

Interview with Robert Kjellander

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, February 19, 2014. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This morning, I'm in Springfield. I'm going to be talking to Robert Kjellander. You say "Bob," don't you?

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: Tell us where we're actually meeting here.

Kjellander: We're meeting in my office, the Springfield Consulting Group, which is 233 North Fifth, right across the park from the library.

DePue: A block and a half away. I can't get much more convenient than this location. Well, I always start with when and where you were born.

Kjellander: Nineteen forty-eight, Chicago, Illinois.

DePue: What's your birthday, or are you not willing to divulge that?

Kjellander: No, March 22.

DePue: So, you're an early baby boomer.

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: Was your father in the military?

Kjellander: Yes. He was in the Pacific theater during World War II. He was a bombardier in a plane.

DePue: Do you know the type of aircraft...B-17, B-29?

Kjellander: I don't really recall. I have pictures, but I'm not good at picking out which plane.

DePue: Was your dad one of those who didn't talk very much about his wartime experiences?

Kjellander: Very much so. It was like pulling teeth to get him to talk about it.

DePue: Kjellander, that's an unusual name, at least in these parts. I'm sure you struggled all of your life trying to get people to spell it correctly.

Kjellander: I, to this day, spend my life spelling my name. Whenever I check into a hotel or I'm doing anything, I have to spell it out, because Kjellander with a Kj makes no sense to almost anybody, unless you're from Stockholm.

DePue: So it's Swedish?

Kjellander: Swedish, yes.

DePue: Do you know when the family originally came here?

Kjellander: The family, interestingly enough, came around the turn of the century. My father's father and my father's mother came from the same area in Sweden, Utebore (??), but didn't know each other, and then met in Chicago.

DePue: That's where they both had immigrated?

Kjellander: They both immigrated to Chicago. In those days, certain countries were in certain neighborhoods. They met, got married. My grandfather owned a bakery on Irving Park Road on the Northwest side. They now call it Old Irving Park; we just called it Irving Park in those days. Now, because it's gentrified, it's Old Irving Park. My grandmother was a milliner at Marshall Fields.

DePue: Well, there is a very recognizable name from Chicago's past.

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: Did you grow up in Chicago?

Kjellander: Yes, I grew up in the same home that my father grew up in. It was basically a two-and-a-half story house. My father had the second and third floors. His sister, my aunt, and her sons had the first floor.

DePue: What was your father's name?

Kjellander: Robert. I'm junior.

DePue: And your mother's maiden name?

Kjellander: Robbins.

DePue: And her first name?

Kjellander: Neva, N-e-v-a.

DePue: That sounds more English than—

Kjellander: It is. She's English and German. But, with the Kjellander name, I've always just considered myself Swedish. (both laugh)

DePue: Proudly so?

Kjellander: Absolutely, absolutely.

DePue: Do you have any other siblings in the family?

Kjellander: I have one sister, younger by a year and a half, who lives up in Madison.

DePue: What was your father doing after he came back from the war?

Kjellander: Well, he did a number of things. He drove a fuel truck for a while. Then he started in tool and die making and ended up working for a company called Hawk Model Company, which at the time, was one of the premier manufacturers of plastic model planes, boats and that sort of stuff. He eventually retired as the head of tool and die for Hawk Model Company.

DePue: As a kid growing up and being able to talk about what your dad did for a living, I would think that would be one of the cooler jobs that you could describe to your buddies.

Kjellander: I was the envy of everybody at school, because my dad could get any kind of kit. If they didn't make it, they were always back and forth with other companies. But—and I think it infuriated him—I had absolutely no interest. Sitting at a table and trying to put little plastic pieces together was not my thing. So, I think I was a great disappointment to my father in that regard. He was very mechanical. I'm totally unmechanical. I mean, I can't do anything that requires any amount of technical abilities whatsoever.

DePue: Do you have a cell phone?

Kjellander: Yes, I do have a cell phone.

DePue: But I think you mentioned that you don't do emails at all.

Kjellander: I have an email account, but email for me is my secretary prints it out and puts it in my inbox. Then, I scribble on it what I want her to send back. (both laugh) That's email for me, but everybody knows that.

DePue: So, this affinity for all things not mechanical continues to this day for you?

Kjellander: Continues to this day.

DePue: Does that mean that you didn't take after your dad, but you took after your mom more?

Kjellander: Yeah, she wasn't mechanical or anything like that.

DePue: How would you describe her?

Kjellander: She was the ultimate 1950s stay-at-home mom. Our house was a little bit like *Leave it to Beaver*.¹ It was like, she was in charge of the house. She went to the grocery store and the meat market every single day. It was about four blocks from the house, and every afternoon she walked down there, did her grocery shopping for the day. Today, maybe we go to the grocery store once a week. Back in those days, it was... Because I can recall when we had actually ice delivered to the house for refrigeration purposes.

DePue: Was going to the meat market and the store a social occasion for your mom, not just a—

Kjellander: Yes. Yeah, I think it was.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about the neighborhood. What was it like growing up in Irving Park, especially in the 1950s, early '60s?

Kjellander: It was very much like I think it is in suburbia today. It was a very laid-back atmosphere. The grammar school that I went to for eight years was literally on the other side of the back of the block that I lived on. There was an alley. In Chicago, almost all the neighborhoods have alleys down the street. On the other side of the alley was a park and a school. So, I literally walked around the corner to go to grade school for eight years.

DePue: Did she have any concern for your safety in the neighborhood?

¹ Popular sitcom in the late 1950s and early 1960s that centered on minor comedic disturbances in the suburban, domestic tranquility of young Theodore "Beaver" Cleaver.

Kjellander: None, absolutely none. People would leave their doors open. No, there was absolutely no crime that I can recall. It was just like... You couldn't have asked for a nicer place to grow up. It was very quiet. People were friendly. Everybody likes to talk about Chicagoans not being friendly and all of that stuff, but people in the neighborhood were all very friendly. We knew everybody. To this day, I can walk down my block, and I can assign the names of the different people who lived in those houses, because they all stayed a long time.

DePue: What was the ethnic makeup of the neighborhood when you were there?

Kjellander: Some German, some Swedish, some Eastern European. But most of the people in the neighborhood actually were second generation, so everybody spoke English. Everybody seemed "like just a normal American."

DePue: Did you have a bike growing up?

Kjellander: Oh, sure.

DePue: You rode all over the place, did you?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Were there certain areas that you knew, if you crossed that line, you were probably not in a good neighborhood?

Kjellander: No. But see, in our neighborhood...I could count on the fingers of one hand the number of times my parents went to the Loop.² They **never** went to the Loop. They stayed in the neighborhood. Like I said, the grocery store, the meat market were within walking distance, the drug store, as well. There was a great bakery right down the street from the meat market. You had everything you needed within walking distance. If you walked eight blocks further, on Irving Park, you'd get to what you call Six Corners. Six Corners was Irving Park, Milwaukee and...anyway, a convergence of three streets. There was a big Sears store and several other stores. So that's all you needed. You didn't need to go to a mall someplace; you went to Sears. It was the neighborhood store. But it was very large, and it had everything you could possibly need. There were several movie theaters in the neighborhood and ice cream parlor, the old Buffalo Ice Cream Parlor, which stood at Pulaski and Montrose for sixty years or something like that.³

DePue: I think I know the answer to this, but I'll ask you anyway, Cubs or White Sox?

² The central business district or downtown of Chicago, Illinois.

³ The Buffalo Ice Cream Parlor began operation in 1902, before moving to Pulaski and Irving Park in 1918. It lasted until 1978, when Shell Oil demolished the store to make way for a gas station. Carol Oppenheim, "Once Endangered Buffalo Thrives Now," May 30, 1974, and John McCarron, "Ice Cream Parlor to Close," October 1, 1978, both in the *Chicago Tribune*.

Kjellander: I'm going to surprise you. I've been a White Sox fan my entire life.

DePue: Really?

Kjellander: Yes. That was primarily because everyone in my family was a rabid Cubs fan, and, of course, the Cubs in the fifties were like the Cubs now. They never win anything. So, when I was really focused on baseball, 1959, when the Sox won the pennant, I listened to or watched every single game I could.

DePue: Eleven years old. That's an impressionable age, I would think.

Kjellander: A very impressionable age. I could still recite most of the lineup of the '59 White Sox. (both laugh) My grandfather especially was...He just lived and breathed the Cubs. It was just so painful that I was a White Sox fan, of course. Then, of course, the Sox were winning the pennant and doing all sorts of stuff, and the Cubs were doing what the Cubs do, and that's nothing. So, (laughs) that probably surprises you, as a North Sider. There aren't too many White Sox fans that grew up on the North Side, but I did.

DePue: What's your earliest memory, growing up?

Kjellander: My earliest memory is 1954, I think, so I would have been six. We got our first television set, and it was one of these big boxes. You know, it was enormous. But, the first thing I remember seeing on television was the McCarthy hearings, so I think that was '53.⁴ I'd have to check the history book. I recall the spectacle of the McCarthy hearings on TV. That's my first kind of memory.

DePue: A distinctly political event.

Kjellander: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: What kind of stuff did you watch, growing up? Do you remember any of the shows?

Kjellander: We watched, Oh, gosh...I'm trying to think...*Leave it to Beaver*, probably. We watched...I'm trying to remember the original *Hawaii Five-O*. I don't know when that was on. I think that was in the '60s.

DePue: That was in the later '60s, I believe.

Kjellander: That was in the '60s, yeah. It's kind of hard to remember TV programs.

DePue: Was the family religious? Did you go to church?

⁴ Probably the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954, which essentially ended Senator Joseph McCarthy's (R-WI) crusade to root out alleged Communist subversion in American institutions.

Kjellander: We were members of the Irving Park Presbyterian Church. As children, we all went to Sunday school every Sunday and all that sort of stuff. But the family was not particularly religious and did not go to church regularly. I would say it was intermittent, but they made sure we got to Sunday school as kids and that sort of thing.

DePue: Was politics something that was discussed at home while you grew up?

Kjellander: A little bit, not a whole lot. My family was basically Republican, but there was no real involvement in politics, at all. The most political thing that happened growing up was I signed on to be the Youth for Goldwater chairman in my high school. They gave me a four-foot long banner.

DePue: Who is “they”?

Kjellander: The campaign. They sent us a banner. It said, “Goldwater for President.” My parents had, there house... There was a wrap-around front porch. I could take this four- or five-foot long banner and just hang it on the front of the porch. We were two houses away from the polling place. It was outside the limit, so it wasn’t violating anything.

So, I hung up this “Goldwater for President” sign on my parents’ [porch]. I got up at like 5:00 in the morning, so it would be there for the first people who went to the polling place and all that sort of stuff. (laughs)

Nothing happened, and obviously, Goldwater got his clock cleaned. But for the next four weeks, our street got no garbage pick-up. Of course, the neighbors were not pleased, because everybody knew why. It was because I hung this banner on the front porch of my parents’ house.

I later told this story to Richie Daley, who got a great big kick out of it.⁵ He asked me one day, “How did you become a Republican, growing up in the city of Chicago?” I said, “Well, let me tell you a little story, Mr. Mayor.” I told him the story, and he just laughed and laughed and laughed. He just thought it was so funny. But that’s the way it was in those days.

DePue: Was Irving Park this little pocket of Republicanism in the city?

Kjellander: Yes, actually it was. There were actual Republican state senators and reps [representatives] from the northwest side of Chicago, up until about twenty years ago or something like that. Yes, in those days, there were real Republican and Democrat organizations, and they actually got out and competed and all that sort of stuff.

⁵ Refers to Richard M. Daley, mayor of Chicago from 1989 to 2011. He was the son of Richard J. Daley, mayor from 1955 to 1976 and boss of the legendary political machine.

DePue: Did the Irving Park neighborhood, while you were there, especially in the later years, start to experience any white flight, changing in the demographics in the neighborhood?

Kjellander: No, I never did see any of that. In fact, even when I recently walked through it, the neighborhood looked pretty much like it did before. People had upgraded the houses; it has been gentrified a little bit. I'm told there is more Hispanic population. I didn't happen to see it or anything like that. But, no, it pretty well stayed the same the whole time I was there.

DePue: When did you graduate from high school?

Kjellander: Nineteen sixty-five.

DePue: Were you going through public schools the whole time?

Kjellander: Yeah. It's interesting. They used to have graduations twice a year, instead of just in June, so I was a mid-term graduate. I graduated in January.

DePue: The whole Chicago school system did that?

Kjellander: Yeah, the whole Chicago school system in those days had 2 graduating... They had a graduating class in January and a graduating class in June. They did away with that now.

DePue: I have never heard of that before.

Kjellander: Yeah, but most colleges started in September in those days. I went to University of Illinois-Chicago, which had a quarter system. You could start any time, so I started in the winter quarter.

DePue: I've got a few more questions from the high school years. Let's start with this one. You were obviously in high school when John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Do you remember that day?

Kjellander: I remember it very well. I remember standing in the hall outside of... I think it was English class, and the word had just gotten around that the president had been killed. People were just stunned. Nobody thought about anything like that was possible in this country. I do remember standing there, talking to friends, when we first found out about it.

DePue: How about extracurricular activities?

Kjellander: I was not a jock; I did not play sports. I was interested in politics, and, like I said, I took on this Goldwater chairmanship for the high school, but it was a title more than anything.

DePue: What was it about politics that got you excited at that time?

Kjellander: I read Barry Goldwater's book, *Conscience of a Conservative*.⁶ It really got my attention. I really was enthusiastic about him. I had the opportunity to meet him once. I was just very impressed and very taken with him. What's really interesting about that... Even though that was the thing that sort of got me into politics, the rest of my career has always been more in the moderate part of the party.

But the Goldwater thing is what got me started and probably made me the most conservative senior staff person in the Thompson operation. It was very interesting, because you had all of the law enforcement types, the Zagels and the Webbs and the Fahnners and all that. Then you had the Paula Wolff program department, the "do-gooders," as we all used to call them. (both laugh)

DePue: But maybe she didn't call herself that?

Kjellander: No. She just did what was right.

DePue: Well, you're teasing me here. (Kjellander laughs) We're going to get into Thompson, but it's going to be a while before we get there, I'm afraid. Did you have a job when you were in high school?

Kjellander: Did I have a job? No, the only job I had was, every summer I worked at the Chicago Boy Scout Reservation up in Michigan, the Owasippe Scout Reservation.

DePue: What was the name of it?

Kjellander: Owasippe, O-w-a-s-i-p-p-e. It's in central Michigan. It used to be a 10,000-acre camp. I don't know what it is today.⁷

DePue: Probably in that day and age, 10,000 acres was huge.

Kjellander: It was very huge. I worked there for six summers, because I grew up in the Boy Scouts. I really enjoyed my time at camp. It was a good... I went from assistant junior counselor to the senior guy on staff the last year I was there.

DePue: Were you an Eagle Scout then?

Kjellander: No, I actually was not, because I didn't do the life-saving swimming part. I was a Life Scout.

⁶ Barry Goldwater published *The Conscience of a Conservative* in 1960. It was ghostwritten by L. Brent Bozell Jr., a notable American conservative intellectual who began his career as a speechwriter for Senator McCarthy and was a co-founder of Young Americans for Freedom. David Stout, "L. Brent Bozell, 71, a Champion of Conservatism," *New York Times*, April 19, 1997.

⁷ At the time of this interview, the camp was still in operation in Twin Lake, Michigan, northeast of Muskegon. The camp's area had decreased to 4,800 acres. Boy Scouts of America—Chicago Area Council, "Owasippe Scout Reservation," <http://www.chicagobsa.org/camping/owasippe-scout-reservation/3820>.

DePue: Didn't or couldn't?

Kjellander: I don't know. I was just...I was a Life Scout, but I figured that was enough.
(both laugh)

DePue: I think I know the answer to this one too, your favorite subjects at that time?

Kjellander: Oh, without doubt, history and government.

DePue: When you were getting close to the end of high school, what did you think you wanted to do with your life?

Kjellander: I wasn't sure. I thought about law school, but I wasn't sure.

DePue: In 1965, every young man faced the possibility of the draft.

Kjellander: Uh-huh. I can remember sitting in my parents' bedroom, because they had the big radio in their room, the night they did the lottery.⁸

DePue: This would have been quite a few years later, maybe the '70, '71 timeframe?

Kjellander: Seventy, I think. No, this would have been earlier than that, because I would have been eighteen or nineteen when they did the lottery. I would have just been done with high school and, I think, in my first year of college, when they did the lottery. I'll never forget that. I ended up with a 265 number in the lottery. It was very clear that I could go to college and not have to end up getting drafted, if I didn't want to.

DePue: Nineteen sixty-five was the year you graduated from high school, correct?

Kjellander: Correct.

DePue: At that time, the Vietnam War was just starting to build up.

Kjellander: Right.

DePue: But it was becoming a political issue. Do you remember, at that time, how you felt about the war itself?

Kjellander: I do, in a sense. It's a couple of years later, when I was in Champaign. Champaign was a hotbed of anti-war sentiment, all sorts of demonstrations on campus. By then, I had become much more partisan. I felt that the anti-war stuff was...I was very uncomfortable with it. I can remember standing at

⁸ The Selective Service System held seven draft lotteries from 1969 to 1975, although no inductions were made after 1972. The first lottery was drawn December 1, 1969, to determine the 1970 induction order for all men born between January 1, 1944 and December 31, 1950. As Kjellander remembered, 265 was assigned to March 22, while the highest number called for his draft class was 195. Selective Service System, "The Vietnam Lotteries," <https://www.sss.gov/lotter1.htm>.

Wright and Green Streets in Champaign with Chuck Percy's nephew. I can't remember his name, but it was his nephew. We were standing there, as the National Guard marches down Green Street in Champaign, after the radicals had stormed the Armory Building.

DePue: Was that after Kent State?⁹

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: That was 1970 then.

Kjellander: That was '70. It was an unbelievable experience to see troops in your college community at Wright and Green, which was the heart of the campus. Some of the crowd would be tossing flowers at the National Guard. Some would be screaming obscenities. I mean, it was quite a thing to watch.

DePue: Looking back at your youth, all of the way up through high school, were there any particular mentors or powerful influences that you want to mention?

Kjellander: Not so much in high school. I did have a couple of mentors in the Boy Scout area. The real mentorship really started more in college. I had a professor in college who was Wally Farnham, who was a history professor. I was in his class, and after I had listened to him lecture a few times, I talked him into becoming the faculty advisor for the College Republicans, which in that day was—

DePue: Was that the University of Chicago or the—

Kjellander: No, the University of Illinois-Champaign. In fact, and this is wild, in 19... Let me get these dates right. In 1970, which was the height of the Vietnam War, we had 2,000 dues-paying members of the College Republicans in Champaign, 2,000! Now, the dues were \$1.00 a semester, but still, that was a \$2,000 budget. That was big money in those days.

DePue: Out of a student body of what, about 20,000 maybe?

