhaps?

Edgar: Yeah, that's early. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I don't even know if Axelrod was still at the *Tribune* by the time the election came, because I forget when he left. But yeah, he always actually wrote good things about me. I'm sure—that's a political column—all the politicians would view that was favorable to me and not to Fahner. But no, that didn't come up.

DePue: So even the suggestions about patronage?

Edgar: No, that was acceptable. I think the point was that I hit the ground running and did that. Of course, you have a lot more. I think what they missed was how many people still were there, Democrats, that we co-opted. I think that was the key, especially downstate. I think the key for me always was we co-opted the Democrats. It wasn't so much the Republicans we put in as the Democrats we kept, and they helped us.

DePue: Well, I would imagine most people reading that in the way he was writing that would have missed the fact that most of these positions were coded and therefore protected, and you didn't have the same level of political clout.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DePue: Another thing that I know that Cosentino was saying is that—and again, I don't know that this is all that damaging, but by the initiatives that you put in place, that perhaps things still weren't—in terms of the DUI initiative—that things weren't still tight enough, that a lot of drunks were going free, that too many of them were slipping through the cracks.

Edgar: He might have said that. I don't think it had much traction. I don't know if he ever offered any specifics to deal with that. I think he probably figured that's what people knew me for and why I got the credit, and so he hit at that. Again, I don't remember too many issues (laughs) in that campaign, I got to tell you, that he raised. I think he used to try to take the trucking thing to his advantage, said he understood that part of the office where I didn't. We argued that it was a conflict. In fact, he got to the point where he hired Dick Ogilvie, which ticked me off, to review it, and Ogilvie came back with this idea of a blind trust to get him off the hook, and I wasn't too happy that Ogilvie did it. But I always said the blind trust, as I said, it was like throwing a sheet over an elephant. If you know you got a trucking firm,

you're going to favor trucking things. But again, I'm not sure how much any of that had traction. His problem was that he very seldom ever ventured out of Cook County, and I think that's one of the other reasons I really kind of had the big margins downstate, was he wasn't there to campaign. It was just me. He left the field, thinking he could come up with enough of a margin in Cook County.

The other dilemma was, it was really hard for any of our messages to get any attention because you had a gubernatorial race. Most people didn't get in—there weren't any scandals. Eight years later when George Ryan and he ran against each other for secretary of state, you had his scandal on—the *Tribune* came out with some stuff on worker's comp. But there really wasn't any scandal on either one of us. Our issue things—we raised them, but I don't think they got much traction. Now, if people knew me, they knew me about drunk driving. That's what they knew me about. So I don't think probably a whole lot of what I said or even said in the commercials changed any minds; people just maybe reinforced what they already thought about me.

DePue: Well, here's one other issue, and again, I don't know that it raises to too high a level, but he was criticizing you because—here's the quote: "High-flying officials costing Illinois two million dollars each year."

Edgar: Yeah, he did—because he didn't fly, so he'd never use a state plane, so he would complain. I think one time he had the quote, he said something about—he got Jesus Christ, about being crucified or something like that. Oh, they were on him about something, and he says, "Well, nobody's perfect." Says, "The last perfect guy, they crucified." (DePue laughs) On flying, he says, "If God wanted us to fly, we'd have wings." But yeah, I'm sure he hit at the—and I don't know where the two million—I think that might have been the total cost for the state planes.

DePue: Which seems awfully miniscule in today's dollars.

Edgar: It does, yeah.

DePue: I'm sure it was significant back then.

Edgar: Because I don't think the two million was how much I had spent flying, because I flew some, but very little. Like as governor, I flew all the time; the planes would fly me, but as secretary of state, I'd only fly on the shuttle they'd run between Chicago. I very seldom ever had a plane just for myself.

DePue: Well, reading the article, it was suggesting that you were flying all over the place, that you would use the thinnest of secretary of state excuses to basically do campaigning.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. If that was true, it was much truer when I ran for governor or when I was governor, because I didn't fly state planes—I flew state planes from Chicago to Springfield—what you call the shuttle. I never had a plane for myself. I flew a lot of private planes and really dangerous planes. The scariest part of the campaign was

my flying because we'd get people to volunteer planes for us, and they'd be single-engine planes, one pilot.

I remember one thunderstorm. I had been down to meet with the editorial board at the *Post-Dispatch*, and the World Series was going on that day in St. Louis. It was a beautiful day. We flew out of Parks, that airfield—is that what they call it? Right? Near East St. Louis, right across the river. And we were going to fly to Chicago because I had another function that night—and that was a private plane, one engine, and I'd flown it some. And about halfway between East St. Louis and Springfield, some thunderstorm they didn't know about came up. We got thrown around in the air. Finally the pilot said to me, "You know, if you don't mind, I'd sure like to put this plane down." I says, "You put this plane down anyplace you can." We finally landed in Springfield. I didn't think we were going to make it. Then I forget how I finally got to Chicago that night, or if I even went.

Then it was the night before the election—I was going to go up to—the only thing going on was a pancake thing in Freeport, Illinois, that one of the state senators was having, so I was going to fly up to that and then fly down to Charleston—I still voted in Charleston at that time—and spend the night in Charleston and vote the next day. And we flew out of Springfield—this was a different plane; this was a twin engine—and we ran into a thunderstorm that was just terrible. We get beat up, beat up. Finally we get up to Freeport; it gets a little better. We could hear them, they can hear us, but they can't see us and we couldn't see the—so we never landed. We ended up landing in Rockford. And then I asked the pilot, I said, "Well, what do you think about going on down to Charleston." And he said, "Well, if it was me, I would drive." (laughter) I said, "Well, if you're telling me that, I'm..."—I said, "I think I'm going to win this election. I want to be there alive, you know. So we drove down to Charleston that night. But I flew a lot of times...

I never—like the governor would go someplace—like if the governor was going to go from Springfield to, let's say, Peoria, he'd fly. I'd always drive. I never—but I did shuttle. So I don't think he probably had a whole lot he could hit me with on flying. He could say I did fly. But he didn't fly, that was the thing. He probably did it because he never would fly; he was afraid of flying. He just wouldn't go downstate much, and you just never saw him downstate. So I always thought that would help downstate. Again, the "Punch ten" thing, I think caught everybody off guard how successful that was.

DePue: Did you have a security escort that traveled with you?

Edgar: One of the decisions—during the transition, we were trying to decide—Dixon had secretary of state police. Particularly after he got his DUI, they decided he needed to have secretary of state police. And state police was offered to me, as was all constitutional officers. Dan Webb suggested, he says, "Take the state police." He says, "They're more trained in this than the secretary of state police are." And I also liked the idea because I didn't pay for the state police. I figured that would free up

the secretary of state police to do secretary of state stuff, and I wouldn't have to... So I took state police from the day I was sworn in—they picked me up, and I had state police for the next eighteen years. Now, as secretary of state, I didn't have a large detail. I'd maybe have two guys with me. If I'd ever go out of state, I didn't take them, unless it was for an official function, I might take one. But when we'd go on vacations or whatever, I'd drive myself.

DePue: But they would be with you?

Edgar: No, they'd never go with me out of state.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: I remember when I came back—six secretaries of state and their wives went to Taiwan, and I came back, and they met me in San Francisco, one of them did. It was great because they cleared me through customs, and some poor congressman had to wait in line. Because as the guy said at the counter, the guy for immigration or whatever, passports, said—big black guy—I remember he said—he was just big, I just remember. He looked at me, and he says, "You know"—who was it? It was, oh, the guy that had been Nixon's chief of staff, was secretary of state early under Reagan. The general.

DePue: Meese? No.

Edgar: No, the general. He headed up NATO.

DePue: Oh, Powell?

Edgar: No, no, no. He headed up NATO for a while.

DePue: Oh, I know who you're talking about, because he was, "I'm in charge" Alexander Haig.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. Anyway, he was still secretary of state. And I remember I come in there, and my trooper had been—and my trooper, this one trooper, he knew every—cops know cops. That was the great thing about having troopers. Anyplace you'd go, they just automatically got along with any other cop anyplace you went. So he had been talking to this guy. So I get there. There's a congressman there with me, too; we were both flying back first class, complements of the Chinese government—or the Taiwanese. And we get there, and my guy kind of waves me on through. And the guard looks at me, and he—oh, Al Haig. He looks at me, and he says, "You don't look like Al Haig, but I'm just three months from retirement and I'm not taking any chance. Because your title is secretary of state, you can go on through." And that poor congressman had to wait in line to get through. (laughter) But something like that, I might have a trooper early on, and then I said, "I don't really need a trooper when I'm out of state." On weekends, you know, they'd leave me, and I'd be at home. I'm trying to think, when I went to church. I

think we might have gone to church on our own. I can't remember if the trooper went with me or not.

DePue: You still going to the same church, then?

Edgar: Yeah, Central Baptist. I can't remember if they—because anytime I was out driving around, they'd take me. They must have taken me to church. And I had the same guys—four guys that started with me. One guy retired about the end of my secretary of state and went to Arkansas. The other guy, Lou Blackbee, he's a guy that had never met a stranger, he stayed until there was early retirement in '92, and then the other two—he took early retirement, and the other guy stayed with me and was head of my detail when I was governor. He was head of the executive security.

DePue: So you knew these guys as well as almost anybody.

Edgar: Oh, they were like family. Yeah, they were like family. They watched my kids grow up. They were like uncles to my kids. In fact, this one guy, the guy I was talking about that had met me out in San Francisco—when I was secretary of state, Brad was going through sports and stuff, and I never missed a game. I remember Lou—we were over at Quincy, and there was some controversial play down near the end zone and everything, and I saw the referee yell at this guy and motion this guy off, and this guy was standing there yelling. It was Lou. He's just thrown Lou out of the ballgame! (laughter) Lou was down there telling him it was a lousy call, you know, and my state trooper got thrown out of the ballgame. (laughter) But Lou took this all serious. But I remember—Elizabeth was like six, I think, the day they came to pick us up, because she got sick and threw up in the car, and then Brad would have been—he was about six years older—he had just started junior high. But anyway, they watched them go all the way through college. Jim O'Donner who stayed with me throughout, OD, he... But the troopers were like family. I was with them every day. Especially when I was governor—the kids were gone—but when I was secretary of state, they got to know the kids because they'd travel with us and stuff.

We'd go to the secretary of state function. One time we took a motor home and the kids went with us, and they'd drive us to those. But most the time when I'd go out of state, like on vacation—we go to Florida every Easter—I'd drive myself. They always got worried; they wanted to go. I said, "No, I'm not the governor. I'm going on my own." And as governor, I always had them—all the time, because I thought I needed to have them, because as governor, you have to always be in communication with the governor no matter where he is. Something could happen. Secretary of state, the world wasn't going to end if they weren't going to try to find secretary of state. And we had a small detail compared to my successor's larger detail as secretary of state.

That was a whole change in lifestyle for me because I always did things on my own, and when I was a legislator I drove myself and all that, and all of a sudden now, no matter what I did in the state, I always had state troopers with me. Which

was fine. I didn't mind it. And people said, well, didn't it bother you, always having people all the time? And I said, "No." I said, "You know, I'd tell them, 'Give me ten feet; I'm going to go for a walk,'" or something like that, but it didn't bother me. And I enjoyed sitting in the backseat. I could get a lot of reading done and stuff. I don't like to drive that much. And you didn't have cell phones. They'd just begun to have, about halfway through my governorship, began to have what we call cell phones today, but you had bags and things. They didn't work very well. So for the most part, you'd get a lot of work done in the backseat and do some thinking, try to figure out what you were going to say at the next stop.

DePue: One of the issues that I think was on the ballot in 1982—it was an interesting year just because of the governor's race that year, certainly—but wasn't the Cutback Amendment on the ballot?

Edgar: Yeah. In '82? Yeah. The cutback was in the 1980 election.

DePue: And do you remember much about how that was playing out?

Edgar: Just everybody was against it, but it passed overwhelmingly. (laughs) All the politicians and everything. I tried to stay out, because I personally at that time thought it might be okay, because I like single-member district, though in retrospect, I don't think it's worked that well. But yeah, I didn't get too much involved in that. You had a group out there that a lot of the lobbyists put up money for and legislators were running a group to try to defeat it, and Quinn was out trying to pass it. What, it passed about three-to-one, didn't it?

DePue: I don't know what the numbers are.

Edgar: It was huge. I mean, it wasn't even close.

DePue: Well, we've been talking for about three hours. This is probably a good place to break, but—

Edgar: You got any more questions about the campaign?

DePue: No. The only other question I had was in reference to the media and their treatment of you. And you've already talked about how beneficial it was to be on Bob Collins' radio show all the time.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. The media was fine to me. Throughout my career, I have no complaints about the media. Occasionally you'd get a reporter that would be mad at you, and maybe you'd give them a hard time, and they'd get even madder. But against Cosentino—Cosentino really wasn't a guy who dealt with the media much. I think I got all the endorsements. I don't know, I was trying to think who didn't endorse me in that election. Even the *Sun-Times* endorsed me, I think. But reporters—for the most part, I can't remember many negative stories or anything I thought was unfair. I think the media wars, I won, just because I had a lot more coverage just on what I had done as secretary of state. Cosentino had a tendency to get himself in a little

trouble on things, like the flying thing. He'd make statements and then kind of—he was probably okay as a ward committeeman. He was not a statewide—you get elected state treasurer probably because of the fact the Democrats were going to win that office, and he had enough money to run some commercials, but he just never worked at it too hard.

DePue: Did you consider yourself or do you consider yourself pretty thick-skinned when it comes to criticism?

Edgar: I don't know of any politician who is thick-skinned. That's an oxymoron. They tell you they are; they aren't. No politician is thick-skinned.

DePue: But you mentioned before that Thompson was...

Edgar: No, he's not paranoid. He doesn't get mad, but he doesn't like criticism. It's a difference. But none of us like criticism. None of us like to get beat up, no matter—it's just not true. If you were thick-skinned, you would not be a politician because part of being a politician is you want to be loved. (DePue laughs) And if you're thick-skinned, then you're not somebody that cares about being loved.

DePue: So when you flip to the editorial page and you see that nasty cartoon or that editorial—

Edgar: Oh, oh—

DePue: —do you flip past it, or do you sit there and read it?

Edgar: No, you flip past it, and you curse and everything else you shouldn't do. And if you get a good one, you cut it out and put it in your pocket and carry it around with you for days. No. And nobody reads editorials except politicians, but boy, they have an impact on us, because that's part of your grade, that's part of your judgment—are you doing a good job? The ultimate is Election Day—the voters say you're doing a good job or not. But before that, it's polls, it's columns, and it's editorials. Anybody that writes something about you is a preliminary to the election, and it's a grade. It's are you doing good or are you loved, kind of. So no, I hear this about thick-skinned politicians. There might be some old-timers in Chicago that were thick-skinned, but they weren't in it for the reason most of us were in it; they were in it to make money (laughs) or something like that.

First of all, to put up with what you got to put up with in politics, it's because you want that love, you want that recognition. You want to do good, but you also like that ego satisfaction. I think you can be a minister or something else and do good and maybe not get the ego satisfaction. (laughs) Yeah, you don't want to be criticized. You want people to think you're doing a good job, people to like you. That's part of the problem why it's so hard for a lot of politicians to say no and why they do things that make people unhappy, because you just don't want to do that. That's not the nature of you.

But the media—there's always been times when I think they're wrong, the story's not fair, they emphasized the wrong thing. But I had a tendency, too, is I'd read a whole story, and most people would say, that's a good story. Well, I'd find a sentence that wasn't that good, and (DePue laughs) that's what I'd focus on. But as secretary of state, no. I'm not sure that some of the old-time media guys felt that close to me because I didn't drink with them, and they weren't happy about drunk driving in some ways, but for most—and the electronic media in Chicago, we worked pretty well. Again, they're looking for somebody to have on, and there's always something they can talk about from the secretary of state's office.

DePue: They need to fill airtime.

Edgar: Yeah. And, you know, I could go on and talk. So the Chicago electronic media, I found as secretary of state, was extremely important, because press media, maybe you didn't get as much coverage, but the radio stations always wanted somebody. And one of the things I found out—you'd be on a radio station in Chicago, it could be the sixth radio station for that timeslot. You're still going to get to more people than you're going to get to on five television stations in downstate Illinois, probably. And the other thing is, somebody who listens to that radio station likes that radio station, and so if you're on there with some radio personality on that station, they probably like that person or they wouldn't listen to them. And usually they'd be pretty nice to you, particularly if you come on their program. So that's why the Bob Collins show was so helpful to me. It wasn't a gotcha kind of situation, and wasn't a *Face the Nation*; it was just come on, and what are you doing about drunk driving; then you'd get to talk about your family or something like that.

DePue: So just two guys talking?

Edgar: Yeah, and people would get to know you. And first of all, they liked Bob Collins; that's why they listened to him, and they could kind of tell Bob Collins liked me, because he had me on all the time. I used to think I should get a check from WGN. I was on as secretary of state and then as governor all the time on the Collins show. But it gave me an opportunity for people to—particularly in the suburbs, in the city—to get to know Jim Edgar in a way you don't usually get to know him through the newspapers or through political means. And I've always said that that did me more good than all the other media stuff I did in Chicago, because it was listened to by so many people, and it was in a favorable situation for the most part. Even if he didn't agree to me, which was very seldom, he never went out to get me. And he'd have callers. One of my favorite stories was when we were talking about DUI, and some guy called up and said, "Well, these DUI laws maybe have gone too far." And you could tell it was an older guy. He says, "I've lost my license. I can't get it back." And I said, "Well, if it's your first offense, you could qualify maybe for a work permit or something." And Bob Collins said, "Well, yeah, it's your first offense?" He says, "No." He says, "Well, how many times have you been arrested for drunk driving?" He said, "Well, this is my sixth." And Collins says, "Well, I hope he never gives the license back to you" and hangs up on the guy. (laughter)

Now, Collins was—and the other guys—I'd do others, but Collins was the most important, and it was the most listened to. But radio in Chicago, I found—which I didn't appreciate till I became secretary of state—was really a very effective way to communicate with folks. And again, as a public official, a state official, it's tough to communicate with people in the Chicago area because that's not their priority. Their priority is City Hall; that's what they read about, at least, in the paper most, and they see on television. And the suburbs is just hard to get to. That's why I love to do parades because it was one way people in the suburbs saw you. But the radio turned out to be a very effective media form. Talk radio wasn't something I liked to do, but as secretary of state, I got the chance to do it a lot, and I could realize it did make a difference.

The other thing secretary of state—the one thing secretary of state got to do that I thought was kind of neat—the Chicago Auto Show was always a big deal when we was growing up. You always heard about the Chicago Auto Show. Well, who cuts the ribbon for the Chicago Auto Show? Two people: the mayor of Chicago and the secretary of state. Not the governor, the secretary of state, because it's run by the Chicago Association of New Car—well, who are they regulated by? The secretary of state. I dealt with car dealers all—I got to know all the car dealers. And the first time I did that was in—I think it's in February or March. I remember I went to Florida right afterward, so it must have been in March of '81, and that was a huge deal. Here is this kid from Charleston; I'm cutting the ribbon for the Chicago Auto Show. And that's a—probably not like it was—but then, that was a huge event. You had every manufacturer there, and tens of thousands of people went through, and we had a booth there, and—

DePue: McCormick Place?

Edgar: Yeah. But the kickoff was... And the fact that maybe this didn't get a big play on television, but it got some play. But I always thought, well, I made it. I'm here at the Chicago—and I'm a bigwig at the Chicago Auto Show. But there were a lot of things the secretary of state—just lifestyle things and things that just were so different for me. I spent so much time in Chicago and in the community and neighborhoods, and the ethnics, which is something I never really experienced downstate as a legislator. It's pretty homogeneous in the fifty-third legislative district in the 1970s when I was a state rep. Illinois is anything but homogeneous. This is a very diverse state, and as secretary of state, particularly being an incumbent secretary of state, you got in to see all that. And that's really fascinating. You know, I look back—it's probably one of the most fun, interesting part of the job was the ethnic diversity and all the ethnic community. And it still—today, maybe not as much—but in the eighties and even in the nineties, it still was a very important part of particularly the fabric up in the Chicago metropolitan area, was the ethnic communities. Politically, it was important, but it's how people thought. They thought, I'm Lithuanian, or I'm Polish, or I'm Italian. They don't necessarily think that way downstate as much, but up there, it was the way people thought of themselves, the way that a lot of them socialized. You had these groups that—the Germans had all these choirs. You don't think of Germans as being singers, but

there were all these singing groups I would go to, the Germans, and the Italians—they had more festivals than Carter has pills. And the black community—I mean the African-American community—I always did well there because I spent a lot of time there, and they just were happy to see some white politician who would be in their community—and I wasn't Irish.

DePue: And Republican, no less.

Edgar: And I wasn't Irish. No, that was even more—I was not Irish, which they didn't care for. But so those were things as secretary of state that I got to do that I had never done before, were all new to me, and it was a very interesting, interesting thing, and realized that that still has a big factor, what your ethnic background is and how they socialize. Foods—that probably led to my heart surgery. (DePue laughs) I ate a lot of food that—you know, Italian sausages and things that I never had had before.

But secretary of state's a great office. It's a great office because it's a big enough office you can do kind of whatever you want to do. You've got enough leverage; you've got some interesting issues. Like I said, as state librarian, we got into that early on, and most secretaries of state up to that point had ignored that part of the job. They just hadn't spent much time with it. But I enjoyed it. I got a lot of satisfaction, because I loved libraries, and even before we started the literacy thing. But it was a whole different group of folks you dealt with. Then you dealt with like the car dealers—that's a different group of folks. There were just so many different groups you dealt with as secretary of state that I had not been exposed to as a state legislator from Charleston. Again, those ten years as secretary of state definitely prepared me for what you had to understand and deal with as governor much more than if I'd have stayed in the legislature. There's no comparison.

DePue: Well, we have spent three hours here talking about the secretary of state years, but we've primarily been trying to focus on those first couple of years, so I think I'd like to spend the next meeting finishing up your secretary of state years because there's still quite a bit of history there.

Edgar: Yeah. We still have mandatory insurance; we have literacy; have some more of the DUI.

DePue: Got the state library.

Edgar: Building of the state library.

DePue: So we will pick that up next time, Governor.

Edgar: Okay, very good.

DePue: Thank you very much. Any final words for today?

Edgar: Nope.

DePue: Thank you.

(end of interview 7)

Interview with Jim Edgar
ISG-A-L-2009-019.08
Interview # 8: June 22, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

DePue: Today is June 22, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today we have session number eight with Governor. Jim Edgar. Good afternoon, Governor.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: And where we've gotten to at this point is to talk about your first two years as secretary of state. We've gotten through that first crucial election that you won rather handily, but I'm sure that you had moments where you were concerned about it, and that—

Edgar: Well, yeah, because Republicans basically got wiped out that year, and Jim Thompson barely got reelected by less than five thousand votes. A few weeks before, it looked like we were going to have a big Republican landslide; and because of the economy and a variety of other things, the Democrats were very effective at getting a straight Democratic vote in Chicago. We were fortunate to win, the two of us who did win statewide.

DePue: What we want to do next is talk about the next several years, and we have the bulk of your administration as secretary of state to talk about. We've already spent quite a bit of time on the initiatives you'd taken that first couple of years, especially in terms of tightening up DUI laws. But very much a part of the story for the rest of your administration was the steady progression of legislation and moves towards increasing or tightening up enforcement of DUI laws, and the administration of those. I wonder if we could start with that.

Edgar: It's not uncommon—any time you pass a major new program, you're going to find that it's not 100 percent right. One of, I think, the great mistakes in government is you pass a new program, and then you never want to admit there might be some problems with it and that you need to go in and tinker with it and change it. You just—"This is mine, and it's perfect, and we're not going to change it." Now, sometimes you make a complete mistake and ought to repeal it; but even the best of pieces of legislation, you're probably going to have to go back in and tinker with it a little bit. And with DUI, I think what we did initially was good, but it wasn't enough. We still were frustrated that the courts often would use what we thought were loopholes to not convict people, and you had to have a conviction to lose your license.

So one of the major changes or additions we brought in later was what was called administrative suspension. That said that you didn't have to be found guilty in a court to lose your driver's license because a driver's license was not a right, it was a privilege, and you could lose that administratively. And if you refused to take the Breathalyzer or you failed the Breathalyzer, you could lose your license, and you could do that administratively. You could always appeal that to a court, and people did; but for the most part, after we were able to get that legislation passed, they didn't have to go to court. Now, the courts were kind of happy because they'd just as soon get rid of that logjam they had from traffic things, particularly DUI.

So while some judges maybe had resisted, a lot of judges began to change their attitude and not be obstructionist. I think part of that was, politically, it was a very dangerous thing. (laughs) We had groups that would go sit in court and watch how judges performed and then rank them; and you didn't want to be reported in your local newspaper as being weak or easy on drunk drivers, because you had groups like MADD and others—AAIM was another group. They were very involved—Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists, which was kind of an Illinois group—in the court watching.

So we continued to work in all those areas because, as I said in a previous session, sometimes the easy thing is passing the law; the real trick is how you administer the law. And we found that after the initial DUI law passed, there still were things we needed to do that maybe didn't require legislation, but it's how you administer it. But one of the major legislative additions to the initial DUI law was the administrative suspension, which came along later and proved to be extremely effective. Pretty well assured—if you were stopped for drinking under the influence and either you failed the Breathalyzer or you didn't take the Breathalyzer, you were going to lose your license for a short period of time. Now, you could get a work permit on some very limited cases, but we knew that in the past, that had been an abuse, and we were very hesitant. In many cases, people just had to go without a license. They had to have somebody drive them to work because—particularly if you were a repeat offender—you weren't going to get a work permit. It was obvious that you didn't learn the first time. As long as people knew that they could get a permit, it took away a lot of the sting about being convicted of DUI.

But I think just as important as the law changes was the whole kind of PR campaign, the change of culture; and you can't change culture by laws, necessarily, you got to change it just by more PR. Again, we continued to keep the pressure, work with grassroot groups; and it was amazing to me, the grassroot groups—not only MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, but AAIM, which was very probably, in some ways, more effective initially in Illinois than MADD was. Then we had a group called SADD, Students Against Driving Drunk. To me, that was the most phenomenal thing, to see teenagers who would form clubs in school to encourage other teenagers not to drink and drive. When that happened, I began to think, maybe we are going to be able to change culture; maybe we are getting our message across, because that was just something I never dreamed would happen. I thought adults, maybe, but not teenagers. I thought it was too much in the—part of getting older; you could drink, especially when it was illegal. To me, that was a very positive sign. And we saw those clubs particularly in a lot of what you would say were the better high schools, the more affluent. Like, Lake Forest had a very active Students Against Driving Drunk that I went up to several times.

DePue: Had they had an incident that caused that?

Edgar: They had. I think somebody had been killed that they knew. But it was also the driver's ed teachers, who often get a bum rap, I always thought, for just being a bunch of coaches who had to do something else. They were instrumental in many of the high schools in getting the SADD chapters going.

But you began to see throughout the state a change in attitude among people realizing, hey, drinking and driving is wrong, and it's not something we should tolerate. It's not a funny matter; if you're arrested for drunk driving, you should feel ashamed. You could begin to see people view it that way. It was amazing to me to watch culture change; I think we saw it in the eighties on drunk driving. I think just as important as the laws were the grassroots campaigns that happened. The media did a very good job of covering it. There would always be a series or stories about somebody whose loved one was killed by DUI, and it was just such a needless loss of life; or in some cases, people were injured, with injuries for the rest of their lives.

You also began to see in some cases the courts, as part of the sentencing—particularly for someone who maybe had cost someone their life, they had to go around and do community service. You would have people out speaking—who were involved in a DUI—about how terrible it was and the impact that had. You would get people like that before teenagers in high schools, and it really would have an impact. Sometimes it was kind of bloody and gory, but it did resonate with the teenagers, you could tell. And as the secretary of state's office, we coordinated a lot of that activity. I had people in the staff whose full-time job was working on traffic safety issues, particularly DUI; and I always felt that while there were a lot of folks out there who didn't ever work for the secretary of state's office, who worked long and hard, I think we provided a central point for people to go and get help and

coordinate programs and speakers—and kept it before the public eye. I think that, in many ways, was as important as our actions on trying to get the laws changed.[18]

DePue: How much was Illinois a trend-setting state versus following national trends?

Edgar: Initially we were one of the worst states. When I first came in, it was probably the weakest. Through the eighties, I think we definitely were a trend-setter, doing a lot of the community things, the promotions. Because again, in Illinois, the secretary of state's office is unique. Most states' motor vehicle and traffic safety matters are in the governor's office, and the governor's got forty-eleven other things to worry about; but the secretary of state's office in Illinois, which is a large office, has a pretty good reach, deals with the media on an ongoing basis. That was our top priority. So because we were unique with the secretary of state's office, we were able to give it more attention, keep it in the forefront, and provide leadership that maybe didn't occur in other states.

Also, as I think I mentioned in my last session, we had a good working relationship with the National Safety Council and their people. They were very active in Washington, so we were usually tied in with whatever was going on traffic safety matters—particularly DUI matters—at the national level; we had input. The twenty-one-year-old drinking law, as we talked about at the last session; from my time on the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving—I'm not sure that we would have been able to do everything that we did if we hadn't had the alliance with the National Safety Council. They coordinated a lot of what happened nationally, particularly in Washington, on the drunk driving law. (coughs) And they lined up meetings for me to sit down with some of the key senators and congressmen to push that legislation.

So again, I don't think that would have been true if I'd have just been some bureaucrat under the governor whose job was to worry about traffic safety. The fact that I was an elected official, a political figure in my own right in a major state—if I'd have been from Mississippi, we may not have had as much clout as being from Illinois. But particularly the alliances. There's no doubt serving on the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving gave me a lot of opportunities to tie in with people at the national level and to do things on DUI that I wouldn't have otherwise.

DePue: Who chaired that commission?

Edgar: The chair was former governor of Massachusetts John Volpe, who also had been secretary of transportation under Richard Nixon. He was kind of toward the end of his—he died a few years later. He was older, but he was a person that had prestige in Washington, and people knew him around the country. As I think I mentioned before, we had representatives of the liquor industry. The guy who was the chief lobbyist for the beer industry, who was a very effective guy, was on it. We used to

[18] For a useful overview of key changes in Illinois DUI law between 1935 and 2003, see State of Illinois, Department of Transportation, Division of Traffic Safety, "History of Illinois DUI Laws" (August 25, 2003): 1-22, http://www.dot.state.il.us/trafficsafety/historydui.pdf.

go do battle, particularly on the twenty-one-year-old drinking law. But it was a good commission—as I said, if we hadn't had that commission, I don't think we'd have a twenty-one-year-old drinking law now. We recommended that—on a split vote—but that, I think, spared President Reagan to do something on that later; and when he supported it, that gave us a real impetus to get it through Congress. And Elizabeth Dole spent a lot of time—I give her a lot of credit for talking the president into pushing it and then also to lobbying it on the Hill. We spent a lot of time together before congressional groups during that period of time.

DePue: How much were you at the center of what that commission was doing?

Edgar: On that commission, I was pretty active, mainly because a lot of these people came from other jobs and did other things. As secretary of state at that point, I was doing drunk driving about seven days a week; working on that, whether it was legislation or PR campaign or whatever. So I was very much into it. Plus I had a staff. It always helps to have a staff when you're on one of those, so that your staff can talk to the other's staff; they can provide you information. So on that commission, I was probably one of the more active members. I think after we got the twenty-one-year-old drinking, that showed I also was probably one of the more influential members—the fact that we could overcome some opposition from other committee members.

But that, I found to be a very enjoyable and worthwhile endeavor on my part; and it was kind of a coup because I had just been appointed secretary of state a few months before—and this is a presidential commission. To this day, I'm considered part of the Reagan administration (DePue laughs) because I was on that commission. I get letters about the Reagan reunions and all that, and I find it kind of ironic since I never was a Reagan guy in the Republican Party.

I got that because of a former operative in Republican politics in Illinois, a guy named Bee Oglesby, who actually had worked for Governor Ogilvie, then gone over to John Lewis when John Lewis got appointed secretary of state.[19] He was older and more important than I was when he was around Springfield, but right after I got appointed secretary of state, I went to Washington—because he was one of the last Republicans who had really been an operative in the secretary of state's office under John Lewis—to have him tell me what I needed to know about in the secretary of state's office. So he had just become legislative liaison, congressional liaison, for Reagan, and we kind of developed a friendship, a relationship—because any time I'd go to Washington, I'd always go see Bee. A few months later, this presidential commission thing came along, and I talked to him about seeing if there was a chance I could get named to that because it would really help politically.

[19] Born in Flora, Illinois, on October 1, 1942, M. B. Oglesby, Jr. also served as deputy and acting director of the State of Illinois office in Washington, D.C., executive assistant to Congressman Madigan, and minority staff associate for the House Energy and Commerce Committee, before moving to the Reagan White House as special assistant for legislative affairs. On December 14, 1981, President Reagan elevated him to deputy assistant for legislative affairs. John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, Santa Barbara, CA, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=43351.

Here, I'm kind of new and this is my cause; if I get named to this commission… So I think I had some other things going, too. But I got named to the commission.

That's the only thing at the federal level I probably did all that much of—I did some when I was governor, on some matters through the NGA. I always felt like that was a great opportunity, but I also feel like I did actually contribute. Some of the other laws, they were more geared for states than the federal government. There was no doubt the twenty-one-year-old drinking had to be done at the federal level. That was a good learning process for me. I got to know people and know more about the issue, but I think I was able to contribute. We spent about two, two and a half years on that commission, and it felt like it was a very worthwhile time.

DePue: You're making excellent contacts while you're doing that as well; and you're still a young man—in the mid-thirties at that timeframe?

Edgar: Right. I was probably thirty-five, thirty-six.

DePue: So you probably know the question that's coming next here. How much did this possibly fuel any presidential ambitions you might have had at the time?

Edgar: Oh, no, if I had the presidential ambitions back in grade school, I think at this point in my career, I just kind of wanted to get reelected secretary of state—when I first went on the commission, I hadn't been elected yet; I was still under the appointed—and then maybe move onto governor. I really hadn't given it much thought and didn't ever seriously think too much about running for president. I kind of realized, particularly early in my governorship, that I was the wrong kind of Republican to be the Republican nominee. I was too moderate for the Republican Party; we'd seen the party drift to the right, and I was not drifting that way.

And one of the other things, too, and we can maybe talk more about this when we get to the governor's part. Some of the people who had national ambitions spent a lot of time on those things. I didn't have them, plus I didn't have the time. I was just trying to keep my head above water in Springfield when I was governor. I didn't have time to run to Washington every week and testify before some Senate or House committee, and nothing would happen anyway or to—again, it was just a whole different situation I had, and I did not have the burning desire.

Now, as I've mentioned, you have a lot more free time as secretary of state than you do as governor, so the DUI commission—I had the flexibility of my schedule, and I had the time to spend. I could do it and not worry something was going to come unhinged back home while I was at the drunk driving commission meetings. So it was an ideal time to be involved, for a whole lot of reasons. But that, I think, was an important time, and I think we did have an impact on national policy.

I am convinced—maybe I'm being a little too egotistical, but I am convinced that if I hadn't been on the commission, I don't think we'd have a twenty-one-year-old drinking law in the United States even today; I just don't think it would have

happened. And I think it happened not just because I—but by me being on there and pushing it, and it was the right time. You had the awakening that we got to do something about drunk driving. Particularly, we used the statistics in Illinois, with the Wisconsin border; that really was one of the major selling points to get that done, both in the commission and in Congress later on.

DePue: We wouldn't be talking about this as much as we have unless there was some legitimate opposition to the move. I wonder if you could flesh that out a little bit.

Edgar: One of the legitimate arguments was states' rights. The federal government shouldn't tell the states what to do; they ought to be able to determine that policy themselves. Each state has their own—like in Wisconsin, you have the tradition—German backgrounds—they drink. (laughs) They've always drank. They make a lot of beer up there. They even served it, I think, in the university unions, which I found appalling. And later when you looked at the high cause of alcoholism on college campuses. But then you'd hear that in European countries where they don't have drinking ages, they don't have the problem because they learn to drink responsibly. There's all these arguments. But—

DePue: How about the issue of the summary suspension? Isn't that—

Edgar: I want to stay on twenty-one first. Before you get me off on another topic. But the argument I made back and we made back from a legal point of view—because some said, "This is unconstitutional because you are really taking away states' and…" Well, the intercommerce act. It's the whole reason for having the federal EPA. If I've got a power plant—let's say in Illinois, but it's on the Wisconsin border—and it's creating pollutant that floats over to Wisconsin, that makes it interstate. Same thing we argued with drunk driving. If people would go to Wisconsin, drink underage, and stay in Wisconsin and just kill Wisconsin people, then you might have an argument. The trouble was they were driving over the state lines and killing people in Illinois because of laws in Wisconsin, and we had statistics to back that up. So that was the argument that we would give to the purists who said, "Gee, this is unconstitutional." That's what I heard a lot when we first started, and we made the argument.

Now, it also helps, when you're going to change public policy, particularly when you're taking on maybe some constitutional questions, that public opinion just says, "Hey, we got to crack down on drunk driving. We don't care. These guys are killing people. They ought to get off the road." A lot of folks wanted to take drunk drivers and throw them in jail—I never wanted to do that. A lot of them wanted to take away their cars, and I didn't want to do that. I thought there were other people in the family who needed the car, and I didn't want people to lose their jobs because of it. I didn't want them driving, but I didn't necessarily want them to be penalized. Today it's not uncommon that if some official in a school or somebody's convicted of drunk driving, they might lose their job. I'm not sure—I think the penalty should go to what caused it, and I think losing your license if you violate a drinking, driving thing.

