

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Julian D'Esposito

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Illinois Statecraft – Jim Thompson Oral History project

Interview # IST-A-L-2014-040

Julian D'Esposito, chief counsel and director of staff to Gov. Jim Thompson, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft – Jim Thompson* oral history project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: August 4, September 2, and September 29, 2014.

Location: Offices of Mayer, Brown, Chicago, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mike Czaplicki, ALPLM project historian

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston MA

Edited by: Mike Czaplicki, ALPLM project historian

Total Pages: 142 pgs Total Time: 2:47 + 2:56 + 2:39 / 2.78 + 2.93 + 2.65 = 8.36 hrs.

Session 1: Formative Years through Joining the Thompson Administration

Session 2: Major issues during D'Esposito's tenure as Chief Counsel (1977-1981)

Session 3: The Post-Administration Years: Tax-Reform, Boards & Commissions, and the White Sox Stadium Deal

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on February 24, 2015.

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

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Abstract

Julian D'Esposito, *Illinois Statecraft-Governor Jim Thompson*,
IST-A-L-2014-040

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Julian D'Esposito was born in New York City on August 6, 1944, while his father was serving at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. After the war, his parents returned to their hometown of Chicago and moved to an apartment on Wolcott & Lawrence. They lived there until 1950, when they moved to Wilmette. D'Esposito's father was a packaging engineer for the Container Corporation of America, and his mother was a homemaker. His grandfather had emigrated from Sorrento, Italy, at the turn of the century, and he worked as an engineer for the Pennsylvania RR. During his career, he left a lasting impact on Chicago, serving as chief engineer overseeing the construction of Chicago's Union Station, as well as supervising the initial construction of the Red Line and Blue Line subways as the PWA project engineer. D'Esposito graduated from Quigley Academy in 1962, and then majored in English at Loyola University. Upon graduating in 1966, he attended law school at Northwestern, where his faculty advisor was future state senator and gubernatorial candidate Dawn Clark Netsch.

D'Esposito finished law school in 1969, then did a fellowship year with a talented group of lawyers—including future state attorney general Ty Fahner—at NWU Law's Prosecution and Defense Program. Despite serving as the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, the experience confirmed D'Esposito's interest in fields other than criminal law. He soon began work in governmental law at Ross, Hardies. During his seven years with the firm, he gained critical experience working with local governments and various public authorities, especially in the suburbs around Chicago. He left Ross, Hardies in 1977 to join Jim Thompson's administration as chief counsel and served until 1981, when he returned to private practice. Despite this base in the private sector, D'Esposito continued to be involved in governmental service, serving as a member of Thompson's Tax Reform Commission, as well as outside counsel to the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (McPier), and the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority (ISFA). He also received appointments to the Illinois Medical District Commission (1988-94), the Illinois Capital Development Board (1994-95), and the Tollway Authority (1995-99).

In this interview, D'Esposito discusses his upbringing and some of the major events of the 1960s and early 1970s, his role in the Thompson administration, relationships among the staff, Thompson's governing style, the structure of state and local government in Illinois, and the place of the public authority. Specific subjects of interest include the Thompson Proposition, the creation of the director of staff position within the administration, the bill consideration process, Thompson's handling of sentencing appeals, Thompson's decision to intervene in the 1981 election of the Illinois Senate president, the Chicago school funding crisis of 1980, city-suburban political conflict over the RTA, and the construction of a new ballpark for the White Sox.

Subject Headings/Key Words: D'Esposito, Julian C.; staff relations, Thompson administration; chief counsel, Illinois governors; Thompson, James R.; Thompson Proposition; Chicago School Finance Authority; tax reform in Illinois; public authorities and special districts in Illinois; pinstripe patronage; Regional Transportation Authority; Illinois Medical District Commission; Chicago White

Sox.

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