Kjellander: Closer to 30,000. That was the year I met Karl Rove for the first time.¹⁰ Karl was hired by the Ralph Tyler Smith campaign to organize college campuses for Senator Smith. Senator Smith did not have a lot of appeal to young people, shall we say. He was a pretty right-wing guy.

⁹ On May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard fired on Kent State students, killing four and setting off a massive wave of student protests across the nation, causing several campuses to close early for the year. The University of Illinois remained open. For the response by students in the Illinois state university system, see Brian K. Clardy, *The Management of Dissent: Response to the Post Kent State Protests at Seven Public Universities in Illinois* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002).

¹⁰ Karl Rove would go on to become a major Republican strategist, most notably engineering George W. Bush's successful presidential campaigns in 2000 and 2004.

DePue: What state was he from?

Kjellander: Illinois. He was the Speaker of the Illinois House. When Everett Dirksen died, Governor Ogilvie appointed Ralph Smith to be the United States senator. So in 1970, he had to stand for reelection and was trounced by Adlai Stevenson III.

The Smith campaign brought in this young kid from the University of Utah, (laughs) who was like nineteen years old at the time, to teach us how to organize the campus. By the time we were done, every single dorm and fraternity and sorority on campus had either a chapter chairman or a dorm chairman. Every floor had a floor captain. We had a literal precinct organization throughout the entire university system, even though all of the attention on politics was on all of the anti-war stuff and things like that. But we had an organization. We ran campaigns.

DePue: From the 1970 timeframe, when Rove was just getting started?

Kjellander: That was his very first job.

DePue: There's a story that I'm sure you're familiar with. This, I thought, was connected with Alan Dixon's campaign. He broke in and stole some Dixon letterhead, then printed off something and passed it around, talking about how free beer and food or whatever was going to be—

Kjellander: No. I know this story. He didn't break in. What they did was take a piece of Dixon stationery and cut and pasted it on a...what do you call it? What were those old machines?

DePue: A mimeograph machine?

Kjellander: Mimeograph machines, thank you. And he was having a fancy fundraiser at some big Chicago hotel.

DePue: Dixon was.

Kjellander: Dixon was. So Karl (laughs) took the letterhead and did a handout invite, you know, free food, free booze, the whole nine yards, and then had it distributed, basically, on Skid Row. (both laugh) So, you had all of these ne'er-do-well folk showing up at the Dixon fundraiser. Of course, they had an invitation. (laughs) To my knowledge, there was no break-in. It was just a scissor job on a piece of letterhead, then they just mimeographed the thing and handed it out.

DePue: The next question, I'm afraid, is obvious. Did you have any involvement with this at all?

Kjellander: No, I didn't. I didn't. I'd tell you if I did. I did not. I found out about it later. Karl actually was then later appointed by President Bush, the elder, to some

kind of, I don't know, board or commission or something. As it turned out, the senior Democrat on the committee for the confirmation was none other than Alan Dixon. So, he had to go hat in hand to Alan.

DePue: When Dixon was a senator.

Kjellander: When Dixon was a senator. He said, for the first thirty seconds, he said Dixon pretended like he was mad, but then it was all old home week. They all laughed about it, because it really was kind of funny, when you think about it. People call it dirty tricks. I suppose, but he owns up to that to this day. I think he even put it in one of the books he wrote, I think.

DePue: Well, let's go back to finishing high school. You said you initially started at the University of Chicago.

Kjellander: No, the University of Illinois-Chicago, because I could commute. I did that for two years and then transferred to Champaign.

DePue: So not a difficult transfer at all. You were already in the system.

Kjellander: I was already in the system, yeah. It was just a matter of moving down there.

DePue: That takes you up to what timeframe, 1968?

Kjellander: No. Let's see. I graduated in '70, then did my Master's in '71 and got it in '72 in Champaign.

DePue: You started in Champaign, what year again?

Kjellander: I came to Champaign in '68.

DePue: In the fall of '68?

Kjellander: Yeah, in the fall of '68.

DePue: I always like to ask people of your generation a series of questions about 1968, because that's a memorable year in American history. It starts off, I'm sure you'll recall, with the Tet Offensive in late January, early February. By that time, the whole nation is focused on what is going on in Vietnam, and it seemed to be a bellwether event in terms of changing opinions about the Vietnam War. Do you remember hearing about that in '68?

Kjellander: Oh, sure.

DePue: Did it change your views at all about what the United States was doing in Vietnam, how well the war was going?

Kjellander: It was clear it wasn't going that well, but I was old-school enough to think that what we as a country were doing was right, and we needed to do it. The more

you learn, the more you question whether you were right in the first place, but at the time, I did not question where the country was.

DePue: April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King is assassinated.

Kjellander: Stunning. It was like JFK [John Fitzgerald Kennedy] all over again. It was the notion that we kill our leaders, whether you agree with them or not. It was astounding, and it was just such a remarkable change. It killed the innocence in the country, I think, the combination of Kennedy and King.

DePue: Of course, right after the assassination, many of the cities in the United States explode in violence, among them, Chicago. And you were in Chicago at the time.

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: What do you remember about the riots after the King assassination?

Kjellander: Very little. I was travelling from the Northwest Side to the university on the Near South Side.

DePue: Was the campus in place by that time?

Kjellander: Yeah. I never went to Navy Pier. I was in the early years of the current campus.

DePue: Let me ask you an impolite question, then. What did you think of the architecture of that campus?

Kjellander: I hated it. I thought it was grotesque, ugly. I just thought it was horrible. It did nothing for me, and it was just ugly. I had it in the back of my head that when you go to college, there's brick buildings and ivy. (laughs) There was just all of this concrete and all of this stuff. No, I was never a fan of the architecture of the UIC campus.

DePue: Did you fellow students share that opinion, in general?

Kjellander: A lot of them did, yeah.

DePue: Let's get back to 1968. Sixty-eight is an election year, so you have the heated primary season, because it's all about the Vietnam War and a very strong liberal movement at that time. Robert Kennedy is assassinated out in Los Angeles, June 6, right after he had won that primary in California.

Kjellander: Right.

DePue: Your reaction to that one?

Kjellander: The same as it was with King. It's like surreal that we are killing off our leaders. It makes you question the very foundations of the country, when these things happen, especially several so significant in, from a historical perspective, very short period of time.

DePue: Were you able to rationalize or understand that from the perspective of somebody who is really interested in history and politics?

Kjellander: Well, I could not believe... I understood, on the King thing, if you've got somebody who's a racist, who wants to put a halt to the Civil Rights Movement or something, there's some rationale there, I guess, if you're a nut job. But Bobby Kennedy? [It] made no sense at all. It made no sense.

DePue: Sirhan Sirhan was the one who killed him, correct? A Palestinian.

Kjellander: Right, a Palestinian. No, it was just sort of mind-numbing. I don't see how you can rationalize all of that. It was just overwhelming, I guess, is the best way to put it.

DePue: The next big event in 1968 is the Democratic Convention at the end of August, right up in Chicago. You had to be there, I would assume, at that time.

Kjellander: Yeah. Yep, it was wild time. I watched it on television; I didn't go down. But it was crazy. Nobody can wrap their arms around how that was. The mayor really overreacted and created so much of that problem. My biggest memory is him on the floor of the Democratic Convention, screaming. (both laugh) I'm trying to remember who was up on the podium, whether it was McGovern or... Somebody who was up on the podium, chastising the police in Chicago. And Daley's up there, screaming obscenities at him.¹¹ He's all red-faced. There was clearly an overreaction.

DePue: During the time, what group had your sympathies? Was it the protesters?

Kjellander: No. As a Republican, I was kind of glad to see there was upheaval on the other side. (both laugh) I guess I had to lean more with the mayor at the time, but in retrospect, they overreacted.

DePue: Dan Walker, an ambitious lawyer—I think he was working for Montgomery Ward at the time—was put in charge of a commission to study it. It ended up that the report essentially said, "It was a police riot."¹² Would you agree with that assessment?

¹¹ Daley yelled at Senator Abraham Ribicoff (D-CT) after Ribicoff declared, "With George McGovern as president of the United States, we wouldn't have to have Gestapo tactics in the streets of Chicago."

¹² Future Illinois governor Daniel Walker, a business executive and president of the Chicago Crime Commission, oversaw an analysis of the conflict that controversially charged a minority of police officers with engaging in a "police riot." For Walker's recollection of these events, as well as his role developing the report

Kjellander: I think that's harsh. I think that's harsh. I think, in the heat of the moment, there's some overreactions, and clearly there were. I have to say that, because of the mayor's strong feelings that he always voiced, the police had the message that they could pretty well do what they wanted to do to contain the situation, and they'd get support all the way up the top. But to call it a police riot, I think, is overkill.

DePue: Now, this would have been something that would have been playing out by the time you were down at the Champaign campus, but there was the whole trial of the Chicago Seven and some of the personalities involved there, as well. You've got Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin and Tom Hayden and some others, who were more than happy to get some limelight out of all of this.

Kjellander: Yeah. I didn't have much patience for the likes of the radicals. We'd call them terrorists today. But in those days, they were radicals.

DePue: What caused the move, then, down to the Champaign campus?

Kjellander: I wanted to have a more complete college experience. I was halfway through my degree, and I just thought I'd like to experience living on campus, so I moved into a dorm.

DePue: Do you mean moving out of home?

Kjellander: Moving out of home and into a dorm.

DePue: Did it meet your expectations?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah. I stayed in the dorm my junior and senior years, which is kind of unusual. I enjoyed the dorm thing. Like I said, I got heavily into the College Republican stuff, and so I kept busy with that.

DePue: How did that start, because this is the time period when, as you've already said yourself, most of the college was definitely leaning towards the left?

Kjellander: Because I had started with the Goldwater thing in high school. I considered myself a Republican. I joined the College Republicans when I got to Champaign and worked my way up to becoming president of it. Then [I] was asked by, actually, the folks in the Ogilvie administration to become the state chairman of the College Republicans in 1971, when I was in grad school.

and drafting that phrase, see Dan Walker, interview by Marilyn Huff Immel, May 12, 1981, Illinois Statecraft Oral History Program, Norris L. Brookens Library, University of Illinois Springfield, Springfield, IL, <http://www.idaillinois.org/utills/getfile/collection/uis/id/4479/filename/4480.pdf>. Also see Dan Walker, interview by Mark DePue, August 21, 2007, Illinois Statecraft Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (ALPL), Springfield, IL. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the ALPL project and are available at <http://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/oralhistory/illinoisstatecraft/Pages/default.aspx>.

DePue: At that time in your life, would you still consider yourself a conservative Goldwater Republican or more in line with the Nixon side? Obviously, Goldwater didn't run in '68, I don't believe.

Kjellander: No, he didn't. I was already becoming more pragmatic. The Ogilvie folks were very pragmatic. They weren't focused on ideology and social issues. They were, nuts and bolts, how do you make government work? They also had complete control of the party.

So, when I was thinking about running for state chairman of the College Republicans, I had to go to the governor's office and ask their permission. (laughs) And I got it! I think part of that was because we had 2,000 dues-paying members in Champaign, and they thought, If you can do that in Champaign, maybe we ought to have you doing this all over the state.

The person in the governor's office, at the time, was Don Udstuen. He was the patronage person and had the political portfolio within the Ogilvie administration. That's how I met Udstuen. Then, I later worked for him, when I went to the Medical Society.

DePue: What led to your decision to go from getting your undergraduate degree right to grad school?

Kjellander: I thought about going to law school, but I wasn't sure I wanted to make a three-year commitment to law school. I had, as I mentioned before, this great history professor, Wally Farnham. The political science department in Champaign in those days was terrible. It was a waste of time.

DePue: Terrible in what respect?

Kjellander: The professors were very subpar, shall we say.

DePue: Were they politically oriented?

Kjellander: They were very rabidly left-wing, which didn't make me very comfortable. They let it permeate all their lectures, all their stuff.

DePue: Was it the intellectual quality or their partisanship that bothered you more?

Kjellander: A little bit of each, because I can't go back and name you one really outstanding political science professor in Champaign at that time. The history department, on the other hand, was, I thought, a lot more professional. So, I decided I wasn't sure I wanted to commit to three years in law school.

DePue: What was Farnham's specialty?¹³

¹³ Wallace D. Farnham taught courses on constitutional history and nineteenth-century America.

Kjellander: American history. By then, my thought was, I'm going to become a college professor. That was my initial thought.

DePue: To teach political science?

Kjellander: History, yeah. I decided to do the master's, and if I really liked it, I'd go on and do the PhD and then teach. That was my thought process at the time.

DePue: Your master's was in history or political science?

Kjellander: History, American history.

DePue: It was probably about that time that you were approached again, in terms of politics.

Kjellander: Yes. I was the state chairman of the College Republicans in '71. Then I was approached for a job. My first political job was to organize the college campuses for the Nixon Campaign in '72.

DePue: Who approached you on that?

Kjellander: A guy named Paul Caprio, who is today the head of Family PAC, here in Illinois. The person who really did it was Udstuen. He orchestrated it, because the Ogilvie people wanted to have somebody that "they trusted" in the Nixon Campaign. I worked for a year, organizing college campuses for Nixon.

DePue: You started in the fall of '71?

Kjellander: I can't remember exactly. Yeah, it would have been late '71, and I did that for a year.

DePue: Were you comfortable with Nixon's political positions? A lot of people, looking back at it, see many things that Nixon did that we would describe today as being pretty progressive, price controls and the EPA and things like that.

Kjellander: Oh, yeah. I wasn't focused on that so much. I was a grunt-level kid working on a campaign, so you don't really question the philosophy that much. You've got your job, and you do it.

DePue: Were you an enthusiastic supporter of Nixon?

Kjellander: Yeah, I was. I thought he was doing a good job. I'm trying to remember when the outreach to China was, but that was, I thought, **very** significant.

DePue: How about his efforts, as far as ending the Vietnam War, the peace negotiations?

Kjellander: I thought he was doing the right thing. He was trying to extricate us with a sense of national honor. I thought that was a good thing to do.

DePue: Did this give you an opportunity to work more with Karl Rove at that time?

Kjellander: No. I worked with Karl when I was state chairman of the College Republicans, but not during the Nixon campaign. When I became state chairman, which was in early 1971, my first national meeting, I got to meet a lot of new state chairmen. We were all new, from all over the country. And there had been this guy named Morton Blackwell, who had been the executive director of the College Republican National Committee for like ten years. He was long in the tooth.

DePue: That guy must have been in his thirties or something.

Kjellander: Yeah, but in college, that was like an old guy.

DePue: This is the timeframe when anybody over thirty can't be trusted, right?

Kjellander: Correct. So we got together, a bunch of us. I'll never forget this. We were meeting in a bathroom, and literally several of us were standing in the bathtub, because we were trying to have a secret meeting. We hatched a plot and fired Morton Blackwell and then replaced him with Karl Rove, (laughs) because we said we needed new thinking. He [Rove] had developed this whole strategy of dorm floor captains and all this sort of stuff. So we replaced Morton.

Interestingly enough, many years later, when I first got appointed to the national committee, literally the first person I ran into was Morton Blackwell, because he was already the long-time national committee member for Virginia. He runs into me, and the first thing he says is, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Morton, I'm your worst nightmare come back." (both laugh) He and I were like this on the national committee for years.

DePue: He knew full well your role in his demise?

Kjellander: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I later ended up chairman of the Rules Committee, and he was the longest serving member of the committee. Of course, he was affronted that he wasn't the chairman, because he wasn't a team player. He didn't get it. He's, to this day, still the national committee member from Virginia and as cantankerous as he was forty years ago. (laughs)

DePue: What was your initial impression of Karl Rove?

Kjellander: A smart aleck, (laughs) but he grew on you. He was so whip smart; it was amazing. Even though almost everybody he was interacting with were older than he was, he had all of these ideas. It became fascinating to watch him operate. I've never seen anybody manipulate people quite as well as he does. I mean that in a good sense. When he's got a good idea, he understands how to

sell it. He understands how to put groups together to back his play on whatever the issue of the day is.

DePue: Did he have a sense at that time or carry an air that he was the smartest guy in the room?

Kjellander: A little bit, but he was. (both laugh) A lot of people act like they're the smartest guy in the room. Karl, very frequently, is the smartest guy in the room. He got everybody's attention. He truly transformed the College Republicans and made them into a much more effective organization. He did such a good job as executive director, he was elected chairman in his own right two years later, I think.

DePue: Chairman of the—

Kjellander: Of the College Republican National Committee.

DePue: Did you happen to attend the Republican Convention that year?

Kjellander: Which year?

DePue: Nineteen seventy-two.

Kjellander: No, I did not.

DePue: Having the exalted position, in charge of the College Republicans at the University of Illinois, doesn't earn you a ticket to anything like that?

Kjellander: No.

DePue: I'm not terribly surprised. I would think the Democratic Convention that year was much more interesting to watch, because that's the year that you've got McGovern emerging. It's also the year that they had that major dust-up involving the Daley delegation being basically barred from participating in the Democratic Convention.

Kjellander: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Any reflections on that?

Kjellander: It was just wonderful, as a Republican to see McGovern emerge, because he was so far out of the mainstream. I liken it to the Democratic glee of us nominating Goldwater. I thought it was great that they denied Daley, because that simply creates more division on the Democratic side. The one thing you need to carry Illinois is the Democratic organization being enthused and energized, so slapping them in the face like that, from my partisan perspective, was great.

DePue: I can't remember the specific date, but the break-in to the Democratic offices in the Watergate happened before the election, and it made some news before the election. Do you remember hearing about that or any impressions that might have made on you?

Kjellander: I actually do. I think it was in preparation for a presidential visit to Springfield, I think. I can't remember that exactly. But several of the big shots in the re-elect committee were in Springfield for a meeting. We, the staff, got invited to go to dinner with them. I'm trying to remember where it was. I think it was the old St. Nick Hotel at the time; I'm not sure though. Anyway, there was a big ballroom kind of thing, and there was just a big table set.

I did overhear a couple of these guys talking about, "Oh, we're going to get all sorts of great information on this" and blah, blah, blah. I never thought anything about that, until later it dawned on me. What they were talking about was the break-in. Of course, we didn't know about the break-in at the time, because they were intent on getting all of this intelligence from the DNC [Democratic National Committee]. It's just silly stuff, in retrospect, but that is a recollection I do have.

DePue: Were these people who were chatting about it fairly low in the hierarchy of the political campaign?

Kjellander: No, they were fairly high up. I can't remember their titles and stuff. This was when the big shots from Washington were coming in, and the peons got to have dinner with them.

DePue: Were you surprised at all by the sweep that Nixon had that year in the election?

Kjellander: No, not at all. Like I say, I think George McGovern was so out of touch, I don't think he ever had a prayer.

DePue: In retrospect then, does it make any sense that the Republicans had to resort to those kinds of tactics?

Kjellander: No, it's just hubris. It's hubris that did that. They didn't need it. They did it because they thought they could get away with it.