But the twenty-one-year-old, there were arguments against it. Fortunately in the early eighties—'84, about, when this happened, '83, '84—the mood was, we've got to crack down on drunk driving. And even the president—who overcame, I think, the objection of some of his staff members who thought, gee, this is a terrible violation of states' rights—did not flinch; he just said, "Hey, I'm for this." Once he was for it, then it made it much more doable on the Hill because you knew the president was going to sign it, and that allowed Elizabeth Dole to lobby. I'm not sure I had all that much influence lobbying on Capitol Hill, but I think I was the factor that got the commission to approve it. I said the other day it was a very close—it was a one-vote margin to get that passed on the commission, and I had to do a lot of maneuvering and lobbying to get that done and overcome particularly the beer industry's opposition.

But that, I thought, was a very worthwhile look back, and every so often there would be talks about repealing it, and people start pointing out, that's crazy. And when you carry that another step further, the problems with drinking on our college campuses. You talk to most presidents and they'll tell you that's the number-one problem, alcoholism.

DePue: And binge drinking especially.

Edgar: Yeah. Kids get away from home, and they get and have their keg parties. They had that when I was in school, but it's probably worse today than it was back forty years ago when I was in college. Every time that comes up, it gets knocked down pretty quickly. Just about a year ago there was talk—some university presidents wanted—it got knocked down within two days, which I was very glad, because I do think that it would have a very negative impact on traffic safety, and I think it will have even a negative impact on the amount of alcohol consumed by teenagers. What we found back then—people said, "Illegals are going to drink," and I said, "That's probably true"; but I said, "What happened—we saw in Illinois the few years we had a lower drinking law—we had it for a short period of time—you started hearing a lot more problems with drinking among kids under that age." You're always going to have underage drinking, but what we did, we moved that underage drinking problem to a much younger age. Instead of eighteen, nineteen, and twenty-year olds, we were having a lot more sixteen, fifteen, and fourteen-year-olds. So the feeling was that by moving that up, you cut down a little bit on that. You're still going to have underage, but it's an older underage.

DePue: To go back to the issue of administrative suspensions, summary suspensions—I know that's kind of where we started, and you yourself mentioned the importance that that had as well to get these drunk drivers off the road. But what were the objections that you heard on that?

Edgar: People said, "You can't take away my license without a trial." There was argument that you can't do that. We argued it's a privilege; it's not a right. And it went to court, and we won the court case.[20]

DePue: Was that a state-level court?

Edgar: Yeah, I'm pretty sure. Yeah. By that time, the courts were (laughs)—they didn't want to—for a long time, they had been a lot of the problem, and I spent time working particularly with the Cook County courts. That's where the problems were, to a great extent. We spent a lot of time working with the Cook County courts. We had a chief judge, name was Comerford—I'm going to blow this name—one of the old Irish Democrats who controlled everything up there. I don't know, he may not have even been Irish now that I think about it. But he understood the PR problem they were having.[21]

DePue: What's your best shot at the name?

Edgar: Comerford or something like that. I'm terrible—but I'm looking right at him. Kind of a slight gentleman—he wasn't very large.

But he understood that this was not a good PR thing for the courts. We started working with the Cook County court on trying to come up with procedures and to make sure that judges felt comfortable with what we were doing, and in the end we saw a huge change. Also at this time, you had a lot of court watchers. They'd sit in court, they'd report on what judges, and they'd get that put in the newspaper; and that had a huge impact on getting, I think, the judiciary to realize they needed to change their ways on this. So again, I can't stress enough how important that grassroot involvement—and those people who sat in court day after day and spotlighted the judges who were really weak on drunk driving—was. That had an impact; and while these judges never run for election, they run for retention, and there have been judges that occasionally get knocked out on retention—and people knew they were going to go after them. So—

DePue: But what you're talking about is taking it out of the realm of the judges having a voice in the process, is that correct?

Edgar: Yeah, but you still have appeal. You could always appeal your administrative suspension. That was part of the, I guess, compromise. You can appeal it like you can a lot of administrative action. You have the right to go to court. But what

[20] Governor Edgar is most likely referring to *Doe v. Edgar* 562 F. Supp. 66 (N.D. Ill. 1982), *aff'd* 721 F.2d 619 (7th Cir. 1983). Douglas L. Gilmer, *Doe v. Edgar*: A Constitutional Battle Against Drunken Driving," *John Marshall Law Review* 18 (Fall 1984): 255-70. See also, Larry Davis, "Representing Revoked or Suspended Drivers Before the Secretary of State," *Illinois Bar Journal* 84 (November 1996) for some of the legal challenges Edgar's reforms sparked.

[21] Harry Comerford (1921-January 29, 2008) was first elected as a Cook County circuit court judge in 1960, becoming head of the county division in 1969. In 1978, he was elected chief judge, steering the courts through the aftermath of the Operation Greylord investigation of judicial corruption, and served in this capacity until his retirement in 1994. *Chicago Tribune*, January 30, 2008, 9.

happened was most of the judges said, "No, we don't want this. This doesn't belong here; you can do it administrative. It's been decided. We don't need to…" And they did the procedure properly. I mean, you had to have a proper procedure about how you went about that. That's really what you could appeal. You couldn't appeal the fact that secretary of state's office didn't have the power to take away my driver's license. Oh, they had the power as long as they followed a set procedure. So we had to make sure our procedure was done right, but—

DePue: And while they're waiting for the appeal, are they not driving?

Edgar: They don't have a license; they're not driving.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: And they may not ever get it. They may try to take it to court, and the court will never take it up. And those who did—very seldom did we ever get reversed. And it turned out to be a very effective—and some people thought a scary—tool because they knew they'd lose their license. I think I told you the story about a couple of my friends who were working, I think, in the governor's office at the time on New Year's Eve, the night that was going into effect. They were rather upset with me. I saw them early at dinner and they said they were eating early and going home because they were afraid they'd get arrested and lose their license forever. I said, "Well, good for you to go home early." Wasn't a problem I had.

DePue: Maybe I am belaboring this here, but it strikes me that this particular issue is an even easier one to develop a constitutional objection to. But then it goes back to, is it a right or is it a privilege?

Edgar: Yeah, and it's a privilege. There's nothing in a constitution that says you get a driver's license. The statute says you get it at an age, and you pass a test, and you got to follow certain rules. There's nothing—this is not a pursuit of happiness thing. (DePue laughs) Now, I have to say, we didn't know—that was the theory, and you didn't know. And you don't know with Illinois courts particularly. They can be difficult. And as I remember—I'm sure that was in the state court. I don't know. Again, to me, it was common sense. Not being a lawyer, I usually rely on common sense.

DePue: (laughs) And you didn't mind taking the lawyers on and going to the people in that respect.

Edgar: Oh, no. No, no. I always said I always wanted lawyers working for me; I didn't want to work for them. (laughter)

DePue: Another issue, and this one I think had been going on for a while—the organ donor program. Was that something that you were trying to—

Edgar: Yeah, organ donor actually had—Dixon, I think, had passed the—it had passed initially under him. I think what we did—we emphasized it a lot more. Again, one

of the advantages of being secretary of state, not to the degree of being governor, but more so than any of the other offices—it's a bully pulpit. You can go out and champion causes, whether it's DUI—in this case it was organ donors, and we championed organ donors and made it easier for people to sign up. We had organ donor promotion in Chicago. We'd get celebrities, and we'd have sign-ups, I remember, outside the State of Illinois Building or other places encouraging people to sign up and become an organ donor. And we did PSAs [Public Service Announcements] and traveled around the state and pushed that. It wasn't controversial. There were some people who didn't want to do it; they were just afraid. And it was interesting. There was more of a concern among African Americans. They didn't trust hospitals. They were afraid that they might have their organs taken before they were ready. Just kind of a suspicion toward society. But most people didn't have any problems; they just never got around to signing them, and we got them to sign it. And again, there were some changes we got made in the laws—and also worked with the groups on sometimes transporting the organs when they were donated, and things like that. But there wasn't any downside on that one like on some of these others.

DUI turned out, you'd think today, now, that's a motherhood issue. Back in 1981, there were a lot of downsides—at least it was viewed. I didn't think there were that many, but a lot of folks did, and I think in the end they were proven wrong; most people did see the problem there. But organ donors—I never noticed any downside on that.

DePue: Al Grosboll—and this might not surprise you—really stressed that after you were secretary of state, the issues that future secretary of states have always run on basically have been defined by you: it's drunk driving, it's DUI laws, it's literacy—

Edgar: Libraries, literacy, yeah.

DePue: —those kinds of things, and that was almost unheard-of beforehand.

Edgar: I think that's true. Before I was secretary of state, most people just thought about how quick can you get your driver's license. And they'd do a few PSAs. I got to go back to Charlie Carpentier, which was in the 1960s, when I was getting my driver's license, that you had a secretary of state who talked a lot about traffic safety. But there's no doubt DUI, literacy, libraries, organ donors—all that stuff was stuff that we kind of created; at least the image out there, that that's something the secretary of state was involved in.

And traffic safety in general were issues that we talked a lot about. We were involved in the speed limit; we were—seatbelts. We didn't initiate the seatbelt legislation, but I was a strong proponent of it and had to spend a little time convincing Governor Thompson that he—not so much the seatbelts as a child restraint seat. He didn't think he wanted to sign that. He said he'd never get Samantha to do that. I said, "Governor," (laughs) I said, "you got to sign that. You're talking about lives. There's no way you could veto that bill." And he finally

signed it, and he finally got Samantha to get in one. But I just remember having that discussion one day with him. There weren't many things Thompson and I really talked about. We'd see each other, but the governor and secretary of state's office—pretty different offices. But I remember on that issue, I did have a chat with him. Now, on DUI and stuff like that, he was 100 percent. Anything we wanted to do in DUI, even the—I think some of his staff were a little—administrative suspension, they were a little questionable about that, but he never did bat an eye on any of that stuff. But he did bat an eye on the child restraint seat laws. He was a little hesitant on that.

DePue: Going back to the organ donor just very briefly, do you recall any of the public figures that you got to endorse that?

Edgar: A lot of times we'd have sports figures do it. And I can't remember who—it was not an African American. It was a TV anchor. In fact, I think I know who it is, but I'm not positive and I'm not going to use her name, but she went on to national prominence. The station, of course, wanted their people to be involved in public service programs, so the TV station sent over some of their news people, anchor people, and she was one of them. And we got done. I made some reference about, "You're an organ donor." "No, I'm not. I'm not sure about this." (laughter) And I just laughed because she'd just spent the last two hours helping us promote it because her station told her to come as part of her public service, but she wasn't real sure if she was going to be an organ donor. I'm pretty sure I'm right on who it is, and every so often I see her on national TV and I just kind of chuckle (DePue laughs) thinking about that.

DePue: Wonder if she's got her card signed now, huh?

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Let's change the subject to something that was also important to you—and I think we talked about this a little before in the last session, so maybe you can elaborate a little bit more on it or tell me that we had fleshed it out pretty well—and that's literacy. And the reason I'm mentioning it now is that 1984, at least according to what I've discovered, is the year that Governor Thompson established the Illinois Literacy Council, with you as the chair.

Edgar: Yeah. Actually we went to him and asked him to do it, (laughs) because he could do that as governor. What had happened—Barbara Bush, whose husband was vice president under Ronald Reagan in the eighties, took literacy on as an issue. I was at the American Library Association meeting as state librarian—I used to go to those—and she spoke about literacy. I thought, that's a very worthwhile project, and it makes sense libraries ought to be involved. Often there'd be things and we'd say, "How does that relate to the secretary of state? How can we justify getting into that?" So I thought, libraries, reading—that makes sense, and libraries ought to be involved; we ought to be involved in promoting that. So we came back, and—

DePue: Had you seen something in the state that caused concern about the lack of literacy?

Edgar: What she pointed out was that every state has that problem. There's tens of thousands of adults who hide their inability to read and what an impact that has on them. How many people only go to restaurants that have pictures on the menus; that way they can just point and say, "I want one of these," or they get the same thing all the time at restaurants because they don't know how to read a menu and they know they have hamburgers. Just things like that, and there's no reason for us to think Illinois didn't have as many. We have a lot of disadvantaged minorities, but we found out it wasn't just disadvantaged minorities; there were a lot of whites out in DuPage County who couldn't read, too—which shocked people in DuPage County—as well as people in the inner city and people in rural areas.

DePue: And an influx of immigrants as well.

Edgar: Yeah. You had the problem of people learning to read English, but you had a greater problem; the bigger problem was people who just couldn't read. People who could read Spanish—it was a lot easier for them to learn to read English than somebody who couldn't read. It was just… Now, (coughs) there were a lot who couldn't read English, who only knew Spanish and things; but more times than not, those that really had difficulty learning to read English were people who couldn't read Spanish either, even if they were Spanish; they had a reading problem.

So we got Governor Thompson to make a proclamation. In most states, governors would do it, and I can't remember—probably the feeling was that was the way to go because other states had done that. And with that council, we also got some money appropriated that we could give out for literacy grants. And again, Governor Thompson was—it was something new in the budget, in my budget. (coughs) It wasn't a huge amount. Community colleges often would be the ones who would apply for these grants to set up local literacy councils and work in their communities. That really is where the work got done, and they would have volunteers come in and get people to come in.

One of the things that was interesting in our efforts on literacy—we found out it was a lot easier to get people to come to a library than to some other governmental institutions. Not that it was friendlier, but it was less threatening. And so libraries often would be the—in the basement of a library, a meeting room in the library, is where some of these programs would go on. And what we needed was volunteers. We needed a lot of one-on-one, and so we got people in communities to set up these councils, and then they'd go out and get a lot of volunteers, and then they'd work with people. Also, employers sometimes would identify employees they thought had reading problems and kind of get across to employees they weren't going to be penalized; in fact, they might help them get a promotion. And we did that all over the state.

And again, I remember people in DuPage County were really surprised to find out how many—they set these up, the libraries—we had them set them up in

DuPage County, and they just kind of went through the motions because they wanted to keep me happy. I was the state librarian, and they might need something from me. And they said they were shocked at the number of people who came in DuPage County—people that were dressed well and everything—they didn't know how to read. It was just an amazing experience to find out how many people in our society couldn't read, in the latter part of the twentieth century.

DePue: Did it make you wonder about what the schools had been doing in the first place?

Edgar: You had to wonder how these people got through—then you'd check, and some of them were high school dropouts or maybe never even got that far—or how they could get by. Yeah. It was a surprising finding. Now, you had a lot of immigrants, a lot, and that you could understand, but the white Caucasians, I have to say, or the African Americans who had grown up here and gone through school—you just wondered how did that happen. But I think the white Caucasians in DuPage County is the one [case] that really made us realize this is not limited to poor people in the inner city, as some people had originally thought.

DePue: Could you point to anything and say, "We're making progress in that front?"

Edgar: You'd look at the number of people you grad—you mean today? Or then? I think we'd look at the number of people who went through the literacy program. And once they got the basics—these were adults, and there was a desire. Once they wanted to learn to read. They knew what it meant not to be able to read, and you'd hear from them about how it turned their lives around; they'd get jobs. More importantly, they weren't embarrassed around their family any longer. We had parents—we had husbands and mothers who were embarrassed around their kids because they couldn't read, and how proud they felt now that they could read, and they could read to their children. That was one of the main inducements, particularly among women. They wanted to be able to read to their children at night, and they couldn't do it.

In literacy, and also in DUI, you'd hear the personal stories. People would write you, and stuff. You'd hear from DUI, from people who lost a son or a daughter to a drunk driver, but the most rewarding was to hear from people who we'd taken away their driver's license—before you got your license back, you had to go through a rehab program. If you had a DUI, even if you didn't think you had a drinking problem, we made you go get checked because more times than not, you had a drinking problem and you wouldn't admit it. And I don't know how many letters I got from people thanking me for being tough on them and making them go to that rehab, because they now realized they had a drinking problem and they faced up to it. And we'd get letters from family members about how their husband or wife or somebody had turned their life around.

And the same thing with literacy. You'd have people coming up talking about, thank you for your literacy program. I now can… And it wasn't tens of thousands, but just a few letters or a few people coming up and talking to you—it's what I

always tell students about working in government. You don't have to be the governor, you don't have to be the president to have an impact on people. Now, you may not have impact on as many people as if you're the governor or the president, but if you just have impact on one person's life and you can help turn that person around, that's a huge accomplishment. And people in state government—these volunteers in literacy could do that on helping people learn to read. So those are the kind of things you go home at night and want to feel good about—that's what made you feel like, yeah, this stuff does really matter. Literacy was like that, because I don't know how many times I'd have people—and we'd ask people. I'd go by a lot of these programs and say, "Why are you here? Is it you want a better job?" "No, I want to be able to read to my kids. I want my kids to know I know how to read." You can imagine the embarrassment, the lengths people would go to to hide the fact they couldn't read. And here with a little help—and once they learned the basics, boy, it wasn't no time that they were able to read books and just be part of society. But more importantly, the self-esteem that they got from that was just huge.

And again, literacy—nobody's against it. It was a motherhood thing. But it was something you had to administer. You had to figure out, with a limited amount of money, how can you get the most bang for the buck, and I think we did that. Community colleges in particular were probably our major ally on this; and to this day, there's still those literacy programs going around the state. But it was something, I think, until that happened, most people just didn't know it was a problem. I don't know if I'd have known it was a problem if I hadn't gone to that conference and listened to Barbara Bush give that talk that afternoon.

And as a result of that, Barbara Bush and I got to be very good friends. We brought her into the state two or three times, and we were getting the council going and getting the thing kicked off, so later it was a natural tie. In fact, in one of her books, her autobiography or whatever, she's pretty good at mentioning she's been here and saw this guy; but every time she mentions me, she always talks about what a great job I did on literacy and how we'd worked together for years. And we have.

And it came time in 1988, when her husband, George Bush, was going to run for president—Illinois back then was a swing state, and it was a key state. Whenever they would come to Illinois—the governor always runs the Republican campaigns for president in Illinois—Thompson took Vice President Bush. Brenda and I would always take Barbara Bush, and we'd go around the state. So that was always a lot of fun. She's a delightful lady—not someone I'd want mad at me.

DePue: (laughs) Did the public respond positively to her?

Edgar: Yeah. When the campaign first started, there was some speculation that Kitty Dukakis is going to be a big asset to Mike Dukakis, but Barbara Bush might be a little bit of a drag on George Bush. I laughed when I read those stories, and I thought, these people don't know Barbara Bush; by the end of the campaign, she'll be the plus. And she was. By the end of the campaign, probably as many people were voting for her as for him. And Barbara Bush, I think, has always been viewed

as one of the most popular first ladies we've ever had, and she had the right mixture. She was out there doing her thing, but she wasn't trying to be co-president or anything like that, but she could be very forceful.

I remember when we first were going to take her around—this might have been '87, even—maybe it was '88. It was early in the campaign. I told Brenda, "We're going to take Barbara Bush on a fly-around." She said, "Oh, I can't do that." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Barbara Bush—she's from the East and money, and she went to Vassar or wherever she went. I can't do that." I said, "No, no, no. Barbara Bush is just down to earth. You'll be relaxed. Don't worry about it." So we spent the day flying around with her. At the end, Brenda had to go someplace and I had to go on with Barbara Bush someplace, so it wasn't until the next day Brenda and I hooked up. I said, "Well, what'd you think?" She said, "Oh, she's the most down-to-earth person." Barbara Bush just puts anybody at ease. Now, she puts anybody at ease, but don't cross one of her kids or her husband. (DePue laughs) She is like a mother bear; she is very protective.

I remember (laughs) in 1987, Bob Dole came by to see me. He came to my office and asked me if I'd support him for president. And I had been with Senator Dole on a lot of things, because he frequently came into Illinois and stuff. I said, "Senator, I have a great deal of respect for you, but I don't know what I'm going to do yet. But I have to tell you, if I'm going to endorse anyone, it will probably be Vice President Bush, and I just want to tell you that upfront." And he said, "I appreciate that." So I went home that night and told Brenda that Bob Dole had come by my office and asked for support, and she said, "What'd you say?" And I said, "I told him I wasn't ready to support anybody, but if I did, I probably was going to support Vice President Bush." She said, "You told him that? You really told him…? I can't believe you told him that." And I said, "Listen, I'd much rather have Bob Dole mad at me than I would Barbara Bush mad at me, (laughter) because there's no way I'm going to be for somebody other than George Bush and have Barbara Bush mad at me."

And to this day—we don't see them all that much anymore, but any time—at the last Republican convention, Brenda ran into her, and the first thing, she said, "All right, Brenda, now hold old are the grandkids and how many do you have now? Now, the oldest is Dakota; I know that." And she sits there and rattles off… But it all goes back in our case—and I'm sure that's where we developed—from literacy. And I'm convinced too that if she hadn't have been speaking that day on literacy—and I didn't know her then, I just knew who she was—but I was impressed with what she had to say and very impressed with her commitment, whatever she got committed to. There's no better ally to have, I think, than Barbara Bush. That was an interesting experience.

DePue: Chronologically we're in the neighborhood, so this is probably a good time for a little bit of a diversion to allow you to reflect on the 1984 presidential campaign.

Edgar: Wasn't much involved in it. Reagan was going to get reelected; Thompson pretty well dominated in Illinois. Reagan came to Illinois—

DePue: Did you go to the convention that year?

Edgar: I went to the convention that year. That was my first convention as a delegate. I was an at-large, which I've been every year since. I wish I could find all my pins—badges. But it was in Dallas. And there was a lot of concern about, what are they going to do with all the demonstrators, because Regan did (laughs) collect a lot of demonstrators. So I knew the Secret Service and everybody worried about all these demonstrators. We get to Dallas, and the first day was about 102, and then it got hot. I think it was 105 the whole time. The demonstrators all went home; it was too hot. (laughter) I just always laugh. They worried for months about the demonstrators. Nobody thought about it would be so hot. After one day, they took off. So what I just remember about Dallas and that first—it was the hottest—nobody wanted to go outside. We were at a hotel near the airport between Fort Worth and Dallas—I think it was a Marriott—and we just stayed inside in the air conditioning (laughs) the whole time.

The convention was pretty cut-and-dry. It was Reagan's going to be renominated, Bush renominated. There was more politicking probably at—one of the reasons you want to go to a convention is that's where all the so-called party leaders are, and it's a great place to politick for back home. So as with the 1980 convention—the first one I'd gone to, when I went as a staffer with Thompson—you get a chance to meet people. As secretary of state, we hosted parties. We were, next to the governor, the most viable, visible Republican there. So it was a good opportunity just to kind of cement your role in the party—and people get to know you and Brenda more.

Now, that also was Percy's year for reelection, and I chaired Percy's campaign. He'd come and asked me to chair it. We knew he was going to have a tough time. He'd had a primary battle against Congressman Tom Corcoran, who used to be—he was Senator Arrington's chief of staff when I was an intern, and then he went off to Congress. And Percy defeated him pretty easily in the primary, but it did cause a—the right wing was not happy with Percy; the Jewish community was very unhappy with Percy. They thought he was too sympathetic or too friendly with the Arabs. He had voted for President Nixon's bill to provide some airplanes for Saudi Arabia.[22]

DePue: The AWACS?

---

[22] AWACS is an acronym for Airborne Warning and Control System. For more on Percy's campaign see Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 41-51. For Percy's troubles with some members of the Jewish community during the campaign, see Arnie Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 40-41.

Edgar: The AWACS, yeah. And the North Shore, where Percy had always got a lot of support from the Jewish community—they were very resentful, and the national Jewish group kind of targeted him. He was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, so they were very concerned he was too friendly to the Arabs. They had a lot to do with recruiting Paul Simon to run against him. Paul Simon was a congressman—initially indicated he wasn't interested. And how he would give up a sure seat to run against Percy, which was—so far nobody had beat Percy for the Senate. But finally he did, and a lot of it had to do with the Jewish group promising a lot of money and support.

My job was more—and we brought in Carter Hendren, who had run my campaign for secretary of state in 1982. We got him to be the campaign manager for Percy. Percy had never really had a full-fledged senatorial campaign. Politics had changed a lot, and it was a lot more sophisticated by the eighties than when he first got elected in'66. And they thought he was going to have a tough time—in '72 he didn't have a tough time, but in '78 he had a tough time. In fact, they weren't sure he was going to win in '78.

DePue: When was it that his daughter was murdered?

Edgar: The daughter was killed in the first campaign, when he ran against Paul Douglas, '66. But again, there was a feeling he had not been home enough, hadn't paid—he spent too much time with all those bigwigs on the international scene. Senator Percy was a delightful guy. He would name-drop a lot. I used to laugh because he'd name-drop, and I'm thinking, (DePue laughs) they ought to be dropping your name, not you theirs. After the '78 election I thought he was doing a lot better job coming back home, but once you get tagged with that… The other trouble was Senator Percy couldn't hear. Had a hearing aide, but he couldn't hear, and people thought he was kind of aloof or snobbish or whatever. Well, he didn't hear what they said.

One day I was with him, and we were down at Mount Vernon at a Republican gathering, and there was a guy there—Phil Gilbert's his name. His dad had been a state senator, and he's now a federal judge.[23] But his dad had been always a good supporter of Percy, and his dad had passed away and his mother was not well. So Percy's working the crowd, and he came up to Phil, and Percy—sometimes he'd look you in the face and I don't think he knew who you were. You know, a lot of people over the years. He came to Phil, and he didn't have his hearing aide in. He looked at Phil and was just, "How are you," and just working—sometimes I'd catch myself, and I would realize who I was talking to, because you're coming down a row of table, and you're busy just shaking hands. And he said, "How are you? How are things?" And Phil said, "Well, not things. Mom's not well; the doctors just don't know if she's going to make it." Percy didn't know what he said. He said, "Well,

[23] John Phil Gilbert was born in 1949, in Carbondale, Illinois. He served on the Illinois State Board of Elections from 1978 to 1988, including two years as chairman, and as a state circuit judge from 1988 to 1992. In 1992, President Bush nominated him to his current post on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois; he served as chief judge from 1993 to 2000. Federal Judicial Center, *Biographical Directory of Federal Judges*, Washington, DC, http://www.fjc.gov/servlet/tGetInfo?jid=854.

isn't that wonderful!" (DePue laughs) And I was standing—and Phil was just kind of strick—"What do you…?" Because he had no idea. Percy didn't have his hearing aide in; he didn't have a clue what he'd just said to him. So those things would happen.

So we knew it was going to be a tough campaign, and Paul Simon was the last guy we wanted to run against because Paul Simon had a—a lot of people remembered him as lieutenant governor. Same thing when I ran against Neil Hartigan—it wasn't because he was AG, it was because he was lieutenant governor and people remembered he'd battled Walker. In the case of Paul Simon, everybody remembered he got beat by Dan Walker in the primary and they all wished he hadn't have, even if they voted against him. They all felt bad about that, because everybody liked Paul Simon, whether you were a—conservative Republicans liked Paul Simon. They didn't agree with him, but they just liked him.

DePue: And he was something of a darling of the media as well?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. (coughs) Of course, he had been a newspaper guy and the media liked him, so he got pretty good shakes off the media—though Percy did all right in endorsements that year because Percy had always, being a moderate Republican, done okay with endorsements. But people knew Paul Simon; they didn't dislike him. A lot of people were disgruntled at Percy for a variety of reasons. The Jewish community was funding Simon, and they're a major funding source. They're not huge in numbers in Illinois, but they are big in contributions, and they were very much behind Simon. So that campaign, we knew, was going to be tough.

Now, at the convention—I don't know if Percy even came because there were no votes for him there. It's all Republicans, and if they're not going to vote for him before he gets there, they won't vote for him because he comes; so he pretty much stayed back in Illinois and campaigned, but I did get to go to the convention. I'm trying to think, anything else from the convention… Not a whole lot. I think probably for me, the more important part was the politicking back at the hotel and just kind of securing your base a lot with the party leaders there.

DePue: At that point in your life, were you warming up a little bit to Reagan's policies and programs?

Edgar: Oh, it was all right. To be very truthful, the secretary of state—I just didn't think too much about the national. I was so kind of viewing what's going on in the secretary of state's office that… I thought he'd proven to be much more pragmatic than I thought he originally would be.

DePue: And the economy had bounced back a little bit by '84.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. But I thought overall—when he named James Baker his chief of staff… I never liked supply-side economics. I always agreed somewhat with George Bush during the campaign that it was voodoo economics. (DePue laughs) You got to pay as you go. I don't think running up a deficit is good. But some of his people—like

Bee Oglesby, who had moved up to become chief congressional liaison for president, that was my tie into the Reagan people. I got along with him fine, it's just I was not—the people in Illinois who had been Reagan people never were my people. It was just always a little different group. But I was more focused on worrying about Percy. And the Reagan people really didn't care too much about Percy; it wasn't one that they were going to spend a whole lot of time trying to save.

DePue: He was a Republican vote in the Senate, though.

Edgar: Yeah, he was, but they had plenty of votes in Republican…[24] (laughs) They didn't go against him, but they didn't go all out for him. And of course Reagan was popular in Illinois, won reelection handily, and we'd hoped that would be more of a coattail for Percy. But it was a long night, election night. Percy didn't lose till—we didn't know till about two o'clock in the morning that Simon had beat him, but he did beat him. In fact, early on we thought it looked like Percy was going to win barely, but then it shifted. But that was an interesting thing, just to go through a statewide campaign at that level, and we were very much involved in that campaign.

In some ways it was a miracle Percy was as close as he was, because we could tell by the numbers early on. I remember talking with Bob Teeter, who was George Bush's pollster, but he was also Percy's pollster, and he'd been mine too, and Thompson's. Even before Simon was a candidate, he said, "This is going to be a close election." They did the head-to-head with Percy and Simon a year out, and I think Percy was ahead two-to-one. He said, "That doesn't mean anything." He said, "Look at the job approval. His negatives are almost as high as his positives," and for an incumbent, that's really bad. And he said, "This will be a close election." I just remember that, sure enough, it was a close election.

DePue: Was part of that because Illinois was tending more Democratic?

Edgar: Oh, maybe a little bit, though Reagan won it pretty handily. I can't remember what he won it by, but it was comfortable. Now, Bush barely won it four years later. People, for whatever reason—I think a lot of them incorrect—were mad at Percy; they didn't think he paid enough attention. You had the Jewish factor that I think, money-wise, had an impact. And people liked Paul Simon.

They both were quality candidates. I don't know of any race I've ever been involved in where you had—the people of Illinois weren't going to lose no matter who won. Now, we did lose the Senate chairman of Foreign Relations Committee. A lot of people say, "Who cares?" Well, for trade and things like that, I think it was important for Illinois. But as far as quality guys, both those guys were just quality

[24] In the 98th Congress, Republicans held a 55-45 Senate majority. When the 99th Congress convened following the 1984 election, Republicans held a slightly smaller 53-47 majority. United States Senate, "Party Division in the Senate, 1789-Present," http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/one_item_and_teasers/partydiv.htm.

guys. Paul Simon and I later became very good friends and worked very closely after we both left office. But I don't know of any time where you had two quality candidates like that run against each other. That was probably, as I said, the best two that ran against each other in my lifetime.

It was also frustrating, in a way, to work on a campaign, because you weren't the candidate. We'd sit there and we'd try to prepare Senator Percy how we thought he ought to handle things. We had trouble too because he couldn't hear. (laughs) Especially when we'd be on a plane—we'd be flying around with him on a plane, and even if he had his hearing aides in, the verberation in a plane… We'd sit there and tell him things, and he'd sit there and smile at us and shake his head yes and get off at the next stop and do the exact opposite. (laughs) And I never knew if sometimes he just turned those off and smiled at us and didn't want to listen to us. I don't know. But he was a very nice guy. Again, I think people made a mistake. I think at that point he was a much more effective senator than Simon could ever be, but I think people liked Paul Simon more, and that had a big factor in that election.

DePue: We're in the area of politics and we might as well continue on with that. Nineteen eighty-six, *U.S. News and World Report* names you as one of the thirty rising stars in American politics.

Edgar: I think we republished that every time we had a chance.

DePue: (laughs) And was that a surprise to you when it happened?

Edgar: Oh, it was a surprise. Yeah, you never know, because the secretary of state—you don't know who's paying attention. I'm not a congressman or a senator. But yeah, it was pretty heady stuff.

DePue: What was it that caught *U.S. News and World Report*'s attention?

Edgar: I don't know if it was somebody that they had or if they had a panel they went to or how they picked up on it. I guess Illinois is one of the large states in the country. I was young; it was pretty obvious that I was next in line for governor, and so I'm sure those things all had something to do with it. Again, I'm not sure who was on the panel. That would be the key: who did they go to to come up with these names. And you never know who out there might have thrown your name in or whatever. But oh no, we really enjoyed that.

DePue: And it's nice timing. Nineteen eighty-six—let's see, you're going to be running for reelection as secretary of state.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Couldn't beat that.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Tell me about the primary.

Edgar: Of course, to be very truthful, in 1986, going into that, there was some question whether Thompson would run again. I always thought in the end he would, just because I thought he wanted to go out by a bigger margin than less than five thousand votes. In '82, I think that had been an embarrassment for him. Just personally, because there was a lot of feeling that maybe he didn't really win, that the court gave it to him, and…

DePue: But a year out, he wasn't riding all that big a wave of popularity, was he?

Edgar: No. But I always thought he'd want to go out more of a winner than that. But there was some thought that he may not run again, and so we were keeping our eye on that, figuring this might be when we've got to go. And you had Neil Hartigan, who wanted to go then, too, and he was out making noises. He'd been elected attorney general in '82, and he was already—I don't know if he ever formally announced, but he was out there. So the '86 election, before we got to who was actually running in the end—it was a lot more exciting from my perspective before that than it was after that, just because you didn't know who for sure was going to run for what. Now, Thompson kept delaying and delaying his announcement, and when he finally did announce, he said one of the reasons was Brenda Edgar says they're not ready yet.

DePue: Did he say that publicly?

Edgar: Yeah. And there was an incident at the state fair when he hadn't announced yet, I don't think, and Brenda was there, and Brenda was the most enthusiastic for him to run again. He'd later tell—editorial boards kind of got on him about, "Why'd you run again? Why didn't you let Edgar…?" "Oh, no, Brenda Edgar says they're not ready yet. The kids are still in school, and she's not…" Because in 1990 or about '89, I said, "Brenda, would you go tell Thompson it's time?" (laughter) I said, "Elizabeth's going to be out of high school, and I'm getting old." No, that was one of these rationalizations. But Brenda—because Elizabeth was going to be in high school, and she didn't want Elizabeth to go through high school in the governor's mansion. She just thought that wouldn't be fair to Elizabeth. Brad had already gone off or was going off to college. I think maybe he'd already gone off, and Elizabeth was just getting ready to go into high school.

So in 1985 I thought in the end he would, but I wasn't positive. There was always talk about maybe he'd go get a federal appointment or something like that. So we had looked at—in fact, early on, right after the '82 election, after we'd been sworn in, I'd formed a committee just to prepare for my future; and there was speculation I was looking at the'86 election, which I think miffed Thompson (laughs) a little bit. And I wasn't; I was just trying to be ready because you—you also had kind of the tradition of two terms, that's about it. Now, he'd had two and a half terms basically, because he had that two-year term. And I've always thought if he'd won that '82 election by a big margin, I'm not sure he'd have run again in '86.

I think he might have gone on and done something else, because my sense was—now, he always said he still enjoyed it, but it just didn't seem like the same fire in the belly that last four years, that he had the first ten years.

So we weren't positive, though deep down I thought he would; and deep down I probably wanted him to, because life was pretty good. I figured if I run for secretary of state again, I should win pretty easily. Life was good. I had my salary, I had my chauffeur, and I could go off to these meetings and do things. And run for governor, you could lose. Then what am I going to do? So I have to say that I was not disappointed when he didn't decide to run again. But then we weren't sure what's going to happen, who's going to run against me. Pat Quinn was making noises he wanted to run for secretary of state—who I thought might be a legitimate candidate. I'm trying to think—at that point, he wasn't anything yet, was he?[25]

DePue: I don't believe so.

Edgar: No. And Jerry Cosentino, of course, I'd defeated four years before, so he was out of the picture. But nobody trusted Pat Quinn in the Democrats, and then they slated Aurelia Pucinski to run, who I thought might be a good candidate. She was a woman; she was pretty active. Unfortunately, she had the wrong last name that nobody could pronounce.

DePue: She was, as I understand, the Chicago metro sanitary district commissioner?

Edgar: I think she was.

DePue: Not necessarily a good launching point.

Edgar: But her father had been a congressman for years. Percy had defeated him for the Senate, and he was an alderman.[26] Pucinski was a well-known name on the North Side in Chicago. Her dad's name was well known. And she was an activist. She was always involved in this or that. She got a lot of press. And the thinking was she could be a decent candidate. She wasn't a county official yet. She was a county official for a while.[27] But she was a woman, and the feeling was that might help. Jane Byrne was still mayor, and she had supported her. Of course, that also was the year nobody paid attention, but LaRouchians were running in the Democratic Party. So I was glad not to have Quinn because he was, we thought at that point, a demagogue; he was out there, and he was very good at getting publicity, and he'd

---

[25] Pat Quinn had been elected as a commissioner on the Cook County Board of Tax Appeals in 1982. http://www.illinois.gov/gov/aboutthegovernor.htm.

[26] Roman Pucinski (May 13, 1919-September 25, 2002) served as a congressman from 1959 to 1973. He lost his Senate bid to Percy in 1972, and finished his political career as an alderman from 1973 to 1991. *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, 1774-Present*, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=P000559.

