

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert (Bob) Kjellander

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft Oral History project

Interview # IST-A-L-2014-004

Robert (Bob) Kjellander, a long-time Republican supporter and fund-raiser who also was Gov. Jim Thompson's campaign manager for the 1982 gubernatorial campaign, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft-Jim Thompson* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Feb 19, Feb 26, Mar 4 and Mar 11, 2014

Location: Kjellander's office at Springfield Consulting Group in downtown Springfield

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Dr. Mike Czaplicki, ALPL Contract employee & Jan Culp, ALPL volunteer

Total Pages: 147 pgs Total Time: 2:32 + 1:55 + 2:02 + 2:09 / 2.53 + 1.92 + 2.03 + 2.15 = 8.63 hrs

Session 1: Patronage chief and legislative liaison for Gov. Jim Thompson

Session 2: Campaign manager for Gov. Jim Thompson's 1982 gubernatorial election

Session 3: Years in private sector and Midwest chair of George Bush's 2000 campaign

Session 4: 2004 IL Senate campaign and co-chair of 2008 Republican Convention

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on June 11, 2014.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Abstract

Robert Kjellander, *Illinois Statecraft*, IST-A-L-2014-004

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Robert “Bob” Kjellander was born in March, 1948 in Chicago, Illinois, and grew up in the Irving Park neighborhood of the city. He graduated from high school in 1966, then attended college in Chicago for two years, before transferring to the University of Illinois in Champaign in 1968. While there, he became active in Republican politics on campus, heading up the Young Republican’s campaign for Richard Nixon in 1972. He worked closely with Karl Rove, who was executive director for the College Republican National Committee at the time.

Kjellander’s first substantial job, following graduate school, was as a lobbyist for the Illinois State Medical Society, where he worked until 1977. He then joined the administration of Illinois’s newly elected governor, Jim Thompson, working in the legislative liaison office. In 1978 Kjellander moved to the personnel office, where he managed the governor’s patronage appointments. Two years later he became head of Governor Thompson’s legislative liaison office. In late 1981 the governor asked him to run his 1982 gubernatorial campaign, with former Senator Adlai Stevenson III as Thompson’s Democratic opponent. By the end of that campaign, which ended in January after a court challenge confirmed that Thompson had won, Kjellander was ready to move back to the private sector, returning to his job as a lobbyist for the Medical Society. In 1984 he started his business, the Springfield Consulting Group. He stayed active in Republican politics over the next decade, often as a fundraiser.

In 1995 Kjellander became a national chair for the state Republican Party, representing the state at Republican National Committee (RNC) meetings. In 1998 Karl Rove contacted him and asked Kjellander to head up George W. Bush’s Midwest campaign for the presidency. For the next two years Bob juggled his full-time job with the demands of helping Bush win first the primary election, then the general election. Managing the candidate’s efforts in the Iowa caucuses was especially challenging. Kjellander stayed active in politics over the next few years and served as the RNC treasurer from 2005 to 2007. The party then asked him to co-chair the 2008 Republican Convention to be held in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was another non-paying job, one that required long hours and frequent travel. He closed the interview with a discussion about the trial of his good friend William “Bill” Cellini, who was prosecuted by U.S. Attorney for the Northern Illinois District Patrick Fitzgerald in a case associated with Illinois’s impeached governor, Rod Blagojevich.

Subject Headings/Key Words: work as patronage chief in Illinois; Governor Jim Thompson; Governor Jim Edgar; 1982 Illinois gubernatorial election; co-chair for 2008 Republican Convention; work as legislative liaison in Illinois; Karl Rove; George W. Bush; Governor George Ryan; Governor Rod Blagojevich; Governor Pat Quinn; Patrick Fitzgerald; William Cellini; John McCain; Sarah Palin

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The

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