DePue: How effective were you on the campus of the University of Illinois?

Kjellander: We had some good rallies and things like that. We showed the flag. The predominance of opinion was McGovern and anti-war, but still we did respectably, around the state on college campuses.

DePue: Did Nixon win Champaign County? Do you recall?

Kjellander: I'm sure he did, because Champaign's always been pretty Republican territory.¹⁴ In those days, most students voted at home. They didn't vote at school.

DePue: Following the election and increasingly as the months go on, the *Washington Post* does its due diligence, following up on what was going on in Watergate. More and more news is coming out about the Watergate event, the cover-up, the Nixon tapes and the whole thing. That builds for the next year and a half or so. What was your feeling, hearing that news and going through that experience about Watergate and the kinds of things that happen in political campaigns?

Kjellander: It was very disappointing. It was disappointing since it was our team. Like I said, it's mind-boggling, because it wasn't necessary whatsoever. When you look at George McGovern, there is no way in the world that he was going to be president of the United States. They didn't have to do dirty tricks. They didn't have to do any of this stuff, but Nixon paid the ultimate price by having to resign.

DePue: If it had been a closer race, would you have been able to justify it then?

Kjellander: No, absolutely not. Breaking into a headquarters? That's stupid, and it's wrong.

DePue: Did it cause you to rethink your own personal involvement in politics at that time?

Kjellander: No, I was pretty committed by then. My attitude was, we screwed up, but you know what? There's an equal number of bad guys on the other side too. No, it didn't change my—

DePue: You might have just answered my next question. Did you become more cynical about the political process in the United States?

Kjellander: Yeah, a little bit, yeah. I was really disappointed, especially having worked a year on the campaign, to have basically Nixon's legacy just blown away. It was really too bad. I felt bad for him, but on the other hand, clearly he condoned it. When you listen to some of those tapes of his, it's kind of scary.

DePue: Did he deserve to be impeached?

Kjellander: Probably.

DePue: Probably?

¹⁴ Nixon defeated McGovern by 8,957 votes in Champaign County, winning 33,700 to 24,743. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election* for November 7, 1972.

Kjellander: Yeah, I think so. I think so.

DePue: Were your own political views at that time changing?

Kjellander: Again, I'm more of a pragmatic person. Not a lot. I was pretty well still consistent with where I was when I was working on the Nixon campaign.

DePue: After that timeframe, would you say your interest in politics was more focused at the national or at the state and local levels?

Kjellander: Well first, after the '72 campaign, I got out of everyday politics when I went to work for the Medical Society as a junior lobbyist. That would have been 1973. I was there until '77 when I went to work for Thompson. I had just gotten married in '73, so I was much more focused on life in general, the new job, and all that stuff, than I was on national politics.

DePue: Did you marry somebody you met in college?

Kjellander: Yeah, met actually.

DePue: What's her name?

Kjellander: Judy.

DePue: What was her maiden name?

Kjellander: Beeler. If you can recall the Dixie Truck Stop on I-55—

DePue: Very well.

Kjellander: It was their family business for seventy-five years.

DePue: Wow.

Kjellander: I met Judy... I had this kind of plan when I became president of the College Republicans. [It] was to recruit leaders from the fraternities and sororities, so that they could bring groups of their brothers or sisters to the thing. She was the president of the Chi Omega House at the U of I campus, and so she was a Republican. So we met. When I became state chairman, she was so good I promoted the idea of her becoming the new College Republican chairman in Champaign. We started dating and got married in 1973.

DePue: Back to politics. I want you to reflect just a little bit about the damage that Watergate did to the Republican brand and Republican politics.

Kjellander: It did a tremendous amount of damage, especially when the tapes came out, and you could listen to Nixon say some pretty venal things. It very much undermined the party. As much as Jerry Ford was a reputable, nice, decent man, he couldn't quite overcome it, even with somebody who turned out to be

so lackluster as Jimmy Carter. That says it all. If it weren't for all of that, Jimmy Carter would have never been president, never. As it was, Ford made a late run and almost overtook him.

So, yes, the legacy for the Republican Party was bad. We lost the presidency because of it, but we also lost people's confidence, which is, long-term, even more important. They viewed us as being dirty tricksters, and that's not a good thing, and that's not what most Republicans are. Are there some? Sure.

DePue: How about the damage to the state-level Republican Party? Not as severe?

Kjellander: No, not as severe. No, not at all. As a matter of fact, with the election of Jim Thompson, we had how many decades of Republican governors, right in a row?

DePue: Twenty-six, I think, if my math is right.

Kjellander: Thompson was fourteen; Edgar was eight, and George was four. So no, no residual damage to the state party. Thompson created a whole new era for the party. It went on for a long time.

DePue: Let's get to your career as a lobbyist. You already mentioned that in 1973 you started. Was it at the Illinois State Medical Society?

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: Tell me, first of all, how you got the position, and then what that organization is all about.

Kjellander: I think it was Don Udstuen, who was then a senior aide to Speaker [Robert] Blair. When Ogilvie lost, he [Udstuen] ended up working for Speaker Blair. As I recall, I believe it was Don who recommended me to the docs as a possible lobbyist for them. So I went and interviewed. They hired me. [I] went to work and did all of the things a junior lobbyist does, runs papers all over the place and meets people. I worked on our PAC, [Political Action Committee] developing the structure of the political action committees in different counties with the local doctors and things like that.

DePue: What happened to the desire to be a college professor or maybe even a lawyer?

Kjellander: Back in the early '70s, you couldn't get a job as a college professor. I checked it out, and there just wasn't much. So, I had to make the decision of do I commit myself to the cost of a PhD, and right now the job prospects for that are really not very good. Then, of course, when I got married, I had obligations. So, going to work for the Medical Society seemed like a really good idea at the time. So I did.

I thoroughly enjoyed the lobbying part. It was very interesting. [I] learned a lot and met a lot of very interesting people. Like I said, I did that for four years.

Our chief counsel was Jim Fletcher, who of course, was running Thompson's campaign. When the campaign was over, Jim asked me if I would be willing to leave the docs and come to work for the administration. I said, "Why not?"

DePue: Was there anybody in particular who was mentoring you or helping you with how to be a good lobbyist?

Kjellander: They had a contract with Dick Lockhart, who I think just turned ninety. They had the big party for him over at the Sangamo Club.

DePue: In the last couple of weeks.

Kjellander: Yeah. Unfortunately, I was in DC, so I didn't get to go. Dick took me around. He showed me the ropes. He would explain what this guy is interested in or what that guy's interested in and how to approach him and things like that. We'd sit up in the galleries of the House and the Senate for hours. He'd explain different relationships between this person and that person and all that sort of stuff. He gave me a lot of education.

DePue: When you first got to the Illinois legislature, did you work in both the House and the Senate?

Kjellander: Yes. More the Senate, but both.

DePue: That was the timeframe when Walker was governor.

Kjellander: Right.

DePue: The Walker administration is known for its very poor relations with the legislature, in part because of how he ended up being elected governor in the first place and basically going after Richard J. Daley. How did that play out for you as a lobbyist, knowing that even the Democrats themselves were deeply divided, and nothing seemed to be moving very quickly through the legislative process?

Kjellander: That was helpful actually, for me, particularly if, on a given issue, the administration wasn't for it, you could, for sure, get the Republicans. You could also get a good chunk of Democrats just because they didn't like Walker. You learned early how to maneuver and leverage.

DePue: You were a pretty young guy at the time. Did that work to your disadvantage?

Kjellander: No, because I'm going to guess all of that grey hair on your head is not new. The grey hair on my head, I had by the time I was thirty. I had the unique advantage that I could always fall back and say, "I'm just a kid." But, the grey hair, especially when I got into the Thompson administration, was very, very helpful, because the county chairman thought I was much older and wiser. (both laugh)

DePue: Maybe you were wise before your time. Looking back at being a lobbyist, what skills are necessary to be good as a lobbyist?

Kjellander: You've got to work hard, but you've got to understand people. You've got to be patient and listen to what they've got to say. Let them vent. I can't tell you the number of times that I had legislators out to lunch or dinner, and we talked maybe two minutes about whatever bill I was worried about at the time. The rest of the time was them complaining about this constituent or this group or this newspaper. You've got to let people vent.

The other thing that you've got to do is always, always quickly get back with whatever information they need, whether that information is about the bill you're trying to promote, or it's about how do I check out this doctor and see if he's any good. It would range. A lot of times, you would have legislators saying, I really need to get so-and-so—a very good friend and a very good supporter—I've got to find him a good heart doctor or a good whatever. There was a lot of that.

DePue: How would you describe your personality and how that played into being an effective lobbyist?

Kjellander: I was always respectful. Part of that was that I got so many different jobs kind of early in my life. Sometimes I'd go home at night and say, "How the hell did I get to this position?" I'm in these rooms, dealing with all of these powerful people, and I'm just a kid.

So, I tried to be respectful. I never pushed too hard. You never threaten. I was never one of these people that...Some lobbyists yell and scream, "We're going to get you!" My attitude always was, don't piss somebody off today, because you're going to need him tomorrow. If they can't help you on this thing, shake hands and say, "We'll talk again," because, without question, down the road there is going to be another thing where you're going to need their help. And there's a good chance you might get them, just because you were nice about him turning you down on something.

DePue: Do you describe yourself as an extrovert?

Kjellander: I guess a little bit. I'm not hail-fellow-well-met, but I pretty well hold my own in group settings where I don't know people very well. Being young at the time was always helpful, because people would say things in front of you that, if you were a more senior person, they might be less inclined to do that.

DePue: Politicians were more candid in their conversations with you?

Kjellander: Yeah, I think so.

DePue: That surprises me. I would think it would be just the opposite.

Kjellander: No.

DePue: Because you weren't a threat to them or what?

Kjellander: Yeah, I wasn't a threat. I had guys talking to me about their girlfriends.

DePue: You mean their Springfield girlfriends, while their wives were back at home?

Kjellander: Yeah. The only thing I can attribute that to is *a*, I wasn't a threat and *b*, I guess they just figured I was a good guy or something; I don't know. Yeah, you'd be surprised. I don't want to get into that. I'm not going to get into personal details about people, but there was a lot of that.

Springfield in the '70s, the legislative process was very, very different than it is today. There were lots of partying, lots of...all sorts of stuff. But, yeah, people were very candid with me.

DePue: Was it a more collegial environment at that time?

Kjellander: Absolutely, because in those days, control of the two bodies would rotate back and forth. There wasn't this horrible partisan divide that we see in Washington today, but comes down here too. In Springfield, Republicans are a permanent minority, so they're almost ignored in a lot of the processes, until you get to a situation like pensions, where they need Republican votes, because they're not going to get all of the Democratic votes. (laughs)

DePue: Those were the days when cumulative voting was still in effect, and let me put just a little bit of information here to explain to the listener, fifty years down the road, what cumulative voting was. You had the state divided up. Was it eighty-nine senatorial districts?

Kjellander: No, I don't think it was that. Fifty-nine.

DePue: Fifty-nine. Each senatorial district had three House of Representatives members. They were all, essentially, elected at-large, within that senatorial district. The way the laws were written, two of those people would be one party and the third would be of another party, so that when voters would go into a general election, there would be four names on the ballot, two for each party. It got bizarre, because you could do a bullet vote; you could put all three of your votes for the same person. You could vote for two, and then each person would get one-and-a-half votes, or you could vote for three. But, if you voted for three, one of them was going to be of the opposing party.

Kjellander: Correct.

DePue: So it made for a different dynamic, once you got down to Springfield and the legislature, I would think.

Kjellander: Absolutely. If there's one thing that Pat Quinn will go down in history for, it was totally screwing up Illinois government, in perpetuity, by his passing of the amendment eliminating cumulative voting, because with cumulative voting, what you had was a collegial atmosphere where people were motivated to work out problems.¹⁵ I saw that firsthand.

Let's just say, the Republican caucus of the House, you would have a majority of folks from downstate and the suburbs, but you would also have significant players from the city of Chicago. Names come to mind like Pete Peters, Art Telscer. These were dynamic legislators who were elected in the city, and because of that, they came to the caucus and moderated the caucus, so it's not a lot of right-wing zaniness, if you will.

In the same situation, the Democratic caucus, while it's overwhelmingly from Chicago, would have these downstate Democrats. They would have more conservative views on some things. So they'd moderate the Democratic caucus. When you've got two more moderate caucuses, the likelihood of actually accomplishing something is much higher than where you have a rigid Republican minority and an overwhelming Democratic majority.

I rue the day that cumulative voting was eliminated. I've often thought about, if I had time and energy enough, I'd try to mount a (both laugh) campaign to bring it back, because I think it would change the atmosphere in Springfield immensely.

DePue: That actually changed in 1980. The Cutback Amendment was on the ballot as a constitutional amendment, basically, that, as you mentioned, Pat Quinn, at that time, was behind. He was the person from outside the government pushing this as a populist cause. It passed with a pretty significant vote in 1980. In 1982 and afterwards, the state abandoned cumulative voting.

Kjellander: Yep.

¹⁵ The Cutback Amendment is touched on in several *Illinois Statecraft* interviews. See James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, August 29, 2014; David Gilbert, interview by Mark DePue, March 27, 2014; Jim Fletcher, interview by Mike Czaplicki, March 9, 2015; Jim Edgar, June 9, 2009, Volume I: 257-262; Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, March 4, 2009, 53-54; Mike McCormick, interview by Mark DePue, July 8, 2010; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, June 4, 2009; Kirk Dillard, interview by Mark DePue, September 29, 2009; Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 10, 2009; Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, August 18, 2009.

DePue: Let's go back to 1976. That's the first election year for Jim Thompson. Were you involved at all with either the national or the state-level campaigns that year?

Kjellander: No, I was not. I was still lobbying for the docs. My only involvement would have been on their behalf, raising money for legislative and congressional candidates and things like that.

DePue: Would that have been viewed as a conflict of interest, to be a lobbyist and working for a campaign at the same time?

Kjellander: No. When I say working for campaigns, I was working for the docs' PAC and helping to raise money for candidates. This was a political action effort that the docs funded. We would have committees. For big races, we'd try to get doctor committees, and they'd raise money for the candidate, that sort of stuff.

DePue: How did you end up becoming part of Thompson's team in 1977?

Kjellander: In 1977, Jim Fletcher, who was Thompson's campaign manager and then first deputy governor. He had been previously the legal counsel for the Medical Society. I had worked with him closely on legislation for the last four years. He called me up one day, and he said, "Would you be interested in joining the administration?" I said, "Doing what?" He said, "You spent a lot of time in the Senate. Would you consider becoming the governor's Senate liaison?" I said, "Well, let me talk to my wife." I talked to her, and we decided, why not? So I agreed and became the Senate liaison the first year of the administration.

DePue: Pay raise, pay decrease, about the same?

Kjellander: Oh, gosh, I can't remember. It was probably a small increase. It wasn't a gigantic pay raise.

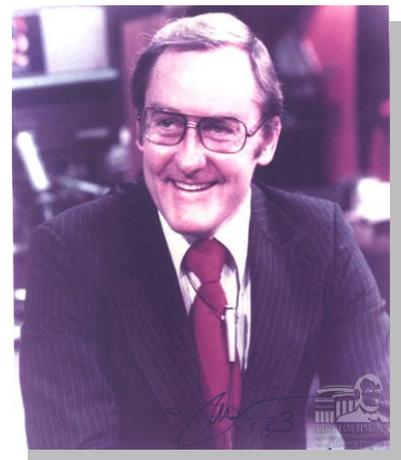
DePue: What was it about that offer that appealed to you then, at the time?

Kjellander: Just becoming part of something bigger. I was very impressed with Thompson and the campaign. I thought it was important that we had a Republican governor. I wanted to be part of something bigger.

DePue: Was that right at the beginning of his administration?

Kjellander: Yeah, right at the very, very beginning.

DePue: Had you met Thompson by that time?



Illinois Governor James A. Thompson

Kjellander: I didn't meet him until I joined the administration.

DePue: What was your first impression of the man?

Kjellander: Intimidating, overwhelming, but just a great guy with a wonderful sense of humor.

DePue: Who was your immediate supervisor?

Kjellander: Fletcher. Well, no, excuse me, Zale Glauberman was the chief legislative liaison. I was the Senate. Then Sam Vincent, who later became a legislator, was the House liaison.

DePue: Do you recall the initial package of legislation that the Thompson administration was pushing, some of the main pieces of legislation?

Kjellander: Nothing stands out, the regular, normal budget stuff and things like that.

DePue: Was Class X one of the issues that was dealt with during your time there? That would have been the "tough on crime" legislation.¹⁶

Kjellander: I know what you mean by Class X. I don't recall working Class X, but I'd have to go back and look. I really don't know, off the top of my head.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about Zale Glauberman.

Kjellander: Zale was a former chief of staff to Speaker Blair, fascinating guy, very smart, smart as a whip. Zale had a great management style. He basically would sit us down and say, "This is what we have to accomplish. Let me know if there's anything I can do to help, but otherwise, you're on your own." (laughs) It worked out perfectly. Whenever you hit a roadblock, I'd go to Zale, and Zale would say, "Well, there is a way around this," and blah, blah, blah.

DePue: I believe in the first couple of years you were there, I believe that Tom Heinz would have been the Senate president, a Democrat. David Shapiro was on the opposite side.

Kjellander: Correct.

DePue: Tell me about those two gentlemen and your dealings with them.

Kjellander: Tom Heinz was a typical Chicago politician who was somewhat abrupt. He didn't suffer fools gladly at all, very professional. He was very good about calling when he wanted to get something done. Likewise, when I needed to

¹⁶ On the importance of Class X, both politically and as policy, see James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, July 31, 2014; Jim Fletcher, interview by Mike Czaplicki, February 24, 2015; David Gilbert, interview by Mark DePue, March 26, 2014; Gregory Baise, interview by Mark DePue, August 6, 2013; and Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, July 9, 2009, Volume I: 244-247.

get something prioritized from the administration's point of view, he would always be accommodating and listening. [We] didn't agree every time, but it was a good, professional relationship.

DePue: Was he one of those Daley guys? This is about the time that Daley passed away.

Kjellander: Yeah, I mean he was part of the Democratic organization. His family had been in Democratic politics for generations up there.

DePue: Heinz, is that an Irish name?

Kjellander: Yeah. He was part of the Irish Mafia. (both laugh)

DePue: Did he have good control over the rest of the Democratic caucus?

Kjellander: You had what we euphemistically called in those days the Crazy Eight, led by Dawn Clark Netsch.

DePue: Vince Demuzio was another one of them.

Kjellander: Vince Demuzio. I probably did more business with Vince Demuzio than any other member of the Senate, because he constantly had a need for employing this person or that person. He was never shy about asking, and we were never shy about delivering.

DePue: That might come in more to the next job that you had.

Kjellander: It does, but it started in the Senate. His eyes got wide when I got the other job. (laughs)

DePue: How about David Shapiro?