[27] Aurelia Pucinski served as a commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago before being elected clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County. She served as clerk from 1988 to 2000, and was elected as a circuit court judge in 2004. Chicago Council of Lawyers, "2007 Judicial Directory," http://www.chicagocouncil.org/judicial_pdfs/P/Aurelia%20Pucinski.pdf.

been the leader on the Cutback Amendment, which had passed in ’80. I thought he might be a lot tougher candidate than… But Pucinski, I thought she might be okay, too, because she’s a woman. I had always run well with women, and I could cut into that a little bit. So we thought we’d be okay, but we’d have to work at it.

DePue: You had no Republican challenger?

Edgar: No, no, not for secretary of state. No. So we didn’t think anything more about it, and we just figured that’s who it was going to be. On the Thompson thing, originally Neil Hartigan was running, and it looked like he was going to be the Democratic nominee. I thought he’d probably give Thompson a pretty good run. People knew him from the lieutenant governor days more than AG, and he’d always run decent downstate. We knew Thompson had a lot of problems; his numbers weren’t good. But Mike Madigan could not stand Neil Hartigan, and Mike Madigan even then was the power in state politics.

DePue: Was he Democratic Party state chairman at the time?

Edgar: I don’t think he was state chairman then. I don’t think he was yet. I think that came later.[28] I think that came when I was governor because I remember—I think when he decided to do that, I called him up and said, “Have you been sitting out in the sun too long? Why are you doing that?” Other reasons we can (DePue laughs) talk about later. No, he wasn’t state party chairman, but he did not care for Hartigan. They were about the same age, and they had not got along back… A lot of the committeemen thought Hartigan had not done his homework, he couldn’t deliver his ward, and things like that. They thought he always kind of—always just trying to get favors from Mayor Daley and didn’t really earn them all. So some animosity is what we always detected, and Madigan particularly didn’t care for Hartigan. So Madigan went out and recruited Adlai Stevenson to run again. Stevenson wasn’t going to run, and it was going to be Hartigan. And Madigan went out and got Stevenson to run again, and Hartigan folded his tent and ran for AG again—not to run against Stevenson in a primary.

DePue: That would suggest that Madigan and others thought that Thompson was vulnerable.

Edgar: Oh, yeah. No, I think everybody thought he was vulnerable; I don’t think anybody thought he was unbeatable. And some people didn’t think Hartigan would be that tough a candidate. I disagree; I think Hartigan would have been a better candidate than Stevenson was. But Madigan had more to do; he just didn’t want Hartigan as

[28] State Rep. Calvin R. Sutker (D-Skokie) was chairman of the Illinois Democratic Party from 1984 to 1986, when he lost his seat as 9th Congressional District committeeman to Jeffrey Paul Smith in the primary. The state central committee elected State Sen. Vincent Demuzio (D-Carlinville) as the new party head in April, making Demuzio the first downstate Democrat to lead the party since Fred Kane (D-Jacksonville) in the 1940s. Demuzio was defeated by Madigan’s chief of staff, Gary LaPaille, in 1990, and Madigan took over the chairmanship April 3, 1998. *Chicago Tribune* January 5, 1984; March 20, 1986; April 18, 1986; April 19, 1990; April 4, 1998.

governor. He just didn't want to deal with it. I think part of it was he didn't think he'd be a good candidate and he could hurt his members, but I think more than that, he just didn't want him. Now, if you read the news clips, it would be more that he didn't think he was that strong a candidate, but I think he just didn't want him. I remember a story on a later gubernatorial—he'd rather have a Republican than have somebody as a Democrat who he didn't trust, didn't like.

So right at the very end, right before filing, Stevenson announces and Madigan orchestrates a lot of support for Stevenson. Plus, people thought, gee, Stevenson almost beat Thompson four years before; there will be a lot of support for Stevenson this time, and Thompson is vulnerable. His numbers weren't good. And I think that was probably reasonable thinking. He's [Stevenson] kind of a known quality. Even though he wasn't a great candidate, at last he came real close before, and this time they think they can get him. And the—

DePue: Tell us about primary election night.

Edgar: Okay. That's what I was going to say, yeah. But then for his running mate, he had Sangmeister, who was a very well-thought-of state senator—George Sangmeister, from Joliet. But again, Sangmeister—a lot of people couldn't pronounce that name; and Pucinski—they couldn't pronounce that name. But we didn't think anything about it. But we knew these LaRouchians were on the ballot, and—now I just went blank on who won the—Janice Hart.

DePue: Janice Hart.

Edgar: And I forget the name of the Democrat for lieutenant governor, but he had a very WASPy name, which was really the key that night.

DePue: Oh, you mean Mark Fairchild.

Edgar: Yeah. Fairchild, was that the name?

DePue: Yeah, that was his name.

Edgar: So, in my staff, we had a pretty good election return thing set up. We could usually tell about two hours before anybody else who was going to win. So we're sitting there primary election night, and they're getting in numbers, and they called me and said, "Hey"—because we were watching secretary of state—"Hart is just beating the heck out of Pucinski downstate." I said, "How much?" Said, "Five-to-one in some of these counties." I said, "But there aren't that many Democratic primary votes down there. It's going to matter more what happens up north." They said, "Yeah, but boy, it's really"—and the same thing happened in the lieutenant governor's race, because lieutenant governor runs separate from the gubernatorial in the primary, which is crazy. And one of the reasons we ought to change it—what happened that night. And they said, "Sangmeister's not doing that well either." At the very end there'd been some talk about could there be a reaction on the ethnic names or whatever, but nobody really gave it much thought.

So, oh, by ten o'clock it was obvious there was a trend moving here, and I remember saying, "Jim Thompson just got reelected." Because up to that point, I had my doubts whether he could win the general election, but I said—because I knew right away. I said, "If the LaRouchian's a lieutenant governor candidate on the Democratic, nobody's going to vote for the Democratic candidate for governor"—because in the general election, you vote for both of them; one vote goes to both of them—"and they're not going to vote for Stevenson if that means putting a nut in as lieutenant governor." That's how we viewed the LaRouchians, as nuts—extremists. Nobody knew for sure what they stood for, but we just knew they were nuts. So I remember saying, "Jim Thompson just got reelected." And then by midnight it was obvious to everybody that Janice Hart was going to be the secretary of state candidate, and more importantly, Fairchild was going to be the lieutenant governor candidate.

I felt, and I think most people did, that I was going to beat Pucinski—no doubt I was going to beat Janice Hart—but the problem was really Thompson, who Stevenson, I think a lot of us thought, probably would beat. As bad as a campaign as he ran the first time, we figured he couldn't run a worse one this time, (DePue laughs) and maybe he'd learn something and win this time. But after he got the LaRouchian candidate, I thought there's no way that Thompson could lose this thing. And as it turned out, Stevenson probably ran a worse campaign that time, but with the LaRouche thing on the ticket, he just couldn't overcome it. Finally they all got off Stevenson; they created a new party. I can't remember. Solidarity?

DePue: Solidarity Party.

Edgar: Yeah. And they got another candidate for secretary of state, a woman from DuPage County.

DePue: Jane Spirgel?

Edgar: Yeah, who I think was on the county board—the only Democrat on the county board, I think.[29]

DePue: I'm not sure what her position was before that.

Edgar: Yeah, something like that. Seemed like a nice lady, but I ignored her, (laughs) because she wasn't the Democratic nominee and I didn't want to… And they never showed in the polls. In fact, we were going to have a debate, and the deal with the debate was you had to reach a threshold of 20 percent, I think, in the public opinion polls. Janice Hart actually reached the threshold because she was the Democratic nominee. Spirgel never got there because she wasn't the Democratic… So the League of Women Voters—we had an agreement, it had to be 20 percent. She wouldn't be on the debate, and she was mad. I said, "That's the rules," and the League set them.

[29] [Do brief background on Spirgel].

So I went on TV that night with Janice Hart. Now, we didn't know what to expect, because she talked about tanks in the streets and just all kinds of wild things. And so the strategy was: don't look at her, don't even respond to any wild comments she might make, just talk about the office and talk about the questions. So I remember going on that night, and I just stare at the camera. I didn't look over at her or anything like that. (laughter) And she actually was pretty good. She didn't get—a couple times she talked about tanks in the streets and would say some wild things, but she wasn't—and she didn't have a clue about the office. She didn't even come close to talking about the secretary of state's office. And afterwards, we shook hands. She was fine. So it kind of was a nonentity, that debate, but I just remember we spent a lot of time trying to decide how should I handle her in that debate and how to deal with… And Jane Spir—we just ignored her. Going in that night, she had her women supporters picketing because we wouldn't let her in the debate, and we just ignored that because I didn't want to give her any credence.

So as a result, that election, I had the largest margin in the history of a statewide candidate.[30] Now, people said that didn't really mean a whole lot, and it doesn't, but it did get people used to voting for me. And there were probably a lot of Democrats who'd probably never voted for a Republican before, but they voted for me that time, which meant maybe they could vote for me next time too. It was kind of anticlimactic, that election, just because it was a pretty foregone conclusion I was going to win. I think it was a foregone conclusion Thompson was going to win, because the Democrats were just in complete disarray. But the only thing I got out of it was I did win by the largest margin, which we would talk about.

DePue: Let me just read some numbers here, but before I do that—maybe take a step back. We both kind of alluded to the LaRouchies. Can you define…?

Edgar: (laughs) To this day…

DePue: Lyndon LaRouche?

Edgar: What is amazing—they ran on the Democratic ticket. They were more—I don't want to say fascist, but they just were—they weren't liberal. I don't know how to describe them.

DePue: From what I've read very briefly, is that Lyndon LaRouche started on the radical left side of things and was thought to be a Marxist or a neo-Marxist, and then in the seventies or somewhere around there, he kind of went to the other side of the political—

Edgar: Kind of like Mussolini. Mussolini started out as a leftist and then went to the other side.

---

[30] Edgar took 67.15 percent of the vote in his blowout general election victory, tallying 2,095,489 votes to Spirgel's 521,410 and Hart's 478,361. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 4, 1986*.

DePue: And a lot of conspiracy theory stuff.

Edgar: Yeah. Just a lot of gobbledygook, it always seemed to me. Now I was never around Fairchild much; I don't know what outlandish things he might have had to say. But Janice Hart was— (laughs) she looked like she might throw a bomb. She would say things, just outlandish things, and you just kind of did a double-take but never worried too much about it. They didn't have any money to speak of, so they couldn't do a whole lot in the campaign. I don't know how to define them. I would define them as definitely right of center—I always found it amazing they were in the Democratic Party.

And the only reason they got the nomination—only reason—was people thought their names looked more common than Sangmeister and Pucinski. And people do blame Stevenson and the Democrats for not doing a better job of going out there and emphasizing the whole ticket and preventing that from happening. Because they didn't want to waste any money in the primary—they wanted to save it to the general election—they didn't do all that much advertising or anything like that. And particularly Stevenson for Sangmeister, since that was his running mate. I've always thought that if it was Neil Hartigan, he would have been smart enough—they know enough basic politics; he would have done a better job at that.

DePue: Mike Royko, who obviously is a Chicago-based guy, speculated that the reason that Hart and Fairchild won—now, you mentioned it already—how can you beat names like Hart and Fairchild? What sounds more American and fair than that?

Edgar: Yeah, particularly compared to Pucinski and Sangmeister. Now, Pucinski didn't surprise—I was a little surprised about Sangmeister. I just hadn't thought of it—because we've got a huge German population in Illinois—but to a lot of folks, that name was still a lot different than Fairchild. And lieutenant governor, nobody knows to a great extent.

DePue: Yeah. Who's paying attention to that in a primary?

Edgar: In a primary. Of course, I used to say, "Republicans—we might have caught them before the Democrats would have, I don't know, in a primary."

DePue: Royko, though, came right out and said that it was basically a lot of the black vote voting for these people, just because they didn't know.

Edgar: Yeah, and that's a huge vote in the Democratic primary. I'm sure they didn't know. Nobody had taken the time to tell them, "This is who you got to vote for."

DePue: But the party leadership decided not to spend any money doing that?

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Here are the numbers: in the overall race, you logged in at 65 percent. Spirgel got 18 percent, the (laughs) Solidarity Party candidate.

Edgar: Never made it to the 20 percent threshold, yeah.

DePue: And Hart got 16 percent. So kind of overwhelming numbers. And the amazing part here is DuPage County—we'd been talking about DuPage County before—you got 83 percent of the vote in DuPage County, and each one of them got 8 percent. And in Chicago, itself, you got 46 percent, Spirgel got 32, and Hart got 22 percent. So…

Edgar: And what did Thompson do against Stevenson?

DePue: Thompson, in the overall numbers: 53 percent versus 40 percent for Stevenson, and Fairchild still pulled 6 percent.

Edgar: Yeah. See, that kind of underscores, I think, Thompson—Thompson still just got 53 percent, with all the trouble on the Democratic side. And I always said that if Stevenson hadn't have had to spend all his time—and Stevenson looked kind of inept on how to handle that. There wasn't any leadership quality there at all, and he never could get on balance and never could really… He had to spend all his time trying to explain what they were going to do about the LaRouchians and all this and that, so Thompson… Again, that primary night—I really believe if Sangmeister had gotten nominated, I think that Stevenson very well would have defeated Thompson in that election. Though I will say (laughs) I think Stevenson ran a worse campaign that time (DePue laughs) than he did the first time, which I didn't think was possible.

DePue: One of the great stories that Grosboll told me about that primary night is they're all focused on the secretary of state race, because he's worried about your campaign, as one of your chief lieutenants. And he mentioned that you made the comment, "No, no, don't worry about that; pay attention to what's going on in the governorship here."

Edgar: The lieutenant governor. Yeah. It was just obvious to me that's going to change that whole thing.

DePue: One of the other results, again, going back to the Royko article, that Royko kind of credited that particular campaign—it was devastating to the Democrats in Illinois when the LaRouchites suddenly rose their head, but it was the demise of LaRouche candidates after that point in time.

Edgar: Yeah, because then people started paying attention. (laughs) If you'd see a LaRouche candidate on, the media made a note of it and everybody knew it. I think we had them after that and they never got anyplace. It was a sneak attack. And also, the fact that you had the two names, Pucinski and Sangmeister, versus Fairchild and Hart. In black communities, those names are as strange as they were to downstaters. You look downstate, the numbers were like they were—and probably even more so than some of those black wards—but it was very similar. You could tell it was just a reaction, like, "We can't vote for somebody named that. We don't know any of these, but it's obvious we're going to be for a Hart over a Pucinski."

DePue: Not a lot of farmers in southern Illinois named Pucinski?

Edgar: Not too many. I never looked to see how Sangmeister did over in the Belleville area, where you do have a heavy German concentration. I'm sure he probably—plus the St. Clair Democrat organization is a little more organized.

DePue: Let's get out of the political arena and get you back to being secretary of state again. In those last four years, you're still pretty busy from what I can tell. One of the things that occurs is your office begins to issue four-year licenses—and I don't know what it was before that time. Two years, or…?

Edgar: It wasn't a big deal. It was a big deal to people. It wasn't a controversy. You know, you were on me the other day about, "Anything you really believed in? I mean, these are political things."[31] And a lot of these things are motherhood. DUI wasn't, when we started out, but it turned out that way.

The one thing people thought I was out of my mind on driver's licenses was when I said, "We're going to retest seniors. We got to retest seniors." Because seniors weren't retested, up to then, like any other group. You get your driver's license; you can renew them, but you're not retested. You maybe occasionally would have to take a written test, but you didn't have to take a driver's test. Once you got it when you were sixteen, you're in forever. And we had some incidents in Illinois where a senior plowed into—killed four or five people, and probably didn't have any business having a driver's license. And I remember I said, "We got to do something about this." My staff (laughs) looked at me like I was nuts. "What are you talking about? You can't take on seniors."

DePue: Old people vote.

Edgar: That's right. "You're going to make them all mad, taking away…" Everybody said, "Yeah, you need to do something," but nobody wanted to do it. So I said, "No, we really need to." Because people said, "What are you going to do about this problem?" Especially after—I think it was a woman—plowed into these people up in the suburbs someplace and killed four or five. I said, "We got to do something." And so we kick it around, and I said, "We're going to have to build some support, because the legislators will be scared to death of this bill. Even if I propose it, they're going to be scared to death." So we said, "Let's go talk to AARP and see if we can some way work with them. Everybody said, "You're nuts," and I said, "We can maybe tell them to work out something reasonable, because if not, it could be worse, and use that approach."

So we talked to AARP for a long time and thought we had an agreement with them, a compromise; it'd be kind of a phase-in… And I can't remember the specifics now, but up to maybe someplace in the seventies you'd have to be retested every three years or something like that—I can't remember—then the older you got

[31] See Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, June 15, 2009, 61, and May 29, 2009, 36-41; Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

the more often you had to be retested, until in your eighties, I think, maybe every year. We had looked at numbers, and we didn't really think people in the sixties there was a real problem, but you get up in the mid-seventies and get in the eighties, you got really a sharp increase in accidents involved.

So, my people were out talking to AARP and finally came back and said—because we had a seniors department in the secretary of state's office, just worked with seniors on different issues and things, and they had a pretty good relationship with the AARP. They came back and said, "We got an agreement; we got a compromise." Okay, fine. So we get the National Safety Council—they're all for it, and they can't believe that I'm going to try it (laughs)—and all these people. So we're going to do a press conference. We're going to have the AARP there and have them say they're in support, because I figured if they're in support, that will take the edge off, and we can—I can't remember if we had Retired Teachers, too, but AARP—of course, it's hard to define between AARP and Retired Teachers. They were kind of the same people a lot of places.

And so I'm up for the cameras—we're doing it in Chicago, and the press is sitting there thinking, he's not going to run for governor, then, I guess, (laughs) because this was probably in '87 or '88. Everybody knew what the next race was going to be—it was probably going to be for governor if Thompson ever decided to not run. So we're at the press conference, and I'm explaining the bill and what our proposal is and saying now we have a compromise. We have these people supporting it. I had the National Safety Council, and they spoke.

And I turned to the guy from the AARP—and they didn't send the president. I thought the president was coming. It wasn't the president; it was some other guy. I don't know what his title was, but it wasn't anything close to being the president, but I thought, that's all right. The president didn't want to get people yelling at him; we'll send somebody else. So I turned to him to announce their endorsement. He said, "We worked with the secretary of state's office, and we'll give this bill full consideration,"—and that's all he said. (DePue laughs) And I'm ready to strangle the guy, because the deal was that he's supposed to be on board. And that's all we could ever get off them. They were scared to death. They had agreed to it, but then they went back to their board and the board about (laughs) strung them up.

DePue: It's the kind of thing they probably heard from their constituents on.

Edgar: You see, it hadn't been publicized yet, but they were worried. They were scared. Oh, I was livid because I knew enough of the politics that we had to have—not just from my own but just to get it passed, because I knew the legislators were going to be scared to death of this thing. So we beat on them for a while, and I don't know if we finally—we got them to where they wouldn't oppose it, I think, at least. We called in every chip we had in the legislature, and everybody said, "You're going to push that?" I said, "Yeah. It's the right thing to do," and I said, "I'm traffic safety; if I didn't do this I'd be a hypocrite. And I just think we got to do something, and people think we ought to do something." Anybody under sixty-five thought we

needed to do it, just people over seventy-five weren't real excited about it. We actually polled, and even people over seventy—there were a good number who thought maybe something ought to be done, needed to be done.

And not so surprisingly, I pushed it. What was probably more surprising is we actually got the legislature to vote for it, (laughs) because profiles in courage isn't something you often attach to the Illinois General Assembly on these kinds of things. (DePue laughs) But we got it passed. And surprisingly enough, we got very little negative feedback after that. Most seniors understood that, yeah, they probably ought to be checked a little more often, and yeah, there probably is a point where they shouldn't have a driver's license. And the key thing was at least they had a chance; they could go back and take the test. I don't know if many people lost their license. I think there probably were several in their eighties who stopped trying, but I don't know if that many failed in the end.

DePue: When you say "retesting,"—a written; the driver's—

Edgar: They had to take the driver's test after a while. In Illinois at that time, every so many years you had to take the written test, but you didn't have to take the driving test. But what we were saying is you were going to have to take a driving test. That was the big change, because seniors weren't as worried about the written test as they were the driving test. I never failed the written test. I failed the driving test, because when I was a sixteen-year-old, they used to always flunk the boys at least once. Girls always passed, but boys always failed the first time just to keep us humble. And I'll never forget the day I failed my test. I was supposed to have a date that night with the car, and she had to drive. That was embarrassing. (laughter)

But that bill—I still look back and am amazed I tried, and even more amazed I got it passed. But there wasn't any political backlash, it turned out, to the surprise of everyone. I don't know if there was any state this far along as us on that. That was a trendsetting… And needless to say, I don't think they've ever done that in Florida. (laughs) But that was an interesting bill.

The other bill was mandatory auto insurance. For years, they had tried to pass a mandatory auto insurance bill, and it would always be opposed by the insurance companies, surprisingly. Insurance companies didn't want to have to because they thought they'd be forced to cover people who were bad drivers, and they figured they'd lose money. You'd think insurance companies would have all liked it; they were the ones that opposed it. Now, there were some companies that specialized in the high-risk motorists, and they wanted it, but the blue-chip companies, the State Farms, the Allstates—they were very much opposed to it.

DePue: Even though they obviously would be able to charge a lot more for insurance for—

Edgar: Yeah, they just didn't want those people. And what they were afraid of—then they would have some kind of pool set up by the state, and they would have to charge a set amount and get stuck with the bill. They just did not like it.

DePue: How much was their resistance tied to problems with tort reform and things like that?

Edgar: It was more the cost. They just figured they'd lose on it. They figured the state would start—see, Illinois is one of the few states that does not dictate the rate. Arrington passed that back when I was an intern. Illinois is the free market sets the insurance rates, and it works out very well. They were afraid that there would be pressure to come in and start setting rates because all these people, and…

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: Other states had tried it, and they didn't think it worked and had been a bureaucratic nightmare. They had some legitimate beefs on the whole thing. And they'd been able to kill it up to then.

So when we're looking at traffic safety, one of the big problems with drunk drivers was more times than not, they'd be uninsured; and then not only do these people get injured or killed, there'd be nothing—they'd have these huge financial costs but there wasn't any place they could go back and recoup it. So people that we were dealing with, particularly a lot of these citizen groups, were really big on they wanted mandatory insurance. And talking about traffic safety and all the things—it made sense that if people are going to drive a car, they ought to—again, there's no right about having a car, that's a privilege, and if you can afford a car, you ought to be able to afford insurance. If you can't afford insurance, you probably can't afford a car, or the car you've got, you don't want on the road anyway.

We worked with the insurance companies—and Grosboll worked on this—and a lot of people on trying to come up with some workable compromise. And we finally did work with what we thought was a reasonable compromise. Insurance companies still didn't like it; they still opposed it. The problem was the bill would always get killed in the Senate. We'd get it out of the House, but you couldn't get it out of the Senate—the insurance committee. It'd go to the insurance committee and it would get killed.

DePue: What was different about the dynamics in the Senate?

Edgar: Insurance.

DePue: They had a stronger lobby there?

Edgar: Yeah. The House has a tendency to pass anything. The Senate is much more going to kill anything. And the insurance industry had strong ties, not only with the Republicans but also Democrats in the insurance committee. So we're trying to get that bill passed. I think we're trying to get that bill (laughs) assigned to the right committee—get it out of insurance. And I think we wanted to put it in transportation, probably, again. But I remember Phil Rock was still the head of the Senate—the guy who had listened to Bob Collins on the DUI and finally let the bill out of committee after he got blasted listening to the radio. I can't remember the

names of all the people, but there was a guy who has an insurance company who is involved in Democrat politics on the West Side of Chicago. It might be Banks—I'm not sure. But they wanted to see the bill passed because they do a lot of business in that, and they knew it would help their business.

Phil Rock—part of his district, I think, was in this guy's ward, so he responded to this guy. And I think there was a state rep—I can't remember if it was Jimmy DeLeo, because he was a rep at that time, not a senator. Somebody on the House side, who was close to this committeeman who had supported the bill in the House, got to talk to the committeeman. The committeeman talked to Phil Rock, and Phil Rock put it in the right committee or got the right people on the committee that day, and it came out of committee, and that was very important. And on the floor, it passed.

We still weren't sure—again, this was a whole new concept, and other states had had bureaucratic nightmares with it. We thought this would work. We thought there were enough safeguards for the insurance companies that it wasn't going to be a hindrance, and it would work. And if some people wouldn't be able to get insurance, they just couldn't drive, but we thought there were enough safeguards. And I can't remember all the details. But it turned out it did work. Insurance companies, two years later, were no longer complaining. In fact, they admitted it had worked, and this was right about the time I was running for election as governor. It was obvious this thing was working. Also, the number of uninsured motorists had dropped dramatically in Illinois.

DePue: What were the penalties in the bill for someone who had an accident and found out they didn't have insurance?

Edgar: Loss of license was big in there. I'm sure a fine, and all kinds of things. I don't know if there was jail at some point. Again, it's been so long I can't remember all the details. That's why I was calling Grosboll, just to go over it again because I thought he'd remember all the details because he'd worked on it. I just remember that the nightmare the insurance companies worried about, which we thought we'd prevented, we had prevented. It didn't have the problems, and it actually did reduce the number of uninsured motorists on the highway, considerably. And it's one of those things that worked. You're never sure—you think you've thought the thing through but you're not positive. And you know in other states they thought they had, and it hadn't worked in other states, though some states had used things similar to this and it seemed to work. So we felt pretty comfortable. The insurance companies—and the thing we had to worry about the insurance companies—we didn't want them sabotaging us. They didn't want it; they didn't think it would work. Sometimes if you don't want something and you don't think it will work, it doesn't work. But we worked pretty closely with the insurance companies after it passed to try to minimize. Again, they knew there were other issues down the road, and they didn't necessarily want to antagonize me; I could be governor someday. So I think they tried to make it work, too. It was a—

DePue: So was this the case where after it passes, you go back to the insurance company and you make some fundamental changes to rewrite it?

Edgar: No. We'd been talking to them through the whole time, and even if they were fighting it, still we were talking to them. You always got to be careful in Springfield. Today's enemy, opponent, might be tomorrow's ally. You never want to burn bridges. I'd been with them on traffic safety issues; they'd been big with DUI, and the seatbelt laws, and all these things. We had a pretty good relationship, so they didn't really want to go to war with me too much. So once we passed it, the administration of it—they worked with us in good faith, and I thought everything went pretty well. As I said, within two years it was obvious.

One of the things we put in the bill, and I agreed to put in the bill—this was one of our arguments. The legislators said, "They say this won't work." It may not. We got a sunset provision in here. After five or six years, you got to renew it, and if it hasn't worked, it won't be on the books, because it's always hard to get something on… And I felt that was a good approach to take with any new program if people thought it may not work—instead of having to repeal it, it just would go away. If it worked, you could get it renewed. I wasn't secretary of state any longer, but when time came to renew it, I think it passed unanimously, and the insurance companies supported it.

So it was a gamble from the point of view that while the concept was very popular with the public, there also was the real danger you could have a bureaucratic nightmare and it wouldn't work. And I prided myself—and we ran a very efficient office. When we created programs, they worked; they weren't just fluff. Now, there might be fluff to them, but there was substance to them too, and we were very proud about the fact that the secretary of state's office was working very well. It was considered streamlined in many areas. A lot of little areas, we'd done things on, like titles. To get a title change when I first came in took months, if not years, and we got it down to days. So there are a lot of those things we worked long and hard and we didn't get stories about, making that office work as efficient as possible, and we didn't want to see it all fall apart because we miscalculated on mandatory insurance. You have to think all these companies are very death on it—they've been in this business longer than I have been. But it worked, and it was kind of a gamble, but it was a gamble that paid off, and it was something you could talk about too, later, that people understood, and it meant something to them.

DePue: That's a major piece of legislation. My question is: once it gets to the House and the Senate, is it still your initiative, your issue to work—

Edgar: Oh yeah.

DePue: —versus the governor's office?

Edgar: No, governor didn't have anything to do with it. Governor's office doesn't have anything to do with our initiatives. We pushed our initiatives. We had our own

legislative office. We did favors for legislators. They needed us. I had the bully pulpit—not as big as the governor, but I had a bully pulpit. I went around the state talking about the need for getting uninsured motorists off the highway and making people meet their financial responsibility. Now, they didn't oppose it. You always worried about you didn't want the governor's office out there opposing your bill. But they weren't involved; it was us doing it.

And again, you had to know how to maneuver it through the legislative process because it had been tried several times before. Now, maybe not in this form, but there was mandatory auto insurance opposed by the insurance industry, and it had always died, and so we had to… It was like we did on DUI probably five years before: this was my number-one priority. I would go talk with legislators; I would reason with them—I didn't threaten them, but we'd reason with them. And legislators knew this was important to me. Plus, back home, most of their constituents—

Charlie Chew, a black senator who had endorsed me in that first election—who liked motor vehicle matters and was always an ally—was against this. He said, "I'm going to vote against it. It's bad for my constituents. I got a lot of people that don't have insurance, and they can't afford insurance." He came from a district on the South Side that had a lot of poor people. "But," he said, "I'm not going to try to kill it, I'm just going to be against it, and I'll make arguments in the committee against it, but again, I'm not going to go out…" And he didn't, because it was my bill and he wasn't going to—now, if it had been a secretary of state he didn't like or maybe didn't care about, I think he would have been a lot more energetic in his opposition. But on this, he was opposed to it, he voted against it, spoke against it in committee on the floor, but he didn't go out and call in any chips to try to defeat it. And that was true of some of the other black legislators that I had a relationship with. They were opposed to it because their constituents were opposed to it—because that's where a lot of the uninsured motorists were, more so percentage-wise than in other parts of the state. We didn't have many Hispanic legislators. I'm sure they probably had a high number of uninsured motorists there, too.

But it passed, and it worked, and it was something that I think was a major step forward. It was something we needed, and I think we did it in a manner that, it made sense. We thought it through. It wasn't just, let's throw in a bill that's a motherhood thing and even though it won't work, it looks good and will be a good campaign issue. It was a good campaign issue but I thought it turned out it was good government too. So that was an important other achievement.

Another achievement in that second—or the parts of my third term, I guess, since I had half of the other term—was building the new library. That's one of the things I'm proudest of. Again, something that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't been there. For years they'd talked about the state needing a library, its own building. The library was in the Centennial Building, which is now called the Howlett Building, and it was in different floors—it was a terrible setup.

DePue: And it didn't own the building outright; it shared that building with other agencies, too?

Edgar: Yeah, the Howlett Building is—motor vehicle is over there, or at least it was. License plate is over there. Driver's license is out in Dirksen, but most the rest of the secretary of state is over there. Corporations, securities—they're all over in the Howlett Building, or they were in the Howlett Building. So there were a lot of other things. But just kind of in the middle of that building was the library. There was a reading room, and some things like that, and shelves that nobody could get at—very antiquated. So there had been talk for years about building a new library, and the site was always to be across from the Capitol. They had a master plan back in the sixties that they had come up with, and the site they designated, where you'd put the state library, was where the—what was it? The Capitol Inn, the tavern was?

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: There was a tavern across the street there. And that block was where it was designated. I always knew that was the designated spot, and so when I became secretary of state, of course the library people said, "Boy, it would be nice if we had a library." And I said, "Yeah, this is terrible." So I thought, we got to pick the right time. Thompson, for the '86 election—they came up with Build Illinois, this capital program, and they were going to do all these wonderful things to spur the economy. It's like a lot of capital programs—it became kind of pork and a boondoggle. I thought, this is a great time. They're going to build all these buildings—it's a great time to come in with the state library. So I said we ought to build a state library.

Part of how you were going to fund this—Thompson had to come up with a new tax, and one of their proposals was going to be they'd never charged sales tax on the sale of used cars by individuals. If a car dealer sold a used car, you had to pay sales tax, but if I sold a used car to you, you didn't have to pay sales tax. So this was a big advantage to people selling used cars. And there were a lot of questionable used cars that were personal cars being sold out there by people who probably were small-time dealers and didn't pay sales tax.

DePue: But it's just the kind of thing that the average Joe doesn't want to have to be burdened with—

Edgar: No.

DePue: —trying to figure out, Okay, how much do I have to…

Edgar: No. Also, they don't want to pay it.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: They just didn't want to do it. So Thompson—they decide they're going to close this loophole, as they call it. But how are you going to administer it? The only way

you can really check this is in the secretary of state's office when the titles change hands.

DePue: Right.

Edgar: So I had to collect the tax.

DePue: (laughs) Not the most popular of a tax.

Edgar: No. In fact, when Thompson first brought this up with some people, they said, "Who's going to get stuck with collecting that tax?" And he said, "Edgar is." He was going to need me to do that, and so I said, "Well, you're going to try to get me to do that, I want my library." So that's how I got my library. That's the whole reason they built that library. It'd been around, but nobody wanted to build a—I forget what it cost. Twenty million? Does that sound too high? I can't remember. It may not be too high. I said, "I get the library if I'm going to do this."

So Thompson—he was always pretty agreeable, just more money, and that didn't matter—said, "Okay," because he didn't want me opposing it. Because they'd tried to raise the license fees—it must have been after the '86 election. Dixon had blocked a license fee increase, when I was legislative liaison, to come up with money for a road program. They finally did it by not doing the Crosstown—and took some existing money and freed that up to match federal dollars, so they didn't get their gas tax increase or license fee increase. And the license fee is where the state gets most their money. A lot of the gas tax money goes to local government; the license fee all goes to the state. But Dixon had opposed it because he didn't want a license fee increase when he's getting ready to run for the U.S. Senate, because he has to administer that.

So early on, when I was secretary of state, they tried it again, and I didn't oppose it because I knew we hadn't had one in a long time and they needed the money. After the '86 election, they decide they were going to do another one. They'd just done one about three years before; they want to do another one.

DePue: "They" being the governor's office?

Edgar: The governor's office, yeah. But they forgot to talk to me this time, (DePue laughs) and I heard it on the radio. I'm thinking I could be running for governor sometime, and I've already done it one time, and people do notice what they pay for license fees because they write a check. It's not like a lot of taxes— they deduct it. This one, they write out a check, and they kind of remember what they paid last year, and all the sudden they see it double. And seniors particularly, because it's the same for everybody. You might have a clunker and you may not have much money; you pay as much as somebody who has a Cadillac.

DePue: Now, is this the license or the license plate we're talking about?

Edgar: License plate.

DePue: Which you have to pay every year.

Edgar: Mm-hmm. So I just was—first of all, I couldn't believe they did it without talking to me; and two, I just thought, hey, I was a good trooper last time; this is nuts. So I came out against it. Thompson had been overseas when this got announced or floated. And supposedly he didn't know they hadn't talked to me. Greg Baise, who was his secretary of transportation at the time, had been one his aides…Bill Cellini told me—because he was representing the asphalt—they were in a meeting, and he said, "Has anybody talked to Edgar?" because he figured, secretary of state, you're going to raise the license fee… And Baise had told him, "No, don't worry about Edgar." (DePue laughs) Well, that got my dander up a little bit. I heard this after I'd already come out against it, because they said, "Jiminy, somebody had better talk to the secretary of state or this thing isn't going to fly." Because it's hard to pass something; it's not as hard to kill something as to pass something. So I came out against it. I remember George Ryan said, "I don't believe you came out against this." I said, "They didn't talk to me." I said, "I went for the last one; this is nuts. They just did one three, four years ago." I said, "They should have talked to me."

So I get a call. Thompson wants to meet. And we meet down in Florida at the labor union. Every year the AFL-CIO would have something down at Bal Harbour, and they'd always invite Thompson—and they invited me, too—just to show they were bipartisan. We'd go down. So we got together, and I just told him, "Hey, nobody talked to me." I said, "I was a good trooper and I went along last time, but I'll tell you, it's kind of like football. I'm a team player, but you got to invite me to the huddle, and I got to at least hear what the play is. I don't want to read about it." And I said, "And it's too late now. I'm already out there on record, and you guys blew it." And he knew it. He didn't say anything. A long story short: we defeated it. He finally had to drop it because I was opposed to it; [Comptroller Roland] Burris was opposed to it for political reasons, and we raised enough fuss that it didn't go anyplace.

So Thompson this time knew enough to talk to me before he tried to impose this. So the deal we had, I get the library and I'll go… And I didn't want to make—this is reasonable. People probably ought to pay sales tax if they're going to sell their car, just like anybody else. So I maybe didn't appreciate the bureaucratic nightmare—and it turned out to be a bureaucratic nightmare—which I think they repealed a couple years later. They made a major change. It didn't affect us so much; it was just people got confused about the tax and didn't like it. But I got a library.

And the other thing I said, "Now, I'm designing this library. You designed the State of Illinois Building—this is going to fit into the Capitol complex."

DePue: You need to explain why you were so insistent on that.

Edgar: The State of Illinois Building in Chicago looks like a weird-looking building. Besides, it's not functional. It's been a terrible building to work in, and it's had all kind of structural problems. It's modern architecture, and maybe in Chicago—

DePue: Was that the kind of thing Thompson liked, though?

Edgar: Yeah, Thompson likes that, yeah. He had an architect come in, Helmut Jahn—some German architect, kind of the darling of the architect critics or whatever, very modernistic—and he came up with this thing. And in Chicago, maybe—but it has not worked well, and a lot of people that ever worked in there hate working in there because it's not a functional building. I had an office that was right next to the CTA, and I knew the CTA schedule because it felt like it was coming right across my desk. And there was one wall, I remember—it was always cold, and the other was always hot because the heating system didn't work. There were just all kinds of problems with that. But I just—this is going to be in the Capitol complex, and I'm a stickler on traditional architecture, particularly in the Capitol complex.

But I remember the bill's before the legislature—Mike Madigan comes down. "Who's going to design this new library?" I said, "I am. Not Thompson. I'm going to design it." "What's it going to look like?" Because he was afraid it was going to look like (laughs) the State of Illinois Building, too. I said, "It's going to look like the rest of the Capitol complex. It's going to look like it's always been here. It's going to have pillars and"—I think I might have had a preliminary drawing at the time. He said, "Why should the state get a library? You know, Chicago wants a library." I said, "Yeah, okay. So do most cities in the state want a library." He said, "If we spend thirty million dollars on this, then the state ought to spend thirty million on Chicago's library." I said, "No, no, no." I said, "Mr. Speaker, this is the state's library; this is not Springfield's library. We spend money on local libraries—fifty thousand dollars is the most we give, but this is a state library. Chicago's part of the state of Illinois." It's a conversation I had that I realized how these guys think different in Chicago. He said, "No, the state gets thirty million, the city gets thirty million." (DePue laughs) I said, "No, the city is part of the state. This is not a city library." I said, "You don't understand." (laughter) He just… I think he really believed that, too. That conversation with him, I always thought, that's part of the problem. They view—Chicago, Illinois, those are two equal entities, and we ought to cough up the same amount for anything for both, not that the city is part of the state. But he finally went along. He was more concerned (laughs) about what it was going to look like. He said, "I don't want another State"—I said, "Trust me, it's not going to look like the State of Illinois Building." "All right, well—"

DePue: Was he concerned that it might look like the Stratton Building, which has always had a reputation for being pretty darn ugly?

Edgar: Oh, it's ugly. Yeah. I think he was worried about the architect being some wild design, and Thompson would pick it, and just wasn't happy with the State building in Chicago. I said, "No. We think we know who we're going to work with, and it's

going to look like…" It turned out the architect we were working with—Billow—was a guy that he knew anyway, so in the end he didn't have a problem.

But I remember when I took the drawings to Thompson and showed him, he said, "Boy, this is dull." I said, "It's not dull, it's appropriate." I said, "You designed the State of Illinois, and I'm designing the state library." He admitted—we had him come speak at the dedication, and he said, "I have to admit, I was at first critical of the proposed design, but now that I see it, the secretary was right—this is the right kind of building here." But again, I'm convinced we'd have never had the state library if I hadn't pushed it. Fortunately we had the Build Illinois, and I (laughs) traded, and I got stuck with collecting the tax, but we got that library built. That's the one building I've always thought, "That's my building." It wouldn't have been there if it hadn't been for me, it looks the way it does because of me, and I'm always very proud of that library building. And it's built in such a way, too, that if the state ever has any money or whatever, you can expand it. You can go to the east, and it's designed in the back there—you just knock out that wall pretty easy and go on toward the railroad track and get more square footage in there.

There's a statue in there of Sarah Bush Lincoln, Lincoln's stepmother. We were about done with the library, and I had an artist come to me—some local guy—and he had this statue he'd made of Sarah Bush Lincoln. He knew that Sarah Bush Lincoln was Lincoln's stepmother, and Lincoln's parents lived south of Charleston, where Lincoln Log Cabin is—it's a state historical site—and I grew up playing in Lincoln Log Cabin. That's where we used to go have picnics. There's a state park. And everything in Coles County is named Sarah—the hospital is Sarah Bush Lincoln Hospital—because she's always got a lot of acclaim, and part of the reason was she was the parent who encouraged Lincoln to read. There was a question whether she could read, but she was very supportive of young Abraham Lincoln in his quest to learn, where his dad was not. His dad thought it was a waste of time. And Lincoln, who did not necessarily get along with his father—in fact, he failed to even go to his father's funeral—always came over, particularly after his dad passed away, to visit his stepmother. In fact, the last visit he made in Illinois before he went off to Washington was he took a train over to Coles County to see his stepmother for the last time. So he's very close to his stepmother, and his stepmother played a huge role in his life.

So this guy had the statue, and I thought, that's neat, so we bought it, and I stuck it over in the library. And I put it in the—there is the reading room, which is my favorite room in the library, and I had it in a prominent spot. I think after I left, it kept getting pushed back farther. But I always thought it was appropriate to put Sarah Bush Lincoln's statue in the library because she's the one who encouraged Lincoln to learn to read and encouraged him to study. And it always underscored to me the importance that a parent plays in the education of a child, even a parent who doesn't know how to read. I've read that someplace—there was a question whether she could read or not, but she was very supportive of his quest to learn. And that room…

Now, the biggest mistake I made as secretary of state was—for a million dollars, we could have put a tunnel from the library underneath to the Capitol building, and I didn't do it. The staff talked me out of it because they were afraid that extra million would look like it was too costly. Two big mistakes. The other thing: I didn't get rid of the starlings in the Capitol building. We should have just taken a machine gun and shot them. (DePue laughs) We tried so many things to get rid of those, and I didn't succeed there. But the other thing: I didn't put a tunnel. We have a tunnel from the Centennial Building to the Capitol, which makes it very functional; you have it from the Stratton Building to the Capitol—makes it very functional. We don't have it in the library. If we did it when we built it, it would cost a million; if we go in there a year later, it would have cost three or four million dollars—and today, probably cost ten million.

DePue: Yeah, it's too late now.

Edgar: So that was always a regret. But the library is something that, again, I take a lot of pride in. I think that's a neat building.

DePue: It's interesting you mentioned the starlings because that's been a hot topic in Springfield for a lot of years, and we paid serious money to have a bird whisperer come to town to try to get rid of the birds downtown.

Edgar: When I was secretary of state, they used to—and I think maybe they still do, I don't know if they still do or not—have the fireworks on the Fourth of July during Lincoln Fest. Actually, it might even have started before I was secretary of state, but we made a big to-do about it when I was secretary of state. Fireworks. I'd always take the family, and we'd go throw a blanket out and sit in the Capitol grounds, and at the end, I started dipping ice cream and giving out ice cream on the Fourth of July. I'd do that with my staff, and we'd give free ice cream cones before the start. And we'd always make sure the municipal band was there to play John Philip Sousa music. Everybody knows that there's always a possibility I might run for office again when I hear John Philip Sousa music. Brenda's scared to death on the Fourth of July that I'll hear John Philip Sousa music and say I'll run, because that really gets my juices going. But we'd sit there, and we just loved doing that, and then the fireworks go off, and the birds would just (laughter) go nuts up there. I used to just shake my head thinking we should have got rid of them, but we didn't.

DePue: I don't know if we talked about this on tape before or not, but hopefully your memory's better on this than mine—the issue of the Illinois authors being part of that building.

Edgar: Yeah. We had a program called Read Illinois. It was part of what we did out of the library and just promoted Illinois authors—it was a way also to be a little more literary as a secretary of state. We got along with a lot of authors who probably wouldn't hang out with secretaries of state (laughs) in Illinois historically, because of that. So we got ready to build the state library. Bridget Lamont, who was the director of state libraries—I was the state librarian, but she was for all practical

purposes the day-to-day state librarian—she said, "You know, we ought to put outstanding authors." They came up with a committee, and they came up with these names, which was highly controversial. Some people got left off, and people said, "What's Black Hawk doing up there?" He did write his autobiography. And Lincoln's up there. He's never written a specific book, but he wrote a lot of speeches that are considered great writings.

DePue: Yeah, how can you keep Lincoln off of that list?

Edgar: Yeah. But I remember Bridget told me—who's the guy who wrote the real famous one-volume book on Lincoln, who had been the state historian for a while?

DePue: I should know, but…

Edgar: Oh, shoot... Anyway, his widow was still alive at that time, and—Thomas. Was it was Thomas? Thompson? Thomas? Yeah, I think it was Benjamin P. Thomas. Anyway. Before the last ten years, it was always viewed as probably the best one-volume—

DePue: My excuse—I tell people I'm the twentieth-century guy, not the nineteenth-century guy.

Edgar: Yeah. His widow was very upset (laughs) when his name didn't get etched up, and I remember Bridget said she took some books home, or some artifacts that she had had that we had used in something. But how the names came out was a committee, and I think they just ran them by me. I think I asked a couple of questions, but that's all I know about it—how those got on there. But the feeling was to put something up there like that.

DePue: It's viewed today as a very nice touch, an important addition to the building.

Edgar: But there is controversy surrounding some of those names.

DePue: Everything in Illinois has controversy.

Edgar: Has controversy, yeah.

DePue: A couple issues to go back to as well, and maybe you weren't all that directly involved, but I know one of the things that always goes on is redesigning the actual licenses themselves to try to keep up with counterfeiters.

Edgar: The license? The driver's license?

DePue: Right.

Edgar: Yeah, I wasn't so much—our technology people and dealing with companies like 3M and people involved—I can't remember if it was actually 3M, but whoever we bought the camera from. And they've come a long way since we were there. But

that was always—you're keeping one step ahead of the underage drinkers and the mob, and that's who usually were trying to do that. But it wasn't something that I personally spent—I spent more time on the license plates, the one license plate, when we replated. They brought it into me, and the rationalization was that when you look at it, it looked like a prairie. It looked like a prairie with the big city in the prairie. The color was what I picked. It was the color of Eastern Illinois University. Historically, every year the license plate colors would change to meet one of the universities in the state. Then we went to multi-year plates, and so we're still going to annual plates during my time, and I decide—this was early; this was 1982—we're going to make it blue and gray. That's Eastern's colors, as opposed to U of I colors. (DePue laughs) So the coloring of the plate, I had picked. The design, the staff came too, and I don't know if I—I probably looked at three or four and decided to go with that. We did not do a contest.

DePue: How about the issue of vanity plates and the proliferation of all of these different kinds of plates?

Edgar: Vanity plates had been there before I got there. The only new big one we added—we did vanity plates for trucks, pick-ups, that weren't there—was the one-character plates. I did that as I was going out of office, and I will tell you I gave them to my friends. There was no law against giving them to my friends, and I gave them to my friends. (DePue laughs) I have *E*. I did that after the election in 1990. We did it right at the last minute. The others, you had some discretion. You had a lot of discretion. Vanity plates, you did. Once a person gets a plate, then as long as they keep their registration up, they can even pass that down in their family; but if they ever not kept it up, then you could… And that's how I have license plate four. I gave Pate Philip license plate eight or nine—I can't remember which number. Those were hot commodity items. What was the other question you asked about, besides vanity plates?

DePue: The proliferation of other kinds of plates with specialty groups.

Edgar: Yeah. It's much greater since I left the secretary of state's office. That already started before I came in. We did that some, though we finally decided to slow it down. When I was governor I used to veto all those bills, and they'd override me every time. We went way too far. State police complained, and I agreed with them, and when I was there, we stopped doing as many. We finally decided we could only do so many a year, and they could only be a certain period of time. Again, the state police just had a real problem with too many plates out there. The other argument, too, when we went to replating, was let's go to one plate to save money, wear and tear. You don't have to worry about that front plate that's always falling off. State police was opposed to it. They said they identify more cars by the front plate than they do the back plate, and they say they pass a lot more cars than they follow, and if state policemen train themselves, they can read that front plate driving the other direction. Made a good argument to me, so we kept two plates in Illinois, because I thought license plates—I don't want to be a state policeman; that's a tough job and I

don't want to do anything that undercuts their ability to do their job, so I made that call on the plates, that we'd keep two plates.

DePue: Next question. This might not have been an issue then. It certainly was a hot issue in the last presidential election we had: licensing of illegals.

Edgar: It wasn't an issue then. I support licensing of people who are in Illinois—not to get hung up on if they're legal or not legal—because I want people licensed so they can drive, and if they're illegal, they're still going to drive. I'd rather make them go through a test. Immigration wanted us to check green cards—because people would bring in green cards to show their identification to get a driver's license—and if we thought they were phony, we should take them from those people. I said, "No, I have enough trouble with my people just doing the basic driver's license, I'm not getting into immigration's job. We're not going to sit there and hold up the line and have my people try to determine is this a legal green card or not and end up being wrong and being sued. That's just not our job." And I don't think immigration liked it, but Hispanics liked it (laughs)—all the ethnic groups.

DePue: And it never became a political issue while you were secretary of state?

Edgar: No. I have argued several times, and I've been listed as supporting attempts to have a special license even for a person who can't prove their legal residency, just because licenses are not there to prove residency; licenses are to demonstrate you have the ability to drive. It's a traffic safety issue. My concern is you keep it dealing with traffic safety. Again, it wasn't a huge issue when I was secretary of state, but that was the position I took, and I continue to take that position on licenses, because I know how hard it is—particularly in the Chicago area—to move people through those facilities. I also know that if you add many more responsibilities on these people, particularly determining if something is phony or not, it's almost impossible for them to determine that, and you'll slow down those lines, and that's not our function.

DePue: We're pretty much towards the end of our discussion about your years as secretary of state, but I did want to give you the opportunity to talk about any reorganizations within the secretary of state's office and then finish off with talking about some of the important people who worked for you there.

Edgar: I think more important maybe than reorganization was we professionalized it. I really think—like the secretary of state police, you had to go through the academy; we took the politics out of it. We redid a lot of the codes and procedures, like in securities and corporations. We had advisory committees we actually listened to and their recommendations became—whether it was law or rule or regulation. I think people in those departments felt that they were professionals. I'm just trying to think on reorganization. I'm sure we did some reorganization, but I think more important was the professionalization. I really feel like we had that at the secretary of state's office.

DePue: I think we've mentioned briefly—but the role of an inspector general?

Edgar: Inspector general was to kind of police the internal—that had been there. I think that we expanded it, and we professionalized it maybe a little more when we had—Jim Redenbo came over from the state police and drew up some recommendations before he left. And he did it for a while. But that was very important because I think it kept us out of trouble and allowed us to do a better job of policing ourselves in an office that had a history, before and after, of some shenanigans. Not that we eliminated it all, but I think we severely reduced it, and everybody knew that it wasn't going to be tolerated.

But again, it was just the whole tone of the office. I think people you talked to, who had worked there under several secretaries, said that was the best time to work there. They felt like it was professional. They also got taken care of. We gave raises; we gave promotions. People who performed well got rewarded, and it wasn't based on how many tickets (coughs) you sold in a fundraiser. I think we had a lot of people surprised, who were mainly Democrats that found out it was actually better under me than it had been under Dixon or Howlett. So to me, that's the…

It had a lot of people there who were very good. I mean, they were good. Some came with me to governor; some stayed. But you had Al Grosboll, Joan Walters, Bridget Lamont, who had been there and stayed after I left and went with George Ryan. You had several holdovers from the Democrats. Bridget had been there under the Democrats. Her husband was a U of I trustee elected as a Democrat. But there were a lot of good people. Steve Schnorf headed up my driver's facility. He later became head of the Bureau of the Budget under me and under George. I thought he did a good job at driver's.[32] Mark Sorensen was the deputy I brought in—he was somebody I'd gone to school with, was a history major—and he was deputy director of the archives. You had John Daley, who was always the head while I was there—he was there before I came, and he was there when I left—just died about a year ago, last year. He was retired.

But there were people there who were before, and there were people we brought in. I think all the ones who stayed around were good because I think we let them do their job, and we encouraged them and helped them do it in a professional manner and gave them the resources. Showed an interest. As secretary of state, we created a program called Employee of the Month, which I always thought was a good program, that showed the rank and file we cared about how they performed, and I'd always go to every one of those ceremonies and hand out the award.

I tried to be out and about in not only the driver's facilities around the state, but over in the Centennial Building a lot. And I had an interest—archives, that's history, so I loved that. The library, I enjoyed. I was around the plates and the driver's license part of it a lot, too. Securities and corporation—securities, we had several directors. Corporations, we had Bud Hall most the time. George Fleischli

[32] See Stephen Schnorf, interview by Mike Czaplicki [rest of cite and page numbers].

did building and grounds. I thought we did an excellent job on the Capitol complex—was kept in good shape. We did improvements there. I think we did it all within reason on the budget.

So overall, I thought the secretary of state's office was a great opportunity for me to learn, but I thought we did a good job there. I had a lot of people that I'd brought in and people I got to know there, who later went on to the governor's office and the various departments, who I thought did a very good job, both in the secretary of state's office and later when we went to the governor's office.

But it was obvious to me you're only as good as the people around you, and that's something I learned there and remembered when I was governor. You had to have good people, you had to give them the authority, you had to listen to them—not always agree with them. Sometimes I would veto what they wanted to do, but most the time, because I had confidence—if I didn't have confidence in them, I wasn't going to listen to them, and I'd put somebody else in there. Because I didn't have time, and the secretary of state is a very diverse office—not the size of the governor's, but still very diverse—and so you had to have confidence in the people because there was no way you would know all that much about all those different things. The same thing was true in the governor's office. Now, attorney general, treasurer, comptroller—it's much more narrow, and maybe you know about that stuff. But the secretary of state's office is kind of a hodgepodge of everything that didn't rest in the governor's office, and the governor's office is a hodgepodge of a lot of stuff, too, so you had to learn to…

The most important thing you did probably was the people you picked to work with you and for you, and how you dealt with them. We spent a lot of time, when we'd have staff retreats and staff meetings, talking about how do you deal with personnel, because particularly in the secretary of state's office, it's all about service. What most people know the secretary of state's office is how quick can they get their driver's license or get their title or their license plate or whatever. Or if you're a corporation or a securities—how they deal with you. Service was extremely important, and the key to service is the people's pride in that service, so we spent a lot of time worrying about how do you deal with people—employees—and how do you deal with the public?

I remember early on, one of the things—this was a small thing, but I think it kind of symbolic. People would come over to the Centennial Building, the secretary of state's office, to process things. These people who would do license plates and stuff, they'd come from all over the state and they'd come down—people would come to them, and for a fee they'd come down and do that stuff. They were in our office all the time processing stuff that was important to get done and saved us a lot of hassle. They always had trouble parking. We finally designated about five spots for them to park near the Centennial Building and provided a little work area for them. That made their job ten times easier. And while they didn't work for us, they were providing a service to people from our office. We tried to identify those things. They were small things, but they were things that were important to people

who dealt with our office, and I think they left a positive impression in people's mind about government being responsive—not on the scale a governor can do, but still on a scale that I think has a positive effect and was very successful. And again, I think it has a lot to do with people's confidence in me and job approval ratings and all those things that you kind of measure—are you doing a good job? And to this day, I have people who will come up and talk about how good it was to deal with the secretary of state's office or to work in the secretary of state's office during that period.

Now, most of those things weren't things that I thought of, and most of that relationship with employees wasn't me personally; it was the people I had working for me who had that attitude, but hopefully I instilled some of that priority to them. The key was those folks you have around you, and that's the most important thing, maybe the biggest difference between the executive branch and the legislative branch of government. You've got to have good people and you've got to have some sense of picking good people and having good people kind of charged up to go out and do the job right. If you do that, then I think a lot of those things will work out, and I think people will view your tenure as successful, and government works. So that's what I think was important, and there's just a whole host of people. In fact, if the people weren't doing that, they didn't stay. We usually would move them out or they'd get the message and leave. We didn't have to fire too many people. My experience was that most people wanted to do that, if they just were given the proper tools and encouragement to do that—and guidelines—and that's what we tried to do.

DePue: I noticed there's one other thing that I missed that I do want to touch on. We started today with talking about drunk driving issues, so let's finish the secretary of state timeframe with drunk driving and the move from 0.1 to 0.08.

Edgar: That happened after me.

DePue: I know that the discussion started while you there.

Edgar: Yeah. You could look at it, and you could see that at .08 you shouldn't be driving. Some states had started, and we tried to do that, and we talked about it. It didn't happen. I think George Ryan did it about the second year I was governor. But it was—

DePue: But you initiated that?

Edgar: I can't remember. We talked about it. I can't remember what happened, why we didn't push it, or what—

DePue: According to what I've seen, it was roughly 1989. It was at least moving though the House and the Senate at that time.

Edgar: Yeah, it didn't pass, though, because I signed it when I was governor at the state fair, and I think it was '92 or '93. It was before my first reelection. But yeah, I can't remember what…

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: It's one of those things that—and I think it's very helpful—it's something that probably gets more attention than, of course, administrative suspension, but not one-tenth as important as administrative suspension. That was much more important. Most of those other things were really more important. That was just kind of icing, but it's something that people could remember and get excited about. But you could make the argument, because you look, and somebody driving at 0.08 has no business driving. Point-one had always been the number out there. Our problem was just getting people—at least at .1—off the road.

DePue: Finish off with—

Edgar: Now, DUI, too—I might say that that last year when we left without .08, MADD picked us as having the best laws in the nation. There might have been another state we were tied with, but that was a long cry from where we'd been eight years before.

DePue: Just the kind of thing to talk about when you decide to run for governor.

Edgar: Yeah, but I'm trying to think—(laughs) it came out pretty late. But when you talk about running for governor, you talked about this. People already knew me as the guy against drunk driving, and I'd fought… Really, a lot of those things, I'm not sure how much they worked out there talking about them. I think probably the thing that worked more than anything we talked about and probably had more of an impression was those license plates being made by people in Decatur who wanted to work, (DePue laughs) who had a handicap. I just think people said, "Boy, that makes a lot of sense. That's just good common sense."

DePue: So we're going to finish today with that fateful call, another call from Governor Thompson.

Edgar: We're going to make one quick call. I'm not going to get into the announcement—I'll do that next time—I'll just get into that call. It was the summer of '89. It was sometime in early July—I can probably go look and check my thing back here, we can get you that date—and I was on my way to the secretary of state's meeting. One thing we didn't talk— I was pretty active in the national secretary of state organization. I was then president of it, and I was going out to preside over my annual meeting in Vail, Colorado—it wasn't an accident we'd picked Vail, Colorado. I talked the Colorado secretary of state into saying we ought to come to Vail, because I love Colorado. And I did not think Thompson would run again, but again, he always had. (laughs) And there had not been any offer from the White House. There had been talk early on that he might get to be FBI director, which would have created a vacancy and made George Ryan governor, but that didn't happen. So we didn't think he'd run again, but he hadn't said. So the legislative

session was over. I'm on my way—it's early July. I can't remember the exact date. I'm on my way down to St. Louis to catch a plane to go to Colorado for the secretary of state meeting. And kind of had the feeling that he might be about ready to make a decision one way or the other, but wasn't positive, didn't know exactly what was going to happen.

I just remember I got to the airport and one of my state troopers said, "You've got to call your secretary." Penny Clifford's my secretary at that time. "You've got to call Penny." So I call Penny, and Penny says, "The governor needs to talk to you." I thought, oh, this must be it, because he doesn't really search out for me, and Penny—I could tell. Penny said, "He's got to talk to you now," because I was about half an hour before getting on the plane. So I said, "Okay."

So we make contact, and I get him, and he said, "It's yours." I said, "What's mine?" He said, "The office. I'm not going to run again; it's yours." (laughs) And I said, "When are you going to announce it?" He said, "I'm going to announce it in about an hour."

DePue: Whoa.

Edgar: And I said, "Okay." And that's all. He hung up, and I get on the plane and go to Colorado. Of course, needless to say, I don't remember much of that flight except thinking about running for governor, and knowing that when I land I had to plan out my campaign and get started. Because when I landed, we drove on up to Vail, then I started getting calls from my office—I was talking to Mike Lawrence and other people back there—saying, "The TV media wants to talk to you." But it was that.

Talk about transition. You're getting on a plane to go someplace, and you kind of take off in one mode and land in another mode. Because that was the event, that was the moment when you knew, all this political preparation—you're now going to put it to the test. And you knew that Hartigan was going to be the Democratic nominee. He'd already announced, I think. Or I don't think he'd formally announced. He was already out there—pretty obvious he was going to run, would probably be the nominee. Madigan wasn't going to try to recruit somebody else this time. But you finally knew Thompson was going to finally say, "I'm not going to run." You had to wait until that happened.

DePue: Did he mention your name when he said that he wasn't going to run again?

Edgar: I think so. I'm not sure. You'd have to be there. They probably asked, and he said he expected I would run. I don't know if he said he'd endorse me at that time. He made it clear he was going to support me—that was never a question—but I can't remember, because I was in Colorado, and he did it in Chicago and Springfield. I can't remember which he did first, because I was *en route* and kind of out of

pocket to know all the details.[33] There wasn't anything he said that surprised me or disappointed me, but I don't know exactly what he said.

DePue: Next time, when we do get together—and I think it's going to be a couple months before that happens—we get to talk about what everybody I've talked to describes as a classic gubernatorial race—

Edgar: Oh, yeah, it was.

DePue: —between you and Hartigan.

Edgar: Yeah. Probably the most even, as far as funding, name recognition, poll numbers, and everything. (voice farther away) And you had two guys that you kind of—

DePue: Oh, don't go too far away. We're still recording here.

Edgar: I've always said that if you're going to study a gubernatorial race in Illinois to understand politics, that's the one to study.

DePue: Thank you, Governor.

(end of interview 8)

Interview with Jim Edgar

ISG-A-V-2009-019.09

Interview # 9: September 2, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

DePue: Good afternoon. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today is September second. It's a Wednesday afternoon, a gorgeous day in Springfield, and it's my pleasure to be with Governor Edgar this afternoon. How are you, Governor?

---

[33] At a morning news conference in the State of Illinois Center, July 14, 1989, Thompson announced he would not seek reelection. Later that day, he made the same announcement in Springfield. Hartigan formally declared his candidacy July 18. *Chicago Tribune*, July 14 & 18, 1989, 1.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: This is part of a continuing series that we've been doing at the library with Governor Edgar. This is actually the ninth session that we've had with the governor, but we decided to do something a little bit different for this one, because the subject for today's interview is the 1990 gubernatorial election. And Governor, you've told me several times that this is a classic election, so we wanted to do something a little bit special in that regard. So thank you again for agreeing to come here, and we're looking forward to it. Last time we talked, we left off with a discussion about your call that you got from Governor Thompson telling you that it was your turn.

Edgar: It was in July 1989, twenty years ago, and I was on my way out to the secretary of state convention in Vail, Colorado, which I was the president of.[34] The last thing before I got on the plane, I talked to Governor Thompson, and he told me that in a few minutes, he was going to announce he was not going to run for reelection and that—the term he used—"It's yours." And I think everyone kind of figured I was the heir apparent, at least on the Republican side, that I would be the Republican candidate for governor. So as Brenda and I flew to Colorado, I don't know if I noticed the flight. (DePue laughs) I mean, you hoped eventually this opportunity would come, and it did, and now that it was coming, my mind was racing on all the things I needed to do and all the concerns and worry—because I knew it was going to be a tough campaign. I thought at that point I'd be the Republican nominee and Neil Hartigan, the attorney general, would be the Democratic candidate, and it would be a barn-burner. And it turned out to be that.

When we landed in Colorado, I got a hold of my staff back in Illinois. I think I'd called Mike Lawrence, my press secretary, right before I left, and he knew what was happening. And of course Governor Thompson had had his press conference while I was flying. We began to talk strategy, and right away they had calls from Chicago television [stations] that wanted to come and interview me. Well, little bit of a dilemma—I wanted them to interview me, but I didn't necessarily want them to interview me so everybody knows I'm in Vail, Colorado. What are you doing in Vail, Colorado, (DePue laughs) on some kind of junket? So the agreement I had—they could interview me, but they couldn't have the mountains in the background. They just interviewed me inside our hotel room and didn't make any mention necessarily where I was. So they all contracted with local television stations in Denver, who came out to Vail and interviewed me on what I thought.

Also, while this was going on, we had our people out talking with party people around the state and making sure everybody was going to be on board whenever I did announce. And so there were a lot of things going on as we drove into Vail, Colorado, and spent the next two or three days trying to preside over a meeting but also trying to lock down a nomination for governor back in Illinois. And we thought we had a pretty good open field at that point of anyone who would

[34] Jim Edgar served as president of the National Association of Secretaries of State from 1988 to 1989.

be a credible candidate. George Ryan and I had already had a discussion about I would run for governor and he would run for secretary of state.

That was important, because for just a little over a half year, George Bush the elder had been president, and there was always speculation or rumors that Governor Thompson might be named to his cabinet, or if the FBI post came open, they might name him the head of the FBI. If he left, then George Ryan would become governor, and that would completely change the political landscape. Whereas most people viewed that I was the heir-apparent Republican nominee for governor, if George would become governor, then he would be the likely candidate. He'd only have a few months, he'd still be in a honeymoon, and undoubtedly he would be the candidate for governor. So when we got together—this was probably in late spring sometime, maybe in May or June—it was pretty obvious Thompson probably wasn't going to the cabinet, so George Ryan was willing to kind of settle for secretary of state. And the party chairmen around the state kind of thought that made sense—he ought to not try to run for governor—maybe go for secretary of state, and I go for governor. When we got together and kind of reached that agreement, I think many of the party leaders around the state were in agreement with that.

So I knew I didn't have to worry about George Ryan. Then word came that Donald Rumsfeld, who had not really been around Illinois politics for a long time, but who had been a former congressman and then chief of staff for President Ford, was maybe interested in running for governor. And this was kind of out of the blue.

DePue: Most people even forgot that he ever came from Illinois.

Edgar: Yeah, but the insiders knew, and here was a person the media—this is a big name—and it just kind of stunned me. I never thought about him having any interest in—because he had never been involved in state politics. So I'm still out in Vail running my meeting, and I'm making calls back to Illinois, talking with people who are going to talk to people that talked to Rumsfeld. And in fact, I think he had been on a raft trip with Dick Cheney, (DePue laughs) his former assistant, and Bob Teeter—who was one of my political consultants, who also was President Bush's political consultant—out in Wyoming. So when he got back, he was going to think about it. He got back, I think, on a Sunday night, and his people had a conference. And some of his people had talked to some of my people, and they didn't think it made a lot of sense. He had no understanding of Illinois that much—the state and the political nuances or some of the issues. They didn't think he would probably be real excited about worrying about a bridge down in Saline County, or something like that. So they kind of counseled him that it probably didn't make a lot of sense; plus, ideally there'd be a pretty tough primary battle, because while he would have been a formidable candidate, I think most people still figured I had the edge. Then he announced the next day that he wasn't interested in running for governor, so that pretty well, I thought, locked up the nomination.

And I have to say, that at that point, I could then enjoy the secretary of state meeting. In fact, it was ironic. The day before he made that call, our special guest was Gerald Ford, (DePue laughs) because we were in Vail and that was his summer home. I made some mention that one of his former people might be running, (laughter) and he kind of chuckled. He didn't offer any advice or help, but he chuckled. So within three days, at least in the Republican political establishment, and I think in the media, it was pretty much a foregone conclusion I would be the Republican nominee. Now, I later did have a primary opponent, and we'll talk about that a little later, but that kind of gave me a little breathing room, because we still wanted to do the official announcement, but we wanted to stage it just right. Also, I had a week vacation coming in Colorado, and I figured I better take it because I might not get one for a while. So we stayed in Colorado for another week, and my staff was back putting together the plans for an announcement, which came the eighth or ninth of—

DePue: Eighth.

Edgar: —August.

DePue: I wanted to ask you before you got too far, put you on the spot: why was Thompson supporting you rather than Ryan?

Edgar: I think, again, it was just kind of taken for granted that I would be the person. Name recognition—secretary of state's much more visible than lieutenant governor. I think the polls indicated that. Again, I think it was just kind of taken for granted that's the way it would be. I had worked for him on his staff before I had become secretary of state.[35] There's a quote I think we talked about in an earlier session, and he had it in a book I read recently on George Ryan: that when he convinced me to come and work for him, he said, "We'll put you in line to be governor."[36] I think in everyone's mind, it was just after secretary of state, I was going to run for governor, and he was in agreement with that. There was never any question, I don't think, on that.

So I got back to Illinois, and we were planning the fly-around. But I also spent a lot of time early on in that campaign talking to people, business leaders, trying to line up support, line up money, and work with groups around the state that we'd already worked with. The year before, as secretary of state, I had had a lot of the various state association boards of directors into my office—had lunch with them, got to know them, began to make them feel comfortable with me so when this

[35] Edgar discusses his selection and work as Thompson's legislative liaison from 1979-1981 in his interviews with Mark DePue on June 9, 2009, 75-88, and June 10, 2009. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

[36] According to Fred Edgar, when Thompson tapped his brother to be secretary of state, he did so with the idea that the governorship would be the next step for Edgar. Fred Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 22, 2009, 58-59.

campaign came along, they would feel like they knew me, and hopefully they would support me.

DePue: This is going on before the formal announcement?

Edgar: Yes. Everybody knew I was going to announce, but I wanted to get out and about and try to get people lined up to be with me, and put together committees and things. So I spent a lot of my time, then and really for the next three or four months, just meeting one-on-one with leaders in the state—a lot of business leaders, but also ethnic leaders and association leaders and things—kind of to begin to put the campaign together. I probably was spending more time focusing on what I thought it was going to take to win the general election than worrying about a primary challenge.

Now, at that point, it didn't look like we were going to have a primary challenge—we did have one later—but my sense was this was going to be a tough general election, come 1990. Historically, the off-year election is a tougher election for the party with the White House, so we knew we'd probably have a backlash there. Also, I had begun to pick up—though not to the degree that I realized a year later—that people wanted a change. Jim Thompson had been governor for fourteen years; that was a long time in Illinois for one party to hold onto the governor's mansion, so there was beginning to be some restlessness and "We want a change." So you had to begin to think about how do you get identified as change while at the same time you're a Republican and you're an ally of the current governor?

So those things were beginning to happen, but also working on what I was going to say at the announcement. Began to focus on some of the themes we wanted to talk about in a campaign, knowing that was going to be probably one of the best media opportunities I would have for several months in this campaign. We wanted to start the campaign off very positive; we wanted to get as big a bang as we could in that opening announcement because we knew we were going to have television coverage all over the state—particularly in Chicago, which was important—and we just wanted people to have a positive attitude about the campaign from the word "Go."

So we spent a lot of time on the speech, spent a lot of time planning the announcement day. I'm one who likes to get involved in that stuff. I'm my own scheduler, my schedulers always would point out. We wanted to hit as many places as possible; we wanted rallies, we wanted a good crowd, we wanted a good setting, and we wanted to have the right people there. So that took a lot of planning, because I think we had six stops that day. We started out in my hometown of Charleston, which I wanted to do; I wanted to start there. We had the announcement on the campus of Eastern Illinois University, where I'd gone to school. And then from there, we flew down to southern Illinois and we went to Marion. Now, in Charleston, we announced; I gave the speech six times that day, so—

DePue: I have the press release right here, as a matter of fact.

Edgar: Do you? Okay, you probably remember it better than I do, if you have the press release, but I got tired of hearing it. (DePue laughs) But that first, we knew, was important. Because one of our themes was going to be education and children and all, Ted Sanders, who had been the state superintendent of schools and had just gone to the Bush administration as the number-two person in the Department of Education—he was deputy secretary of education—came back to introduce me, both in Charleston and later in Springfield, and that kind of dramatized my concern about education.

DePue: If you don't mind, I can read a couple of quotes from the—

Edgar: Okay, all right.

DePue: —announcement that kind of help frame this. "We can assure that Illinois has an educational system that is second to none in our nation, an educational system that will help attract and keep good jobs, an education system that will encourage our children to stay in Illinois and raise our grandchildren here, a system that will assure that Illinois is a state prosperous enough to meet the needs of the truly needy and to bring them into the mainstream of our society." And here is another quote that I thought was a little bit revealing of how you were thinking about things. You said, "All politicians want to be popular—I'm no exception—but it's more important to me that I do my duty as I see it, and that I keep faith with the principles that have guided me through my years of public service." Does that sound about right?[37]

Edgar: Um-hm, that sounds about right, yes. Yes, the speech was much longer. Nobody should think they got off that easy back in (DePue laughs) August 1989. But we had a great turnout at the campus, and we were well organized. That was very important to me, that we were organized, and I thought we organized well. But the night before, we'd had all the media, particularly the Chicago television media and the newspapers, in Charleston to see where I grew up. We had a cookout at the park, Morton Park, which also appears in the first ad, I think, that we did. But I did some one-on-one interviews with people that night; then we took them over to show them our house, where I lived in Charleston, which was a very modest ranch house.

DePue: You were hoping to get on the evening news, perhaps?

Edgar: We did, I think, get on the evening news, yes. Because we hired a satellite truck to come in so they could uplink their stories back to Chicago, and that got all the neighbors in my mother's neighborhood all excited, because that's a pretty big thing. (DePue laughs) Again, we wanted to get every free moment we could on Chicago television, which is always the name of the game in Illinois politics—

---

[37] The relationship between political success and principled governance is an important theme in the Edgar Project interviews. For examples, see Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, May 28, 2009, 26-28, and June 15, 2009, 23-30 and 58-63; Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, August 18, 2009, 28-29; Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, April 1, 2009, 54, 59-63; George Fleischli, interview by Mark DePue, January 27, 2010, 51-52; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, July 23, 2009, 49-51 and 53-55; and Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 134-139, 143, and 146-148.

getting on Chicago television—because two-thirds of the state's population watches Chicago television. So I thought that went well. The announcement in Charleston went well.

Then we went down to Marion, where I remember they had this huge balloon, and we had several thousands of people there, too. It turned out to be a beautiful day. We had leased a jet from Ozark Airline—that was an airline that (laughs) existed back then. It was a, I don't know, DC-9? It was a big plane. It cost a lot of money, I remember. And we took a lot of people with us. We also planned on who would fly with us. We'd have people fly so far, then we would change, they'd get off, and other people would get on. But again, we wanted to use that for potential supporters, particularly financial supporters, also political leaders, people who were influential, and people who had been very supportive over the years. I remember Governor [William] Stratton flew with us. I don't know if he'd ever done a fly-around, because he used a helicopter back when he ran for governor a few times, but he hadn't been around to all those places probably since he left office thirty years before, so it was fun to have him.[38] We had a whole group of folks with us. The press—some of them would fly for two stops, we'd change, and some other press people would get on. So Brenda and I and our two children were on the flight. My mother wasn't well at that time. She was with us in Charleston, but she didn't do the fly-around.