Kjellander: David was a class act. He was just a gentleman's gentleman. He was one of the nicest people I ever dealt with in the General Assembly, just a very nice man, who you would thoroughly enjoy sitting around having lunch with. He was just a nice, nice man.

DePue: Was he a suburban Republican?

Kjellander: No, he came from northern Illinois, up in the DeKalb area, but he wasn't from DeKalb. He was from a more...I want to say Amboy, I think, is where he was from. Amboy sticks in my mind. Don't ask me where Amboy is, but it's somewhere up north.

DePue: I know that Glauberman was your direct boss, but did you have dealings with a lot of the other people within the Thompson inner circle?

Kjellander: Oh, sure, because people were constantly being called to testify before committees, particularly cabinet officers. I would have to coordinate that, make sure that secretary or director so-and-so was there on time and all that sort of stuff. [I] had some dealings with the program staff, as well, because they were always trying to impact legislation.

DePue: How long did you hold that position?

Kjellander: One year. Fletcher called me in at the end of the year.

DePue: This would have been late 1977?

Kjellander: Yeah, it would have been late '77. Over the first year of the administration, there had been, I believe, five different patronage chiefs, none of whom worked out particularly well.¹⁷ He called me in, and he said, "I've been thinking about all of your political background, and I think the governor and I would like you to move over and take over the patronage jobs." I said, "What have I done to annoy you?" (laughs) because it looked like a job-killer or a career-killer. But, when you're young and you're in a new administration and they want you to do something, you do it. Obviously, I agreed to do it, took it over, and revamped it from top to bottom. It worked. It worked for three, three-and-a-half years.

DePue: What was the official title of the position?

Kjellander: Director of the Governor's Office of Personnel.

DePue: Now, it would be known as the patronage chief. Was that the vernacular of the day, as well?

Kjellander: Sure. I was the patronage chief. I was proud of it and still am today. (Both laugh)

DePue: Walking into it, what was your understanding of what the patronage chief's job is?

Kjellander: Thompson gave me just two directives when I started. He said, "Number one, we're not going to hire anybody who doesn't get an A on the test. Number two is I want you to find the best people for these jobs." I took that literally.

My first meeting with the county chairmen, I told them point-blank that, if the guy you want for that highway maintainer job can't get an A on the test, he ain't getting the job, period. While there was grumbling, it created a sense of, well, we at least understand what the rules are now. I said, "Don't

¹⁷ In 1977, Governor Thompson went through a series of patronage directors—Dan Kennelly, Mike Dunn, Zale Glauberman and James Helm, and Jim Clark—before Kjellander stabilized the post. See Mark DePue's interview with Governor Thompson, Vol II, pp. 260-263.

bring me unqualified candidates, because it ain't going to happen." From that perspective, as well, that helped me with the department directors, because I wasn't trying to unload some mope who couldn't pass the test.

Now, we can debate until the cows come home whether the test was a good... What's the word I'm looking for here?

DePue: Indication of how well they could do the job?

Kjellander: Yeah. But it was the law, and my instructions from Thompson were to not violate the law. He said, "You will not hire anybody for a job that can't get an A on the test." I said, "Fine."

DePue: The next part of that equation was "the best qualified person." Is that how you phrased it?

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: But are you saying both Republicans and Democrats, or are the party chairmen only bringing you Republican candidates?

Kjellander: Honestly, I don't know the exact numbers. I hired a lot of Democrats when I was in the patronage office. To a certain extent, that was... We had a Democrat majority in the state Senate, and we worked closely with a lot of them. It was not just partisan. Yes, was I the liaison with the Republican County Chairmen's Association? Yes, and I went to every meeting, and I'd get beat up at meetings.

But again, I would come back to the fact that, if you guys give me qualified people, we'll get them hired. We were able to do that, and we were able to do it in an orderly fashion.

DePue: I've got lots of different questions going in different directions here, but we talked before about you being a young guy as a legislative liaison. You're still a young guy.

Kjellander: Yeah. I think I was thirty when I took over.

DePue: A pretty darn high profile, and I imagine most of these county chairmen were quite a bit more senior than you.

Kjellander: Oh, yeah, most of them. Most of them, unfortunately, are dead today. There were some characters. But yes, I was still a kid.

DePue: Did a lot of these guys feel like they could push you around, to a certain extent?

Kjellander: No, not really. Most of them saw me as an opportunity, because the patronage thing had been kind of chaotic in the first year of the administration. When I came in and I laid out everything and how we were going to do it and what I needed from them, in order for me to deliver for them, the great majority took this as, Okay, I'll give this guy a shot. I'll try to work with him. We developed good relationships with most of them.

DePue: You mentioned early in this discussion that you went in and basically revamped the position, revamped how the process worked. Lay that out for us if you could.

Kjellander: What I found when I came into the office was that you had a director of personnel, and then you had four or five assistants. These four or five assistants—how many there were, I don't remember now exactly—each had a geographic area that they were responsible for. So, what you had happening was that the assistant for northern Illinois would be trying to subvert the guy from central Illinois to get the job moved from central Illinois to northern Illinois, or the guy from central Illinois was trying to get the job from western Illinois, you know. It was very counter-productive, because what you had was like an internal competition for the jobs, instead of a state-wide approach on how we're going to do this.

I revamped it entirely and brought in one person to liaison with the county chairman, Janis Cellini, and one person to deal with the jobs, which was Tom—I can't think of his name. Tom had a state-wide perspective of what we were doing. He would work with the other people to bring the jobs where they were most needed. Janis did the liaison with all of the county chairmen and was their main port of entry into the office. She headed up the whole operation for Edgar in the next administration. She was terrific to work with, absolutely terrific to work with.

We streamlined the place. It became a much more centralized operation, as opposed to five regional things. It worked. I think we were very successful in hiring folks. I think the people we hired were by and large good people. They were qualified for the jobs. I have absolutely no hesitation in saying that, in spite of *Rutan* and all of the other things that have happened in the last few years, when you're the governor, and you're in charge, the people that you hire in positions have to be your people, because you're responsible for what they do.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Rutan v. Republican Party of Illinois*, 497 U.S. 62 (1990). By a 5-4 vote, the decision extended the rule of *Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347 (1976) and *Branti v. Finkel*, 445 U.S. 507 (1980), determining “that promotions, transfers, and recalls after layoffs based on political affiliation or support are an impermissible infringement on the First Amendment rights of public employees.” Justice Brennan wrote the majority opinion, which cited the petitioners’ argument that Thompson, through the freeze, “has been using the Governor’s Office to operate a political patronage system to limit state employment.”

Where you get to a situation in which government is so structured that the governor can't impact anything, it's very bad, because he can't control a lot of what goes on in his administration. I don't have any problem with—even though they were now calling it illegal and all this sort of stuff—I don't have any philosophical problem with the governor appointing people who are in tune with him to jobs in state government, as long as they're qualified for the job.

DePue: Did the positions that the governor and you indirectly controlled extend to the other constitutional officers, or did they have their own patronage operation?

Kjellander: Oh, no. Every constitutional officer had their own.

DePue: What was the biggest pool of opportunity, if you will, or the most positions that you were able to appoint from your position?

Kjellander: DOT [Department of Transportation] was, by far and away, the biggest thing. Then, of course, up in Chicago, the toll road. And those were some of the most sought-after jobs. If I could pick out one job that was the first on almost every county chairman's list, was the local highway maintainer job. That's what everybody wanted.

DePue: How about the Department of Corrections? That was a growth area during the Thompson years.

Kjellander: Corrections, yeah, but not so much. The Corrections was less so. We did a lot with General Services, which then became Admin [Administrative] Services. Then what did it become?

DePue: Now, it's Central Management.

Kjellander: Now, it's Central Management Services. It's had three or four iterations.

DePue: Let's take an example here of the Department of Transportation. You're on a maintenance crew someplace. Why should that be a patronage-influenced position?

Kjellander: I'm old-fashioned enough to think that, if somebody is willing to go out and help elect a governor, and he's qualified for a job within that administration, if the governor is successful in getting elected, that that's a reasonable thing to do. Now, maybe that's because I grew up in Chicago, and I watched the Democratic machine work its ways, throughout my whole life, growing up in Chicago.

DePue: To include not picking up the garbage, because some young kid's stupid enough to put a Goldwater sign out.

Kjellander: Yes. But see, that made me more committed to do something. That was a marker for me.

DePue: Is part of the definition of being best-qualified somebody who can help the party win the next election?

Kjellander: Let's look. We were talking about highway maintainers. You can put six guys in the room here, and you could interview the six guys about being a highway maintainer. Who's the most qualified for the job? It's whoever the guy who is doing the interview likes the best. Let's be realistic about it. If you have a requirement that they have to pass the highway maintainer test with an A, then theoretically they're all equally qualified.

Therefore, if we have the local county chairman saying, "I want this guy"... Many times we had a situation where the local county chairman wanted this guy, but the local senator wanted this guy, so we would have to negotiate.

DePue: Of the same party?

Kjellander: Usually. But I took some heat with Vince Demuzio because, like I said, Vince was a regular in my office, and I say that in the best way. I thoroughly enjoyed Vince. He was a really good guy, and he fought really hard for his constituents. So yes, we did sometimes annoy some of the local Republicans, down in Macoupin County, by acquiescing to what Vince wanted to do.

DePue: You've mentioned it already, the *Rutan* decision. This is something that had been in the courts for a long time. The United States Supreme Court finally made a decision in 1990, now known as the *Rutan Decision* that dramatically changed the way patronage in Illinois is done. I'll let you start by explaining how it changed the way patronage is done and then maybe some background or history on how we got to that point. And let me add that in 1990, you'd been out of the job of patronage chief for a long time.

Kjellander: Oh, yeah, but it [the *Rutan* case] got its start back when I was patronage chief. This is the one story that I may want redacted. I'm just putting that out front. [In a later conversation, Kjellander decided to keep the story in.] It would have been, I think, 1979. I walked into my office, and my assistant said, "There are two state police in your office." I said, "Okay." I go in the office. They flashed their badges. I said, "What can I do for you?" "We would like the patronage records." This is before computers, so I had like a wall of file cabinets. I said, "That entire wall of cabinets are patronage records. Which one do you want?" They said, "All of them." I said, "Excuse me?" They said, "We want them all." I said, "On whose authority?" "On the authority of Director Fahner."

DePue: The Attorney General.

Kjellander: No, no. He was director of Law Enforcement at the time. I said, "Director Fahner and I work for the same guy." I said, "I'm not going to just turn this over to you willy-nilly. No." You have to remember, I'm in an administration full of former U.S. attorneys. (both laugh) And I'm a non-lawyer, politician kid. I said, "I'm not going to turn these over, until the governor tells me to." They said, "Well, we're not leaving until we get them."

I did one of the craziest things I've ever done. I said, "Then I'm going to pick up the phone, and I'm going to call the uniforms in the front office and have you escorted out of my office." They said, "You wouldn't do that." So, I picked up the phone. They said, "All right, we'll leave." They leave. I'm thinking to myself, "What have I just done?"

So I go down the hall, and at the time, Greg Baise was the bag boy. He had the desk just outside the governor's office. In all of the years I worked for Jim Thompson, I never did this before and never did it since, but I walked right past Baise. I opened the door to his office; I walked in; I asked whoever—to this day, I can't remember who was in there—I asked them if they could excuse us for a minute, but I had an emergency. Whoever it was left.

Thompson looks at me and says, "What's wrong?" All I could think of to say was, "Governor, I think I may need a lawyer." He got this look, and he said, "What have you done?" (laughs) I said, "Nothing that you haven't told me to do." Then I explained what happened. He got red in the face. To this day, I would wade into the ocean for Jim Thompson. He said to me, "Bob, you've got a lawyer," and then he pointed to himself. (laughs)

He then—I wasn't part of the conversation—obviously talked to Director Fahner, and nothing ever came of it. They never came back for the patronage records.

DePue: But Fahner was obviously responding to something that had happened that had gotten to him, where he wanted those records.

Kjellander: I don't know. But it sounded to me, as we get into the whole issue of *Rutan* later—because he wasn't asking for a specific thing, he was asking for **all** the records—that it was a far more "big picture" thing, as opposed to a small thing.

DePue: A fishing expedition, perhaps?

Kjellander: Yeah. One of the things that the police guy said... I said, "What is this for?" He said, "We're looking into subversion of the personnel code."

DePue: The personnel code is essentially what governs how you can go through the process of hiring people?

Kjellander: Correct. But, that was the last we ever heard about it. I don't know if it was some precursor of *Rutan* or what. But that was probably 1979. I think it was '79 that that occurred.

DePue: Cynthia Rutan was the plaintiff in this case. Do you remember that hiring at all? Did that occur during your timeframe?

Kjellander: I couldn't tell you. We hired thousands of people. I have no idea if she was hired during that period. We'd have to look up her records and stuff. Cynthia Rutan is not a name I knew until much, much later, when she filed the suit.

DePue: Looking now from the outside and watching the *Rutan* case work its way through the court system, what was your gut reaction to that experience?

Kjellander: I thought it was a totally misdirected, phony reform, because when you take away the political aspect of patronage, you simply replace it with bureaucratic patronage. I can't tell you the number of times over the years that Bureaucrat A wanted to hire his cousin, his niece, his nephew, his next-door neighbor. It happens all the time, all the time. The more control we got of it, the more the bureaucracy reacted. But I felt I was there on a mission to get qualified people who were, where we could, supporters of the governor to be in state government.

Honestly, the alternative and what you have today, where the governor's office has a very, very limited amount of control, is bureaucratic patronage. I will never believe for an instant that all of these candidates for these various jobs are now vetted upon who's the best, baloney! In many, many cases, it's who the bureaucrat wants to put in there. If you're balancing political patronage and bureaucratic patronage, I would pick political patronage any day.

DePue: Let me change gears here. You've referred to this a little bit before. In this position now, is it fair to say you're within the inner circle of Thompson's administration?

Kjellander: Yes, I think so. I was in the senior staff.

DePue: In previous conversations, and even today, we've talked about the good government folks and the political side. I want you to just kind of go through those two sides of any administration. Then we're going to go through some of the personalities.

Kjellander: Yeah. In any administration, you've got folks, who are more of a political persuasion; i.e., personnel, legislative. Then you've got the more programmatic people, who are there to do good works and impact policy and those kinds of things. In many instances, you get people who can work together and get along and get stuff done. In some cases, it's more of a us-versus-them mentality. I always felt that, when the program people came to

me with something, I would do my best to get it done if I could. Sometimes the requests were a little outlandish, and sometimes we'd get into it a little bit.

For the most part, the people who were on the programmatic side were reasonable to deal with. Jim Kiley comes to mind; Tom Berkowitz comes to mind. These were programmatic people who really focused on getting the job done and weren't holier than thou about stuff.

DePue: You've talked quite a bit about Jim Fletcher. Flesh out his personality a little bit more and his role as deputy governor, especially.

Kjellander: Jim's one of the smartest people you'll ever meet. He's a brilliant tactician, a very smart guy. As chief of staff, he had to deal with everything from me on the political side or other people on the legislative side, Paula Wolff from the program side, Bob Mandeville at the Bureau of the Budget. He had to juggle all of these balls in the air and try to bring to the governor the best solutions for whatever the issue of the day was.

DePue: And was effective at it?

Kjellander: Very, very.

DePue: Was he on the political side or the policy side or straddled both?

Kjellander: I'd say he leaned a little more political. He was more political in the sense that, as a lobbyist... His legal career was focused on lobbying and stuff like that, so he understood the game. I would say he leaned that way a little bit. But Thompson always required that he get all the different points of view before he (Thompson) made a decision.

That's one of the great things about Jim Thompson. He didn't come into things prejudiced. Even if he did, his mind was open to argument. Sometimes, I'd win an argument, and sometimes I wouldn't. But we all walked out of the room feeling like we got our day in court.

DePue: You've mentioned her name several times, but Paula Wolff, how would you describe her and her role in Thompson's government?

Kjellander: I think Paula envisioned herself as the conscience of the administration.¹⁹

DePue: Envisioned herself? Was she?

Kjellander: I don't know. I think she saw herself as the conscience of the administration. She's a very smart woman. She's very committed to her beliefs. She wasn't a Republican, because her husband was an active, involved Democrat. I assume

¹⁹ Whatever Wolff's self-perception was, one observer called her exactly that. Kathleen Best, "Paula Wolff: Conscience of the Thompson Administration," *Illinois Issues* (June 1990).

she was, because she comes out of that University of Chicago milieu. Her positions on things were sometimes a lot more liberal than some of the rest of us thought a Republican administration ought to be doing. But, she was true to her beliefs, and she fought very hard for things that she believed in. She did some good things. We had our set of dust-ups over the years, but she also stayed for almost...I don't know. When did she leave? She was there almost—

DePue: Almost the entire administration.

Kjellander: Close to fourteen years, which is far beyond any of the rest of us.

DePue: Do you remember any specific dust-ups you would have had?

Kjellander: No, I can't remember anything that really jumps out. There would just be disagreements about policy issues. I can recall, sometimes I had responsibility for overseeing our liaison with the Republican Party, so when there'd be a state party convention and there'd be a platform and stuff like that, sometimes she'd want to get some things in the platform that had no prayer at all of ever getting enacted. Things like that. We always had a cordial relationship, but we always knew that we were coming from totally different perspectives.

DePue: Dr. Bob Mandeville, budget guy.

Kjellander: I've never met anybody who could take the complexities of state government and lay them out in such an uncomplicated manner, so that you always knew where you were at and what you had to do to get it fixed [like Bob Mandeville did]. I've never been a budget guy, so when I had budget issues, I relied on him all the time. He was terrific to work with, just terrific. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of the budget, what we'd done last year, what we were going to do next year, and all this sort of stuff, terrific, terrific guy.

DePue: Dave Gilbert, who was the initial press secretary.

Kjellander: Dave's great, a former *Tribune* reporter. He had a great sense of how things would look and how they would sound. He wrote terrific press releases. He was able to stage things very well to put the governor in the best light possible. He was terrific at that.

DePue: Who was the legislative liaison for most of this time?

Kjellander: Glauberman did it the first two years, and then Thompson hired Jim Edgar out of the legislature to do it.

DePue: That would have been '78.

Kjellander: Right, so he did it in '78 and '79.

DePue: How closely did you work with Edgar at that time?

Kjellander: Very, because certainly the patronage, and I'd known Jim. I had helped him with doctors on his first losing campaign, interestingly enough, for state rep, back in 1974, I think it was.

DePue: Another young guy.

Kjellander: Yeah, another young guy. He and I were friends, and we got along. He wasn't a patronage-oriented legislator. There were some, like Vince Demuzio or [A.C.] Junie Bartulis or guys like that that were real patronage folks. Bobby Winchester was another one. C.L. McCormick was unbelievable.

DePue: Bobby Winchester?