So we went to Marion. Again, had a great crowd. It was a beautiful day. The weather is the other thing I was worried about, because all of these were outdoor rallies. Except the one in Charleston was in the student union, I think, and the one in Rosemont was in an auditorium, but the rest were going to be outside, or maybe in a hanger if we had to. So Marion, then we went from Marion to over near Alton; then from Alton, we had to get to Springfield. We wanted to get to Springfield for the big rally downtown at the Capitol Building during noon hour.

DePue: The current Capitol Building or the old Capitol?

Edgar: Yes, the current Capitol Building. We had them in the rotunda; that was always where we had our rallies. And we wanted to try to do it during noon hour so we didn't [get] accused of having our people off work. (DePue laughs) We didn't get there till about 1:00 or 1:30, but everybody took a late lunch hour. The place was packed. Of all the places we had political rallies, by far my favorite was in the rotunda of the State Capitol. One, you didn't have to have all that many people to make it look jammed (laughter), and you always wanted a big crowd. The setting to me just was—and we always had a band playing John Philip Sousa music. That was my favorite kind of music to get me pumped up. So we went in there that day, and I just remember that place—people were hanging from the rafters, and they'd been waiting for two hours; they were still there. And there wasn't just all job-holders or -seekers; there were a lot of other people there. Because we lived in Springfield,

[38] Meeting Stratton had been a big event in Edgar's early life; see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 54-56.

a lot of our friends were there as well. And that rally was very uplifting. It kind of got the juices going.

From there, we flew to Peoria and had another good rally, and then flew to Rockford. We might have had seven rallies, now that I think about it. We flew to Rockford, and then from Rockford, we flew to the Quad Cities. And I think that one, we had it near the Holiday Inn near the airport, because I remember they have a huge polar bear in that hotel, and we walked by the polar bear walking into our rally. Then we had to get to Chicago in time to make sure that we got on the WGN evening news. We were going to do a live broadcast on WGN. You want to do that because that goes all over the state. But we were running behind—of course, needless to say—we'd had all these stops, and we just weren't quite on schedule. We're sitting at the Quad City airport, and they said, "There's a delay getting into O'Hare."

DePue: You were going to O'Hare?

Edgar: Yes. Well, we had a jet. I think (laughs) it was a regular airline—

DePue: I'm surprised you wouldn't have gone to Meigs.

Edgar: We were doing it there because that's where the rally was, in the suburbs—it was in Rosemont. But anyway, I remember they said, "You're going to be held on the ground here in the Quad City probably for an hour." Well, one of our staff people, who knows a little bit about flying and stuff—Sam Skinner was the secretary of transportation from Illinois, and he was a guy we knew. (laughs) This staffer got on—he took the microphone or whatever from the pilot and said, "You know, we have special clearance from Secretary of Transportation Samuel Skinner"—and he made this up. (DePue laughs) There was a pause on the other end, and finally says, "You have immediate clearance into O'Hare." (laughter) And we flew. About a year later, the staffer—somebody got a letterhead from the Department of Transportation or one of their agencies, saying they were investigating some use of—this guy was scared to death he was going to go to jail. (laughs)

So we get into Rosemont, and a huge crowd is there. And that was important because this was our big Chicago rally, and we had worked extra hard to get a lot of ethnic groups there; that, we knew, was going to be an important part of the campaign. And I'll never forget—this is, I think, my seventh stop, not my sixth, at this point, and I was getting a little tired, but the crowd was just huge, and it got us all pumped up. We had a lot of speakers there before I spoke, and I'm looking out in the audience, and over here we have Pakistanians for Edgar, and over here we have Indians for Edgar (DePue laughs)—India Indians—and I thought, huh. As the night went along, they got pushed closer and closer together, and I had this vision that right when I got up to speak, they were going to be right next to each other, and a fight was going to break out between the Pakistanians and the Indians. Anyway, that didn't happen, but I told that to both groups later on, during the next three years; so four years later, when I ran for governor, they had a joint Indian-Pakistans

for—(DePue laughs) show that they could get together in Illinois in my campaign. And we got there in time to do the live broadcast on WGN and had a great rally there.

So the fly-around, we thought, was very successful. I think everybody that was on it remembers that. It was quite an event. And the publicity was good. As a result, in the initial polls they had between Hartigan and I, I had a fifteen-, sixteen-point lead, because I think we did a much better job of getting out of the starting gate than he did.

DePue: And this is obviously months before the primary, even.

Edgar: This is a year and three months before the election, but my theory was, we're both kind of known, and you want to get to people quickly and start out with a favorable impression; then it makes it a lot harder for you to lose their support later on. Now, that proved wrong. What I found out and what I didn't appreciate when I started out: I knew that I had 95 percent name recognition, I think the attorney general had 90 percent name recognition, my job approval's a little bigger than his—secretary of state in Illinois was much more visible at that point than the attorney general was—but it was all pretty shallow compared to what it takes for a governor. A governor—there needs to be a little more depth in people's perception than for secretary of state or attorney general. So while I thought people knew us and we got off to a good start, they still hadn't made up their mind. Even though they might have answered a poll one way or the other, they still weren't locked in, as we found out a year later. But it was off to a good start.

DePue: I know that the next phase is going to be this fly-around that you've already alluded to here, but I wonder if this is a good time to talk about the progression of your own political skills. You're a guy who's going to be running for governor after Thompson has been holding the office for fourteen years—and arguably the most skilled politician/campaigner that Illinois had seen for a hundred years or so. Talk about or critique your own campaigning style.

Edgar: I'm not Jim Thompson, and I knew I didn't want to be Jim. We knew we had to separate ourselves from Jim Thompson, and it had to be a little bit different; but at the same time, people expected kind of a backslapper or somebody who was not too stiff, and I was probably a little stiff. But for the announcement, you knew that what was going to be on TV was going to be maybe thirty seconds to a minute and a half of what you said at your speech, and some cutaways on what you were doing as you went in and shaking hands. So of course, I always walked in and shook hands with everybody, and there were pictures that appeared of me shaking hands with folks.

DePue: What were you wearing?

Edgar: Suit. White shirt, tie. This was a very formal thing. Now, it got hot, and there were times I'd take that off, but when I did my speech, I think I always—I can't remember if there was any time maybe when I just did it in shirt and tie. There's

a picture that we made up of the plane and Brenda and I getting off the plane, which we gave to everybody and signed it—everybody that was on that fly-around. There were, all said and done, probably about 250 people at some point on that plane, on that fly-around, and it shows that I'm in a suit, Brenda's dressed up, and the kids were kind of complaining; they had to dress up a little, too. (DePue laughs) They didn't have to wear suit and tie, but they were dressed up. But no, it was much more formal than going to the county fair or the state fair, when you wore a polo shirt, things like that.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about the fly-around for the next few months that you did, in terms of campaigning and preparing the field.

Edgar: I spent a lot of time in the Chicago area—again, downtown Chicago—trying to line up financial support, business leaders. Neil Hartigan was from Chicago and was pretty well known in the social circle. His wife was very active socially, and a lot of politics is done in the social circles as well as the business circles. Neil's Irish, and there's a group of Irish businessmen, and even though they might be nominally Republicans, in Chicago, if you're a businessman, you've got to deal with Democrats because they run the city—always have. So I knew there were several of those businessmen who had a personal relationship with Neil Hartigan, and I had to try to wean away as many of those as I could. Pat Ryan, who is a well-known insurance person, was a personal friend with Hartigan; the head of Commonwealth Edison was a personal friend of Hartigan. I never got those people. I spent some time with Pat Ryan, but in the end, he supported Hartigan. Now, he might not have supported him as strongly as he would if I hadn't spent time with him. But again, a lot of the time was spent with business leaders.

Also, we worked the ethnic community very hard, because in Illinois, in 1990, and I think even today, the ethnic communities still play a major role in politics. Maybe not as much as back in the mid-twentieth century, when you made sure that every major ethnic group had representation on the ballot—particularly the Democratic Party did—but still, a lot of people thought about their ethnic background before they thought about their political alliance.

DePue: And I want to make clear on this part—you're not just talking about the racial groups, but…

Edgar: Oh, no, I'm talking about the Poles, the Italians, the Germans, the Czechs. Lithuanians are an important thing in Illinois. Then you got into the Asians, but you had to deal with the Koreans, the Japanese, the Philippines—they're all separate. I mean, they didn't want to. And then the Hispanics—big difference between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, and then you had others—the Colombians and all. One of the big advantages I had being the secretary of state getting ready to run for governor: I had ten years to spend in those ethnic communities, and they knew me because I was the secretary of state—they knew who that was; that gave me identity. But then I spent the time, so when I got ready to run for governor, I wasn't a new person. I had been very active in those communities—more so,

really, than Neil Hartigan had been. A lot of those groups—everybody figured they were going to vote Democratic, so they kind of, I think, were taken for granted. I knew that I was going to have to go in there and get to know those people and win them, particularly being a downstater and a Republican to boot. So we, throughout the campaign, and when we did that first fly-around announcement—a lot of the groups we had, particularly in the Chicago area, were ethnic groups that we had been working on for several years. But again, in those early weeks of the campaign, I needed to get out and about and make sure we had as many of those people involved as we could.

But the main concern early on was putting together and raising the money, because you knew it was going to cost several millions of dollars, and that was kind of the major concern. And I had to put together my campaign structure—I didn't have a campaign manager yet. I had hoped to get Carter Hendren, who had run a campaign for me when I first ran for secretary of state, but he hadn't signed on yet. And when we did the fly-around, he still wasn't signed on. He did go on the fly-around, but he was there kind of as an observer more than as a participant. So I had to get him to agree to do that, I needed a finance chairman—

DePue: I wonder if we can put up the slide that's got your campaign staff on there, at least the big players there.

Edgar: I pretty much had everybody in place except Carter. Mike Lawrence was already my press secretary. Don Sipple had done media for me as—I'd talked to him. He hadn't done media, I guess, in my secretary of state race, but I'd talked to him before, and he was going to do it. Bob Teeter had been my pollster, he'd been Thompson's pollster, he was George Bush's pollster. No longer was pollster. By that point, he didn't want to be a pollster; he wanted to be a consultant. And don't ask me what consultants do except charge you money, and I never… But the guy that had been his assistant, Steeper, was my pollster, and then my media guy was Sipple. So you had two guys with S's, and that used to get people a little confused. Don Rose had done some media stuff for me in the past; he was very connected with kind of the independent group in Chicago and also the South Side of Chicago, and he was a consultant in this campaign as well. He didn't do the media; for the most part, Sipple did all the media. But Carter agreed to come on; then I needed to find
a finance chairman.

I got a person, a businessman in Chicago named Karl Bays.[39] He had chaired a major fundraiser for me when I first ran for secretary of state, and he was very active in the business community, which is important; you wanted somebody who knew all the CEOs so when they made the calls, they'd take their calls and they'd know him. He agreed to do it. Unfortunately, a few weeks later—or maybe it was a few months later—we were ready to have our first big fundraiser, and he had a

[39] Karl D. Bays died November 6, 1989. Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, May 7, 2009, 38-39.

heart attack and died the day of our fundraiser, and we had to cancel our fundraiser. So even though I felt good I had that in place, we had to start back over.

But as I said, the first few months were really trying to put the organization together to get out and talk to a lot of folks one on one. There weren't many campaign events. I was still secretary of state, and I would do things there. We didn't put out any position papers yet, though early on—in fact, it was when I was still in Vail—I did a radio program with Bill Cameron. He's now on WLS radio, but back then he was on WMAQ radio. I remember it was about three days after Thompson announced he wasn't going to run, and it was obvious I was going to be a candidate. I did a Sunday morning program or something with him, and he raised a question. "What's your position on the temporary income tax? Are you for making that permanent or not?" I think he expected me to just kind of waffle and not take a position, or maybe be against it. And I said, "I think we got to make it permanent." And he was dumbfounded, because here's probably going to turn out to be the biggest issue in the campaign—

DePue: Yeah. What timeframe, roughly, was this?

Edgar: This is three days after Thompson announced he wasn't going to run, and about two weeks before I even announced that I was going to run. And he was just—he said, "Do I understand you?" He said, "You're really being that candid with me? You're not going to beat around the bush?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Well, I really admire that." He admired it, but a lot of Republicans (laughs) back in Illinois had heart failure over it. It didn't get all that much play, but people kind of knew. But that had always been my position on that, so I thought, no reason to beat around the bush; just get it out now and get it over with. So that position I had taken, though it hadn't got huge coverage, the insiders knew it, and the party folks were rolling their eyes, and…

DePue: For those who can't remember the specifics, I think the specifics for the surcharge was that in 1989, the state needed more money; Thompson was able to push this through the legis—

Edgar: No, Thompson didn't have anything to do with it.

DePue: Okay, I'm sorry.

Edgar: There's a myth on that. No, no, it was Mike Madigan. Mike Madigan went down to do a fundraiser in Effingham for state rep, and they say it's like Paul on the road to Damascus. Madigan hadn't pushed an income tax, didn't care—schools needed more money—didn't bother him too much, but when he went down to Effingham, that's all they were talking about down there. The state rep was [Charles] Hartke—he went down to his fundraiser. Madigan came back from there, and in a twenty-four-hour period, he sprung on the general assembly a temporary income tax for education and local government. Also, Mayor [Richard M.] Daley had just been elected, and he wanted money, and this was a way he could get money for Daley

but get downstaters to vote for it, too, because it had education. And in twenty-four hours, he pushed it through the legislature. Thompson did sign it, but he didn't have anything to do with it. There were very few Republicans, if any, that voted for it. (laughs)

DePue: So it took it from 2.5 to 3 percent for personal income tax, 4 to 4.8 percent for corporate, and you already mentioned, half of it was designated to education and half to local government.

Edgar: Yeah. None of it really went in the state, except, if you want to say, the money that went to education, and it was to expire in two years. That was the first year after the new governor took office. (DePue laughs) So it's an understandable question: If you're the governor, what are you going to do about… Almost everyone in that election was running opposed to making a surcharge permanent. Even Madigan wasn't talking about making it permanent. So right out of the bat, I take a position on it. Hartigan didn't take a position for almost a year. So I took that position, and for the most part, there weren't a whole lot of issues being talked about out there. There was a little bit of personalities being talked about.

A lot of people thought, early on, that I looked like I might win easily. One, we'd had a Republican government for fourteen years. A lot of the pundits didn't realize that there was a huge "We want change" [sentiment] out there; they just figured, the Republicans have it, they'll probably hold onto it. And also, a lot of them didn't think Hartigan would be that tough a candidate because he'd backed out four years before when he was going to run for governor. Madigan—who didn't like him—put pressure on him, and he got Adlai Stevenson III to run again, and then Hartigan caved and withdrew. So he got a rap, even from members of his own party, that there wasn't enough steel there.

Now, I didn't agree. I thought he knew this was his last shot. I knew he had good name recognition downstate from his time as lieutenant governor when Dan Walker had been governor. They didn't get along, and so he was always fighting Walker, but he was very visible. Not as attorney general, because then attorney general wasn't as visible as it is today, but because he had been lieutenant governor. And I had also seen Paul Simon get elected U.S. senator, to a great extent because people knew him not as a congressman, but remembered him as lieutenant governor. So I thought he would be a tough candidate, and I thought he really wanted it, because I knew him. We spent time together, and I knew he was like me: this is what you want to do; this is your one shot. I thought he'd be the toughest candidate, but there were some out there that didn't think he would be that difficult. And those early poll numbers, with me with a pretty big lead—a lot of people just said, "You know, this won't be that tough a race." Well, as it moved along, it got much tighter, and I think he surprised a lot of people and I thought ran—and I think everybody would agree—an excellent campaign and was a good campaigner.

DePue: I wanted to ask you—something you mentioned just a few minutes ago—it was a year, though, before he came out on the issue of the surcharge. I imagine the media were hounding him unbelievably to come out one way or another.

Edgar: They were. But if you don't take a position, sometimes it's easier. At least they couldn't put you one way or the other.

The biggest issue was the issue of change. People wanted change. After fourteen years of one party and Jim Thompson, they wanted change. So I, as a candidate, had to convince people I was a change even though I'm a Republican and not an enemy of Jim Thompson. And Neil Hartigan kept hammering away that he was change. So change was a huge issue.

The other issue was the surtax—taxes in general. And to compound that, probably sometime in early October, late September I was doing a press conference in Chicago as secretary of state on some issue, which the media up there didn't care a bit about. (DePue laughs) When I got done, we started talking about political issues. Then the conference kind of ended, but we kept talking—something I hadn't learned yet: don't talk when you don't have to. (DePue laughs) I remember Bob Crawford from WBBM radio was there, and he said something about, "We've got to do something about school funding. The property tax is really bad." And I said, "No, I agree. I think the property tax is antiquated, and we ought to rely more on the income tax." And he said, "All right, yeah." And it was just kind of a discussion.

There was a new reporter for the *Tribune* who hadn't sat through these discussions before, and he thought, boy, I've got a great story: Edgar's for raising the income tax even more to help schools, so we can lower property taxes. So the next morning, the banner headline in the *Chicago Tribune*: "Edgar Opens Door to Income Tax Hike"—not just making the surtax permanent, this guy wants to raise it even more.[40] Needless to say, the party folks just went out of their minds. Even my friends said, "Did I read that right?" I've always—throughout my legislative career and everything—said I favor income tax over property tax when it comes to funding schools. I think it's a better source. And that's really what we were having. It wasn't like I was going to propose an increase in the income tax for schools in addition to the surtax. But the headline was there. So that, among party folks, got them all real excited about taxes. And taxes, throughout the campaign, was probably—besides change—the number-one issue out there. So as this campaign progressed, we spent a lot of times talking about taxes, be they income tax, surtax, or property taxes.

DePue: Had any of the journalists done enough digging to find out that as a legislator running for—back in, I guess, '74—that was one of the issues that you were advocating at that time?

[40] "Edgar Opens Door to Income Tax Hike," Rob Karwath, *Chicago Tribune*, January 23, 1990.

Edgar: I don't know if you'd find that, but they'd find that I proposed a local school income tax—

DePue: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about.

Edgar: —the first year I was a state legislator, in 1977.[41] Yes. And I think they did dig into that, but again, I think the AP took—they're kind of lazy; they take their stories off what the major papers write—they'll rewrite it. They rewrote the *Tribune* story, and that appeared around the state—about me wanting more of an income tax increase than just making the surtax permanent. So needless to say, that created a little bit of a crisis in our campaign.

That was a huge issue, and then toward the latter part of October—because filing wasn't till December then—you started to hear some grumbling from the Right. Now, we always worried about somebody from the Right, not on the tax issue, but on the social issues. I'm pro-choice, and issues like that; and sure enough, we had other people talking about it, but finally somebody surfaced to run. Steve Baer was his name. And he attacked me on my tax policy, but really all his support came from the religious Right. It didn't generate all that many votes on the tax issue, but on the abortion issue, in particular, that's where a lot of their support… And when the primary came about, you could see that where his votes came from were in areas where there were a larger percent of fundamentalists… We also know they didn't have much money—they didn't spend money on television—but they campaigned, putting fliers at churches and things and church groups. But that put me a little bit on the defensive throughout the campaign on the issue of taxes and how I handled it. But I didn't back off on the surtax. I did say that I wasn't going to raise any other taxes; I wanted to make the surtax permanent, but other than that, I was for holding the line on taxes. Now, at that point, nobody thought we'd even get the surtax because—

DePue: Were you reluctant to say that you wanted to hold off on any other kind of taxation?

Edgar: Not really, because I thought I was going to use up all my capital just trying to get the surtax permanent. At that point, you had almost every legislator, even those who voted for the temporary tax, saying we're not going to make it permanent—two years, that's enough. And as Neil Hartigan later would say, just cut the waste out of government.

But the other big issue out there, in the suburbs particularly, was property taxes, because at that point, you had a huge amount of inflation. House prices kept jumping; that meant their property tax kept jumping, but people weren't selling their houses. Their property tax bill was going up, and the schools and all were taking that money. So a lot of interest out there. A lot of them wanted rollbacks, freezes. So in the primary, we developed a proposal that was a tax cap—probably a misnomer—really, it was a limit on how much property taxes could go up. I spent

[41] For details of this early proposal and the reaction to it, see Jim Edgar, June 9, 2009, 23-29.

a lot of time working on that with staff and people coming up, and made that proposal probably in January. It was before the primary. And we wanted to do it in the primary because we wanted to kind of dampen this concern about the income tax, because we thought the property tax issue was just as important, if not more so, in the suburbs where most of the Republican primary votes were. So timing-wise, but we also thought this was an issue we needed to be upfront on because people wanted to do something on property taxes.

Interesting—we didn't get a lot of press off that. People didn't take it seriously; they thought it would never happen. Now, two years later, it was law, much to the surprise of everybody. But that was an important thing for us to get out there and to talk about, to try to get the talk off of income tax and talk more about property tax relief, which, I think, did help. But again, I don't think a lot of the pundits and the insiders really thought it would ever happen until it happened.

DePue: Once you got past the beginning of the year, was your focus on Baer, or was your focus on the general election?

Edgar: No, I never focused on him; in fact, we kind of ignored him. Part of that was strategy—he didn't have any money, and we didn't want to give him any platforms. We wouldn't agree to debate or anything like that; we just ignored him. And most of what I concentrated on was the general election. The difficulty with that is, the general election, you need to be in the middle, and here, you're getting attacked in the primary from the right. You wanted to kind of dampen that, but at the same time, you didn't want to do something that was to going harm you in the general election, because to me, that was going to be the tough election.

I knew I was going to win the primary. How much, I didn't know, but I knew I was going to win the primary, but I wasn't sure about the general election. So throughout that period, I didn't worry as much about the primary as maybe some of my people did, but we also knew we wanted to keep that vote down, because the more vote he got would be kind of embarrassing to us. Now, Hartigan didn't have any primary opposition, so he could just be a statesman, as we said, and there wasn't anybody attacking him, but we got a lot of attack from Baer publicly about taxes. Publicly, he didn't talk about abortion much. Privately, that's what they talked about, and that's what generated his support.

DePue: I was curious about how you would address the anti-abortion groups.

Edgar: I didn't; I just didn't go there. You'd go to groups, and there would be some people in there that were right-to-life and some pro-choice. It wasn't an issue that I usually brought up, but my position was clear. I had always been pro-choice and had no hesitancy about that position. I did think you ought to have parental notification—I thought you needed to have certain restrictions—but on the choice, particularly for an adult woman, that was her decision.

DePue: How about the issue of state support for abortions?

Edgar: My argument: that was a health issue, and you shouldn't deny poor people the same option that wealthy people have.

DePue: So what you're saying is you did adjust your message a little bit, but—

Edgar: Didn't adjust it. That had always been my position; just as a state rep, nobody really cared that much. Secretary of state, we just ignored the issue because I said it had nothing to do with the office. As governor, then I had to kind of flesh out a little more exactly—you got asked not just question A on that; you got question B and C. There wasn't anything that I changed; it was just clarifying or explaining where I was.

DePue: And when I said that, I wasn't just addressing the abortion issue—I wasn't clear enough on that. But you said you needed to run a little bit to the right on the overall issues during the primary campaign.

Edgar: That's the tradition, but I didn't want to do that, because there was a lot of feeling that past governors maybe had said one thing and done something else. I wanted to be very clear whatever I said was where I was going to be, because I thought the worst thing you could do—and Hartigan, too. He had changed his position on abortion. He had been right-to-life; then he became pro-choice when he became a candidate for governor. And some other things. So I was very conscious that—I was maybe slow to take a position, but when I took it, I stuck with it, because I thought that was extremely important.

DePue: Did you ever have a moment when you thought, maybe there's more to Baer's campaign than we had anticipated?

Edgar: No, no. And actually, when he got his vote, what'd he end up getting, 35 percent of the vote?

DePue: You got 60 percent, and the primary election was March twentieth.

Edgar: There were two other candidates, yes.

DePue: You got 60 percent; he got 34.[42]

Edgar: Yeah. That was more than we thought he would get, but there was a low turnout, and we knew turnout was going to affect that percentage. Polls were showing maybe he was only going to get 10 percent. Polls in a primary can be very misleading, and when you have a low turnout… And those church folks came out for certain—I lost some counties where they're very strong and came out in big numbers, whereas nobody got too excited in the general public about that primary.

[42] In the 1990 Republican gubernatorial primary, Edgar defeated Steven Baer, 482,411-256,889, picking up 62.8 percent of the vote. Rob Marshall finished a distant third with 28,365 votes. Neil Hartigan ran unopposed in the Democratic primary and received 802,901 votes. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.

There wasn't a whole lot of excitement on either side, so the turnout wasn't very large. But it did cause a problem because people said, "Oh, this is a lot closer than we thought." Well, that's because they were looking at these polls saying it was going to be 90-10, and instead it was 60. And if you put the two candidates—we had another guy who was a libertarian, basically. I can't remember his last name. He was a doctor.

DePue: I can't remember if I have that down, either.

Edgar: He got the remainder. I think you said 34 and—

DePue: Thirty-four for Baer.

Edgar: Yes, and I got 60, and I think he got 6 percent. But he was more conservative on issues other than the social issues, whereas Baer was really—the social issue was his drive. And again, in a small turnout in a Republican primary, that can be a factor. It was not the determining factor. Fortunately, I did not pull any of my answers—I didn't take positions that I had to reverse in the general election—but it did cause some embarrassment, and people said, "Edgar is going to have a problem with the Right in the general election, and they're not as strong as we thought." Whereas Hartigan had no problems, and after he kicked off his campaign a few days after the primary, there were no negatives there, I was still dealing with this, "Well, you only got 60 percent of the primary vote."

DePue: But you had to spend no money on campaign ads for the primary?

Edgar: No, we spent some on ads. We ran some ads. But that didn't bother me, and I think that still helps for the general. You're still in this process of—on television, Democrats and Independents watch those ads just as much as Republicans do, but I didn't worry as much as some people who say, ah, it's terrible to spend money in a primary. I don't agree with that; particularly for a non-incumbent candidate, I think it's beneficial. Now, you hope you don't get beat up too much by your own party. It turned out—publicly they hit me on taxes, and the Democrats then picked up that theme in the fall, and I think used it effectively. And there's no doubt that I got beat up a little bit in the primary, which made that a more effective, credible issue in the fall.

But the fact that I didn't change any positions, and we began to roll out some positions that I think we continued saying the same thing in the fall campaign as we said in the primary. One of the things that happened early on, which you realize in a primary, and even in the election itself—you get in this, and you think, boy, I've got to explain to people where I am on the big issues and show people that I understand government and I've got plans. I kept hearing this word "vision": "What's your vision?" That's the most overrated, phony word I've ever heard in a campaign.

DePue: But that was always the critique against George Bush.

Edgar: Yes, and I know it. It's not a vision. When you get in there as governor, you don't have a chance for… You got to react; you got to deal with crisis. How are you going to manage? That should be the question. Maybe a president a little more, but… No, you've got to have some priorities, but this vision thing—most of those things that candidates talk about as their vision is something some staffer thought up so they have something to talk about. And most of those issues you talk about in a campaign like that, they go away after the election, and then you got to really worry about the real issues. But we decided early on we wanted to put out position papers and demonstrate to people that I had a grasp about government and would be an effective governor. The first position paper was going to be on the War on Drugs, and we decided we were going to do that at the Chicago Rotary Club in downtown Chicago. It was on a Wednesday at noon. We thought that would be—Chicago, downtown, noon, all the Chicago media—easy for them to cover, and we could unveil our first position paper on a very important issue at that point.

I had a prepared speech, which I very seldom ever did, but we had a prepared speech, we had the press releases with the position paper—everything there for the media—and I show up at twelve o'clock, downtown Rotary Club. This is the first Rotary Club in the world, you know; it's a big deal. I went in there, and one media guy showed up. It was the political reporter from the *Chicago Tribune*, Tom Hardy at the time, who years later was my press secretary—but at that point, he was the political reporter. But he didn't come because I was doing a position on drugs; he just came to see how the campaign was going. He hadn't been around me for a few weeks, and he just wanted to see. Now, he wrote a good story. It appeared on the obituary page of the *Tribune*. (DePue laughs) And we thought, that's terrible. Here's a major position. It's obvious I'm going to be the Republican candidate for governor, and I have a good chance of being governor, and here's a major issue, and I'm talking the issues—that's what they always want you to do, talk on issues—and nobody covered it, except a guy accidentally covered me, and then they bury the story.

So the next issue we decide we're going to unveil is my position on environment. We wanted Chicago television—that's what you're always trying to get—so we thought, maybe we need visuals. Just a bunch of white men sitting around in suits doesn't do anything for them, and that's basically what Chicago Rotary at that point—I don't think they had women in yet. We need visuals, so we'll do the environmental thing on the Chicago River. Maybe Wednesday at noon, there's too much going on in Chicago, and state government's not their top priority; they'd be more concerned about a dog fight on State and Madison, as the old saying was, (DePue laughs) than they would be about what's going on in Springfield. So we'll do it on a Saturday morning when there's not much going on. We don't want to do it too early because we know TV folks don't get up early. So we decide to do it at eleven o'clock on Saturday at the Chicago River—and it was a beautiful spring day. We're down there, and I've got charts, instead of just reading. I've got charts, colored charts, and all this and that. We go down there. Nobody shows up.

You realize, you can talk issues all you want, but they won't cover it. That's why candidates do goofy things in campaigns because media doesn't cover issues because they're kind of dull and boring to some people. Good government is dull, and that's why it doesn't get good coverage. So we learned pretty quickly—you can put out these position papers and talk this, but outside of a few interest groups, the media doesn't care; they're not going to give you the coverage. Fast-forward to the end of the campaign. The last weekend of the campaign, I'm doing the final swing through the suburbs. It's tight, so this is an important thing. What do I do? I spend the whole day Sunday, the last big campaigning day, holding up a waffle, a frozen waffle. And I said, "If my opponent is elected, this will be the state seal because he waffles on every issue," because he'd flip-flop, and all this stuff. I remember the front pages of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Sun-Times* the next day: a color picture of me holding a waffle. The lead story on the six o'clock news on Sunday night in Chicago television: me holding up a waffle. Now, is that good government? No, but that's effective campaigning, unfortunately, because they don't care about position papers.

But I first learned that in the primary, that it's going to be hard to talk about what you think the issues are and do it. A lot of it is what comes up in a campaign. Something will happen, and that will get the media going, and then you have to be ready to respond to that. Maybe your opponent criticizes something—you've got to be able to respond to that. But putting out issues—you got to do it, but it doesn't get you much coverage; and if you do a lot of it, then they say, "Boy, this is a dull candidate." Then when you don't do it, the media says, "Why don't they talk about the issues?" We don't talk about the issues because they don't cover it, and in a campaign, what you do is what you think will get you free coverage, because that's the name of the game. You're out there trying to get in front of the public, and the best way to get in front of a public the size of the state of Illinois is from television. You can buy commercials, but better if you can get free television on the news and it's positive. So that's why you spend a lot of time trying to think that.

You do want to respond to issues, and you want to be careful as you respond on issues that you not only sound intelligent, but you don't make a lot of folks mad at you. And you get a lot of questionnaires—during this period, we were getting all these questionnaires from all these groups. You wanted to be careful how you'd answer those, because they'd make those public, and your opponent would find some sentence that sounds kind of strange, and all the sudden, that would be a commercial.

DePue: Is it a rule of thumb that you want to avoid being any more specific than you have to be?

Edgar: If you can. But sometimes, you've taken positions or you know what your position is, or you know what that group's on, and you can take a position—and maybe it's not going to be a negative. But those questionnaires would come back to haunt you more times than it would ever help you. And you'd have questionnaires, which maybe you'd filled out twenty years before as a state rep, that somebody would

find. One of the disadvantages I had in that campaign: I had been a state legislator, which meant I had voted on hundreds of bills.

DePue: You had a record.

Edgar: I had a record. He had never been a legislator. Outside of a few attorney general's opinions, which he didn't do many of, he didn't really have a record that you could go at. You could go back and find something and make a mountain out of a molehill. And I think it's worse today than it was then, but that was something you always worried about in a campaign. But a lot of the campaigning, particularly in the first six months of the last part of 1989 and into 1990, you'd be out every day doing things but wouldn't get all that much coverage. There wasn't all that much interest yet. Even in the primary, there wasn't all that much interest because it was so early.

DePue: I wanted to go back and ask you a couple more specific questions about your campaign staff, and start with Carter Hendren. I assume, probably in the primary season, he is on board by that time.

Edgar: I think he was on board by, if not September, October, before…

DePue: Why did you select Carter Hendren?

Edgar: Carter had run my campaign when I ran for secretary of state in 1982. He actually, when he was a student at Eastern, had worked on my first campaign for state representative, which I lost in 1974 in the primary.[43]

DePue: But what were the skills that he was bringing to the job?

Edgar: He was one of the few people who had run a statewide campaign on the Republican side in the state. He ran my campaign in '82, but then he ran [Sen. Charles] Percy's campaign in '84. Percy didn't win, but Carter ran a good campaign; it was close. He had experience running a statewide campaign, which is very important. Sometimes they'll bring people in from out of state to run a campaign. I would much rather have somebody from Illinois who understands Illinois. Carter also had worked in the legislature—he was working for [James] Pate Philip, the Senate leader—and that gave him an understanding. He'd worked a lot of legislative campaigns, so he knew the grassroots, he knew the nuts and bolts of a campaign, and that's what you want in a campaign manager—somebody that knows the players, knows the nuts and bolts, knows kind of who to believe and who not to believe. Now, there were a lot of people he met when he got involved in my campaign for governor that he didn't know before, but there were a lot of folks he already knew, and I thought that was helpful. He also brought credibility, particularly Senate Republicans—they trusted him and they liked him.

[43] For Hendren's work with Edgar in the 1974 and 1982 campaigns, see Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, 8-10 and 21-40.

One of the things in this campaign that made it interesting, why I think it's a classic: Hartigan had his detractors on the Democrat side, and I had my detractors on the Republican side. I don't think Pate Philip necessarily loved me. He was very conservative; I was more moderate to liberal—different lifestyles and all. But he wanted me to win because of redistricting. Same thing on the Democratic side. Mike Madigan did not like Neil Hartigan. He kept him off the ballot four years before, and they had kind of been competitive young guys coming up the Democratic… But he thought in 1990 that Neil Hartigan was the strongest candidate, and the reason he wanted a Democratic governor wasn't philosophical; he wanted a Democrat to sign the map. (DePue laughs)

So from the Democratic and the Republican legislators' view, the most important thing was to have a governor of our party in to protect us on redistricting.[44] I had a lot of conservative Republicans in the end who supported me, not because they were excited about me, but because they figured, oh, I'd rather have a Republican governor veto a Democratic map than have a Democratic governor sign a Democratic map, and we'll be in the minority forever in the legislature. That was a huge factor in this election as far as support and why the election really did fall on party lines. One of the groups we worked hard on and didn't do all that well with was labor unions. We'd have probably done a lot better with labor unions, because Thompson had done pretty decently with labor unions, but redistricting was not an issue when he got their support. My year—that was the issue. That was one of the undertones of the whole campaign: the map and which party is going to have the governor's office. The Republicans knew they probably weren't going to get control of the legislature, but they would have somebody to veto the map. The Democrats knew if they could get the governor's office, chances are they were going to get the map the way they wanted it. So that was a huge factor in this campaign that made a difference from some other elections in the past.

DePue: Another one of your campaign staff, and somebody who's going to be very important throughout the administration, is Mike Lawrence. What was it about Mike Lawrence that so appealed to you?

Edgar: Mike Lawrence at that time was my press secretary as secretary of state. He'd been that for a couple of years. Before that, he'd been a reporter for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and before that, for the Lee chain of downstate newspapers. Mike was probably one of the most respected people in the press room, so when he came with me, he brought that credibility, which was very helpful to me as secretary of state, but more importantly as a candidate for governor and later as governor. He was also a few years older than I was, so he was in a little easier position to kind of tell me, "Secretary, you can't do that; that's foolish." He did it in a nice way, and he continued to do that. But he'd been around state government; he knew it well. He knew the media well. He was well thought of, even in Chicago; even though he had primarily been a downstate newsman, they knew him in Chicago and they respected

[44] Edgar was well aware of the importance of redistricting, because he had played a key role as a Senate staffer in the legislative redistricting process that had followed the 1970 census. Jim Edgar, May 28, 2009, 40-49.

him. So it was very important to have as your media person someone who had credibility, and also someone who understood, in his case, state government. He knew people in all the agencies, and he knew a lot of the history and a lot of where the bodies were buried. So he was very helpful on policy development as well as dealing with the media.

DePue: I've often heard people describe the nature of the relationship between the two of you as, especially during your years as governor, he was probably your most important advisor in that inner circle. How would you characterize it at that time?

Edgar: I described him—I think most of my staff would—as the conscience of the administration. If I had a wild idea or some staff guy would have a wild idea—which happens in government—he would kind of bring everybody back to reality or say you can't do that. Now, sometimes he would be a little too far that way and I'd overrule him, but I never made any major decision without his input. And I think he was extremely respected by all the staffers. He could have a temper—we all do—and he'd get in his moods, and he'd get down on somebody, but I think he was very well respected.

But one of the things that helped me, when I went for governor—I had a lot of the people that were with me as the secretary of state, and that continuity made me feel more comfortable, because here, you're relying on these people to help you. This is your career. To them, it's just a job, maybe; but to you, it's your career, so it's very important that you have confidence in your staff. I had confidence in my staff because I'd worked with them for a long time, and that helps. Particularly when you get in a crux of a campaign, right down to the wire, and it's close, and you know everything you do, any little thing might swing the election one way or the other—you want to make sure that you've got people you can depend on. So Mike and many of the—Carter; Al Grosboll, who kind of was left back running the shop while I was out running for—

DePue: In the secretary of state office.

Edgar: Yes. For governor. George Fleischli, who was very active with a lot of the sportsmen groups and downstate groups. Mark Peterson, who worked the ethnic community. These were people that had worked for me for years, I had confidence in, and who I thought did an excellent job and had my interest as their number-one priority. So whenever you run for office, you've got to have a team, but you've got to have a team you feel comfortable with and that you will listen to. Now, I used to argue with them, and they'd tell me, you got to do this, and I don't want to do that, and that's crazy. Usually, in the end, I'd do it. Usually we'd modify it. I never did anything that I didn't believe in. If I'd have taken a vote among my staff, they would not have voted for me being for making the surtax permanent, and some other things, but they knew that was me, and they ignored that.

One of the things that we have not talked about, and it happened early in the campaign, something that Republicans have always done—Democrats very seldom

do this—pick your running mate. We have a terrible thing in the Illinois statute. The lieutenant governor and the governor don't run together in the primary. They run together in the general election, but in the primary, somebody can file for lieutenant governor who the candidate for governor doesn't like—they're elected separately. And we've had the case of—

DePue: Dan Walker is the classic—

Edgar: —Neil Hartigan and Dan Walker. And this was after the new constitution. They thought they'd fixed it, because in the old constitution, we had Dick Ogilvie, a Republican governor, and Paul Simon, a Democratic lieutenant governor. They thought they'd taken care of that because they said, you got to run together in the general election. But it didn't say you have to run together in the primary, or the governor picks his running mate after he's nominated, like they do at the national level. So Thompson did not pick his running mate the first time he ran, but from then on he did.

I thought it was important that I pick my running mate, because, one, I wanted to make sure I had somebody that was compatible. We'd just gone through, four years before, where Adlai Stevenson picked somebody but didn't push him hard enough, and they had the LaRouchian.[45] You don't want to have that happen, but I also just didn't want somebody that I was going to be at loggerheads with. And I wanted somebody who, if something happened to me, could step in, and there'd be continuity. I was never a subscriber that if you're a moderate, then you need [someone] very conservative to put on the ticket; I think you ought to have somebody that's pretty compatible to your point of view. I think you ought to have geographic balance, which I did. So, after we made the announcement and got going, the next big decision really was, who's going to be my running mate? And I had several people interested because, again, it looked like there was a good chance I could get elected governor, and people thought, this would be a good place to be.

DePue: A nice stepping stone.

Edgar: Yes, though it turned out that everybody I talked to was older than me. Of course, I was kind of young. I was forty…

DePue: Forty-four?

Edgar: Forty-three when I announced. But there were four people that I talked to: Aldo DeAngelis, who was a senator from the south suburbs, a modern Republican. Loleta Didrickson, who was a state rep from the same area, a moderate. I thought it'd be nice to have a woman, but I wasn't that concerned, because Lynn Martin was going to run for the U.S. Senate against Paul Simon—she was a congresswoman from the

[45] In the 1986 Democratic primary, Mark Fairchild stunned the presumptive Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor, George Sangmeister, with an upset victory. His victory forced Adlai Stevenson III to form a "Solidarity Party" slate, with Michael Howlett as his lieutenant governor candidate. See, Jim Edgar, June 22, 2009, 43-51, for his discussion of this primary.

Rockford area—so that'd be the top of the ballot, and there would be a woman. I had always run well with women. I always ran ahead with women of any other Republican when I'd run for secretary of state, and the polls showed that I was doing fine with women, so it wasn't like I had to have a woman, unless I found one that I felt comfortable with, and who was the best candidate. And Judy Baar Topinka—I talked with her. Now, I have to say, Judy, when she ran for governor years later, was probably much more compatible with my position, I thought, than she was back then. (laughs) Judy's always been flamboyant, which wasn't quite my style, but she was a good campaigner, and she's from the west suburbs. We knew we wanted somebody from the suburbs, because I'm the downstater; we didn't need two downstaters.

And then Bob Kustra—Bob had originally said he wanted to run for comptroller, and he'd started going around the state during the preceding year, during Lincoln Day dinners, talking about running maybe for comptroller. He wanted to run for statewide office. One night, I was at the Jersey County Lincoln Day dinner, and he was there, too. We hadn't been at the same places. Usually, they didn't like to go where I was because I got to be the main speaker; everybody thought, he'll be the candidate for governor, and they would rather be the big… It turned out for some reason he was in Jersey County when I was, and I heard him talk, and I thought he did a great job. And I asked him later, I said, "That was really good. Would you be interested in something other than comptroller?" And he said, "Well, I might be." So when it came time, he was one that I seriously—

DePue: He knew what you were fishing for at the time?

Edgar: He knew, yes. He thought running for comptroller was a lonely job. That's a tough thing; nobody gives you money, and you're out there… If you can hook onto the guy who's going to be the gubernatorial candidate, that's a lot better place to be. So then a few months later when I became a candidate, he was one I talked to. And again, I felt comfortable. I'd known him; we'd both been staffers years before. When he first got out of school, he'd worked in the House when I worked in the Senate as a staffer. He had his Ph.D. He was a university teacher when he wasn't a legislator. I felt comfortable with that. We probably agreed on a lot of issues. Now, he was—interesting, though—right-to-life, and I was pro-choice. And I told him, "That's all right." I said, "It'd be better probably if we were the same, but I'm not going to keep you from being my running mate because of that issue, because I think there are a lot of things we're compatible about." So I picked him to be my running mate.

So, (laughs) the day we're going to announce it, I remember Mike Lawrence and I were flying in, and we're talking to him, and he says, "You know, on the abortion, I think I'm going to change my position." We said, "What?" He said, "No, I think maybe, you know, this…" I said, "Uh, you don't have to do that." Unfortunately, he went ahead and he came out and did it, and that was the whole story: Lieutenant governor candidate flip-flops on a—that's what we wanted to hit Hartigan with. And then that just sent the religious Right off the wall. They weren't

mad at me because I'd always been pro-choice, but they were really mad at him; they felt he'd betrayed them because he had been always right-to-life.

One of his main supporters was one of the big right-to-life—a guy named Tom Roeser—not Jack Roeser, but Tom Roeser. He really had always been one of Bob's main supporters, and he was furious, and he never—I don't think he had a good thing to say about him afterwards. That also stirred up a little bit of the against Edgar [group]. They didn't run anybody against him, but it did stir them up and I think helped fuel the fire. But, putting that aside, Bob, I thought, was an excellent choice, because he was very articulate, very bright, and he was a very good campaigner. He's a good stump speaker, and he can get a crowd riled up and—

DePue: Did the two of you campaign together?

Edgar: No. That would be counterproductive. He'd go places I couldn't get to. I'd be on the east side of the state; we'd have him on the west side of the state. Now, he didn't like to fly, which was a (laughs) little bit of a problem. I didn't know till later. But he spent a lot of time in a car going out talking to party groups and things, and was a very effective campaigner.

DePue: The other part of the campaign team that I wanted to return to was the question of financing and who took over the financing role. You mentioned that Karl had passed away.[46]

Edgar: Karl Bays was going to be, and he passed away. We didn't have anybody for a long time. We had people on the staff who worked on fundraising, but we had to rely on individual fundraising. You could go every night to a fundraiser.

DePue: But I've heard that you weren't the guy who would like to pick up the phone and make the calls yourself.

Edgar: Nope, nope, nope. I didn't like it. I never did it. I never asked anybody for a campaign contribution. I'd go to fundraisers and shake hands, but I didn't call a guy and say, "Hey, I'd sure like some financial help from you." I just never did that, which was a luxury that most candidates don't get. I had people on my campaign staff that did that with great regularity, but I didn't do it.

The only person I ever asked—there was an individual who was a Democrat, who supported me because I was pro-choice. I'd gone to a pro-choice thing in the primary, which I'd just as soon not go to, but I couldn't say no to them. It wasn't really the publicity I'd wanted right then. But I went to this event, and there was a bunch of women in Chicago—many of them wealthy women, it turned out—and I was their candidate in the Republican primary. In fact, they never were real sure about Hartigan because he flip-flopped on that issue. So most of them were Democrats, but I was their candidate. And this woman said something to her

[46] For fundraising in the 1990 campaign, see Hendren, May 7, 2009, 38-41.

husband; her husband called and said, "My wife wants me to support you, and now, my partner is going to support Neil Hartigan, but whatever my partner gives Hartigan, I'll give you." And I think this guy gave me fifty thousand dollars, which was a lot of money in 1990. I said, "I appreciate it."

So the only time I ever called anybody was about a week before the end of the campaign. I think in the last two or three weeks, if you give a contribution over ten thousand dollars, you have to immediately report that within twenty-four hours to the state board of election, so somebody at the end of the campaign can't dump in a whole lot of money to influence the election without the public being aware of it. So, this is about a week to go, and the campaign is nip and tuck. We're back and forth. And I get a call from Carter. Carter said, "So-and-so's partner has just given Neil Hartigan fifty thousand dollars. Now, none of us know this guy that you got this fifty thousand, but we need"—and he said, "I know you don't ask for money, but you're the only guy. You got to call him and ask him for fifty thousand dollars." I said, "All right."

So I called the guy up, and I said, "Sorry to bother you, but you told me… Your partner gave Neil Hartigan, the other day, another fifty thousand." He said, "Check will be in the mail." (DePue laughs) Twenty-four hours later, we got the check. Never saw that guy—I ran into him one time at an Illinois basketball game—the whole time I was governor, (DePue laughs) and he was my biggest contributor. But that's the only guy I ever asked, and that was for that last fifty thousand, because nobody knew him except me.

DePue: I have heard Bob Hickman's name mentioned as one of the people who was making calls for you, helping with the fundraising.

Edgar: Bob Hickman was the staffer who was in charge of fundraising. He had headed up my Chicago office, knew a lot of people in Chicago. Former mayor of Charleston, somebody that had helped me when I first ran for state rep. I used to buy cars off of him—he was a car dealer in Charleston. He came to work for me when I became secretary of state and eventually went up to Chicago and headed up my Chicago office, and then when I ran for governor, switched over and started working on fundraising.

DePue: Do you remember how much money you spent in the campaign?

Edgar: Ten million dollars. No, we spent a little more than ten million dollars, because we raised ten million dollars. The first time I ran, as we talked earlier, for state rep— when I lost, I ended up with a debt. So I was determined I wasn't going to do that for governor, because I thought I could lose, and I was assured going into the last few days of the campaign that I had that much money; I had all my bills paid for. Then I found out later that I didn't; I was about a half-million dollars over. Fortunately, I didn't know that until after I won, and when you win, you don't have a debt; you just got a cash flow problem. (DePue laughs) But we raised about ten million dollars, and so did Hartigan, and spent.

I always said he had more to spend because he got a lot of free labor stuff that I didn't get. But money was not a factor in the election because we both had about the same amount. That's why I go back to that election. We both had about the same amount of money; we both had the same amount of name recognition. I had a little more job approval going in, but it really didn't impact so much for governor. We both had our party's—maybe grudgingly, but we had our party's support, almost 100 percent. It was about as even as you could be.

Now, you come to the primary, and again, it was a disappointing night when we realized we were just going to get 60 percent when it had been projected we would get 80 percent. I wouldn't say I was shocked; I was just disappointed. The next day, we were to be at a dinner for the new president of Poland—the first free Polish president—so I went out to Washington for that. That was a state dinner. That was my first state dinner. Of course, Bush was in the White House, and they knew we had a lot of Poles in Illinois and this would be a good thing to have me to. And more importantly, probably, Brenda sat next to John Sununu, who was chief of staff, and struck up a relationship there.

I mentioned Bush a little bit in the primary. I had supported George Bush when he ran in '88. I think I told you that story earlier about telling Bob Dole no, I was going to be for George Bush.[47] Bush, for the most part, didn't take sides in primaries, but in this case, he did; he endorsed me in the primary. And Phyllis Schlafly was just furious. She was the head of Eagle Forum, a very conservative woman, and she was for Steve Baer. And she went out to see Lee Atwater, who was Bush's political operative—I think he was national chairman at that point—because Atwater was coming to Illinois to say that he was for Edgar, and this is the best thing for the party. She came in and just chewed on him, and he just said, "That's how we're going to be, because he can win and we want to win, and your guy can't win." And he said, "Plus, Edgar's been supportive of the president when he ran," and stuff. I remember Atwater told me, "She wasn't happy." (DePue laughs) But Atwater, he could just chew right back, you know. So the White House had tried to be—and they didn't get real involved; that was about all they did, but it was still a sign that I was approved by the president. At that point, he was still very popular, at least among Republicans, and so that helped to some extent, to kind of again give me credentials as the legitimate Republican even if I did have some of these wild-eyed liberal tendencies on abortion and taxes and things like that.

But the primary was not a fun night, and then after that, we went to Florida to take a vacation. We were down there for a week. Well, the whole time I'm down there, Hartigan's then starting his campaign and getting all this media—ah, he's wonderful, and all the Democrats are united, and Republicans are still split, and all this and that. Again, property tax is a big issue, and my staff wants me to say that I'm for making the surtax permanent, but I want to take that money and give it to property tax relief, at least the part that goes to local government. I say, "I got to

[47] Jim Edgar, June 22, 2009, 28.

leave some for local government, but I want some of that, because I never promised it all for local government."

DePue: And that local government piece, wasn't that primarily there because of Daley?

Edgar: Yes. And local government—they didn't need the money half as much as the state did, as we later learned. They were building things, and… I didn't know how bad off the state was, but I knew it wasn't in good shape. I didn't realize it was as bad as it was or I wouldn't have run; I'd have probably just (DePue laughs) left the state. But I didn't want to give that up. They just hammered away at me, and they'd call me three times a day in Florida trying to get me to sign off on this press release. And they about had me, but I said, "Where's Lawrence?" Lawrence, fortunately, had gone to the restroom. Because Lawrence was kind of with me, but Carter and a guy named Mike Belletire and Phil O'Connor, some guys, were just fanatics on this, just beating away at me. I need to do this; I got to do something to revive the campaign because we came out of the primary bad, we don't have momentum, blah-blah-blah. Our poll numbers were getting closer. I didn't want to do it, but I just wanted them to stop bugging me. I just wanted some peace and quiet in Florida because I was trying to kind of get over the primary. I said, "Not till Mike gets back. I don't want to do it…" Mike didn't get back for—I don't know what happened. We didn't talk again, but by that time, Mike had kind of felt even more like I did—"I don't think it's a good idea"—so finally I just told them no. But (laughs) if Lawrence hadn't gone to the restroom, we probably would have given it all away for property tax relief, which is a drop in the bucket, and we wouldn't have had anything to help the state get out of the crisis we were going to find it in.

After the primary, after we came back, there was another poll that came out, and I still had a comfortable lead, which kind of quieted… Because the legislators were all upset, everybody was nervous about it. Now, that quieted things down, and then we went into the spring. You didn't know how things were going because the legislative session was in and the media wasn't covering it. And we come into the summer—now, all the time, I'm doing fundraising; just all the time, I'm doing fundraising. Almost every night you'd be at a fundraiser. A lot of these were small fundraisers, and Hickman would do all kinds of—to get people to put fundraisers together. They weren't the big fundraisers you would think of in politics. You'd have maybe a few of those, but most fundraising's done on little fundraisers, maybe fifty people, and maybe you get thirty thousand dollars for governor. We tried not to go for less than twenty thousand dollars, because just time-wise, it didn't pay off. But they were from maybe twenty-five to fifty thousand, a lot of them; there weren't all that many over a hundred thousand dollars. So you spent a lot of time doing that.

But in that spring, again, we kept talking issues, working groups. Groups were beginning to endorse; the primary was over. The IFT didn't wait till the primary. They endorsed Neil Hartigan before the primary. But one of the big groups was the IEA, the Illinois Education Association, the teachers' union—downstate teachers' union, suburban teachers' union. It was probably the most important endorsement

out there of any of the groups because they not only endorsed, they put people in the street; they put money into campaigns. And they're pretty good politically.

DePue: And normally aligning with the Democrats, I would think.

Edgar: More times than not, though they had endorsed Thompson, and I'd had them as state rep when I ran. They had endorsed some Republicans, but more times than not, they'd be with the Democrat. To them, the big issue was the surtax, and Hartigan was trying to get their endorsement; I was too. They had a council of twenty-two people, and I went and visited, I think, every one of those twenty-two people to try to—

DePue: Individually.

Edgar: Individually, because that was that important. Now, there were a few I didn't get to or we knew were going with Hartigan or whatever, but I spent a lot of my time meeting face to face with the people on that council. First of all, the IEA wanted to be with the winner, as they proved when they endorsed George Ryan over Glenn Poshard, who was a member, in 1998. But they also wanted somebody that was going to be sympathetic to their point of view. And while I didn't necessarily agree with all their positions on some of the work rules and things like that, on the big issue, on surtax, I was there, and Hartigan hadn't taken a position yet. He implied he might be there, but he never would tell them.

DePue: I would imagine that they would especially want to see that swap—that you put a cap on property tax and—

Edgar: They didn't like that. They didn't like the property tax thing at all. They didn't like that, but they didn't think I'd really get it done. Nobody thought that would really happen. But really, the surtax was the driving thing, probably more important than my suggestion of a property tax cap.

DePue: But there had always been a link between we're willing to raise income tax if we lower or put a cap on property tax.

Edgar: Yeah, but that isn't what we're talking about here. They already had that surtax money, and they were already spending that, so they weren't ready to drop property taxes for something they already had and wanted to keep. So the biggest issue, the most visible issue to them wasn't a property tax cap, though in hindsight, they probably wish they'd made it that; it was the surtax, and I was for it, making it permanent. Plus, I had a record. I was also not for aid to parochial schools, which Hartigan—he was Irish Catholic; he had a record of being more that way. I wasn't, and I was pretty adamant on that.[48] So outside of the property tax issue, which wasn't as important as the surtax at that point, I had a pretty good record for teachers.

[48] The American Baptist tradition is an important source of Edgar's belief in the separation of church and state. Jim Edgar, May 21, 2009, 27-29.

DePue: How about Chicago school reform? Was that an issue at this time?

Edgar: This is the IEA. You have to understand, the IEA is not the Chicago Teachers Union. The Chicago Teachers Union endorsed Hartigan in the primary for the general election, which I always thought was crazy because he had never been for the surtax yet—never did, but he wasn't even then—and I was, and they didn't even come in and endorse me in the Republican primary. They just didn't endorse; they just endorsed him in the primary for the general election. But the IEA was more important, because the IFT—that's the Chicago Teachers Union—they're automatically Democrat.[49] They always are Democrat. And that's basically Chicago. But the IEA is suburbia and downstate, so it's much more important in the political scheme, and it's also a possibility for a Republican to get. So we spent a lot of time—and Hartigan did, too, I think—on that group, and I think sometime midsummer they made their endorsement and endorsed me. And right after that, Hartigan came out against the surtax.

DePue: I wanted to ask you one more question, and I think we're going to take a break for a brief moment here and then pick up with a new tape. Give me your sense of Hartigan the man, Hartigan the political opponent. We've talked about him a lot, but I don't know that you've been quite that explicit.

Edgar: I had known Neil Hartigan back when I was a staffer and he was lieutenant governor. On energy issues, we'd been allied. I had worked for some senators who were allied with him against Walker and some of the House Republicans—interesting. And he's a very friendly person, very personable. He always is very congenial. I found out as secretary of state—there was an issue that came up; he was trying to do something that affected us, we were on different sides, and the legislature told us to get together, and we got together. Kind of like George Ryan in some ways—but much more affable, I think, than George Ryan—he wasn't so much a detail guy; that wasn't his thing. I don't want to say back-slapping, but he was that kind of a… Speaker—he could give a fire and brimstone speech. It didn't come off as well on television, but boy, at a rally, he was really good at working a crowd up. He was a ward committeeman in Chicago and had those political skills. But as a person, I always found him to be very friendly. Even when we were running against each other, he never was nasty about things or anything like that. He always was very friendly. And after the election, he was very friendly.

But as a candidate, as I said earlier, I thought he'd be tough—a lot of people didn't—and he was tough. He turned out to be much more disciplined than people thought he would be, he worked harder than they thought he would, and I thought in 1990 was as tough as anybody I could run against. I was glad he came out against the surtax. I really think if he'd have been for the surtax—there wasn't a whole lot of difference between us, and I think that would have been to his advantage because I think he could have maybe held on and maybe picked up another editorial. He

[49] Illinois Federation of Teachers.

didn't have hardly any editorials. *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Crain's Business* are the only two papers in the state that endorsed him.

DePue: He could have run on the change issue much more strongly.

Edgar: I think so, and I think the teachers—the IEA endorsement is important, but teachers have got to follow it. If he would have been for the surtax, there might have been more teachers that said, "Well, I'm still going to be for Hartigan." But the fact he was against it, I think hurt him. Now, it would have been tough in some ways for him to be for the surtax, because in late summer of '90, right before Labor Day, they ran a series of commercials that really closed the gap in that race. And they didn't attack me; they attacked Thompson more and all the taxes—Thompson and the taxes, the Republicans—and implied I was part of Thompson's machine or organization. They went after Thompson and taxes, and they documented all these taxes—a lot of them were little taxes, but they counted up several hundred taxes that had been increased under Thompson when he said he wasn't going to raise taxes, and things like that. And they really hit at that, and I think it was effective because people were worried about taxes.

Also, Thompson had been in fourteen years and people kind of wanted change, and [the ads] reinforced that, and then I'm part of that. The Democrats were pretty good at—I hated this—they'd call "Big Jim" and "Little Jim." I hated that with a passion. It wasn't as bad as being named Ryan, like Jim Ryan right after George Ryan, (DePue laughs) but still, I just didn't like that. But I also knew that I needed to distance myself from Jim Thompson or I would get caught up in that change. While people may be tired, there were positive things about Thompson that wouldn't transfer to me, but the negatives could, on this change idea. So I thought those commercials they ran in August were probably the most effective commercials in the campaign for them, by far, because we went from about a nine point lead to a three point lead, I think, or something like that—very close—by Labor Day.

DePue: Let's take a break right now. This is a good place to break it off. And we'll get into the heat of the campaign and take a look at some polls, watch some commercials, and get your response to all that—as well as some of the barbs going back and forth—for the last part of the discussion. Thank you very much.

(music)

(end of interview 9)

Interview with Jim Edgar

ISG-V-L-2009-019.10

Interview # 10: September 2, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

(music)

DePue: We are back, after a very short break, with Governor Jim Edgar. We've been talking, Governor, about your experiences during that crucial 1990 election campaign. And I thought the way to start, as we get into the heat of the campaign, is to ask you your thoughts on strategy, where you were at the time, and what you wanted to see in terms of the road down towards the election.

Edgar: The campaign really, I think, hit its high gear on Labor Day in 1990. At that point—as a result, I think, of a very successful television barrage that the Democrats and Neil Hartigan did on taxes and all that—the election had gone from when I had almost a double-digit lead to very tight. So I was concerned that every step we took might make the difference in the election. When it's close, you have visions that everything you say or do might swing enough voters one way or the other. Now, what we didn't appreciate: many of the things we do, voters don't care a bit about. And what moves voters sometimes is mysterious, or we'd know how to win elections automatically.

But there were still some endorsements out there—newspapers hadn't endorsed yet, and we thought that would be very important in this campaign, and some groups hadn't quite yet. We also knew that we had to mobilize our base. Turnout in a non-presidential election is even more important because there's less of it, so whoever gets their vote out has got a better chance of winning. Even if maybe they're not ahead in the polls, they might be able to surprise the pundits on Election Day because they got their vote out. We knew we had to not only worry about winning over the Independents and some, as I called them, thoughtful Democrats, but we needed to make sure our base was excited and came out and voted. So while I, as the candidate, was out there trying to get publicity, talking with groups, my staff was working on the nuts and bolts—voter registration, signs, and all those little things. Campaigns, I don't think turn on some of the things you read in the newspaper, the big issues. That's the only thing that's left, though, because the record is usually what's in the newspaper pile. But there were a lot of little things that I think probably had more to do with the campaign.

For example, my wife Brenda spent a lot of time on the road, not with me, but on her own. She doesn't like to make speeches, but something she learned from

Barbara Bush—Barbara Bush, when George Bush ran in '88, would go out and do a slideshow. She had this slideshow, and she'd have pictures of the family and things that had happened, and would talk about that. Brenda thought, that's a great thing. So Brenda did her slideshow, and she was all over the state of Illinois, talking mainly to Republican groups, women's groups, or whatever, with that slideshow. But that gave her some confidence; to get up and make a speech, she just would have been a nervous wreck, but she had that slideshow. And to be very truthful, a picture's worth a thousand words, and it was a lot more interesting. So she was able to talk about the family and things that we had done, or the kids and things that I believed in, and people we had met with that slideshow. She got that from Barbara Bush. But Brenda was very effective out there, as was Bob Kustra. And we had other surrogates. We had a lot of legislators. I know John Maitland from Bloomington was one of them, and they went around the state to kind of repudiate whatever the attacks might be on me or to talk about my strengths to groups that they had influence.[50] But Brenda played a very important role.

The one thing she did for me that she didn't really like to do at all—the Fourth of July. I love parades. We haven't, I think, talked about parades. But my theory is that's one of the few ways you can campaign in the suburbs, because they don't have their own television or radio. Their newspapers aren't that big. People there still read the *Sun-Times* or particularly the *Tribune* for their news, and then they read the *Arlington Herald*, but how do you get to suburbanites? They have parades, and they love their parades in the suburbs. So Fourth of July in '90, I did, I think, eight parades on the Fourth of July, and they were all in the suburbs. People were happy to see me, and they clapped, and they waved.

Well, Brenda did parades downstate, and she went into some Democratic areas, like the Quad Cities. I'll never forget—I think she was in East Moline or someplace like that, and it was a hot day, a Democratic stronghold, and there she was, in the back of the parade. And as secretary of state, one of the things they were hitting me with was: Edgar—if he gets elected, you won't be able to drive, because he's going to take away your driver's license if you drink one beer. The slogan they had in all the taverns was "Stop Edgar before he stops you." So Brenda's doing this parade in East Moline, a hot day, and the parade gets stalled right by a tavern. (DePue laughs) They're out there, and they're just on her case, yelling at her, all kinds of things. Well, I'm up in the suburbs. People are cheering in these Republican strongholds. She did it, but she didn't like doing it.

DePue: You heard about that afterwards?

Edgar: Oh, I heard about it many times. And I made the mistake of letting her come with me one time to the suburban parades, and she said, "I'm coming here from now on. They cheer for you here. (DePue laughs) You go to East Moline." But one of the

[50] After Edgar's victory, Maitland played a role in Edgar's selection of Howard Peters as director of the Department of Corrections. Howard Peters, interview by Mark DePue, December 21, 2009, 34. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

things I learned: in any campaign, but particularly governor, you've got to have a lot of people doing a lot of things that never get that much publicity, don't get the headlines in the paper. But Brenda out, Bob Kustra out, a lot of other people out.

DePue: The kids?

Edgar: The kids were out. Brad had graduated from college and didn't have a job, and I asked him to come back and work on the campaign, so he was out and about. Now, he liked that like he liked the mumps. But he was good, because he understood it, and Brad's a good, likeable kid, and a bright kid. He had one of his friends from high school—Brad played end on football, and this was his tackle, a big kid. His name was Brad, too, and he was his traveling aide, and they'd go out around the state together. They'd go to colleges, mainly, and talk and do things. But again, all those things—in some ways, they were able to connect with people. And people can see the headlines in the newspapers, but they may or may not read it. They might even not watch the evening news, as we know. A lot of people don't watch news that much on television anymore, and even then, they didn't as much. So all those little things, to me, were as important as the big things, and we just had to make sure those were happening around the state as we went into those last two months of the campaign.

And I just think back. There were hundreds of people that I probably to this day maybe have never met and don't know, who were out there doing things that made a difference in a close race. Make sure you have signs up. That's very important psychologically to show you've got momentum. So part of our strategy was: What do we need to do? What are the nuts and bolts? What are the little things? We worried about the big things, but we also knew we had to make sure the little things were happening.

Other things and other strategy again—I was just really consumed with the idea of the ethnic community. I still thought that's the way we break into the Democratic vote in the Chicago metropolitan area. We need to get to these groups; if we can get through there, maybe we can pull off people who traditionally have voted Democratic. So I spent a lot of time in those closing weeks in the ethnic community.

The other strategy was media, and the closer we got to the election, we got to be bigger news. The U.S. Senate race, which was right above us [on the ballot], looked like it wasn't going to be as close as people thought it might be, that Paul Simon was probably going to beat Lynn Martin pretty decisively. So the media didn't pay much attention to that race. The gubernatorial race, though, was close, so they paid a lot more attention to that. We knew every day, we wanted to be in the Chicago media—but we knew we were only going to have one story. So what we finally realized after a while, in the last two months, was we'd spend part of the day in Chicago and do some event to have a news story; then we'd jump on a plane and go someplace else in the state and get another media market. It might be eastern Illinois, it might be western, wherever, but sometime during that day, we needed to

be in Chicago and be in the TV stories that night. But the rest of the day, we would then go downstate and try to hit different media markets.

Now, downstate, a lot of these communities don't have TV, so you go there and you go there once. There's an old axiom in Illinois politics: before Labor Day, you're downstate; after Labor Day, you're never downstate. Well, we didn't do that. After Labor Day, we always were sure that every day, we were in Chicago for the media because we were beginning to get good coverage, but then go on downstate. There wasn't any reason to stay in Chicago, because you're only going to get one story, probably, on the evening news. There were times we maybe wanted to go to some group or whatever, but as much as we could, we tried to make sure we were in another media market during the day.

And sometimes we would just get in a car or a van and just drive down. I remember one time we drove down Route 1 on the eastern part of the state and made stops. Little communities, maybe a little radio station, and newspapers. But we also knew we would never be back, and we needed to be there one time so they knew we were there. So scheduling media was a very important part of what you did those last two months. And the other thing was you had the debates—

DePue: I do want to spend quite a bit of time on the debates.

Edgar: So you had to plan that strategy, too. Then we still were doing fundraising. We did fundraising right up to the end. I think it was in June when we had President Bush in to do a big fundraiser downtown. You raise a million dollars; that's a big deal. We spent ten, so that was just a small part, really, but that is how I think people think campaigns are funded. It is, but it's a small part of the overall campaign. But that was fun, to have the president of the United States come in and say nice things about you, and have all these people downtown. Then he came again in September, out in DuPage County. We had a bigger rally out at DuPage County Community College. And he offered to come in again at the end of October, and we were probably the only campaign in the country that—we didn't have time. This was after "read my lips."[51]

DePue: I don't know how to ask you this question except to ask you this question.

Edgar: You can ask it; I may not answer it.

---

[51] At the 1988 Republican National Convention, George H. W. Bush's presidential nomination acceptance speech contained the line "And the Congress will push me to raise taxes, and I'll say no, and they'll push, and I'll say no, and they'll push again, and I'll say, to them, 'Read my lips: no new taxes.'" On June 26, 1990, in the midst of deadlocked budget negotiations, President Bush issued a statement calling for a mixture of policies, including "tax revenue increases," to reduce the federal budget deficit. On September 30, 1990, the Bush administration reached a budget agreement with Congressional leaders, an agreement that included increased taxes. Opposition to this plan by conservatives led to a Columbus Day weekend shutdown of federal spending authority. *Washington Post*, June 27, 1990; October 1, 1990; and October 9, 1990. John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, Santa Barbara, CA, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25955.

DePue: (laughs) You're a very handsome guy. You've got a beautiful family. Did that factor into the campaign strategy, especially the media strategy?

Edgar: Oh, sure. I don't know about the beautiful part, but I think I have an attractive family, and people like to know your family. People want to know something about you. They don't really always care about those big issues we worry about. They want to know you, the person. Are you married? Do you have kids? What are they like? What kind of person are you? That's why Brenda's slideshow, I think, was so effective, because it made people who didn't know me, know me. It's like doing the *Bob Collins Show* all those years on WGN radio.[52] People get to know you. And they remember those little things. They may not remember your position on taxation or your position on environment or whatever, but the average person will remember, he's got two kids, and he always goes to the kids' sporting games—things like that.

But we thought the family was extremely important, and that's why I was delighted Brad didn't have a job yet, and I could get him to go out. Now, Elizabeth was in high school. In fact, I was trying to get to some of her tennis games as much as I could while I was running for governor, which got—I missed some tennis matches. The first time I'd ever missed any of the kids' stuff, that last two months running for governor. I still made more tennis matches than I think any other parent did, but not as many as I used to. But I would occasionally—we'd have the schedule [set], even the gubernatorial thing, so I could go by and see her play tennis. But yes, they were an important part of it.[53]

DePue: But even back many sessions ago, we talked about the importance of Cavins & Bayles, working at that clothing store and knowing how to dress right and how to present yourself.

Edgar: I don't know about the dressing right. I think Cavins & Bayles was important because it put me in contact with a lot of kids at Eastern, so when I ran for student body president, it helped me. Now, it did get me hooked on worrying about clothes too much and spending money. But also it's where I met Brenda the first time, so Cavins & Bayles on campus, the clothing store, had a lot of positive effect.[54]

The family, I think, is extremely important in a campaign, because again, people want to know about you and what you're about. And women, particularly, want to know about a wife, and I think for good reason. It's a package deal. After I got elected governor, Brenda was a very visible First Lady and could do a lot of things and go around and reassure people on a lot of things. So I think it's valid for

[52] During Edgar's years as secretary of state, Collins played a critical role in raising Edgar's public profile and pushing his DUI reforms. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 15, 2009, 36-40.
[53] Being on hand to support his children's extracurricular activities was very important to Edgar. Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 40 and June 15, 2009, 101. For the difficulty of balancing family responsibilities with a fledgling political career, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 9, 2009, 65-66.
[54] For Edgar's discussion of his work at the store and his courtship of Brenda, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 22, 2009, 10-33. See also, Tony Sunderman, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 17-19.

people to know a little bit about your family because that kind of tells what kind of person you are.

Too often in a campaign, we dwell on issues and not enough, I think, on character and personalities and what you really are, because a lot of those issues you talk about in a campaign disappear after the election. Some of them are fabricated by the media and some are fabricated by the candidates, and some just go away, but character doesn't change; what kind of person you are doesn't change. But what kind of person you are might give an indication how you're going to react to some crisis down the road, which you can't predict during a campaign. So I think all those personal things that people talk about in a campaign, I think they are valid, and I think they are important. Now, they're not the only thing, but I do believe that your background, your personal traits, your characteristics—those are all things that I think are valid for people to know about.

And your family can help get those messages across. A wife can say things about a husband that people might actually believe once in a while. And Brenda's pretty candid. I think I'd said that in the first campaign, my mother was upset—oh, those things that were said about me, she thought they were terrible. Brenda thought they were terrible, but half of them she thought might be true. (DePue laughs) They're a little more realistic. But again, they can say things that you can't say. Brad in the first campaign and Elizabeth in the second campaign were very active, and I think helped a lot. Family is very important.

DePue: I wanted to go to the issues, even though you just talked about character, and a measure of a person's character is how you deal with the issues that come up. So let's take a look, if we can bring up slide five, at this issue. This is October eleventh, but a couple months before that, I would assume, Hartigan finally comes out on the surcharge—surtax is how you've been saying it here. This particular chart is from the *State Journal-Register*, and on the right side you can clearly see that people who are opposed to retaining the surtax is 52 percent, and for is 37 percent. So that's one of the issues that you have to overcome and address in the Hartigan campaign.

Edgar: That's a better poll than I saw. It was about 75-25, (laughs) the one I remember seeing on that issue. Maybe we'd educated some people by then.

DePue: And the next slide here—an interesting reaction from the media, if you will. Here's their take on Hartigan's position.

Edgar: Yes, his ideal was, we don't need the surtax; we can just cut waste out of government. "Two percent" was his favorite phrase. And he really did not, I think—

DePue: Put up the victory sign if…

Edgar: Yes, the victory sign. And he talked about it in debates and stuff a lot. I think a lot of the media was very skeptical because they'd heard that before. I tell students at

U of I [University of Illinois] now, whenever you have a candidate who says the solution is to cut waste in government, get real suspicious—because there's waste, but there probably isn't that much waste, and they probably won't figure out where it is. So that's kind of not a valid way to say you're going to balance a budget or deal with financial problems. We didn't really know just how much of a financial problem we faced. But the media, I don't think ever bought his arguments, and that helped me, because that 52-37 opposed and supported the surtax—that was a lot better than when we first started out. I remember in early September, it was 75-25, but I think people began to focus and realized, schools need this money, and there isn't an easy way. And you'll never find that on taxes, people are going to be in favor of it. They'll accept it, but they're never going to tell you they like it.

DePue: You've mentioned already the importance of this ad campaign that Hartigan had, which really kicked off in August. Did that change the nature of the campaign at that point in time? It got more negative?