Kjellander: Bob Winchester, yeah, from southern Illinois. But Jim Edgar was not a patronage oriented...He had things he had to get done, but it wasn't the be all and end all. His compatriot in the Senate over there, Max Coffey, was far more patronage oriented than Jim was. I had just left the legislative office and was now running patronage, so we intermeshed a lot, because a lot of the patronage push came from legislators. We worked together very well on that.

DePue: Is there anybody else that comes to mind that you'd like to mention, while we're talking about some of the key players, especially in the early years of the Thompson administration?

Kjellander: I'm trying to think. Staff-wise, I think that covers it. Press, legislative, patronage, programs—

DePue: Budget?

Kjellander: Budget.

DePue: Who would you say was Thompson's most important advisor during those years, his most trusted advisor?

Kjellander: I would have to say Jim Fletcher, in the first two years. Jim left after the first two years or three years. I can't remember now when he left. But while he was chief of staff, he was clearly the most trusted advisor.

Thompson had a unique ability to bring us all in a room and play one off against the other and let everybody argue. He would sit there, take notes, and then come to a decision. Sometimes these would go on for hours. We'd do them over at the mansion, or we'd do them in the office. I don't think anybody in the senior part of the administration ever felt that they didn't get their day in court, that they didn't have an opportunity to make their case to the governor.

DePue: Most everybody who worked with Thompson has their favorite Thompson stories. What are a couple of yours?

Kjellander: Well, I told you probably my favorite one on the patronage thing. (laughs) Another one comes along that is very interesting. After that patronage incident occurred with the state police, Bill Scott resigned?²⁰ I'm trying to think of how the attorney general's spot got open. I think Bill Scott resigned, and Thompson decides to appoint Ty Fahner as the attorney general. So, he calls me up...and there had been a lot of lobbying going on. I can't even remember all the candidates at the time, but suffice it to say that I wasn't a strong advocate of Fahner. (DePue laughs)

Thompson calls me up one day. He says, "Come down here a minute." I go down. He says, "I want you to go home and pack a bag. We've got a flight at 5:00. We're going to Chicago. We're going to have pizza at my house, okay?" "Do you want to tell me what we're doing?" He said, "Yeah, I'm going to announce Fahner as attorney general tomorrow, and I want you to help me lay out the roll-out with Fahner and his people tonight." I said, "Yes, sir." (laughs)

DePue: Knowing full well how you felt about the man.

Kjellander: Oh, yeah. He knew, because I had been lobbying hard. I don't even remember who I was lobbying for, but I know it wasn't Fahner. (both laugh) I can't even remember who the other candidates were at the time. So, I went home and packed my bag and got on the plane. We had pizza. We walked through all of the things that could happen in the press conference and after, how to start the initial things of structuring a campaign for an election and all of that sort of stuff. We all kissed, made up and moved forward. (both laugh)

DePue: I should have asked you before, but do you have any stories that would illustrate what it was like working as Thompson's patronage chief, hiring stories or anything else you'd like to share with us?

Kjellander: Oh, gosh. There was one time, somebody—I honestly can't even remember who it was—was in my office and put a \$100 bill on my desk. I said, "I think you've made a really big mistake. You'd better take that back quickly." Of course, the minute he left, I called the counsel's office and said, "This guy just put a \$100 bill on my desk. I told him to take it back, and he did." To this day, I don't know if anything happened about it.

²⁰ Scott resigned following his conviction for filing a false federal tax return. The conviction came a day after Lt. Gov. Dave O'Neal defeated him in the 1980 Republican primary for U.S. Senate. Jay Branegan, "Scott Guilty of Tax Fraud: Jury Convicts Him on 1 of 5 Counts," *Chicago Tribune*, March 20, 1980. For speculation on who Thompson might tap for the post prior to his pick of Fahner, see F. Richard Ciccone, "Thompson Has a Chair to Fill," *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 1980. On Fahner's appointment, see James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, October 20, 2014; Tyrone Fahner, interview by Mike Czaplicki, May 4, 2015.

Most of the time, people would come in, and they would go into great detail about how they really needed this job, or “I really need you to hire this person,” that sort of thing. You have to listen. You have to give them an opportunity to make their case. Where you can, you try to help, and where you can’t, you don’t. There’s not too many outlandish tales from that.

DePue: How did it work specifically? Somebody applied for a job; they had to take the test, then they appeared before some kind of an interview with some people, an interview board?

Kjellander: It totally depends on the job. Every agency is different. Every agency handles it differently. What I did was create what we called the key man program. I told you, when I first took over the office, you had this structure of like five regional people.

Instead, I got rid of that structure and just had two centralized people. Then I got people to agree, so that I had a key man in each agency. This was the point person for the governor’s personnel office. This person oversaw the hiring in each agency. That was my key man. Most of those guys are dead too, because a lot of them were old personnel, professional folks.

DePue: Where was the level of approval then? Did it all eventually rest with you, or was that delegated out to a lower level?

Kjellander: Depending on the job, but a lot of times... We’d have key man meetings every week, and they’d come in and report. We’d all sit in my office once a week. We’d go around the room, and I’d get everybody to say who got what done this week.

The ultimate authority was really rested with the director of the department. A big part of my job was negotiating with them on what would be a political hire and what they really needed. If they made the case that they really needed Professor Schmoltz from over here to oversee this program, we’d negotiate.

DePue: I’d like to finish today with the appointment of Jim Edgar as the secretary of state when Alan Dixon decided he was going to seek the U.S. Senate position. Did that surprise you, when Thompson pulled this very young guy out of the legislative liaison office to do that?

Kjellander: No, we were all tickled to death that that was happening. He was kind of one of our crew. No, we all thought it was a great idea.

DePue: You had to know that George Ryan would have loved to have that job, and some others were lining up for it as well.

Kjellander: It did annoy George. But, as we now look back with the advantage of hindsight, had eight good years of good of governor, with Jim Edgar and good

government with Jim Edgar. Today he's probably the most popular former governor that we have, when you look at the polling stuff.

So, it was a really good choice. It was a tough choice for Thompson because, like you say, George was sitting there as lieutenant governor, and obviously wanted the job. But Thompson made the choice that we had to be looking at the future of the party and putting in a young guy like Jim Edgar as a long-term potential successor for him...No, George wasn't lieutenant governor at the time; George was Speaker of the House. He was Speaker of the House; that's right, which even made it more difficult. (laughs) But it was a good decision, and it certainly turned out extremely well for the people of Illinois.

DePue: Well, you've been putting up with me for a long time here. This is probably a good place for us to stop the conversation today, with lots more to come the next time we meet. Thank you very much, Bob.

Kjellander: You're welcome.

(End of interview 1)

Interview with Robert Kjellander

IST-A-L-2014-004.02

Interview # 2: February 26, 2014

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, February 26, 2014. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today, I have my second session with Bob Kjellander. Good morning, Bob.

Kjellander: Good morning.

DePue: Today it's all about 1982 for us. Last time we had a very interesting discussion about your relationship with Governor Thompson, in a couple of jobs. We finished off with a rather lengthy, an important discussion, on your job as his patronage chief, which took you through most of 1981. I think sometime in 1981, that you got a fateful question from the Thompson people, in relation to his third campaign for governor in 1982. Can you tell me about being asked to help out with the campaign?

Kjellander: Yes. This occurred at the time that the governor was appointing Jim Edgar to be secretary of state, when Alan Dixon was elected to the U.S. Senate.²¹ Jim was the chief legislative liaison for the governor, the office that I had actually started in, back in 1977, as Senate liaison. The governor and Art Quern asked me if I would move from the patronage office to take over the legislative shop for the session in 1981, then as soon as the session was over, leave state government to set up the '82 re-election campaign, which I obviously agreed to do and was excited to do.

DePue: You didn't have any reservations about taking both of these offers?

Kjellander: No. Again, as we've talked before, when you're in an administration, particularly in the higher levels of the administration, you do what the principal wants you to do. That was the plan, and it made sense. I was able to pick my own team in the legislative office and pick somebody who was prepared to move up to follow me, as soon as I left for the campaign, John Washburn.²² I had John as the Senate liaison. John had been a senior member of the Senate Republican staff for many years.

We set up a process in which I led the legislative office during the '81 session and then left shortly thereafter, and John took over. He did it for the following couple of years, I believe.

DePue: Did you take a pay cut when you got to that job as the campaign director?

Kjellander: Honestly, I don't remember. I doubt it. I can't remember what I was paid as the campaign manager, but—

²¹ Following Alan Dixon's election to the U.S. Senate in 1980, Governor Thompson appointed his legislative liaison, Jim Edgar, to secretary of state. James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, October 20, 2014; Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, Volume II: 324-332.

²² John E. Washburn began his career as a budget analyst in the Senate, serving from 1973 to 1977. He then directed the Senate Republican staff for the Appropriations Committee until 1981, when Kjellander brought him on board. In 1984, Thompson named him director of insurance, followed by deputy governor in 1989. *Illinois Issues* (February 1984), 39.

DePue: Based on my conversations with several patronage folks and the kinds of positions you had as legislative liaison, these aren't 9:00 to 5:00 jobs. But my understanding of running a high-powered campaign like governor, especially the race in 1982, that's about as far away from a 9:00 to 5:00 job as you can possibly get.

Kjellander: There's no question about that. There are no reasonable timeframes when you're running a campaign. You've got management stuff during the day, and then you've got, usually, receptions and meetings and sit-downs with various people in the evenings. So, it's a very demanding job.

DePue: When I interviewed Carter Hendren, who ran Jim Edgar's 1990 campaign, somewhere in the conversation, he said something like, This is a young man's game. It's not something that you want to have too much maturity and do.²³ Would you agree with that statement?

Kjellander: Absolutely. You've got to have the energy of youth to do these jobs and do them right. It's very interesting when you look at the various gubernatorial races in modern Illinois history. I'm not sure you can name one person who's done more than one. It takes a lot out of you. Thompson ran four times and was elected four times and had four different campaign managers.²⁴ Now, I might be wrong here. There might be somebody who's done it more than once, but I don't think so.

Part of that is... You did put your finger on it. It's the enthusiasm of youth, the willingness to plunge into everything and give it 110 percent to the detriment of family and friends and everything else. Because there's a date certain when it's over, you can kind of get through all of that. I don't know how many times I said to my wife, "This will all be over soon." (DePue laughs) We know for certain it will be over on Election Day, except in 1982, it wasn't! (both laugh)

DePue: Which is why this is going to be an interesting year for us to talk about. In 1981, late in the year, did you have a sense of who your opponent was going to be, in the general election?

Kjellander: I think the presumption always was that it was going to be Adlai.

DePue: Adlai Stevenson.

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: Who had previously been a U.S. senator, but now was going to be running for that position. What I want to start with, before we really get into talking about

²³ Hendren didn't use this exact phrase in his recorded interview, but he addresses this theme in Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, 10 and 30, and May 7, 2009, 44.

²⁴ Thompson's respective campaign managers were Jim Fletcher, Thomas Jacob, Kjellander, and Greg Baise.

the nuts and bolts of this campaign, is the backdrop. What was going on in 1982? This will be of no surprise to you, but I think it's important to kind of lay the groundwork.

National inflation rates in January of '82, at the start of the year, were at 8.4 percent.²⁵ Now, that was going down, so by the time you got to the election year, it was in the high 6s, I believe, but still high, especially looking at what we would consider a healthy economy of 4 percent or 5 percent. The unemployment rate was at 8.6 percent and going up, very high. In fact, in Illinois, I've got a number here of 11.3 percent. Does that sound about right, that Illinois was doing worse, in terms of unemployment, than the national average?

Kjellander: I can't recollect exactly what it was. I didn't think it was quite that high, but if you say it was, I won't dispute it. The economy was in terrible shape.

DePue: The interest rate at that time, at one point in that year was 15.37 percent for a thirty-year loan, which, with where we're at right now, is mind-boggling.

Kjellander: Yeah, exactly.

DePue: So the misery rate for January of '82 is seventeen. That was the rating, and that was left over, I know you recall, from the 1980 campaign, Carter versus Reagan, when there was a lot of discussion about the misery rate, which is the addition of the unemployment and inflation rates together. How much of a challenge is that going to be for an incumbent like Jim Thompson?

Kjellander: Huge. Folks, when they are thinking about the state of the economy, focus first and foremost on the president but secondly on the governor. You see that even today, where, in spite of the so-called recovery—it's a very lethargic, stagnant recovery—you have Republican governors around the country campaigning on how their unemployment numbers are lower than the national average.

We didn't have that luxury in 1982. It was a really, really tough economic time. Rightly or wrongly, the governor gets a big part of that responsibility in the minds of the voters.

DePue: Reagan was standing on a position of being a conservative Republican, certainly on the fiscal side, although he ran up big deficits, because of national defense spending.

Thompson, as you've already explained, was very much a moderate Republican. What was the relationship between the two men?

²⁵ The Illinois unemployment rate was 9.4 percent in January 1982, but increased to 12.9 percent by December. Figures are seasonally adjusted "Local Area Unemployment Statistics" from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Kjellander: I think it was very cordial. I think that the governor understood that the president represented a good part of the Republican base. Having just turned Jimmy Carter out of office, people in the country, they wanted a change, and they were prepared to give Ronald Reagan a chance. I think that the relationship between the governor and the president was a good one.

DePue: Was Thompson eager to have Reagan come to Illinois to help him campaign for re-election?

Kjellander: I'm trying to remember. Reagan, since he was born in Illinois, there were certain elements there that would be helpful. In the first two years of the Reagan administration, the turn-about hadn't occurred yet. That came later. I don't really recall many discussions about, should we get Reagan to come in. It wasn't a major point of discussion.

DePue: I want you to tell me more about your role in the campaign and then some of the other people on the campaign team.

Kjellander: When I left the governor's office, the first couple of months were really writing a campaign plan, pulling together the names of potential people to take key roles in the campaign, that sort of thing. It was a planning process, and then gradually I started hiring people and putting the structure together.

We had a very major focus on having what I like to think of as a well-oiled machine of field staff, where we could energize people to get out and do everything, from knock on doors to the many, many, many phone banks that we had, in different parts of the state. In those days, you still had long-distance phone call things. We had lots of local phone banks, so we could keep the cost down [with] local phones.

DePue: Who were some of the other key players on the campaign team?

Kjellander: Oh, gosh! There were just so many different people on the campaign. One of the stars of the campaign staff was a young woman I hired off of the Senate Republican staff to be my city of Chicago coordinator, Lori Montana.²⁶ She went on later to be a fundraiser for the governor in future campaigns, and is today one of the preeminent fundraisers in Chicago. (coughs)

Like I said, we had a staff. We had regions that were set up, kind of similar to the regions that I had in the patronage office, so that we'd have somebody that would oversee X number of counties. Their jobs would be basically to work with the county chairman, develop, with the county chairman's assent, a county coordinator for the governor.

²⁶ Lori Spear Montana served on the staff of the Illinois Arts Council from 1983 to 1990, then was appointed its executive director by Governor in Edgar in 1995. She left in 1997 to head the state lottery, where she served until 2003. Her husband is Jim Montana, one of Thompson's lawyers during the 1982 recount and later a chief counsel for Edgar.

That person would be responsible for managing the local phone bank, if we had a phone bank in the county. He or she would be responsible for putting together...If we were going to have a rally, if the governor or one of his senior people was going to be in town, they'd put together the rallies and that sort of stuff.

DePue: Who did the press office work? Was Dave Gilbert still the press secretary for the governor?

Kjellander: Yeah, Dave Gilbert was press secretary for the governor. I can't even remember who it was. There was a young press aide, but the reality of it was, all of the press relations ran through Gilbert.

DePue: I would think that would be a difficult line to walk. You're on the state payroll as the press secretary, and yet you're also working for the campaign in certain respects. How was that managed?

Kjellander: Well, it was a different time than it is today. Dave was just an outstanding press secretary. He had tremendous relationships with the media, particularly the Chicago media, since he came from the *Tribune* originally. Reporters would come to him on everything. We were very careful to have a campaign press secretary—I'm embarrassed that I can't even tell you the name of who it was today—because we were cognizant of the line that Dave was a state employee, and we were very careful that all press releases, in terms of the campaign, would come out of the campaign office.

But, realistically, the press all knew, if they wanted to get an answer on something significant, relating to the governor, they were going to go to Dave Gilbert. They weren't going to go to the campaign. It's just that simple.

But all the functional things, the normal, time-consuming things, the press releases and organizing the various rallies and interacting with the local press, that was all done out of the campaign office.

But realistically, if you wanted the governor's input on something, and you were an enterprising reporter, you went to Dave Gilbert. That's just the way it was.

DePue: Where was your office? Where were you working most of the time?

Kjellander: We had an office over on Second Street. It was a second floor building there.

DePue: In Springfield?

Kjellander: In Springfield, yeah. We ran it out of Springfield.

DePue: How much of your time did you spend in Chicago?

Kjellander: Quite a bit. We had offices up there too. But my main office was in Springfield, over on Second Street. I think there's a travel agency in there now, if I'm not mistaken.

DePue: Who headed up the fundraising efforts?

Kjellander: So many of these kind of blur together. We had an incredible team of CEOs in Chicago who were very close to the governor and who were very energetic about helping. The Wirtz family were key players. Pat Ryan was a key player. It just goes on and on and on. There's so many of them.

DePue: These are people who donated a considerable amount of money, plus helped network?

Kjellander: Yes. That was the key, and fundraising was not my role. I would go to Finance Committee meetings and give them presentations on the campaign and where we were headed and what we were doing, but the CEO community in Chicago was very energized. The meetings would basically be very similar, I think, to what you see in Chicago today with Rahm Emanuel. You have all of the heavyweight business leaders are part of his inner circle.

In that same way, Thompson really, he set the bar for that, because he was not ever hesitant to pick up the phone and call the CEO of this company or that company and say, "I really need your help, and I really need you to raise me some money, and I need you to come to a meeting." He was a trailblazer in that, I think, in Illinois and set up this group of people. It was year-in and year-out. Since he ended up running four different times, it got down to a science. Some of the same people who were there in '76 were still there in '86.²⁷ (laughs)

DePue: I would imagine, by that time, they'd say, "It's Governor Thompson on the line?" And they'd respond, "Well, I'm out right now." (laughs)

Kjellander: No. That's the interesting part. That's the really interesting part. Yes, the CEO knew that, if the governor was calling, he either A) wanted money, or B) wanted him to do something. But, in my experience, none of them ever ran from Jim Thompson.

To give you an interesting contrast, when I was running the national convention, up in Minneapolis in 2008, we had a Republican governor at the time, Tim Pawlenty. One of the reasons that Minneapolis was picked was because, next to New York, they had more Fortune 500 companies headquartered in the Twin Cities than anyplace else in the country.

²⁷ On the importance of businessmen to Thompson and development of the Governor's Club to routinize fundraising in non-election years, see Kim Fox, interview by Mike Czaplicki, July 14, 2014. Fox was the director of Citizens for Thompson from 1984 through 2004.