Edgar: I don't know if it got more negative. I don't think the campaign was all that negative. You were going to show some commercials [during the interview], but there were a lot of commercials, a lot of things going on. I think it made it a lot tighter, and everybody knew, this is probably going to go down the wire, and so everything matters; whereas, when I had a double-digit lead, you could think, he could make some mistakes and it's not going to cost him the election. But when you get down to one or two points either way, you know that anything might make the difference in the election.

Hartigan was making a play for the Republican voters. Now, I was making a play for the Independents and, as I call them, thoughtful Democrats, but he was making a play for the more conservative Republicans, and he was arguing he was a businessman, he had business experience. His business experience was on this savings and loan board—and we pointed out (DePue laughs) that wasn't real great experience—and vice president of a bank; he was at First National Bank. But he was a businessman, and he was going to bring that skill into government; that's why he didn't need to keep this surtax. And it was working, to some extent. I think he did probably at some point make some inroads on some of those voters.

DePue: I know he really emphasized the 2 percent, but I would think there's an opportunity for you as well, because he's also talking about increasing or at least emphasizing education, which is an expensive business, obviously. And 2 percent—where are you going to get those cuts?

Edgar: Oh, we did, but again, you're talking money, you're talking figures—you're talking things that don't stick with a lot of folks. But a lot of people did listen. In the end, I think that's why I got almost all the newspaper endorsements. I think the *Sun-Times* and *Crain's* both kind of implied, in spite of what he said, we just think he'll know Chicago better and he'll be better for Chicago; it isn't that we buy his philosophy on the surtax or his approach. I can't remember, *Crain's* might have said the business experience a little bit. We got the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, a very Democratic paper,

and it was mainly because they didn't buy Hartigan; they believed me. They thought my approach was much more responsible than Hartigan's.

We haven't talked about it yet—I just made reference—but after Bush said "read my lips," we shouldn't have won that election in Illinois. Also, people wanted change, and it was that whole fourteen years with Jim Thompson. While he was popular to start, at fourteen years, you begin to wear out your welcome a little bit, and people wanted a change. I really think that if we'd have run your typical campaign, I'm not sure at the end we'd have won that.

DePue: "Read my lips"—we should mention the second part of that. "Read my lips: no new taxes." And I would imagine it's hard for you to convince the Illinois public, this isn't a new tax; it's an existing tax.

Edgar: The Democrats said, "Edgar wants to raise taxes." I said, "No, I just want to keep status quo." That was my argument, and that was a hard sell. People viewed, hey, we could get rid of this. But the other side of that coin: most people don't think you ever get rid of a tax, so they never believed Hartigan. And they kind of thought, at least Edgar's being honest with us. Kind of like the right-to-life people. In the end, they grudgingly voted for me, probably a lot of them, in that election, because they thought, at least he doesn't say one thing and… They didn't really trust Hartigan because they knew he flipped on it, so at least I hadn't flipped. And push comes to shove, people give you credit if they think you're being honest with them. That's very important, and I think that helped me in this election.

As the campaign was going along, as I said, the issues were important, but you just had a sense they were trying to focus on the individuals, too. Governors maybe aren't as ideology-oriented as senators. You've got to run things; you've got to make appointments. I think the trust factor is more important in a governor than maybe a senator, because a senator goes off and makes votes; a governor is at home in Illinois running things. And that trust factor. I think it was true in '90. I suspect in 2010 it's even going to be (laughs) more of a factor, after what we've gone through the last few years in Illinois.

DePue: You've already talked about some of Hartigan's ads and especially the effective campaign he ran in August. He's attempting to tie you to Thompson, not—

Edgar: And taxes.

DePue: I've also heard you and Carter both mention the bumblebee ad.

Edgar: Yes. Oh, it was a cute ad. Do you have it?

DePue: No, I don't have that one.

Edgar: Oh, that's right; he couldn't find it. The bumblebee was cute just because it was cute, but it was also a way to get at me and tie me to Thompson a little bit, and the

question—I'm frivolous with money. Here we were, spending money on putting a rose garden in the mansion. I think I told this story earlier. Did I?

DePue: I don't recall.

Edgar: Thompson (laughs) wanted to build a rose garden at the mansion. He wanted to do some work on the mansion, because it always needs work, and his staff some way screwed up and didn't get the bill passed. The legislature went home, end of June, and they weren't going to be back till October. Well, he wanted to get going, and they needed to get going on some of the repairs. Because I do the buildings and grounds of the Capitol, I have a line item that does—and they determined they could take some of that money and spend it on the mansion. But it was my money.

So Governor Thompson called and asked if he could borrow money from my account, which I wasn't going to spend that part of the fiscal year, and when the legislature came back in October, he would shift that over to my account. My people said, yes, we don't need it now. "So I can do it?" It was kind of hard to tell him no, because really I'd still be able to do my projects and he'd get the money appropriated in the legislature. And I knew he could get it appropriated in the legislature; the staff had just made a mistake. So I did it. But officially, if you look at it, from the secretary of state's budget, I took our money and we put a rose garden in the mansion. So that's what that ad was about, and he has this bumblebee flying around in a rose garden. It's just one of those things—what is the old story about no good deed goes unpunished? (laughter)

DePue: Absolutely. Let's go to one of your ads, and the first one we're going to take a look at is entitled "Homecoming." Don Sipple is the one who put these together for you. And this is one where you get to frame yourself, introduce yourself to the public.

Edgar: Oh, this was my favorite commercial. I didn't like any of the rest that much. I liked a couple in there, but this was my favorite.

[ad plays:]

Narrator: Charleston, Illinois—a small town of twenty thousand hardworking, honest people. Today, they will welcome home one of their own, Jim Edgar, and remember the experiences and people that shaped his character and his life.

Dr. Mack Hollowell: He had a tough childhood. His father was killed in an accident when Jim was seven years old.

Fred Edgar, Brother: My mom had not worked, but after that happened, she had to go to work full time, and we all got jobs.

Narrator: Whether it was on his paper route or cleaning out dorm rooms or later working in a clothing store, the people of Charleston got to know a

determined young man whose integrity and compassion made a strong and lasting impression.

Betty Edgar, Mother: He is sincere. That's what I said. He's really interested in the welfare of people.

Jim Kimball, Sheriff: Charleston can be very proud of Jim Edgar and what he's accomplished so far and what he's going to accomplish in the future.

Louise Taylor, Neighbor: There's no two sides to Jim Edgar. What you see is exactly what you're going to get.

Narrator: For Jim's wife Brenda and their two children, the tribute and the day were overwhelming.

Brad Edgar, Son: I know he played baseball in the park over here, and these are all the people that he considers his good friends.

Elizabeth Edgar, Daughter: For me, it's a little overwhelming to think that these people want to take time out of their day to come by and see our dad.

Brenda Edgar, Wife: I don't guess you'd find a more honest person. He's dependable, caring.

Jim Edgar: So thanks a lot. Appreciate it very much.

Narrator: What we've learned about this man's past tells us a lot about what we can expect in the future. So let the future begin. Jim Edgar for governor.

DePue: Recall when that played and the reaction it got?

Edgar: It played in July and August, a little bit before Hartigan's tax thing. And it got a good reaction. It wasn't a heavy one, but one of the reasons we particularly wanted to do it was to play it in the Chicago area just so people kind of knew me. Because again, they didn't really know either one of us. Even though they knew my name and knew a little bit about me, they didn't have a real good feel. And that, we felt, was important—and downstate, too—to get an idea of who this guy is, a little bit about him, and having people feel some kinship to that.

DePue: It plays exactly to what you were talking about earlier: it's about character and personality; it's not about issues at all.

Edgar: Yes, and it was at Morton Park. That's the park where we later had the press, when we had them down. Morton Park is a park in my hometown of Charleston, where I did play a lot of baseball. I wasn't very good, but I played a lot of baseball there. I played a lot of things in Morton Park, but that was an appropriate place for us to gather in Charleston.

DePue: The next ad I'm going to show is a very different kind of an ad. It's got Professor Irwin Corey.

Edgar: Yes, I never liked—in fact, I told them not to run this, and they told me afterwards they ran it. I thought it was silly.

DePue: How did the campaign, though, come to decide to do a series of campaigns with him, even if you didn't run the ads?

Edgar: They ran it one time. They ran it during a Bear game the last weekend of the campaign, and it got a lot of publicity that night on television. I didn't know who Corey—I still don't know who this guy is. (DePue laughs) To me, a flip-flop is a shoe. That's out East, but in the Midwest, we called them thongs. I never called them flip-flops. So this whole commercial never meant anything to me, and to run on a Bear game, I think it cost sixty thousand dollars. I was irate. (laughs) The poor guy who had to tell me that they ran it. But they already did it. I didn't think it made a lot of sense. I think these guys were sitting around in the bunker one night with Sipple, and they'd been in the room too long, (DePue laughs) and they thought this idea up. He knew Corey, and he thought he could get him. And I won't tell you the whole story I've heard about how they got him, but they got him. They all love this commercial to this day, and I have always thought it was silly.

DePue: Was there a conscious decision at that time, though, to get a little bit tougher? Was there a decision because—

Edgar: Oh, this isn't as tough as some we ran.

DePue: We'll get to a couple of those.

Edgar: I don't think tough commercials sometimes are as important as just something you remember. It's like the bumblebee or Professor Corey. Some people remember him. You're going to show the one a little later, I think, on the lake, and I liked that one. I thought that was cute, just because… But I think you got to have something outside of just—your opponent beats his wife or something. (DePue laughs) You need something that's going to be a little unique.

DePue: Let's show this one, even though it came much later in the campaign.

Edgar: Yes, the last week, last Sunday of the campaign.

[ad plays:]

Corey: But in politics, a waffle is when you can't make up your mind. We wear these flip-flops around a pool; but in politics, a flip-flop is once you stop waffling and make up your mind, (laughs) you change your mind! Here is the master of the waffle and the flip-flop. He's done it on taxes; he's done it on the seatbelt law. He is Mr. Waffle Waffle Flip-flop.

DePue: There's the world's foremost authority on the 1990 election campaign, (laughs) apparently, in this case. I can see where it has an impact. People don't forget that kind of an ad.

Edgar: And more important, probably, than the fact they ran it during the Bear game—and the Bears had a pretty good team that year, so a lot of people were watching—the six o'clock news talked about it. Sometimes you run an ad, you get more free coverage than you pay, and that was an example of that. I knew what a waffle was, because that was the day I was holding up that waffle, but the flip-flop, I never… To this day, I always get a kick when I hear somebody say "a flip-flop" when they mean a thong, because that's what I thought it was.

DePue: The next ad we wanted to show here was one that I believe was aired later in September, and it deals with Apollo Savings and Loan. This one, I guess, can be defined as an attack ad.

Edgar: Yes, this is a hard-hitting…

DePue: The name of this ad is "Hazel," and there's a story as to why it's named "Hazel," I believe.

[ad plays:]

Narrator: Twenty thousand depositors were in turmoil when Apollo Savings and Loan went under. One of its directors, Neil Hartigan, after being warned of its pending collapse, still had Apollo provide him furniture, maid services, and two below-market mortgage loans. In a lawsuit, the federal government said Hartigan's conduct toward Apollo was directed to his personal benefit, and he and Apollo executives negligently and carelessly mismanaged the business. Now he says he'll run the state like a business. Can we afford Neil Hartigan as governor?

DePue: These are much shorter ads here. I believe the reference to Hazel was because of the maid service.

Edgar: Probably would be, yes. The reason behind that ad—and I didn't have a problem with that ad—was because the attorney general was saying that he had business experience and he'd run the state—he had this business experience and Edgar didn't. And I didn't; I'd worked in government. But I questioned whether his business experience—and that was also about the time you had the savings and loan scandal that happened, where a lot of people lost a lot of money, and the federal government had bailed them out. To me, you're looking at a guy's record, and he's saying one thing—now if he hadn't ever brought up "I'm a great businessman," we probably wouldn't have run that ad. And we knew that his attempt to talk about being a businessman probably was having some impact, because people thought, yes, he—banks and all—this guy has some… And savings and loan was clearly something in your record. They ran things on some of my voting records, and that's fine; that's fair game.

DePue: One of the most revealing and important stories, from Mike Lawrence's perspective, in understanding this campaign, was a time when I think he and Carter were trying to convince you it was time to take the gloves off and be tough. You had started the campaign, as he described it, wanting to keep this on a very positive—

Edgar: The Charleston—the hometown commercial.

DePue: Absolutely.

Edgar: I wanted to run that the whole campaign, you know.

DePue: Do you remember that discussion?

Edgar: Oh, they had it several times. Those guys would be in Springfield and call me on the phone and stuff…

DePue: The thing he remembers most clearly is that they were trying to convince you of this, and you said, "I'll get back with you a little bit later." I guess you got back to them the next day, and Brad had played a role in convincing you that it was time to respond to some of the attack ads.[55]

Edgar: I do remember Brad—he did think that we needed to hit back. We were getting hit on a lot of things, and the feeling was that we needed to be tougher. Brad was always kind of the hardliner in the family. I collect stamps, and he didn't want anybody to know that, but I do like horse racing, and he wanted people to know that. He thought that was a better image for me than collecting stamps. I'd bet on horses.

DePue: Now we get into some really fun stuff here, a series of debates that you had, and there's actually—

Edgar: You don't have the commercial about the house in Springfield?

DePue: I don't think we have that one cued up.

Edgar: That one was really more effective than the Apollo ad. I thought you had that. (talking to the studio producers) Yes, you got that, don't you? Yes, you have it. Play that one.

DePue: Let's see if we can cue that one up, then, as well. And were these ads all running in the September and October timeframe as well?

Edgar: Um-hm. We ran that hometown ad in the summer, and they did theirs in… That was still pretty unusual. Later on in the second campaign, we ran some ads in June, but back then, you didn't run ads usually until almost Labor Day because people

---

[55] Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, April 1, 2009, 23-26.

weren't paying attention, and you were trying to save your money; then you wanted to go in.

DePue: So while we're waiting for this to cue up: these ads are running at the same time that you're also getting publicity in the debates, so the polls are starting to move in different directions now.

Edgar: (laughs) They didn't move very much. They started to move in my favor after the second debate, but from September, Labor Day, until probably about the middle of October, they were pretty tight. Then they started to move, and I don't think it was the second debate; it was just the timing.

DePue: It looks like we aren't going to be able to find that one, but—

Edgar: It was maybe in reply to the bumblebee ad. Hartigan questioned how I spent money, taxpayers' dollars and all that, and he was talking about how he was going to get rid of waste. He didn't need the surtax; he'd get rid of waste. We were saying, "Your track record isn't real good on that." And the fact was, as a state official, you're required to maintain a residency in the state capital, so the state paid rent for all the statewide officials except one: me, because I had a home that was in Springfield city limits. I was pure on this one. (laughs) And most of them had apartments back then. He had a house on the lake. Now, you've got to understand, in Springfield, a house on the lake, no matter what it is—that's high living, because only the wealthy had a house on the lake. He had a house on the lake and the state was paying for it, while Burris and all the other guys had an apartment downtown someplace.

DePue: While he was attorney general.

Edgar: Yes, so we flew a plane over the lake, over where his house was. You can barely see his house—you just see the trees and you see the water and all that—but it's just the point. I had people tell me they heard more response from people about that one than they did the Apollo one. To me, the Apollo one's more serious. But again, this goes back to this character and personal thing. Yes, a house on the lake, that's got to be expensive versus—and it was. I think his rent was twice what the others were. The point was, when he had discretion, he didn't handle it right, and that, we thought, replied to his "I'm going to cut waste out of government." But I was surprised. I thought the savings and loan ad would be the one that really—and it had some impact, but the other one… I think it was just that people could relate to you renting a house and it's on the lake, versus…

DePue: When I think of the house on the lake ad, part of that discussion was also about cutting his staff by 40 percent for criminal lawyers, and that—

Edgar: We might have had one on that, but my guess is, yes, the house one just because it's a house on the lake.

DePue: Again, it's something that the public can identify with.

Edgar: Yes, I think that.

DePue: I wanted to show a couple more ads but wait till we get past the discussion on the debates, because they were right at the tail end of the campaign. Do you recall any of the discussion and the strategizing about the kind of debates and the number of debates you were going to have?

Edgar: Yes, a little bit. We knew we were going to debate. I didn't want to do any more than two. I don't like debates.

DePue: Why?

Edgar: I think they're all put on. I mean, I think they're useful. You can see how a person is and maybe get a feel, but I just never thought they were that factual. Of course, I was for Nixon over Kennedy, and I always thought Kennedy won because he looked better than Nixon did in that first debate, and I think that still. And I don't think many people watch gubernatorial debates. Presidential debates, I think do have an impact. I don't think gubernatorial debates have much of an impact. But we agreed to do two—do one in Chicago and do one downstate. And I think that kind of had gotten to be the pattern. Maybe sometimes they had three, but it struck me that was enough.

DePue: There was a joint appearance September twenty-sixth in Springfield—

Edgar: Oh, there were several, yes. What was that at?

DePue: That was one Mike Lawrence especially remembered. I believe it was at the Renaissance downtown here, the Ramada Renaissance.[56]

Edgar: For what group?

DePue: The Chamber of Commerce. The larger Springfield Chamber of Commerce.

Edgar: We had one with them earlier than that. I thought we had one at the Chamber of Commerce…

DePue: You could very well have. I know that—

Edgar: That was more like a debate. The rest of these, when we would meet, he'd go in and talk, then I'd come in and talk. But the one that happened in Springfield at the Sangamo Club early on—in fact, I remember Jack Clark, the publisher of the *Journal-Register*, really wasn't sure I was up to the job, tough enough. One of the things that amazed me: people want you to be tough. And I always thought, no, you don't want to be tough; you want to be fair. You don't want to look like you're too—but it's kind of like Brad, "You got to be tougher"—this whole idea about you

[56] Currently the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel.

got to be tough. And maybe it was just because of how they perceived me; they weren't sure I was tough enough.

DePue: Here's a quote to kind of illustrate that. Hartigan is still drumming in on this notion that there's no difference between you and Thompson. In fact, his quote is, "An Illinois that's in trouble"—that's how he described the state. "There's not a dime's worth of difference between Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar." Do you remember what your response is?

Edgar: No, I can't.

DePue: This is what was in the paper, at least. "You had your chance to run against Thompson in 1986, but you wimped out." (laughs)

Edgar: That was a planned line. I'd never use "wimped out." I remember they did, yes.

DePue: And part of the strategy by this time: it's time to take the gloves off and to come out here and go toe-to-toe?

Edgar: Yes, they did convince me that I had to be a little more forceful out there. I think you get into a campaign, and I think there is a tendency—it gets a little tougher, and you do say things that maybe you wouldn't have said a year ago. But that campaign, though, compared to today's, was pretty ginger.

DePue: I think I might have messed up on a couple of the details here. Those were actually some quotes from the October fourth debate. So let's talk about the October fourth debate and leading up to that.

Edgar: That's the first debate?

DePue: That's the first debate, and that's up in Chicago at WLS.

Edgar: The day before, I had had a fundraiser in St. Louis. John Ashcroft, who was governor, had a fundraiser for me. Then we played tennis, which is always a dangerous thing, because Ashcroft's very competitive, and you always have to worry he'll come over the net and hit you with the racket. But we played tennis, and then I flew to Chicago that night. They had some poll results, and they said it was dead even. We thought maybe we were going to be pulling ahead; it was dead even. And I think I'd had a 3 percent lead the last time we did a poll, so I was disappointed because we'd run TV ads and all that—and of course he had been too. So I remember going down there, [and thinking] oh, shoot, we're just not pulling away. I just kept hoping we'd pull away at some point.

I get to my apartment, and I start worrying about not so much the debate, just the election in general—and I didn't go to sleep. And I'm one of these guys—I need my eight hours' sleep, and I didn't get any sleep. I laid awake. I tossed and turned all night. And Brad—very seldom, we'd hook up in the campaign, but he was up to

Chicago, coming up for the debate—came in the apartment that next morning, saw me, and said, "Jiminy, you look like death warmed over." (laughs)

Then, of course, the brain trust is there. Sipple's in and Steeper, the pollster, is in; Carter and Lawrence were up from Springfield, and Phil O'Connor and a few other people, and we're going to talk about what to do at this debate. We go through all this strategy. You got to say this, you got to use this line, you got to… And I'm just sitting there, and I'm trying to stay awake. I don't know what they told me, to be very truthful. Probably that line—was that from that debate?

DePue: That was from that debate.

Edgar: I'm sure they told me to use that at some point when he—I just don't use the word "wimp out," but I'm sure they told me that to use. They had all these lines. And at the end you've got to say this and that. So I had all these things crammed in my mind, I'm half awake, and we go to the debate. Then whoever's putting the makeup on me—I said I probably didn't look great, but she put too much makeup, and I did look like death warmed over, I guess, on TV. I'm nervous about the debate, and I'm trying to remember all those things I'm supposed to say—I don't think I was tracking for the first half of the debate, and that was kind of the sentiment of people watching. The second half, I kind of woke up and [thought] this was good, but all of a sudden it was over.

The pundits said that Hartigan won the debate. The good thing is I don't think anybody watched it to speak of, even though it's in Chicago. Some watched it, but probably the people for me were still for me, and the people for him were still for him. I know David Broder wrote a column, because he came in Illinois to watch that. This was one of the hot races in the country, and David Broder came in—he's a syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post* and is, to me, the dean of all political reporters—and had his own little kind of focus group, a group of people involved in the community, who watched it. He took his poll and he said, "Who won the debate?" And they said, Edgar did, because Edgar's clearly for the surtax; he has a position. Hartigan doesn't know what he's going to do and not do, and he doesn't have an answer to that, and that's a major issue. It's obvious that Edgar's much better prepared to be governor than Hartigan is. So he wrote a column: "Edgar wins debate."[57] Unfortunately, he's not syndicated all that much in Illinois, (laughter) but it made me feel good to know that David Broder said that I won the debate.

But that debate was just a terrible experience for me because, as I said, I was asleep, and I was trying to remember all these lines, and… At the end, I kind of got into it, but it was over. Now, the second debate—can we talk about the second debate now?

[57] Edgar is referring to Broder's article about a discussion group's reaction to the debate. The group, composed of eleven Illinois residents, was displeased with the debate. But after talking with each other about the candidates' positions, the participants favored Edgar by a vote of 8-3. *Washington Post*, October 8, 1990.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: The second debate was completely different.

DePue: And that's October eighteenth.

Edgar: In Springfield. And the second debate was in the Senate chambers. WGN carried it. I think it was the only Chicago station that had it live in Chicago. And I was wide awake. The other thing—for the first time, I wore my glasses. I'd never worn glasses, if you noticed in those pictures and things, up to that point because of my vanity; I just didn't want my glasses on. But I couldn't see. I couldn't see notes. One of the reasons I didn't ever read a speech: I couldn't read it if I wanted to, because I couldn't see it. They can only make the print so big for me. I'd had my glasses on that day, and I finally said, "You know, I think I'm going to wear my glasses tonight. I'm tired of not wearing my glasses." They said, "Yes, that might be all right." So I wore my glasses that night—the first time publicly I wore my glasses. And Hartigan had worse eyes than I did. His glasses were really thick, but he'd never wear them, and he didn't wear them then. My vision was great compared to his, I think. But I wore my glasses that night.

And I was very relaxed. I was in the Senate chamber, and I knew my stuff. They didn't try to get me to memorize anything. There wasn't any of that attempt during the day to cram things in my mind. We went over some facts we wanted to bring up and some issues and things. We were asked questions by three reporters, and Hartigan got—there was something about a contribution by the utilities to him; he's out attacking utilities, but he takes money from them. Then he was accusing me of hiring patronage employees, or something like that. I said, "Now, wait a minute. I've got a Chicago ward committeeman attacking me about my hiring practices?" (DePue laughs)

That debate went very well, I felt, but what was funny—WGN had some good people on afterwards who did the analysis, and of the fifteen minutes, they spent at least twelve minutes talking about my glasses and what impact that had. "Why do you think he wore those glasses? You think he's trying to look more intellectual? You think he's trying to look a little older? What do you think? Well, those glasses look good." I couldn't believe… (laughs) They spent twelve minutes talking about my glasses. Well, I've worn my glasses ever since. You see any picture of me as governor, I'll always have glasses on. It was kind of a very liberating night (laughs) because now I could see. After the first debate, which supposedly we lost, but David Broder said we won, we started to pull ahead.

DePue: I think we've got a slide for this, slide number seven—October tenth, it was 43 percent for you and 41 percent for Hartigan.

Edgar: See, and chances are that's from a poll that was taken prior to October tenth. Is that when it was published?

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: Because it usually took about a week for those polls to show up. And if you look at that, the only other Republican that had a chance, it looked like, was Sue Suter against Dawn Clark Netsch.

DePue: [George] Ryan, but he's four points behind.[58]

Edgar: He was behind four points, yes, but the *Tribune* had begun to run a scandal on [Jerry] Cosentino, which was beginning to bring George up. Because George was way behind until the *Tribune* went after Cosentino on a workers comp scandal.

DePue: But the ultimate thing is your race is within the margin. It's toe-to-toe.

Edgar: Yes, at that point. But the next polls, maybe a week or two weeks later, I'd pulled up. I'd pulled up to about an eight-point lead.

DePue: There's October twenty-eighth, and we can talk to that one. Here's the headline for it. One poll had Edgar way ahead.

Edgar: Yes, that's October twenty-eighth, but the *Tribune* poll was probably taken sometime like October tenth, and the poll you just saw was probably taken like October first. It will take a few days before they get them. And what the *Tribune* showed there: I had an eleven-point lead. We had our internal poll numbers showing I had an eight-point lead leading up to when President Bush went back on "read my lips: no new taxes." When they raised taxes at the federal level, and throughout the nation, Republican candidates just all tanked.

DePue: When in the campaign did that come out?

Edgar: Sometime in the latter part of October is when that happened.

DePue: So after the second debate?

Edgar: It was after the second debate. I had started to build a lead. Menachem Begin's son was at a Jewish gathering, and I was there, and they called me to tell me the poll numbers, and I'd pulled about a seven-point lead at that point, or eight-point.[59] It was the first time we'd had that kind of movement. And it was right about the time of the second debate, before it maybe, and that went well. Then sometime after the second debate, Bush did "read my lips," and overnight, the polls just dropped. Our internal showed that, and the *Sun-Times* poll I know was taken after the second debate. So we knew the *Tribune*—we knew the poll number, but they hadn't printed it. They printed it at the same time, but it was ten days older, and in between, President Bush had worked out a compromise with the congressional Democrats on the budget, and part of that included a tax increase. The media just jumped all

[58] Sue Suter (R) ran against Dawn Clark Netsch (D) in the race for comptroller. In the secretary of state race, George Ryan (R) opposed Jerome Cosentino (D).

[59] Menachem Begin was a former prime minister of Israel. His son, Binyamin, was a member of the Knesset at the time Edgar attended this gathering.

over and said, "He went back on 'read my lips: no new taxes,'" and of course they played that excerpt from the convention. I remember sitting that night saying, "You shouldn't say this because it's going to come back to haunt you." I did not appreciate it almost beat me, and it did beat some other people and almost beat others.

DePue: It was a tough year for Republican governor candidates.[60]

Edgar: And senators. We went to a Republican governors gathering a month after the election, and they said if the election had been a week earlier, three or four of us wouldn't be there—new governors, Republican governors. If it had been a week or two later, we would have had three or four other Republican governors. But what happened—automatically, you had a drop, huge drop. It was a ten-points, eleven-point drop just overnight, almost. And then after about a week, it started to come back a little bit. For me, or at least by election day, it had come back enough—it wasn't dropping anymore; it had come back enough that I was able to win.

I felt really good because I thought finally—you always knew these undecided—everybody's sitting there, they finally made up their mind, and they're breaking for me. So that second debate went well, and I felt good; I thought, we're going to win this. We'll probably win this by 6 or 7 percent. Then that "read my lips," and our overnights just started going south on us. I thought from then on I was going to lose the election.

DePue: We have mentioned already a couple of the charges that Hartigan levied at the campaign, at you—certainly the connection with Thompson, the issue about taxes. Another one—and you've alluded to this already, I think—the allegation of job-selling in the secretary of state's office. That's kind of standard for Illinois politics. Your response to that after all these years?

Edgar: I can't remember specifically, unless… When I first came in, we had some scandals. The first day I was secretary of state, the previous secretary of state, Alan Dixon—they'd had some investigations going on, so we were very careful (laughs) on our hiring practices and how our people operated. Not that everybody was pure; I'm sure we had some people… But it was not business-as-usual in the secretary of state's office.[61] We fired people, and we had an internal affairs that was very, I think, effective in catching folks and everybody knew it; so I think maybe not for the right reason, but people behaved. And the job-selling thing, I cannot remember if there was something specific that got him [Hartigan] on that. I don't remember any charges that anybody had… We had people who worked in the secretary of

[60] In terms of the number of governorships held, Republicans and Democrats emerged from the 1990 election with little change in the balance of power; each party had a net loss of one governor. However, while key Republican pickups included Michigan and Ohio, Democrats scored major pickups in Texas and Florida.
[61] Upon taking office as secretary of state, Edgar was almost immediately informed of a federal investigation that was then underway. For the actions he and his administrators took in response, see Jim Edgar, June 15, 2009, 7-8 and 17-24; Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, July 16, 2009, 64-71; and Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, May 20, 2009, 25-30.

state's office who contributed to the campaign, which is true in every office in state government, but I can't remember what that was coming from. I don't think anybody paid any attention to that, to be very truthful.

DePue: In the comments that I saw in the paper, your response to it was there's absolutely nothing to that allegation. The specific quote was, "This is politics of the worst kind."

Edgar: Yes. That's a good line.

DePue: (laughs) Another allegation that came up—

Edgar: That's probably when I pointed out the fact, "You're a Chicago ward committeeman. What are you talking about?"

DePue: (laughs) A few weeks later, October third, Hartigan alleges bid rigging in the Department of Transportation in favor of asphalt contractors. Do you recall that one?

Edgar: We do a lot of asphalt in Illinois, and a lot of engineers have made that… I think he was grasping. They were probably trying to tie me—because if there was scandal in Thompson's administration, I'm tied to it. I don't have anything to do with that. DOT is under the governor; I'm secretary of state. But a lot of that I think came—Dick Kay, a political reporter for Channel 5 in Chicago, the NBC station, used to always be on this kick about asphalt versus cement, and we favor asphalt, and part of it was because Bill Cellini heads up the asphalt association.

DePue: And he's a large contributor to the Republican caucus.

Edgar: Well, he's not that big a contributor, but that's what they said. If you looked, he's not that big a contributor. But he was a Republican activist and involved, and that must be what… I don't remember that, to be truthful, but I do remember Dick Kay always talking about cement and asphalt and why do we do asphalt when we ought to do cement.

DePue: You did have a memorable response to this allegation.

Edgar: Oh, I had memorable people down there in Springfield. (DePue laughs) I'm out traveling the state. What did I say?

DePue: "This is a full-fledged trip to Fantasyland."

Edgar: Oh, yes. That's Lawrence. That's Lawrence. I can just see Lawrence writing that one.

DePue: And here's something we haven't brought up before. It's not really—

Edgar: See, that's part of it. One of the things, unfortunately, in campaigns and everything—in history, you look at releases, you look at printed words, and a lot of that, some wordsmith… If you catch tape, what a guy actually muttered out on a camp—of course, somebody might have told him what to say, too. But yes, that's pure Lawrence, I can just tell. "Fantasyland."

DePue: Would "wimp out" be a Lawrence one, too?

Edgar: Might be. It'd probably be him sitting there with Carter and a few others, coming up with that. But somebody had to tell me to say that, yes.

DePue: This isn't really an issue; this is a little bit of a diversion, if you will, but I wanted you to talk about and reflect on the impact of the Harold Washington party in the election and the Harold Washington election in 1987, when he won his second term as mayor of Chicago.

Edgar: The second term was kind of anticlimactic. The first term was pretty dramatic. The impact—

DePue: But it was the second one, when Hartigan endorsed Washington's opponent in the primary.

Edgar: Okay, I see what—

DePue: For the 1987 election.

Edgar: Yes. Who'd he endorse, anyway?[62]

DePue: I can't recall the name now.

Edgar: Because Daley was the first one, and [Edward] Vrdolyak ran as a Republican against him in the general. Yes. (pause) As I said, I spent a lot of time worrying about the ethnic community, and that included the black community, because I had ties from being secretary of state. Again, huge help to me. Being secretary of state, you got a lot of name recognition, but one of the other advantages is it gave you connections with a lot of groups, particularly in the Chicago area, that aren't traditionally Republican. And for most people, the secretary of state's office is not a partisan office. Democrats never gave me a hard time, because they always wanted little favors; legislators—they just didn't care that much about it. They cared about it, but it wasn't viewed as a…. When I ran for governor, it was just so much more partisan, the overtone of everything you did, and even the kids at school found a lot more flak when I ran for governor than when I ran for secretary of state. But as a result, I had a lot of contacts in a lot of communities, and I had contacts in the African-American community, and I kept saying, "We need to spend time

[62] On March 4, 1987, Hartigan endorsed Thomas Hynes, Cook County assessor, who ran in the general election as the Chicago First Party candidate. When Hynes withdrew from the race two days before the election, Hartigan finally threw his support to Harold Washington. *Chicago Tribune*, March 4 & April 7, 1987.

there." I remember a lot of my staff people, campaign people, saying, you're spending too much time there. You need to spend more times in the suburbs, or wherever. And I said, "No, I think we need to spend time here."

Also, about that time, you had the Harold Washington Party, which was a third party, trying to get on the ballot in Chicago with mainly African-American candidates who were running at the county level to counter the Chicago Democratic machine candidates controlled by Irish Democrats, of which Neil Hartigan was one. And that was causing a lot of concern in the black community. The Democrats didn't want that because they thought that would siphon off a lot of votes from the straight Democrat ticket. We kind of liked the idea. We knew they may not vote Republican, but at least they won't vote Democrat.

Then the judiciary, which is very much controlled by the machine in Chicago, ruled it off the ballot, and that just inflamed a lot of the independent blacks or the more activist blacks. So they wanted to send a message. Well, I'm running for governor, and I am running against an Irish Democrat. I'd go down to the South Side and say, "Just understand, I'm not Irish Democrat. In fact, I'm a Baptist like you are. I might be a different Baptist, (DePue laughs) but I'm still a Baptist." I spent a lot of time trying to… And they knew I was a guy they weren't afraid of. One of the things a Republican needs to do in the African-American community—you're never going to pick up a lot of votes there, probably, but if they just don't feel like you're a threat to them, they may not go vote. They don't feel like they got to get out and beat you like they do some Republicans.

Plus, we'd spent time—I had contacts, I had some ministers of big churches for me, I had some political activists. But also, one of the guys on my staff had a friend who was a lawyer, whose name was Arnie Kanter. Erhard Chorle was the guy on my staff, but he was friends with Arnie Kanter, and Arnie had been Gene Sawyer's attorney. Gene Sawyer was the last black mayor. When Harold Washington died, he filled the vacancy. And he [Kanter] was his personal attorney, but he got involved with Sawyer's political things, too. Sawyer ran against Daley in '89?

DePue: Eighty-nine.

Edgar: Yes. And Daley beat him. But particularly the independent blacks, the black activists, were very much involved in Sawyer's campaign, and Arnie knew them. Now, Arnie is a white Jewish kid from the North Side, but he knew a lot of the key black politicians who were not that tied to the Democratic machine, who had been with Sawyer. So we got him involved in making contact with some people.[63]

I had already made some contacts with some—Don Rose, who is one of my consultants, was very active in that community; he knew some of the black leaders,

[63] For Kanter's work with Sawyer, especially during the mayoral succession fight, see Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 17, 2009, 46-56. For his organizational efforts in Chicago's black neighborhoods, see the same interview, 63-87.

and he had made some contacts, and we got some help there. But then Arnie got some of Sawyer's people—and also the West Side. West Side's a really hard area to crack for a Republican. And he got some activists, real important activists there involved. So we put together a coalition of a lot of independent black leaders in the south and west side of Chicago. And we had some ministers, and we had the Black Contractors. That was a business group down there, Black Contractors. They were one of the few groups that had money. Not that we got a lot of money from them, but they were influential in the community, and they were for me, too. Republicans just hadn't had much going on in that area for a long, long time, and so we had something going along.

We had that kind of going along, and then they threw the Harold Washington Party off the ballot—that just got more people helping us. And then a lot of people just said, "I'm not going to vote." When the Democrats are getting about 95 percent of the black vote, if there's less black vote, (laughs) that's good for a Republican. The less vote there is, percentage-wise, you're going to pick up more, because there's that middle class, that independent type that will come out and help. And we had a lady, and I just went blank on her name. She was very well thought of on the West Side. She was a black activist. She had never supported a Republican in her life. She became one of my big supporters on the West Side. That all kind of came together, and as a result, on Election Day, I think we got about 25 percent of the black vote, but the overall vote was down. That's part of why we got 25 percent instead of 20 percent—because it was a smaller vote and more, as I said, that middle class or the independent black versus blacks in the projects, who have a tendency to vote straight Democratic. They didn't come out. So that helped. In the final analysis, I didn't get beat as bad in Chicago as Republicans usually get beat.

DePue: Part of the equation when you talk about the Chicago Democratic machine is always turnout. That's what the machine does. Those ward bosses, those precinct captains—they figure out a way to make sure that they have a reliable turnout and vote. And—

Edgar: Excuse me. Nancy Jefferson is that lady's name. And it's very important, because she later was one of my co-chairmen of my transition committee. I had the head of Ameritech, the telephone company—had the CEO, I had Stan Ikenberry, the president of the University of Illinois, and I had this African-American lady from the west side of Chicago who flew to Springfield on the Ameritech jet, and it was the first time she had ever flown in her life. But it was the kind of coalition I wanted. I kept telling the staff, "I want to put together a coalition of people from all over Illinois. Yes, I want to win, but I don't want to win just as suburban Republicans; I want to have some ethnics, and I want to have some Democrats." And we did. We'll talk about election night, but election night looked like the true Rainbow Coalition that Jesse Jackson always talked about. If you ever see pictures and videos of that night, that's what it looked like. Because we had a lot of African Americans who stuck their neck out, and a lot of them continued to get harassed (laughs) for years from the black Democratic organization because they supported

me in that election. But timing's everything, and there's no doubt the court's throwing off the Harold Washington ticket helped a lot.

And then Hartigan—because I'm sure we mentioned that a few times; Hartigan didn't support Harold Washington for reelection—I'm sure that had an impact on him too. Again, they weren't threatened by me, and they weren't that thrilled with him. While they were mainly Democrats, it took the edge off; it didn't cause them to pour out on Election Day. And the turnout was low on the South Side, the West Side.

DePue: I suspect I know what your answer's going to be, but was your strategy more geared towards getting some of these traditional Democrats to vote for Jim Edgar, or kind of sucking away their enthusiasm for Hartigan, where they just don't come out to vote at all?[64]

Edgar: You want them to vote for you, but you also know if you reassure them enough that you're not scary, and maybe the other guy's not all that good, either they're going to vote for you or not vote. And you do know turnout is a key factor in an off-year election. The strategy, the closer we got to Election Day, was get out the vote. I think in the end, one of the reasons we won a close election: we out-precinct the Democrats, which is very unusual. Carter was a fanatic on that. I didn't necessarily agree sometimes on big policy issues that he thought I ought to do and things, but Carter was a master at keeping focused on getting people registered, making sure we had people covering these precincts, and getting people to the polls on Election Day. You talk to Democrats that day, there wasn't that enthusiasm in a lot of those wards, even the white wards, for Neil Hartigan as much as maybe would have been in the past, and there's a lot more enthusiasm for me in areas. In a close election, that made a difference. But at the end, Carter and a bunch of them who had been kind of on me about spending too much time in a black community kind of said, boy, good thing we did that.

But Arnie Kanter, who came on later and was my first general counsel, helped a lot because he had the contacts. In politics, a key is contacts. People who know people, and they've been with you in past campaigns—there's more of a tendency they'll be with you in the next campaign. And there's a tendency sometimes, too: Who we going to be for this time? He was able to go down and talk to these people who he had just worked closely with a year before in the Sawyer race, and they had this bond, even though here he is, a Jewish guy from the North Shore. But they knew him, and they trusted him, and he knew who you could count on, who you couldn't count on. So that was a plus that came about in the last two months. He and Erhard spent a lot of time on the South Side, working and helping getting that organization going.

---

[64] A key component of Edgar's Chicago strategy was an aggressive focus on ballot security. See Kanter, December 17, 2009, 78-80; and Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, May 7, 2009, 32.

Also, the past ten years as secretary of state, I'd spent a lot of time with some church leaders and people down there that paid off. Neil Hartigan, again—one of the things I noticed, I think, in the ethnic community: he hadn't spent as much personal time in a lot of these areas. I think there was this took-for-granted [attitude] too much, and when he kind of came in late, it was too late; he didn't have as much personal time. Also, a lot of folks knew me. I was the secretary of state, so they knew who I was, too. But I'd been in their community, so they knew who I was, and when I came to their community, it stuck. He was just another Democrat white politician. There wasn't as much of a feel toward him.[65]

DePue: Machine politician? Did they see him that way?

Edgar: They don't care quite as much about the machine; it's the fact he's a white Democratic politician, he's an Irish politician—the worst. And let me tell you, the African Americans basically knew who the Irish were after Sawyer got beat by an Irishman, but the Italians knew who the Irish were, and the Poles did, too. There is still, particularly in the Italians—and I don't think the Hispanics get quite as uptight about it, but the Italians, kind of bother them a little bit. They didn't quite have the diversity at the top. I mean, you have an Irish mayor, and you're going to have an Irish governor. This is an awful lot for the Irish. But I'd had contact with these groups before, and that helped me. The fact that I wasn't Irish, I think, helped in some of these areas. Now, it didn't help me with Irish, (laughs) but I think it helped with some of the other non-Irish ethnic groups.

DePue: We saw the poll results already for October twenty-eighth, where it was basically still neck-to-neck; it could have gone either direction. So at that time, what's the strategy in your campaign staff? How do you close the deal? You're a week or so away from the end.

Edgar: Get out the vote. You just keep doing what you're doing. You probably up it a ratchet a little. Me holding that waffle was something I would not have done in September. Probably wouldn't have done it in the first part of October. But at that point, I knew—I thought after "read my lips," we probably were going to lose this race. Actually, the last two weeks, I kind of was going through the motions. I was out there doing everything, but just deep down, I thought, we're not going to win this. We had our chance, and we were moving, and this "read my lips" has just caused everybody to rethink, and they're all breaking for Hartigan. I thought it'd be close, but I thought, I'll probably lose.

The strategy, though, was you just keep—particularly the suburbs, we need to get the vote out. That's why that last Sunday we did that swing through the suburbs. The last week, we were all over the place; we kept running downstate and hitting media markets. Friday, I'd been down on the South Side, and Saturday morning we did something out in the suburbs, then I flew down to Champaign. Or we did

[65] The secretary of state's role as the state librarian gave Edgar an important conduit to communities throughout Illinois, particularly through his programs to improve literacy. Jim Edgar June 15, 2009, 55 and 65; Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 22, 2009, 21-26; and Kanter, December 17, 2009, 85.

Peoria. I stopped and had something in Peoria that was out on a farm someplace. Then we went to Champaign; it was homecoming. I had bought the pig at the State Fair that year—huge pig, I mean, that thing was huge. Well, it was pork day at the football game, and they had my pig over there for pork day, the pork producers, so I went by and said hello to my pig (laughter) before they went and butchered him, and made the rounds there.

I think President Ikenberry had had the foundation in that day, and he probably for the first time kind of tipped a little politically. He just said to everybody, "There's an election coming up. There's one candidate that's for making the surtax permanent. We get money from that; there's no way we can function without that money. I'll just leave it up to you people to decide who you ought to vote for."

DePue: I don't know if we mentioned Ikenberry; that's the president of the university.

Edgar: He was the president of the University of Illinois, yes. I had spent a lot of time at the university, functions and things. And I don't know his exact words, but they said he made it pretty clear who he was for. Hartigan went off the wall. But Ikenberry said, "I didn't endorse him; I just said that's a big issue."

Then I went up to Chicago, went up to Waukegan, I think, that night, or maybe it was Rockford. We did something in Rockford the next morning, and then we went through the suburbs. Again, the strategy was to get out the vote, but that night, we're getting the last polls—Sunday night before the Tuesday election. I had been out all day in the rain, holding up a soggy waffle, and had been running all over the state, and I was **beat**. And Brenda had come up from Springfield that night because the next day we were going to do the last fly-around.

At that point, the poll that had been the most accurate in the last several elections was the Champaign television station, Channel 3, WCIA, the CBS station. Had a poll, and it had always been accurate. It was the only poll that caught Stevenson coming up on Thompson in the '82 election, and so that poll was the one everybody waited for, and they were going to have their last poll come out Sunday night. Carter's down in Springfield and I'm in Chicago, and I've got to do a live interview on Chicago television that night at 10:15, but Channel 3 was supposed to give the poll results at ten o'clock. So he was going to call me before I went out and did the interview. They got the numbers fifteen minutes early; they called them. I said, "How is it?" And he said, "It's not good." And I thought, okay. I said, I'm probably getting beat four or five percent or something like that. I said, "Well, how bad,?" and he said, "You're down eighteen points." I said, "Eighteen points? Jiminy Christmas, this is over." He said, "Yeah." And I thought, again, that "read my lips" thing, they all broke, and it just kept going, and they were going for Hartigan. It may not be exact, but I knew I was not going to be close; I was going to get wiped out.

DePue: But there were other polls out there as well.

Edgar: Same night—maybe it was the next day—WBBM, the CBS station in Chicago, did a poll and said Hartigan was up one or two points, and that's margin of error. I thought, at least I'm not getting wiped out in this one, but Channel 3 has always been the accurate one. I remember that night, I just went to bed, and I had a good night's sleep, actually. I thought, boy, there's nothing to worry about; (DePue laughs) this is over. I was just going to have to find a job. The next day we did a fly-around, and turnout was good, but I just figured, it's over. And I was very kind of emotional because I knew this was the last time I was going to be in these communities, because I'm going to be out of office, and this is it. Brenda and I—I remember we came to the Capitol, and I got very emotional when I introduced her because I thought, this is—and as I said, I loved the rallies in the Capitol—

DePue: This is a bit out of character, isn't it?

Edgar: Yes. Since I've had my heart surgery, I get more emotional, but I hadn't had my heart surgery then. I was very emotional at that because I love doing rallies in the rotunda, these were all the people, I'd spent all my career in state government, and I thought, this is my last rally. This is the last time I'll be here. So that was a tough one. And then I think I did a couple more.

That day, Hartigan had been in Decatur for something. It was his last stop, and he went to Decatur, which is more of a Democratic stronghold. The local station over there had played it up, and people had called and complained because it was all one-sided; they just had Hartigan on it. And they got so many calls, they called us and said, "We want to give you equal time. We want you to come on, but our news won't be until after the Monday night football game." Well, the Monday night football game was between Detroit and Buffalo, or some two teams that nobody cared anything about, and the game was lopsided but went on and on, so it probably had a viewer audience of about three people. (DePue laughs) So I'm standing in a parking lot at K-Mart on the east side of Springfield because that's the only place they can pick me up, and it's damp, cold. It's like eleven o'clock, and I'm tired, and I'm going to get beat, and I just want to go home and go to bed, get up and go vote and get it over with. So they're doing an interview with me, and that was my last interview of the campaign. I thought, what a way to end this campaign.

DePue: I did want to show a couple more of the commercials that are going to be playing—

Edgar: We'll do that before we tell how the election came out, yes.

DePue: The first one is entitled "Commitment," and this is much more thematic, the issues you wanted to play on. The second one we wanted to show was "Butch and the Docks," which is one that basically is going to tie Hartigan to the machine and suggest that maybe Hartigan and Madigan, all these Chicago Dems, aren't a good thing for Illinois. So hopefully we can get these cued up there.

[ad plays:]

Edgar: This campaign has been full of charges and counter-charges, but you deserve to know what I stand for and what kind of governor I'll be. My priorities are to invest in our schools and make sure we get valiant results from our educational system; to make state government more efficient, just as I have as secretary of state; and protect existing jobs and provide training so our workers have new skills for new jobs. You know me. I don't make commitments I can't keep, but I keep the commitments I make, and I'm asking for your vote.

DePue: So again, we've got both issues but especially your emphasis on character at the end there.

Edgar: It was also a play on—because we thought Hartigan had changed, flip-flopped. You may not like everything I say, but you know I'm going to keep my commitment. And that commercial, my part was done right then, right at the end. The footage was old footage, because I didn't have my glasses on. But part of that is at the end of a campaign, you try to come back, and you want your positive message out about what you're about. That's what that commercial is about.

DePue: And certainly I think it's an effective ad. So let's go to the next one, "Butch and the Docks," if we can.

[ad plays:]

Narrator: If Neil Hartigan is elected governor, the Chicago Democratic machine would have total control of state government. Decisions about education, roads, and agriculture will be made by these three lawyers from Chicago. The entire Democratic ticket this year is from Cook County. The choice: Jim Edgar. He'd be the first governor in sixty years from downstate. He's proven as secretary of state that he can solve problems and serve all of the people. Who can we trust: Neil Hartigan, the politics of promises, or Jim Edgar, the record of performance?

DePue: Would that play in DuPage County?

Edgar: No, (laughs) we didn't play that in Chicago, I'm sure. We played that downstate. And I bought the argument, because I think the Democrats did mess up. They did not have a downstater on the ticket. They usually have at least one downstater. For some reason—I don't know, their slate-making or trying to balance all the interests in Chicago and the machine—they didn't have anybody from downstate. And late in the campaign, it was obvious that Hartigan was going to run halfway decent downstate. Traditionally, downstate had been 50-50. It's not anymore, as we talk here in 2009. Downstate is probably 10 percent Republican now, in most elections, but back then, it was always the bellwether. You'd win the suburbs, you'd lose the city, and you'd decide it downstate. Hartigan had spent a lot of time, a lot of effort; they knew him because of his lieutenant governorship downstate. Thompson's numbers weren't as good downstate, so that had changed things and was really a factor. My numbers were okay downstate, but the change factor was stronger than my numbers in some ways. And the Democrats downstate—they wanted in; they

had been out for so long. So we knew it was going to be tougher downstate than maybe we had hoped, and that ad was geared at: you got to make sure there's somebody from downstate.

I have to tell you, I never believed a lot of it. I think the Democrats messed up by not having somebody on their ticket, but I never really believed that as much—that if you had a Chicago Democrat, they were going to ignore downstate. I always thought they would be smart enough, if they were from Chicago—they knew they were from Chicago, but they have to play to downstate a little bit, and they would try to… Because I knew as a downstater, I'd spent a lot of time worrying about Chicago, and I needed to show Chicagoans that I understood and I cared. So I thought it was legitimate to raise, but I didn't think it was as legitimate. Now, if we had run that after Rod Blagojevich was governor, I would say that would be an extremely effective commercial. I'm not sure it changed many people, but it's an argument we always made as Republicans when the Democrats did something like that. For the most part, when the Democrats got in, I think they attempted to balance, just as Republicans attempted balance—Rod Blagojevich being the exception. So I would say that would be a very good commercial for 2010. (laughs)

DePue: You had mentioned already that you were pretty much resigned a couple days before the election, that this thing was over.

Edgar: Oh, a couple weeks, yes. Yes, after that "read my lips," and you saw those numbers drop, I was pretty resigned. Now, after the Channel 3 poll—

DePue: How about some of the other people on your campaign, though?

Edgar: We kept going. Nobody talked about it. I don't know. You had two groups: you had the people with me out in the field; then you had the bunker, as I called them, and that was Carter and Lawrence. I tried not to talk to them because I usually didn't agree; they were trying to get me to do something I didn't want to do. (DePue laughs) Carter and I really didn't—we'd just mumble at each other the last two weeks. Lawrence, maybe, I'd listen to, but I just didn't like the commercials, I just didn't like this and that, and he never had any good news, so I didn't want to talk to him. I think that night he called me on the polls was one of the few nights we probably had more than two sentences to say in the last two weeks. But Rich McClure, who had worked for Jim Thompson, who was a friend of ours—we were at the same Sunday school class at Central Baptist in Springfield—had moved back to Missouri, where he was from, and was John Ashcroft's chief of staff. Ashcroft had let him off (laughs) to come baby-sit me the last two weeks, because they needed somebody to travel with me, they thought, who could handle me. And they figured Rich knew that drill.

DePue: What does "handle" mean?

Edgar: You need somebody to be able to tell the candidate what he needs to do and get him to do it, and when he gets all excited or upset about things, to calm him down. And

when you've got the guys back in the brain trust sitting there, looking at everything, they can communicate. This is the intermediary; this is the guy that—I'd always have a traveling aide, but they were more of a junior staff. They needed somebody senior staff, and also somebody that I'd feel comfortable with. Sipple and him had worked on campaigns, so Sipple and him were close. So I was glad to have Rich back because, again, I like Rich. I tried to get him to be my chief of staff, and he wouldn't leave Missouri after the election. I felt comfortable with him, and it was good to have him with me. So it was reassuring for me; it was good for them in the bunker, because they had somebody who understood and they thought could maybe keep me in line (laughter) or whatever if I got too… I mean, he was one of the guys who helped talk me into holding that waffle up that last day.

So Rich was there, and then I had Ken Zehnder, who had originally been my traveling aide when I was secretary of state. He had moved on to bigger things, but he came back the last two weeks to kind of travel with me, too, because I felt very comfortable with him. Because that last two weeks, it was going to be important; it was going to be very nerve-wracking, and they just wanted to make sure that they got mustard on the sandwiches. One of the things, any of my traveling aides, they always said to the new traveling aides, "You got to remember, whatever, have mustard on the sandwich,"(DePue laughs) because food was very important to me, and if you'd get the sandwiches wrong, I'd be upset. And Zehnder knew to have mustard on the sandwiches. Then I had state troopers. There was one state trooper who traveled with me a lot over the years, and he spent that last two weeks traveling on my detail, too. They alternated even the state trooper detail so I had the right guys with me for that—because the last two weeks was going to be very, very stressful and very, very important.

You had that group; then you had the bunker group. I didn't know what the bunker group thought. I know they saw the poll numbers, and they probably thought things weren't good. They were looking at overnights too, and our overnights kept showing more like the BBM Chicago poll than the Channel 3 poll. It turned out the Channel 3 poll was flawed. You're supposed to alternate between Republican and Democratic candidates when you ask the question—they didn't, they only did the Democrat. And some other stuff was off. They never did another poll after that. Channel 3, after that, abandoned their poll because they were so wrong and it was such a big issue. The BBM poll that said Hartigan was up maybe one or two points was really probably accurate, within the margin of error. I'm sure they were discouraged, but nobody stopped doing their jobs, because I think everybody thought it was still close—at least they did. I wasn't sure—and turning out the vote would be the key factor; whoever got their vote out would win the election.

DePue: That's what I have heard from Carter and Mike Lawrence, the guys you described as being in the bunker—that they weren't quite as pessimistic as you were. But that's all hindsight, too. Before we go into the election night itself, though, I want to give you an opportunity to address anything else we haven't talked about in terms of the campaign.

Edgar: It was an unusual campaign for the fact that, as I said, Hartigan was making inroads downstate, and I definitely was making inroads in Chicago. Not only a lower turnout in the African-American community, which helped me some, but in the Asian community… We weren't just getting support; we were getting tremendous support. We'd hold rallies and have fundraisers, and it would be huge crowds. Hartigan would go in those areas, and he just wasn't there. So I think all that preparation over the many years I'd worked those communities, and we had people who knew those communities, really paid off.

I had a lady who came on my staff a couple years before I ran for governor. She had actually been on Gene Sawyer's staff, and some lawyer I knew up there, Democrat, told me, "You ought to hire this woman. She's really good." She'd been with Harold Washington originally. I think she's Irish and married to a Polish guy, but she knew the ethnic community. I mean, all the Asian groups, all the European—she didn't deal with the African-Americans; she didn't deal with Hispanics. Pat Mahosky's her name. Our kids would come up, and she'd take them around because these ethnic groups love to see the family. They would go with Pat for a day. To this day, we still have this expression: when you get completely drained and worked out too much, it's a Pat Mahosky day. To this day, the kids will talk about those days she'd drag them around to all those communities; she'd just wear them out. But she was good. I could sense at the end of the campaign, that seemed to be coming together fine.

Downstate, we were worried because President Bush had not run well downstate in '88. Particularly in western and northwestern Illinois, he got beat, which hadn't ever happened before. So we spent a lot of time in that area. And I remember talking with the legislators, and they'd say, "Why are you here?" And I'd say, "We're worried about this area." They'd say, "You're going to run like gangbusters in this area." I didn't believe them, but I did. I didn't run as well in southern Illinois—that's a Democratic area—and in St. Clair and Madison, I didn't run as well. But where Bush had lost in '88, we won comfortably.

I went over to my area in eastern Illinois that last week, and again, it was one of those emotional trips because I thought, this is it, and I'd been campaigning there for twenty years, from the legislature on to the governor's race. The turnouts were good, and you can judge turnouts. Everybody felt good, and I was kind of down, but they all felt good about it. So even poll numbers sometimes can—if the enthusiasm is there, because that moves you to the turnout.

I go back to something I said earlier: you just cannot imagine how many people it takes working night and day to get somebody elected governor. It's organizational, and it's very important that you have an organization. Now, I don't think a good organization can elect a bad candidate statewide anymore, for governor, but a good candidate, particularly a Republican, is going to have to have a good organization to win. Because we did not appreciate how the demographics were shifting. Bush just barely carried Illinois, where he carried the nation pretty handily in '88. Usually Illinois was the bellwether—not only how it went, but the

percentage it went reflected the nation. That was changing, and I think '88 was the first election where we began to see such a dramatic shift. Part of that probably was an outcrop of the enthusiasm from the Harold Washington campaigns, but also some of the ethnic changes throughout the state. And again, we were fortunate we had already worked that area.

The last thing—I didn't talk too much about the Hispanic community. We'd spent a lot of time in the Hispanic community. I had a lady named Arabel Rosales who worked for me, who worked the Hispanic community. We spent a lot of time in the Hispanic community. Now, in '90 it was not as much a factor as it was in '94, as it is today, because a lot of them weren't registered to vote. But still, when the election was over, we'd split the Hispanic vote; everybody was just amazed. So I think a lot of that election turned on the fact we had done a lot of work months and years before. It's hard to go in at the last minute unless there's some huge issue, particularly when you're bucking the trend. I think all that, working with groups and having people dealing with people, really paid off, because when it came Election Day, we didn't have a lot of votes to spare.

DePue: It's time to move to election night, then. I've heard some of these stories before, but I think they bear some elaboration on your respect—what election night was like. Where were you? Who was with you? What was the mood?

Edgar: Election night was the magical night. It's too bad we [can] never find the tapes. I got up that day in Springfield, and I was going to go back home to Charleston to vote. In fact, I voted in my high school, and that was kind of—again, I thought, gee, the last time everybody's turned out to see me—and they had the students there to see me come and vote. I was getting kind of philosophical—I did all I could, and there's not anything more I could do. I went and voted, came back to Springfield and got Brenda, and we flew up to Chicago and landed at Meigs about four o'clock; we were going to have our election watch that night.

I remember getting off the plane, and I was depressed because I thought I was going to lose, but I was kind of at peace, too. I got off the plane, and my assistant press secretary, Gary Mack, who was up in the Chicago area, came running out to the plane. And you've got to know Gary. He just came running up. He said, "You're ahead eight points in the exit polls." And I looked at him. I said, "You got to be kidding me." He said, "No. There'll be another one in, but you're up eight points." I knew enough, exit polls usually—Republicans usually lead early in the day, and as they go along in the day, they get tighter. So I thought, at least I'm not going to get embarrassed, maybe. This is going to be close. Because I had just had visions of me getting beat ten or fifteen points and just being embarrassed about dragging down everything. I knew Lynn Martin was not going to do very well, but… And that was the other thing. Here you have the top of the ticket, and we still had straight party voting in Illinois. I knew she wasn't going to do well, so I knew that wasn't going to help at all. So for the first time, I began to feel good. I thought, I got a chance—at least I'm not going to be embarrassed, but I might actually win this race.

So we went into the Hyatt. The Hyatt Regency is where our headquarters was, our election night was. I went in, and the polls closed at seven o'clock. My mother was up there. My mother had come up, and I was feeling a lot better. I talked to her, and I said, "They got me ahead in the exit polls, but that will probably tighten up. But at least I'm not going to get embarrassed. You know, we've got a shot at this." Right after seven o'clock, Carter came in, and he said, "We got the final exit polls. You're going to win by 1.5 percent." I said, "Carter, I've never heard of a 1.5 percent. I've heard of a 1 percent or a 2—how do you do 1.5 percent?" "They've given Hartigan every benefit of the doubt." I said, "Are you sure?" And I never knew with Carter. Sometimes (DePue laughs) I was afraid… "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm sure." I said, "All right. At least we're not going to get embarrassed." He said, "No," but now he said, "They said they gave him every benefit of the doubt, but you never know on these things." So that's seven o'clock.

Returns start coming in, and Brenda and I go into this VIP reception we're having; all the big contributors are in there. They have Chicago television on, and the early returns are mainly from Chicago, and I'm getting killed. I'm just getting beat. But it's early. It's like 3 percent, and I'm behind. It's probably at least 60-40, if I'm doing that well. And people would come up the next half hour and say, "Well, Jim, no matter what, you ran a good race." All of a sudden, Brenda disappears. She goes back in our room, and I go back, and she's crying. I say, "What's wrong?" She says, "We're going to lose, aren't we?" I say, "No," because right before we'd gone in there, I'd got the first results.

We had a pretty good network checking on votes. Steve Schnorf, who worked for me, had a setup, and he had a pretty good setup around the state, and he gave me some early results from some counties downstate.[66] They were spread out, but I could tell by the margin how I was running, and I was running good. And before I went in that room, I had got three or four early precincts from throughout DuPage County, and I was running a good margin there, better even than I was running downstate. So I thought, if that holds up and we have a low turnout—because everybody said, "There's a low turnout in Chicago. There's no enthusiasm." Ward committeemen our guys were talking to, Democrats, said there's no enthusiasm in this. I thought, I think we're going to win this thing. First time in a long time I thought we were going to win. So Brenda's crying. I said, "Brenda." She said, "Well, those people in there." I said, "They don't know. They're looking at old numbers." I said, "Trust me, for two weeks, I knew I was going to lose this race; I now think I'm going to win this race. It's going to be close, but I think I'm going to win it."

Then about a half hour, an hour later, Thompson was downstairs someplace in his suite, and I went down there. He said, "Well, how is it?" and I could tell he thought I was going to lose. I said, "I think I'm going to win." He said, "You do?" I said, "Yes, it's going to be close, but I think I'm going to win." I went up, and

[66] [When Schnorf interview is transcribed and edited, cite here. Unless this was covered in second part of the interview, which currently remains unscheduled(??)]

I kept monitoring the results from DuPage, and then the city started coming in. And city is just a total; you don't get a—but I could tell in the city I was running 35 percent. I knew I needed to run at least 30 percent, maybe 35 to almost 40 percent, so I was doing fine.[67] Actually, I didn't know I was running as well downstate, but in the suburbs, I was running fine, and I had enough in from some of the—I wanted to get Peoria, and I knew the outlying areas I'd do it, but I wanted to see the bigger towns downstate. And I was doing okay. Rockford—doing very well. So I thought, I'm going to win this thing. It's still going to be close.

But I was still behind on TV, and all the national networks would come to Illinois and say, "It looks like Neil Hartigan's going to win in Illinois. He's ahead. It's still too early to call, but it looks pretty good." All the local Chicago television was talking about, "Hartigan's ahead. It's still too early, but it looks good." They had Alan Dixon on from St. Clair County. He said, "Oh, Hartigan's running way ahead of Edgar. It really looks good." Well, he wasn't running as far ahead of me as I thought he'd run ahead of me in those two Democratic strongholds, Madison and St. Clair.[68] We kept monitoring the other counties, and we knew there weren't any surprises; we were running okay there, and DuPage was coming in very good, and Kane. But the last anybody had heard on the national news, I was behind.

At that point, I started feeling guardedly optimistic. It was still close. Nobody would go off that 1.5 percent, and 1.5 is enough to make you real nervous. And the Hartigan people early on had been real jubilant when the TV would talk to them, but then they began to quiet down. Finally about eleven o'clock, I looked at it, and the only problem was, about then, something happened to the voting machines in Will County, and they stopped counting. So we sent lawyers out; the Democrats sent lawyers out. (laughter) And enough votes had come in from Chicago that, again, I had a lead. I had gone into the lead about midnight. There weren't enough votes in Will County out to alter the election, but the national news had never swung back to Illinois, so nobody in Illinois was making a move. You don't do anything until your opponent concedes. It was late, and I thought, I got to get this thing called, because I'm going to win this election. There's not enough votes out now to beat me. We had about a seventy-five thousand-vote lead, and no matter what happened in Will County, they didn't have that many votes. And almost all the city was in.

Bob Teeter, who was one of my consultants, was out with the national folks doing the calling of elections, doing the analysis. I said, "Get Teeter on the phone and tell him to look at Illinois again, because I want him to declare I'm going to win so we can have a party." Because first of all, everybody's going to be in bed pretty soon, and I want people to know we've won—and might be the only fun thing about being governor is the party tonight, (DePue laughs) because it isn't going to be fun. You just had a sense this thing was really going to be a mess.

[67] In Chicago, Hartigan beat Edgar, 449,024-225,258. Edgar, however, reached his goal by taking 33.4 percent of the vote. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.
[68] Edgar received 42 percent of the vote in St. Clair County; in Madison County, his share was 41 percent. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.

Sure enough, about a half hour later, all the networks said, "We've taken another look at Illinois. It's been a turnaround, and Edgar, we are declaring, is going to be the winner in Illinois." This is 12:30 or so. And about one o'clock, Neil calls and very graciously, concedes.[69] We had all these people downstairs at the Hyatt, and a lot of them were real nervous because they knew if we lost, they probably were going to have to leave the state, because, as I said, there were a lot of folks in Chicago, in the ethnic community, who stuck their neck out. We had the Greeks. We had a split in the Greek community. The young Greeks were all for me, and the old Greeks were for Hartigan. A lot of people had their reputations on the line.

So I said, "All right. Let's go down and declare victory." I said, "Call down there." We came down the elevator, and we got on the escalator. The Hyatt—there's a floor above an escalator, then it goes down to the main floor. And of **all** the moments in politics, in government, the high point was when Brenda and I were on top of that escalator, looking down, and that place just packed. It had been packed all night; nobody had left. And they were just—I mean, they were happier than I was, probably, because they had won. As I said, a lot of them had stuck their neck out and everything. Coming down that escalator that night was probably the high point as far as just satisfaction and everything. You looked at the group behind me, and it looked like the Rainbow Coalition. We had blacks, we had Asian Americans, we had Hispanics, we had Poles, we had Italians, we had WASPs. We might even have had a couple of Irish back there. (DePue laughs) It was just packed. And probably by this time, it was almost two o'clock. I don't stay up past midnight, you know? And it was really fun.

DePue: I do think we have a photo from that evening, if we can show that.

Edgar: Do you?

DePue: One that Mike Lawrence gave me.

Edgar: Oh, that's one of him. Yes. That was after. Yes. There was one in the front page of the *Tribune*, too, of the… Our slogan said, "Let the future begin," and they had that sign after I won: "The future has begun." They put that up there. But one of the reporters for Channel 7, Andy Shaw, who just retired, who was their political guy, had made the decision in the last weekend to cover Hartigan because he decided Hartigan was going to win. So some other reporter covered me. And I have never let (DePue laughs) Andy Shaw forget that. For about a month, I said, "No, I'm not going to talk to you, Andy; I'm going to talk to the other reporter. He's the guy that covered me." But it was a vote spread, yes. Eighty-three thousand—that's a lot of votes. (laughs) People don't think so.[70]

---

[69] Mike Lawrence initially took the call from Hartigan's advisor, Bill Griffin. Lawrence, April 1, 2009, 45-46.
[70] Edgar finished with 50.7 percent of the vote, defeating Hartigan by a margin of 83,909 votes (1,653,126-1,569,217). State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.

DePue: The numbers on the left are from *Mostly Good and Competent Men*, so those are the final tally. The numbers on the right, Chicago suburbs and downstate, are numbers that came out of the *Tribune* on November eighth.

Edgar: What day was the election?

DePue: Sixth, November sixth.

Edgar: Yes, that should be pretty close to the… Because sometimes some will drag. But I don't know how many people I ran into the next week who said, "Oh, so glad you won. We went to bed thinking you'd lost." And I said, "How could you go to bed if the election (laughs) hadn't been decided? Why wouldn't you stay up to find out?"

We had a deal: whoever was going to win would be on the *Today Show* the next morning. If Hartigan won, he'd be on; if I won, I'd be on. And I had to be there at five o'clock or 5:30, some unholy hour. I remember we finally got done with all the congratulations and hoopla from the suites and everything at about three o'clock. I'm real fussy about my hair, and if I lay on a pillow, my hair just… And I thought, there's no way I'm going to get up and get my hair and everything (laughs) ready to go do these interviews. So I told Brenda, "I'm going to sleep in this chair." I got in a chair, and got another chair and put my feet up, propped up, put a blanket around me. Didn't take my shirt off—didn't want to mess up my hair—and slept like that for about an hour and a half (DePue laughs), then got up and went and did the *Today Show*. And then I had a lot of requests to go—and I said, "No, the first thing I'm going to do is go to the *Bob Collins Show*." I think maybe I even went on him before I did the *Today Show*.

Mitchell—what's his first name? There's a restaurant over by the Board of Trade.[71] All the Board of Trade guys go in about three o'clock in the morning, and they all go over there and have breakfast. That's, for some reason, a kind of tradition. I went over there after I got done and went in to have breakfast. I walked in, and everybody stood up and gave me a standing ovation. I didn't know most of them, but it was just… That's kind of when you know you won, (laughs) you are in. And it was such a turnaround that whole night from what I'd felt for the previous two weeks, because I just did not think I was going to win that race. It was a nice turnaround. I enjoyed that very much.

DePue: Bill Lair remembers the story of going to the restaurant very well. Who was Bill Lair?[72]

Edgar: Bill Lair was—is; he's still there—the managing editor of the Charleston paper, and we'd gone to college together. We were also in the same Sunday school class for a while, when we moved back after I had lost, or when I went home to run the first time.

[71] Lou Mitchell's.
[72] Bill Lair, interview by Mark DePue, May 5, 2009, 31-33.

DePue: The thing he remembers about the breakfast is that there was a line there, and no, you weren't going to cut in line, but apparently you took the opportunity to shake hands and chat with people.

Edgar: No, I wasn't really hungry; (laughter) I was still on cloud nine. Yes, he went along to Bob Collins, too, just to kind of observe, because he'd come up to cover it. I said, "Come along. I doubt you're going to have another Charlestonian for a while go through this, so…"

DePue: Let's put up the slide again that shows the numbers from the election, and I want you to break it down a little bit for us as you go through there. You've been talking about the strategy that you had towards the end, especially towards Chicago.

Edgar: I never deal with numbers; I only deal in percentages. People say, "How many?" I don't know. But you're looking at that—I lost by about two hundred thousand votes. It wasn't uncommon that you'd lose by a half-million sometimes in Chicago, in presidential elections. So that—

DePue: With emphasis that the turnout was low for Chicago.

Edgar: Turnout was low. Even though I did well in Chicago, (laughs) you still weren't getting 50 percent or more, so you wanted a lower turnout. Suburban Cook—that's probably one of the last good numbers in suburban Cook. You asked strategy earlier. We spent a lot of time in the western suburbs of Cook, because that was an area that was ethnically diverse—a lot of Italians—and the last few years had been going Democratic. Carter said, "You got to spend time in that area." And I probably spent an inordinate amount of time in western suburban Cook—a lot of Italian villages out there, where the mayors basically were Democrats. There were two groups that were very important: mayors and chiefs of police. And some of those mayors had more power than even the old Mayor Daley ever had. So I spent a lot of time with those folks in Proviso, a big township out there—because that had really trended Democratic—and Leyden, and some of those others. We did well out there, and that margin in suburban Cook is very significant. Today, Republicans lose suburban Cook at least by a hundred or two hundred thousand votes. It's just changed demographically. It started to change then, but we still were able to hang on. And I can't remember if it showed the collar counties on that or not

DePue: It did not. DuPage County is the one that normally really trends Republican, and you won that overwhelmingly.

Edgar: Also Kane County, and Lake County not quite as much as DuPage—Will being the least of those out there. But we did very well in DuPage. I always did well in DuPage. I actually saw some poll numbers the other day. I still do well in DuPage,

(DePue laughs) and I've been out for several years. And I give Bob Collins a lot of credit for doing well in DuPage.[73]

But it was a very satisfying election, mainly because I didn't have to promise anything I didn't feel comfortable with. I think that helped a lot in the next four years, which proved to be a lot more difficult than the campaign was in some ways. The campaign was the most stressful year and a half I've ever spent in my life. I think I knew from the word go that this was going to be tough; this was the big-time, and either I win or I'm out. There are no second chances in something like this. And two years later, when I began to have heart trouble, I'm sure a lot of it started with going through the stress of the campaign. Now, part of it was through the stress of being governor when the state's broke, but… That year and a half was just—I don't think I ever did relax until, on top of that escalator, coming down, I saw that crowd. That was just a super feeling.

DePue: We've only got a couple minutes left, so our timing is pretty good. I have one more picture I want to show, and this is the cartoon, jumping a little bit ahead, on the inauguration—

Edgar: Ah, we won't talk about this now.

DePue: (laughs) Yeah, we'll get into that in the next session. But the reason I put it up there: it's still tying you to Jim Thompson, going back to that theme.

Edgar: And when we go into that, we'll talk about that. Again, in this campaign, it was very important. There were groups it helped with, but again, fourteen years is a long time. In fact, one of the things I had to do the last week of the campaign was—Hartigan kept hitting away about I was just going to be more of the same, more of the same, and I said, "No." He said, "You're going to have the same people." I said, "No, I'm going to have an entirely different cabinet. Nobody who's in the cabinet now will be in their same position after I'm governor." It created shock waves through the Capitol building. All these guys kind of thought, if Edgar wins, we'll stay.

DePue: You got one minute, then, Governor, to sum up the most challenging year and a half of your life.

Edgar: Again, I think it's a classic campaign. I thought Hartigan was a great candidate. We both were well-funded, we both had party support—they grumbled, but they were there—and it was just a classic race that I'm glad I came out on top. After you go through all that, it's nice to win.

DePue: After this many years beyond the campaign, it was a blast to hear you describe it.

---

[73] In the collar counties—DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will—Edgar (62.8 percent) defeated Hartigan (36.2 percent) by 147,950 votes. His performance in this region offset Hartigan's margin of 110,881 votes in Cook County. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.

Edgar: Thank you.

DePue: Thank you very much. That's it for today. We'll pick that up again and talk about his years as governor.

(music)

(end of interview 10)