We would have weekly meetings at the governor's mansion. We'd go through these lists of the corporate big shots. At the end of the meeting, we would give the governor a list of people to call. Then we'd have another meeting, the following week or two weeks later. And we'd ask, "How did it go with so-and-so?" "He didn't return my call." "Well, how did it go with so-and-so?" "He hasn't called me back." That became a pattern, which said to me, who was used to a governor bigger than life, Jim Thompson, who no CEO would ever not return a call to.

In Minnesota, it was very different. It was very different. The governor was not on a level that Thompson brought the governorship in Illinois to. Like I said, love him or hate him, there is not a CEO that I'm aware of in Chicago that ever, ever dodged the governor. That's why he was so effective at what he did.

DePue: Almost any successful campaign has a guy who's the numbers guy, who knows all of the counties in the state and whether they lean Republican or Democrat and all of the communities, and where you can count on getting the most support. Who was the guy in the Thompson campaign in '82?

Kjellander: The numbers guy—

DePue: Did Thompson do that himself?

Kjellander: No. I really can't put my finger on a numbers guy.

DePue: Well, that's interesting.

Kjellander: Yeah. I really can't. When I hired each of the regional coordinators, [I] sat with each of them. We talked about structure in the counties and their responsibility. We looked at the numbers from the previous governor's race. We talked in general terms about trying to increase the numbers that they had the last time, but as we talked earlier, the economy was in such a tough situation that we poured a lot of resources into the mechanics of things like voter turnout and identifying our voters, because we knew that the headwinds were strong.

DePue: I guess it's interesting to me, about the numbers crunching, because you're such good friends with Karl Rove, who is considered **that** guy for George W. Bush.

Kjellander: Yes, yeah. No, Karl was not around. I don't know what Karl was doing in '82. He may have still been head of the College Republicans.

DePue: I'm not suggesting he should have been playing a role. It's just interesting in that respect. How about the advertising side of it? Did you hire a firm?

- Kjellander: Yes. He just recently died. I can see his face. I'm terrible about this, with the names; it's so long ago. We hired what was then the preeminent political consulting firm in the country.²⁸
- DePue: Chicago-based?
- Kjellander: No, Washington-based. I can see his face, but I can't recall his name. He was our consultant, and he was in Chicago regularly, which is why I spent quite a bit of time in Chicago. He was sort of the guru that handled the advertising and the strategy, if you will, for how we were going to present the candidate.
- DePue: Let's talk about strategy, starting with this question. Who were the people in the inner circle with Thompson to plan and strategize this campaign?
- Kjellander: Obviously, Art Quern was chief of staff at the time. Jim Fletcher was still a major player. I'm just trying to think of when he left.
- DePue: I think he'd probably been out for a couple of years by that time.
- Kjellander: I think he'd been out, but he was still...His opinion was much sought after. Dave Gilbert clearly was a very key player in that. It was a fairly small group of people.
- DePue: Do you include yourself in that group?
- Kjellander: Yeah, sure. Yeah, since I had the responsibility of executing.
- DePue: Let's start with the strategy for advertising. Was most of the money, the main focus on television ads or spreading around print, radio, leaflets and other collateral materials?
- Kjellander: All of the above, but clearly the biggest amount of money went into television. Those were the days before VCRs and TiVo and all that sort of stuff. People watched television, very large numbers, and a big part of our budget went into television.
- DePue: What demographic slices of the state would that campaign be directed at?
- Kjellander: Virtually all of it. In those days, the Chicago media market was preeminent, pretty much like it is today. But there was considerable Republican strength, even in suburban Cook County, which has deteriorated a lot now. Where a lot of the collar counties today are up for grabs, if you will; in those days, the question just was, how big of a margin we would have in Kane, DuPage, Will,

²⁸ Bailey-Deardourff's Doug Bailey had been Gerald Ford's political consultant during his 1976 race. In fact, Bailey had been retained by Thompson since 1976. For Bailey's background, work for Ford and association with pollster Bob Teeter, see Doug Bailey interview by Richard Norton Smith, August 21, 2009, Gerald R. Ford Oral History Project, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation, Grand Rapids, MI, <http://geraldrfordfoundation.org/centennial/oralhistory/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Doug-Bailey.pdf>.

McHenry. They're still Republican turf, but they're not slam dunks, like they used to be.

Collar County Share of Jim Thompson's General Election Vote²⁹

<u>County</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1986</u>
DuPage	6.9	6.9	7.6	8.2
Lake	4.0	3.8	4.0	4.0
Will	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.9
Kane	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.7
McHenry	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.9
Collar Totals	17.5	17.5	18.8	19.6

DePue: I believe it might be a little bit late for this, but there was a time when DuPage County was considered the strongest Republican county in the country, minus perhaps Orange County in California.

Kjellander: That's correct. Yeah, DuPage and Orange County would fight it out every election, as to which was more Republican, yep.

DePue: Does that mean you don't spend much money in DuPage County?

Kjellander: No, you're spending a huge amount of money in Chicago media, which includes DuPage. Did we have a DuPage brochure? In those days, you had precinct committeemen in most of the precincts in DuPage, who got out and walked their precinct and delivered stuff.

I think, partially because you still had a patronage structure, you had an organization in most of the counties. So, we did a lot of regional and county brochures that we would pay the cost for, that would go into the precinct committeemen's packets for going door to door. We did radio; we did, as I say, lots of television; some direct mail, not much; more brochure distribution through the campaign structure.

DePue: How about newspaper ads? Is that not as effective as radio and TV?

Kjellander: No, we did minimal newspaper ads that I can recall, anyway.

²⁹ Percentages based on State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election*.

DePue: What was the role, and what was the thought of how to use Jayne Thompson and three-year-old Samantha?

Kjellander: They would do certain things that were for visual effect, but Jayne was very busy being a mother to a three-year-old. She was very enthused about the campaign. When we really needed her to do something, she would do it. But we tried to be careful about her schedule, because she was very busy.

DePue: I'm going to read a couple of lines out of Mike Royko. He's certainly quotable.

Kjellander: Yes, he is.

DePue: Here's the headline for this editorial he wrote in April of '82. "The Kid's Got to Go." It starts with, "If Jim Thompson is serious about his political career, he should probably put his little daughter, Samantha, up for adoption." (both laugh) Then later it says, "Many people accuse Thompson of showing off the child in order to try to win the sizable baby-lover vote. Some said that they were endangering her, because she was being exposed to germs."³⁰

Kjellander: (laughing) I don't recall that. I don't recall us overusing Samantha; I really don't. There were occasional photo op situations, but never do I recall there ever being any serious discussion about, Oh, she's being used too much, or anything like that.

DePue: How well do you think the governor did in separating his role as governor from his role as campaigner?

Kjellander: I think he did very well with that. I've never seen any candidate who enjoyed campaigning as much as Jim Thompson. And that includes Ronald Reagan.

DePue: And Bill Clinton?

Kjellander: And Bill Clinton. Jim Thompson, in his prime on the stump, loved it. Our biggest problem in having events was trying to stay reasonably on schedule and get him out of there, because he had this knack for connecting with people.

When he was in a crowd, and he was on his game, you couldn't get him out of there. I can't tell you the number of events that we were late to, just because, when the advance crew would try to move him out, he'd say, "No, no, no. These people came a long way to see me, and I'm going to talk to them." It got to the point where you just didn't even try. We'd try to alter the schedule in advance to compensate for the fact that the governor would shake every hand in the room. Then he'd feel like he could leave, after he shook

³⁰ Mike Royko, "Samantha's a Liability: The Kid's Got to Go," *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 1, 1982.

every hand. He had a genuine affection for people. He loved people, and it showed. It showed when he was out there. He was a very natural campaigner.

DePue: Let's go a little bit more into the specifics of what the campaign was focused on. Obviously, we have to start with a little bit more in terms of discussion of your opponent. Adlai Stevenson emerged from the Democratic primary, I think, unopposed. So he's the candidate. Once you get to that point and the main campaign season heats up, what are the main issues in the campaign?

Kjellander: Stevenson tried to make the economic times...put that onus on the governor. We had to deal with that. Thompson was big on infrastructure, so there were a number of infrastructure initiatives. We focused a lot on that. It really was a referendum on Thompson, if you will, because he was running for his third term. Stevenson was, fortunately for us, a very bad campaigner. Whereas Thompson never met a stranger, it was almost like Stevenson never met a friend. He was cold and aloof, I guess overly intellectual, if you're trying to be charitable. He just didn't connect with people. Our efforts were to constantly contrast that. So we did a lot of public events, a lot of public situations where Thompson shined. He was a great speaker, and he got people's attention.

DePue: Was ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] an issue, or is that behind us now, once you get past the primary season? You know that, come the end of June, it's going to be a dead issue.

Kjellander: Yeah, the governor was for the ERA. Of course, the Phyllis Schlafly element of the party was trying to stop it. I'm trying to remember when the thing kind of got decided.

DePue: That was June. The clock ran out in June.

Kjellander: We took some minor hits from the right-wing of the party. It's hard, thirty years later, with the Republican Party that we know it is today. Back then, you had Jim Thompson, who was pro-choice on abortion and pro-ERA. ERA is a dead issue now. The only problem that [Bruce] Rauner has got in the current Republican primary is he's pro-choice., and that will be very interesting. Of course, he's trying to play it down.

Our earlier conversations about him [Thompson] being a moderate Republican is really true, when you think about a pro-choice governor. We talked a lot about his involvement with the CEOs. He had similar involvements with most of the labor leaders in the state. Many of the unions—I can't remember now all of which ones—endorsed Thompson or didn't endorse Stevenson, which was just as significant in that regard. Again, Thompson worked those constituencies.

He would sail around Lake Michigan on the Wirtz yacht, *Blackhawk*, with a bunch of CEOs.³¹ He would also go to the union halls and hoist a few beers with the labor union guys. In both cases, it worked. He had an appeal that cut across class lines, and that's, I think, partially because of his moderate stance on a lot of issues. He wasn't a Republican that the average guy had to fear. He was just somebody who appealed across lines to everybody.

DePue: In earlier campaigns, one of the emphases would have been on crime. He would portray himself as tough on crime. Was that at play in this particular campaign?

Kjellander: Yes. I'm trying to remember the name of the legislation. But, yes, there was a tough-on-crime bill that he advocated.

DePue: Class X would have been early in his administration. That was the big piece of legislation.

Kjellander: Yeah. I'm trying to remember when Class X was.

DePue: Seventy-seven or '78.

Kjellander: Yeah. How he came to prominence in the first place, as U.S. attorney, and obviously the most famous case of putting Otto Kerner in jail. You combine that with the Class X, and he had a very, very tough-on-crime image. That was very important. The Class X thing was very important.

DePue: I think part of the discussion, at this time in American history, would have definitely been on the death penalty. I know that he was in favor, and I believe Stevenson was opposed. Was that part of the dialog in the campaign?

Kjellander: I don't recall the death penalty being a big issue. My recollection is he [Stevenson] didn't emphasize opposition to the death penalty, because it [support] was pretty overwhelming.

Now things have changed radically, when you have, basically, a Republican governor, George Ryan, doing away with capital punishment in Illinois by executive fiat, basically. My recollection is that wasn't a big thing in the campaign.

DePue: One of the things that I encountered in doing the research was about Ronald Reagan and New Federalism, which was, apparently, in the old days when Nixon was sending out money to the states, giving the states a lot of latitude to use it. Do you remember that being part of the discussion during the campaign?

³¹ William Wirtz, who held extensive interests in real estate and liquor distribution. He owned the Chicago Blackhawks and was co-owner of Chicago Stadium and its successor, the United Center.

Kjellander: Not really. I know that Reagan talked about New Federalism and giving responsibilities back to the states, giving the states more authority. That was something that Thompson embraced. As I recall, part of the Reagan initiative was to give unencumbered money to the states in social service areas, to let each state essentially become almost an opportunity for them to develop locally what works best for a given thing, as opposed to having a federal mandate, like Obamacare, where everything has to be the same.

DePue: Borrowing some more modern language, laboratories for experiments?

Kjellander: Laboratories for... That's what I was searching for in this and couldn't come up with, yes, laboratories. Thompson embraced that. He embraced that.

DePue: Was Stevenson trying to tie Thompson and Reagan together? Was Reagan that unpopular in 1982 that that would have worked?

Kjellander: Reagan was elected, because Jimmy Carter was such a disaster. The first two years were very, very, very difficult. But there wasn't that much of an effort to do the linkage, because the decision on Reagan was still wide open. People, two years in, were still willing to see where things were at. Of course, by the end of his term, things were in pretty good shape.

DePue: I think I'm going to save the discussion on taxes for a little bit further into this. Let's talk about the campaign's view of their opponent, Adlai Stevenson, and then how the campaign tried to portray him to the rest of the general public.

Kjellander: I think—and we got this from many, many, many Democrats—an elite, cold fish who didn't relate very well. It's one of the reasons, in addition to Thompson's courting of them, why we did so well with labor. Stevenson was not a common man. He, I'm sure, is a very smart guy. I don't know him. I met him a couple of times; I don't know him at all. He, for the modern world, was a terrible candidate in the sense that he was not particularly articulate; he was not a good campaigner. Again, this played to our advantage, because we tried to hype all of those things that Thompson was so good at, that he [Stevenson] was so terrible at. I think that showed up everywhere, whether it was an event or a debate or whatever. There was just no comparing the two. Jim Thompson was the ultimate candidate. You could just tell by looking at him every day; he was enjoying it thoroughly.

DePue: Obviously, he was a skilled campaigner, to listen to you and almost everybody else, but he also had the albatross of this incredibly weak economy that he was running in. So he can't claim that he's been successful in the economic realm. Does that mean that the campaign goes negative?

Kjellander: No. We didn't really go negative too much.

DePue: If I were to ask Stevenson, what would he say?

Kjellander: Well, he probably still can't figure out why he lost. (both laugh) There was no conscious, Oh, let's do this, and let's do that. Leak this or go at that, leak this or go at that. Adlai was just a very lackluster candidate, I guess, is the best way to put it.

DePue: I'm going to hand you this cartoon. This is from the *Chicago Tribune*, July 4, the Fourth of July.

Kjellander: The Fourth of July.

DePue: The McNelly cartoon and how the press, by that time, is portraying your opponent.

Kjellander: (laughing) Well, this wasn't us. (both laugh) This says it all. This is really good. I don't recall this one. This is good, but this says it all. Here's this guy who really can't quite figure it out.

DePue: We're looking at the cartoon. I should describe it a little bit. Adlai III is wearing boxing gloves and shorts. This egghead-looking guy looks a lot like how his dad would have been portrayed probably in the 1950s.³²

Kjellander: Correct.

DePue: He's got this very dour look on his face, ready to go into the gymnasium, up the stairs, obviously ready for a boxing match. It's "Big Gym, one flight up." It's "Big Gym," G-y-m, but the connotation is obviously there.

Kjellander: Sure.

DePue: I know that he had the reputation of being a wimp. There was this wimp discussion; who was the bigger wimp? I think maybe Adlai actually lost that part of the equation. Was that something that the campaign played into?

Kjellander: The wimp thing wasn't ours, but once some reporter put it out there, it was okay to stir the pot a little bit on that. (DePue laughs)

DePue: I'm sure it was seen as a gift from heaven.

Kjellander: He was just so lacking in a common touch that it made those characterizations so easy. He never laughed. I don't recall him smiling very much either. He looked like campaigning was the worst thing he's ever done, the most painful thing he'd ever done in his entire life. Here was a guy who was a United States senator twice, wasn't it? I think it was twice.

DePue: From a storied political family.

³² For an example of this label, attached to Adlai Stevenson II, governor of Illinois (1949-1953) and two-time Democratic nominee for president, see Robert Mandeville, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 6, 2013.

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: Do you think there was a better candidate the Democrats could have put up against Thompson that year?

Kjellander: There was some early discussion about Alan Dixon coming back from the Senate.

DePue: "Al the Pal?"

Kjellander: Al the Pal. But, Thompson and Dixon got along very well. Nothing really ever came of it. In my judgment, he would have been a **far** more difficult candidate for us, far more difficult, because he was the antithesis of Stevenson. All the things I've described about Thompson and his relating to people and his campaigning ability were all true of Alan Dixon. He would have been a very formidable candidate.

DePue: You've mentioned this a couple of times already, Thompson's work with the labor community to get their vote. Some of the stuff, in terms of how we identify party politics today, especially this current gubernatorial campaign, seems counterintuitive, in terms of what Thompson was trying to do. What was his position on right-to-work, where an employee has the decision whether or not he wants to join a union?

Kjellander: I don't ever recall a serious conversation about it. I just presume he was opposed to it.

DePue: He was opposed, from what I understand.

Kjellander: Yeah. I don't ever think it was even a discussion. Right-to-work in those days was this sort of extremely right-wing thing that happened in southern states. (both laugh) That was in the days, thirty years ago, when the unions were very, very powerful.

DePue: He also is credited with giving collective bargaining rights to the public sector unions.

Kjellander: Yes, he did, which endeared him to the labor leadership.

DePue: And he was strong on worker's compensation, as well, from what I understand.

Kjellander: He was. He was, like I said, a very middle-of-the-road guy who could appeal to both CEOs and labor bosses.

DePue: That was my next question. How do you retain the CEOs' support when you're making those kinds of decisions?

Kjellander: You cultivate them. You spend time with them. You roll up your sleeves and actually get to know people. The best contrast I can give you is why people are so disappointed—even many people who were strong supporters of Obama—are so disappointed in his lack of effectiveness as president. He pays lip service to bipartisanship and doesn't do anything about it.

Thompson not only talked about it, but did it. He spent lots and lots of time with CEOs, and he spent a lot of time with the labor union leaders. Frequently, he would explain to the CEOs where the labor guys were coming from and vice versa and would help broker common ground. It's because both sides trusted him. That, to me, is the key and why I think it's very unfortunate that he never had the serious opportunity to run for president, because he would have brought that style to the White House.

DePue: You mentioned it already, but there were several unions that ended up endorsing him, SEIU [Service Employees International Union], that certainly would be a surprise today, the Chicago Teachers' Union, I think, maybe, the Illinois Education Association (IEA), and the Teamsters.

Kjellander: The Teamsters. Oh yeah, we were big with the Teamsters. (laughs)

DePue: Was the strategy evolving, as you got further into the campaign?

Kjellander: Evolving?

DePue: The campaign strategy that you and the Thompson people had, in terms of how to actually pull off a victory in such a bad economic year.

Kjellander: I think the longer it took to get into it, the clearer it became to us that it was really critical that we do the voter turnout stuff in our areas. Therefore, our field operation became more and more important. We put lots and lots of resources into the field operations. In the end, it was critical.

DePue: Early in the campaign—and this is probably inevitable. We are talking about Illinois politics, after all—there were discussions about scandal in the campaign and scandal in his administration, specifically, allegations that he was accepting gifts from potential donors, that he was taking flights from friends who were also supporters of his campaign, that he was accepting cash for the campaign from people who were possibly going to be able to benefit because of government contracts. Do you remember any of that in the February or March timeframe?

Kjellander: There were always accusations. But one of the things that Thompson did—and he was very clear with me when we first got started on this, and this goes back to his first day in office—he ordered staff to keep meticulous records of

every donation, every donation, even those that were underneath the cut-off for disclosure.³³

DePue: There was one article I saw, and I think it was a columnist, not a reporter, who was talking about this, he was thankful that Thompson was keeping such careful records of all of the gifts that he had received. As a result of getting a lot of heat, Thompson apparently came out with a ruling that they wouldn't accept anything over \$100, unless it was from a family member, because he was accepting things that were quite a bit higher than that.

Kjellander: Yeah, but you have to remember too... For instance, furniture or paintings that went into the governor's mansion. There were some issues there, but again, Thompson was meticulous about the records.

DePue: Do you remember a dust-up about Thompson accepting deep discounts when he was buying antiques, in the neighborhood of 30 percent or 40 percent discounts?

Kjellander: I do recall, there was some stuff, but it had no traction. I do recall, there was a newspaper article about it or something. I remember—this is funny—we were in New Orleans with some friends, and we were wandering through an antique store. We were looking at this elaborate bedroom set with the carved headboards and all this sort of stuff. The saleslady said, "That's sold." "Oh, okay." She said, "Where are you from? You're a Yankee." I said, "I'm from Illinois." She starts laughing. She says, "You know who bought that set? Jim Thompson, your governor," or former governor. I can't remember when exactly it was. So, I'm on vacation in New Orleans and find some big antique bedroom set that he's bought in New Orleans.

DePue: Was that during the heat of the campaign?

Kjellander: No, no. This was much later. He might have even been the former governor by then. In fact, I think he was the former governor by then. He loves his antiques. Besides his voracious love of people and talking and shaking every hand, antiquing was the other thing that kind of screwed up the scheduling from time to time.

I remember one time, he was to do a Lincoln Day lunch and address. He wanted to stop at the local antique store on the way to the thing. Of course, we were about twenty minutes late to the Lincoln Day lunch (laughs), because he got into the antique stuff, somewhere in southern Illinois. It may have actually been, now that I think about it, it may have been for C.L.

³³ A point echoed by the executive director of Citizens for Thompson; see Kim Blackwell Fox, interview by Mike Czaplicki, July 14, 2014, 44 and 56-57. Until 2009, Illinois had extremely weak campaign finance laws, imposing no limits on contributions and a candidate's use of contributions.

McCormick.³⁴ That sticks in the back of my head, that we were doing a little antiquing before the Lincoln Day lunch.

DePue: In July of 1982, when the campaign season normally really starts to heat up, apparently there were some changes being made in the campaign. Do you recall that? The campaign brought in Jim Fletcher, as well?

Kjellander: Jim came in as like a senior advisor, yes.

DePue: The way the newspaper—at least one article I read—portrayed this is that there was some deep concern about how the campaign was going and that they needed to shake things up.

Kjellander: There was always talk like that, but I was there because of Jim Fletcher, so having Jim involved in the campaign was nothing but a positive, from my perspective.

DePue: Did he take over as campaign director, or did you retain that role?

Kjellander: No, I was campaign manager for the entire campaign.

DePue: What was the relationship that he had, then?

Kjellander: Like I said earlier, when we talked about who was in the inner circle, he was part of the inner circle. Having been through the first campaign, I think there was a sense that bringing his vision and background into it... Plus, again, I'm a pretty young guy at the time still, thirty-two or something like that. Jim was more of a peer of the governor's. So, having Jim in the room and part of the decision-making process was very helpful in getting things accomplished. There were no bruised feelings or anything like that.

DePue: It's also about mid-July that the governor announces that he's got to furlough 1,300 government workers. Now, this is an illustration that you've got a very tough economy, and I think it was a very tough year as far as tax revenues were concerned, as well. The money just wasn't coming in at the rate that they had expected it to.

Kjellander: Correct.

DePue: Did that play against the campaign? You've already gotten the support of the public sector unions, but now you've got to lay off 1,300 of their employees.

Kjellander: It was tough. It was very tough, tough on families. A lot of those were folks we hired, because sometimes when you get into those furlough situations, it's the last on and the first off.

³⁴ C.L. McCormick was a colorful legislator from Vienna, Illinois. On the tradition of Lincoln Day dinners, see Mike McCormick, interview by Mark DePue, July 8, 2010, 14.

- DePue: You mean that you hired from the old patronage job, or you hired into the campaign?
- Kjellander: No, hired in the patronage job. But if they were the more recent employees, then they'd be the first to be laid off.
- DePue: The next series of questions deals with something you've talked quite a bit about already, and that's Thompson on the campaign trail. Just to clarify a couple of things, were you the one who was managing his schedule?
- Kjellander: Well, (laughs) nobody really managed [it]. There was a scheduling office in the governor's office, so all the campaign stuff had to be coordinated with the governor's office stuff. Here again, [he was] very, very meticulous about... If it was a political event, the campaign paid for it. He was very strong about that.
- DePue: Did he get to use a state plane to make those trips or a state car?
- Kjellander: Yes, but my recollection is we paid for the plane and things like that when it was a purely political venture.
- DePue: Did you accompany him on any of these trips?
- Kjellander: Some, sure.
- DePue: What would be the ones that you'd decide that you wanted to go with him, anything in particular?
- Kjellander: No. I didn't do a lot of travelling, because my job was really in the office. If there was going to be a big event, or we wanted to do some extra motivation on a local county chairman or a legislator or something like that, sometimes I would go, but it was not the norm. My travelling was not the norm.
- DePue: By the time you get to the late summer or the fall season, then it's the primary campaign season. If you did want to have Jayne do something, would it typically be accompanying him, or did she go out and do things on her own to support the campaign?
- Kjellander: It would typically be accompanying Jim, but there would be occasional situations where she would do stuff on her own.
- DePue: Was she an asset?
- Kjellander: Absolutely, absolutely. She was very good. She had a great memory for names and could call everybody by name. She was definitely an asset.
- DePue: Was she as personable and as comfortable talking to the diverse groups of people as the governor seemed to be?

Kjellander: Nobody is as comfortable as Jim Thompson in talking to everybody, but yeah, she was very comfortable.

DePue: Was Samantha with her when she was out there?

Kjellander: Not usually, but every once in a while.

DePue: Here's your opportunity. I am thinking that you're holding off on some great anecdotes about Jim Thompson on the campaign trail. I kind of want to divide it up between the various demographic groups. Let's talk about downstate. Is there anything that particularly sticks with you when he's working downstate areas? You told us the antiquing story.

Kjellander: By the way, that's just one that I happened to be on, but I know for a fact there were probably dozens of other antique-related slowdowns in the schedule, shall we say, because he just **loved** antiquing. He's in all of these little towns, and a lot of these little towns have what he would call hidden treasures. He would love to go in there and sort around. He was forever buying stuff, always buying stuff.

DePue: How about some of the traditional Democratic strongholds, especially inner-city Chicago. Would he go there and campaign?

Kjellander: We did some inner-city stuff. We didn't have much infrastructure, in terms of the Republican Party, on the West Side of Chicago or something like that, but we had a few. We made an appeal to minorities, just like we were making appeals to labor, trying to get outside the mainstream of just the Republican base. It didn't get us very much. Our numbers never were significant in the African-American community, but that wasn't through lack of effort. The efforts were made, but the Democrat organization was still such in Chicago that it was pretty much a dead issue for us.

DePue: How enthusiastic was the Democratic machine for their candidate, for Stevenson?

Kjellander: I'd say, on a scale from one to ten, ten being the most enthusiastic, they were probably somewhere between three and four.

DePue: So not enough to really turn out huge numbers of votes for Stevenson?

Kjellander: No. They would go through their routines, but there wasn't the enthusiasm that you would have seen for, for instance, a Mike Howlett or a Mayor Daley, the elder.

DePue: I know that Thompson made one trip to the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church on a Sunday and was prominently sitting in the front pew, where all the photographers could take his picture, while the minister was up there.

Kjellander: Sure. Oh yeah, we did those things.

DePue: What kinds of events would he do when he's talking to suburban Republican voters?

Kjellander: A lot of Lincoln Day events. Everybody always wanted the governor for their Lincoln Day lunch or their Lincoln Day dinner. In the metropolitan Chicago area, that was a focal point for Republican activities. He did a lot of golf tournament things out in the burbs [suburbs]. The governor was never a passionate golfer—that I could see, anyway—but, again, it wasn't the golf so much, it was the camaraderie in the tent afterwards where he would make his mark with people.

DePue: Much of the state of Illinois is rural and depends on agriculture, so then you start talking about fairs in all of the various counties. Did he hit the fairs?

Kjellander: Jim Thompson was the consummate fair politician. He loved the state fair. He loved the... What's the one in southern Illinois?

DePue: Du Quoin?

Kjellander: The Du Quoin State Fair. He was notorious [for] eating the corn dogs and sloshing it down with a beer. He was the "everyman" governor out there. I remember, early in his term, he and—it may have been Samantha, I'm trying to remember—would start the fair off by sliding down the huge slide, here at the state fair.

DePue: The giant slide.

Kjellander: The giant slide, yeah.

DePue: There's a great picture of him, Jayne and the dog going down the giant slide.

Kjellander: Yeah, the dog. The dog thing was—

DePue: Did the dog go with him when he was campaigning?

Kjellander: Sometimes. Not a lot, but sometimes. Every once in a while, the dog would go. He [Thompson] loved the fair. In fact, when we did the Thompson Proposition—and I'm trying to remember what year that was.³⁵

³⁵ The proposition represented Thompson's attempt to harness taxpayer discontent that had already resulted in a California voter initiative, Proposition 13, capping the property tax rate and assessed value's rate of increase. Thompson proposed a nonbinding, advisory referendum, asking, "Shall legislation be enacted and the Illinois Constitution be amended to impose ceilings on taxes and spending by the State of Illinois, units of local government and school districts?" On the Thompson Proposition, see James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, August 28, 2014; Julian D'Esposito, interview by Mike Czaplicki, September 2, 2014, 74-76 and 77-78; Jim Fletcher, interview by Mike Czaplicki, March 9, 2015; Tyrone Fahner, interview by Mike Czaplicki, April

DePue: The late '70s.

Kjellander: That would have been prior to the '78 re-election.

DePue: That sounds right.

Kjellander: We ended up setting up a booth at the fair. We all had to be there for all ten days of the fair, working the fair, because we had to get like two hundred and some thousand signatures to get the Thompson Proposition on the ballot. Of course, the fair was one of the most logical places, because you had people from all over the state. But, he relished the fair. He just lived for it. Whenever the fair people wanted something extra, he always figured out a way to get it done.

DePue: Going hand in hand with fairs are parades. Did he do a lot of parades?

Kjellander: Yes, he was a big parade guy too, oh yeah. Just because of his size, he was a presence in every parade he went on.

DePue: Was he riding or walking?

Kjellander: Mostly walking. Sometimes you ride, depending on the circumstances. But, he loved to be out there, walking and shaking hands. The Bud Billiken Day Parade... I think that's in Cicero or somewhere.³⁶ He was always doing parades. He loved parades.

DePue: Would Stevenson be doing the fairs and the parades?

Kjellander: Not that I ever saw. I'm sure he did some, but nobody ever paid any attention to him. (both laugh)

DePue: You said, with a chuckle. Any other stories you can recall on the campaign tour?

Kjellander: Nothing really exciting. It was thirty years ago. It's kind of hard to remember vignettes, but—

DePue: Apparently, you weren't necessarily with him when he was doing a lot of these things.

Kjellander: No, I'd get the reports from the field staff or from the advance guys. We'd stay on top of it.

29, 2015; David Gilbert, interview by Mark DePue, March 27, 2014; and Gregory Baise, interview by Mark DePue, August 6, 2013.

³⁶ A significant civic tradition, the parade was developed by African American leaders to instill pride in and uplift the community's youths. It is held on the south side of Chicago, along King Drive.

DePue: From what I understand, there were four debates that were agreed upon in July, and then the debates started in September, I think.

Kjellander: Yeah, September as I recall.

DePue: What was the thought, going into the discussion about debates? First of all, was it somebody like yourself debating with Stevenson's campaign manager and negotiating how many debates and where they would be, et cetera?

Kjellander: We negotiated with... No, it wasn't with Stevenson's campaign manager. It was with Newton Minow, the former chair of the FCC, under Carter, I believe.³⁷ We negotiated the debate, Minow, myself... I don't recall if Fletcher was there, but we were in Minow's office, and we negotiated the terms for the debate with Minow.

DePue: Did your campaign want more or less?

Kjellander: I think we were pretty comfortable with four. You get beyond four, and people lose interest.

DePue: Well, sometimes you go in with the attitude, the less debates we have the better. But I would think, from everything you said, that you would figure your candidate would stand up well in a debate with Stevenson.

Kjellander: Yeah, we weren't at all uncomfortable with four. You get beyond four, especially when you're starting after Labor Day, that's plenty.

DePue: Did Stevenson's campaign want to have debates with you?

Kjellander: Yeah, they weren't fighting it. They weren't fighting it. I think some of that's just intellectual hubris. He always thought he was the smartest guy in the room.

DePue: So, whatever the debate topic was, he was going to be able to win on the merits of the issues?

Kjellander: Exactly.

DePue: The first debate, I think, was September 1. Do you recall where that was?

Kjellander: No, I don't.

DePue: What little I've read about it before this, said that afterwards Thompson was making allegations that Stevenson was stretching the truth to the point of lying, during the debate itself.

³⁷ Minow chaired the FCC under JFK.

Kjellander: Yeah, I do recall Thompson was aggravated about some stuff Stevenson said. But, it's thirty years ago, and I really can't remember what the particulars of that were.

DePue: Were you present at that debate? Do you remember?

Kjellander: I'm sure I was. I don't have an exact recall.

DePue: How about whether or not you walked away as the winner or loser of that round of the debate?

Kjellander: I think we felt pretty comfortable after each of them. I don't think there was any kind of aha moment that we slam-dunked this, but on the other hand, Thompson was just so much better on his feet than Stevenson. From my perspective, more than the particulars, as long as Stevenson wasn't landing any serious punches, that contrast just helped us. Thompson looked like a governor, sounded like a governor, was decisive like a governor. Stevenson was sort of this—

DePue: The guy in the cartoon.

Kjellander: The guy in the cartoon, the wimp! (both laugh)

DePue: At least one journalist figured that Stevenson had won that first round, but these are very subjective calls, as well. That's not something a journalist would say; it's something a columnist says.

Kjellander: Right. We felt comfortable throughout the debates that we had done a good job.

DePue: Let's talk a little bit about the polls, before we go on to some future debates, because the polls in September were putting your guy up by as many as eight points.

Kjellander: Yep.

DePue: Does that sound accurate from what you knew at that time?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah. In fact, we went into the election, I think, with a seven or eight point [lead], in our internal polling. Bob Teeter was our pollster. I want to say, even in the last poll, the weekend before the election, I think we were up seven or something like that.

DePue: If it started at 8 percent in September, and it was right there at the close of the election campaign, did it pretty much stay in that range for most of the campaign?

Kjellander: Yeah. Yeah, it did. We felt pretty good, throughout the fall. Like I say, Teeter's final numbers... We felt good going into Election Day.

DePue: So how did he get it so wrong?

Kjellander: (laughs) That's the great question. That's the great question. My most vivid recollection of election night... Back in '82, there was still a significant Republican presence on the northwest side of the Chicago. There were actually Republican legislators and even a Republican alderman, I think.

DePue: In fact, this is the first election where the Cutback Amendment is going to go into play.

Kjellander: Yeah. Roger McAuliffe was the long-time Republican state rep from the northwest side of Chicago. I will never forget getting a phone call from him, about 9:00 on election night. He gave me the numbers for the 45th Ward, which is where he was from. We should have been carrying the 45th Ward, and we were getting beat. Don't ask me the exact numbers, because I can't remember, but it was significant enough that I thought that that was the death knell. I really thought that that was... That if we couldn't carry the northwest side of Chicago, we were not going to win.³⁸ The TV newscasts of the day had Stevenson ahead, not by a lot, but by enough. I went to bed election night believing we had lost.

Then, at like 4:00, 4:30 in the morning, Dave Gilbert raps on my door in the hotel. He says, "You're not going to believe this, but we've just inched ahead." (laughs) Then the rest of it all played out with the recount.

DePue: I want to definitely get to that a little bit later, but I still want to go through some more of the events leading up to Election Day itself. September 10, I think, was the second debate. I expect you don't recall where that one would have been either.

Kjellander: No, I'm sorry.

DePue: I'll have to do some more homework before I sit down with the governor, I think. It was about this time that the whole thing about Stevenson being a wimp really started to pick up, from what I can tell.

Kjellander: That could be. That could be.

³⁸ Stevenson defeated Thompson in the 45th Ward, 12,612–12,372, a margin of 240 votes. Although Libertarian candidate Bea Armstrong (172 votes) and Taxpayers candidate John Roche (228 votes) probably siphoned votes away from Thompson, they were not a significant part of the broader shift from 1978. In that election, Thompson had defeated Michael Bakalis in the ward by 3,291 votes. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election* for November 2, 1982, and November 7, 1978.

DePue: It was also about this time that there got to be much more serious conversation about taxes and a variety of different kinds of taxes that were in play. One was a property tax multiplier. Does that ring a bell at all to you?

Kjellander: Honestly, no.

DePue: Inheritance taxes, where Thompson would have been in favor of eliminating state inheritance taxes?

Kjellander: It could well be. I just don't have any recollection of that.

DePue: The third debate, I believe, was October 3. This would have been Thompson in Springfield and Stevenson in Chicago, so a different kind of debate format, and a lot of talk about pork barrel and pocketbook issues and back to the economy again and also kind of ratcheting up the personal attacks back and forth. By that time in the campaign, was it getting a lot more direct and negative?

Kjellander: Stevenson would attack Thompson for being a pork barrel-type politician. He was clearly hurting from the desertion of a lot of the unions from him, so he tried to turn it around and say, "Well, just because Thompson's buying off these labor guys," things like that, which, of course, alienated even the labor guys who were supporting him. So, it was actually good for us.

Thompson never really took Stevenson on personally that I recall. The wimp stuff and all of that was more sniping from the press people.

DePue: You don't think that Thompson was giving as good as he was getting?

Kjellander: No, he was not generally one to attack other politicians. He was much more a conciliator by nature. Now, I don't think he cared for Adlai a whole lot. Maybe some of that disdain might come through a little bit, but he wasn't out there attacking Stevenson. Stevenson, as the outsider trying to unseat a sitting governor, was a lot more vitriolic in his language.

DePue: I believe the fourth debate would have been on October 16. Again, for all of this, I'm a little bit unsure about it, but in Carbondale perhaps.

Kjellander: Could have been. I know they were pretty well geographically dispersed.

DePue: Coming out of the four debates, do you think you benefited from those?

Kjellander: Our general feeling was, yes, that we did. Again, it goes back to just the perception issue, because Stevenson never really landed any body blows of any kind in any of the four debates. Thompson looked gubernatorial, and Stevenson didn't. So, I felt like they were a good exercise for us.

- DePue: Once we get past that last debate, it's endorsement time for various organizations and institutions, as well as newspapers. From what I've been able to figure out, both the *Tribune* and the *Sun-Times* came out and endorsed your guy.
- Kjellander: Un-huh.
- DePue: Was that a pleasant surprise, or was that expected?
- Kjellander: We hoped that we'd get both, and we did. I think they were very helpful, especially thirty years ago; the *Tribune* was a very significant player within the Republican Party. There was still that residual, left over from Colonel McCormick.
- DePue: It was still seen as the Republican-leaning journal?
- Kjellander: Exactly. Losing it would have been very tough. Today, the *Tribune* endorsement isn't significant anymore. But thirty years ago, it was. So getting that, as well as the *Sun-Times*, was helpful.
- DePue: Here is one that caught my attention. Muhammad Ali came out for Thompson?
- Kjellander: Yep.
- DePue: How did that happen?
- Kjellander: Honestly, I don't remember, but Thompson met him somewhere and probably did one of these with him [pretends to take a punch]. It was just one of those fun things.
- DePue: Why not?
- Kjellander: Why not?
- DePue: What's the mood in the last couple weeks of the campaign?
- Kjellander: Cautious optimism. We felt good. We were getting back good reports from our field operations. In those days, we actually had significant numbers of people all over the state who would go door to door, and that was going well. We felt, like I said, cautiously optimistic. Nobody was taking anything for granted, because everybody was pushing, pushing, pushing, but I'd say cautious optimism was our tone.
- DePue: But if you're leading in the polls by 6 percent or 8 percent, and it sounds like that's what you recall, were you getting a little bit too optimistic and not pushing hard enough in the get out the vote campaign, like you had talked about before?

Kjellander: No. This is terrible for me to say, but I have never been all that enamored of polling, because I believe people fib to pollsters. I believe that to this day. People sometimes say what they think people want to hear. So, while I felt good, I wasn't... Teeter was a really good pollster. He was a class, professional guy. He would always caveat every presentation with, "The percentage that could go wrong here is this much." He would always kind of caveat it. Even though, like I said, I think we were six or seven points—I think it was seven; that's my recollection—going into the election, I always figured, always knock five points off. So I figured it was two points (laughs) going into the election.

DePue: Which doesn't make you comfortable?

Kjellander: No, but again, when I say cautiously optimistic, that's really how I felt. I thought we had done what we needed to do, and I thought we were going to win, but it could have gone either way. Then, of course, when I got the call from Roger McAuliffe, election night, I thought it had gone the other way. (laughs)

DePue: You went to bed that evening at what time?

Kjellander: I don't know, 3:00 in the morning, something like that.

DePue: Late, still not knowing.

Kjellander: No. After I got the call from McAuliffe, I felt an obligation to share it with Thompson. I said, "I just got a call from Roger McAuliffe, and we're not carrying the 45th Ward like we're supposed to. If that's indicative—and I think it is, because we should have been carrying that big-time up there—that's a problem." I said, "There's a good chance that we're not going to win this thing."

DePue: Do you think the Democratic machine did a better job of getting out their vote than you had anticipated?

Kjellander: They definitely did. They worked harder up in Chicago than I expected them to, because, again, Stevenson wasn't their ideal candidate, plus the governor had good rapport with a lot of the Democratic-regular folks.

DePue: Where was the campaign team at that time? Where was the celebration supposed to have occurred?

Kjellander: The Hyatt in Chicago.

DePue: Is that standard Republican turf in Chicago?

Kjellander: Yeah, that's where we always had our... because Thompson was close with the Pritzkers, and it was a great hotel. It still is a great hotel.

DePue: Where were the Democrats?

Kjellander: I don't remember.

DePue: At that stage, you probably didn't care much.

Kjellander: I didn't really care much.

DePue: We know that the results of the election were very close, but once the initial count was done, that Thompson was ahead by a few thousand votes. Was it then required by state law to automatically go into a recount?

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: Why don't you walk us through that process?

Kjellander: The State Board started the recount process.

DePue: The Illinois State Board of Elections.

Kjellander: The State Board of Elections. So, instead of disbanding the campaign operation, we had not only to keep the field staff on board, but we augmented it with huge numbers of volunteers.

DePue: To do what?

Kjellander: To go into all of the counties, recount the votes, make sure that nobody was inflating totals. There was a great story. A state rep from Chicago—I wish I could remember his name, a huge mountain of a guy, African-American, West Side guy—two days after the election, realized he had left a ballot box in the trunk of his car and tried to get that counted. (laughs) There were even cartoons about that one. What was his name? I wish I could remember his name, oh man. Nice guy, actually

DePue: Do you think it was legitimate, that he had actually forgotten it?

Kjellander: (laughs) No, I don't think so. I think they decided they needed a few extra votes.

DePue: But all of these precincts are supposed to have election judges there and have representatives of both parties there. Are those the people that are still doing the counts?

Kjellander: Yes, but in a lot of those cases, the judges go away, and you have to replace them. But it was critical to have judges everywhere, because you didn't want anybody stuffing the ballot boxes.

DePue: Is this all reminiscent of Florida in 2000?³⁹

Kjellander: Yeah, very much so, very much so. We had a structure; we had people in every ward, every township in Cook County, all the counties, because this was a full-blooded recount that went on until it was either one or two days prior to the inauguration of the governor.

DePue: Eventually, this whole issue went to the courts, I know. When would that have occurred?

Kjellander: The [Illinois] Supreme Court ruled, a day or two before the inauguration, that Thompson would be inaugurated.

DePue: Was the count going on at the same time that it was going through the court system?

Kjellander: Yes. The court was overseeing this. Again, I'm not a lawyer. We had teams of lawyers. The lawyers were everywhere. We had so many lawyers that it was unbelievable. They were dispersed to every ward and every township. It was a mammoth, mammoth exercise, but we felt we had to do that. Otherwise, the machine would steal the election.

DePue: The machine? The Chicago Democratic—

Kjellander: The Chicago Democratic machine, absolutely. This little vignette I gave you about the state rep finding the ballot box in his car two days after the election, that's the one we know about. (laughs) However many there were, who knows?⁴⁰

DePue: Well, I'm thinking that a lot of these precincts and the wards you go into in some Chicago neighborhoods—and maybe it works the same way if you're going into deep red [Republican] DuPage County—you'll have election judges that represent both parties, but they really don't.

Kjellander: Correct. In the city of Chicago, many of the Republican judges were the nephews of the Democratic precinct captains. (both laugh) Believe me, that is the way it worked. For a long time, until we reformed it, the Republican State Central Committee was elected in the Republican primary, and there's one member from each of the congressional districts that constitute the Republican State Central Committee.

³⁹ Florida, a swing state, had a major recount dispute that took center stage in the 2000 U.S. presidential election. The outcome was not known for more than a month after balloting because of the extended process of counting and recounting Florida's presidential ballots.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election_in_Florida,_2000

⁴⁰ For Thompson's recollection of the 1982 election, see James Thompson, interview by Mark DePue, December 18, 2014.

Well, back in the day, we had three or four members of the Republican State Central Committee from various Chicago congressional districts, and they were Democrats, sitting on the Republican State Central Committee, because they had been put up to it by their local Democratic ward committeemen. That's why we changed the structure on how to elect the State Central Committee, because the Democratic machine was actually electing members of the Republican State Central Committee from Chicago. (laughs) That's a true story.

DePue: The end result of this is that the Supreme Court rules... What specifically did the Supreme Court rule? Do you recall?

Kjellander: No, I don't exactly know, other than Thompson had won the election. They certified 5,027, as I recall, is the number and cleared the way for him to be sworn in. I want to say it was like two days before the inaugural was to take place.

I remember hearing about it. I was at Meigs Field, on my way back to Springfield when the Supreme Court ruling came down. I think it came down on a Friday, and the inaugural was on Monday or something like that.

DePue: There was a swing vote. A Democrat on the Supreme Court, who voted—

Kjellander: Seymour Simon was an independent Democrat, sort of in the mode of the Dawn Clark Netsches of the world. He was not an organization guy. His son, John, was actually an assistant U.S. attorney under Thompson, in the U.S. attorney's office.

So, the Democrats were all saying that this was some insider deal because of that. But Seymour Simon was as incorruptible as they come. He looked at it, and he decided that this was what really happened and that the will of the people was that Thompson should be re-elected, and that was it.

DePue: So you come home about two months later than you had anticipated and said, "Honey, I'm home." (Kjellander laughs) You had the patronage job, the legislative liaison position, went into this very heated campaign. What were you thinking of doing at that time, then?

Kjellander: I was thinking it was time to get out of government. Where I had previously worked, the State Medical Society, a very good friend of mine was the new CEO. He asked me if I would consider coming in as his number two, which I did. I did that for a year, but then decided I really liked the action in Springfield better than being in Chicago. So that's when I set up my business here.

DePue: Just a couple of closing questions about the campaign itself. Are you glad that you did that job?

Kjellander: It was a unique experience. Yeah, I wouldn't trade it for the world. That's just one of those things, but you only do it once in life.

DePue: Glad I did it, won't do it again?

Kjellander: Correct, correct. Again, getting back to my earlier statement about it, I don't think there's anybody who's done it more than once. Maybe there is, but it sure can't come to mind.

DePue: Any life lessons learned during that year?

Kjellander: Wow. Just that you've got to keep slogging ahead, no matter what happens, because all sorts of unexpected stuff always happens. But you get through it by simply getting up in the morning and doing your job. Eventually, it will all come together, one way or the other.

DePue: Were you proud of your guy and the end result?

Kjellander: Absolutely, absolutely. He was a great governor. I'm sorry that it ended up being a recount and having an extra two months added to the campaign. But in the end, he was vindicated and then re-elected another time.

DePue: That's a whole different story.

Kjellander: That's a whole different story. I wasn't involved in that one...but the LaRouchies were certainly helpful. (both laugh)

DePue: Was Thompson the kind of guy who would show his appreciation for the team that helped him get re-elected?

Kjellander: Absolutely, ab-solutely. He can be very emotional. He's a hugger; he's a guy who really, really appreciates what people do for him, and he's not shy about saying it.

DePue: Did he do anything special in your case?

Kjellander: Well, he just looked at me, and he just said, "Bobby, thank you for everything you've done." That's all he needed to say.

DePue: I think that's a great way to finish off for today. Next time we get together, we get to talk more about lobbying, but also a lot about Republican national politics. I'm certainly looking forward to that.

(End of interview 2)

Interview with Robert Kjellander

IST-A-L-2014-004.03

Interview # 3: March 4, 2014

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, March 4, 2014. This is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today, I have another session. I think this is our third session with Bob Kjellander. Good morning, Bob.

Kjellander: Good morning.

DePue: We are over in his office, which happens to be just a block and a half away from the library and my office, so pretty darn convenient, as these things go. The last time, we talked a lot about the 1982 gubernatorial election, where Jim Thompson was the victor, but it wasn't known until two days before the inauguration. A tense time, I'm sure, for you as the campaign director, trying to figure out if your guy had won, after those many months. But I wanted to backtrack a little bit and do some housecleaning, if you will, and ask what do you think the impact of the '82 election was, especially in terms of Governor Thompson's presidential aspirations?

Kjellander: The fact that it was such a close race and obviously not determined until, literally, two days before the inaugural, certainly diminished his previous aura of invincibility. Realistically, it probably undermined the potential of his running for president.

DePue: Had you, up until that point in time, believed that he had presidential aspirations?

Kjellander: I always believed that a governor of a major state who, up until that election, had been extremely popular, two solid victories, and of course then, he had another solid victory, four years later. He was innovative, so I think anybody like that should be considered. If you look at the field for 2016, many, many of the most often mentioned people are governors.

At the time, Illinois was not perceived as a completely blue [Democratic] state. There had been previous Republican governors and previous Democrat governors within everybody's lifetime, whether you're talking about Stratton or Kerner, and then, of course, four terms for Governor Thompson and two terms for Governor Edgar, and then the election of George Ryan. Illinois wasn't the blue state back then that it is today.

DePue: But so much about presidential politics is a matter of timing, too. Probably in '82, it still looked like Reagan would be the natural candidate running for re-election in '84.

Kjellander: Correct, correct. So, there wasn't an opportunity there. Of course, when Reagan was at the end of his two terms, George Bush the elder became the logical heir apparent.

[In] the Republican Party, historically, the nomination has gone to the guy next in line, whether that's a vice president or a guy who



ran previously, like Reagan had lost, but had "done his duty," and now it was his turn. Similarly, Romney had run before, then he got the nomination the last time.

DePue: Now, I've got to jump way back to January of 1980, so we're working backwards in my timeline here. This is during the timeframe when you're now the legislative liaison, because Jim Edgar has moved to secretary of state. In '81 and '82, the House leadership is George Ryan and Mike Madigan. I want you to reflect on both of them from your perspective as Thompson's legislative liaison...with Ryan as the Speaker in those years.

Kjellander: George was the Speaker. My wife and I laugh about this, but I probably had more dinners with George Ryan that year than I did with my wife. George was a very collegial person. A lot of what got accomplished got accomplished over the dinner table, as opposed to committee hearings and things like that. Everything was personal with George. He and I had a very solid relationship.

He was generally supportive of the governor. Every once in a while, there'd be issues that we would diverge on, but he would make his points to me very crystal clear, and I would do my best to go back and get things changed from whatever it was; I can't remember specifics. But there was always something that a member or a member of the leadership was annoyed about that we'd have to fix.

DePue: Others have told me that one of the things he was pushing repeatedly was...I'm not sure if it was anti-union legislation. I believe it was right-to-work provisions, as well. Do you remember any of that?

Kjellander: No, I don't. I really don't. My recollection, George always had fairly decent rapport with several of the union folks. I don't recall him pushing Right to Work; I really don't. I suppose it's possible, but I don't think so.

DePue: How about Mike Madigan, who was the minority leader at that time.

Kjellander: Mike, as he is today, very professional, very business-like, the opposite of George in the fact that George is very gregarious, outgoing, never met a stranger-type. And Mike is far more reserved, far more, some would say, aloof. But he was always a person you could sit down with and make a good argument. Oftentimes, he would change his mind and come along. Sometimes he wouldn't. But he was always a person you could talk to and make your pitch. Sometimes he'd agree to it, and sometimes he wouldn't.

DePue: My understanding is that the Republicans had a pretty thin majority, that it was pretty well split in the House of Representatives those two years.

Kjellander: Yeah, it was. In those days, of course, we had Republicans from the city of Chicago, as well. Of course, you don't have that today. Some of those city of Chicago Republicans, while having R's on their ballot, were also very tight with the local Democratic organization, as a methodology for getting themselves re-elected. You did not have a monolithic Republican caucus, I guess, is what I'm trying to say. You had Republican members from the city of Chicago, particularly, who were susceptible to Democratic influence.

DePue: Wouldn't that suggest that it would be difficult for Ryan to control his caucus?

Kjellander: Yes. It was tough. But again, George was such a gregarious and outgoing guy. He really worked at being the Speaker. He worked at it very hard, and it was personal. He had personal rapport with so many different people. But, it was difficult; there's no question. It wasn't, Well, this is the Republican position, so everybody on the Republican side votes for this. It just wasn't that way. Again, this goes back to our earlier conversation about the value of cumulative voting and the fact that it created a much more diverse legislature than we have today.

The other thing that made George effective as Speaker, two of his leadership team were from the city of Chicago, Art Telscer and Pete Peters. And, of course, George was from the periphery of the metropolitan area in Kankakee. So there was a very effective leadership team. Art Telscer and Pete Peters were two of the most effective legislators I've known over the years.

DePue: We need to get to the Senate as well. You were working both the House and the Senate side, correct?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah.

DePue: The leadership in the Senate, let's start with Phil Rock.

Kjellander: Phil was another person you could work with. He was not an ideologue. He and Thompson had a very good working relationship. He was always available to talk. His chief of staff, Judy Irwin, she and I are friends to this day. We worked together very carefully. She was very helpful. Phil always wanted to get it done; that was his big thing. He wanted to accomplish things, and he was willing to work across the aisle with the Republican governor to do it.

DePue: I know we've talked about the next person, but I think this is James Pate Philip's first term as the minority leader. It was Sam Shapiro before that time. Did you have a good relationship with Philip?

Kjellander: Yeah, like you say, that was the early part of his tenure as minority leader. He had a tougher assignment, because he was trying to keep the Republican caucus together, and you've got a Republican governor who's dealing with the [Democratic] president of the Senate, because he's got the majority. So it was a much dicier situation. Whereas the House required just a tremendous amount of personal time, dinners and meetings and things like that.

On the Senate side, there were the ruffled feathers, because we had to deal with a Democratic majority, so there was some resentments. But Pate also saw the bigger picture, and the more time he spent on the job, the bigger his perspective became.

DePue: He also seems to be a little bit larger than life in somewhat the same way that Thompson was, but very different personalities, I would say.

Kjellander: Yeah, Pate would sometimes say some outrageous things.

DePue: Because that was Pate, or because it worked to his advantage?

Kjellander: Because it was Pate. That's what I enjoyed most about Pate. He was one of the most outspoken people in politics that I have ever met. There was never any nuance. When you sat and talked to Pate, you walked out of the room knowing exactly what he thought and exactly where he was at and exactly what your parameters were for getting a deal. And you either got it or you didn't. (laughs)

In this day of all politicians shading their comments and being very difficult to read, Pate wore everything on his sleeve. It was so refreshing, because... You didn't always get what you wanted from Pate, but you always knew where you were, and you knew what you had to do to achieve at least part of what you wanted to do, and you either did it, or you came up empty.

DePue: Do you have any stories that could illustrate that or stories where he got himself in a little bit of hot water? He was known for not being politically correct.

Kjellander: He was not politically correct; that's true; that's true. Which also, in this day and age, is a refreshing thing. It's kind of hard to remember some of the specific things. It was so long ago. I have to think about that, because I can't come up with an immediate example.

DePue: Well, it was more than thirty years ago.

Kjellander: Yeah, it's thirty years ago. It's kind of hard to remember what we were haggling over, but the impression remains. He was blunt, but like I say, you always knew where you stood with Pate. That was very, very helpful.

DePue: Do you remember any of Thompson's main legislative initiatives those two years?

Kjellander: I was really only running it during the '81 session, because the plan from the beginning was for me to do that for the '81 session, and then I was, at the time, grooming a successor, John Washburn, who we hired off of the Senate staff. He was a long-time Senate staffer. I made him the Senate liaison, with the idea that, as soon as the session was over, I was leaving to go organize the campaign. So '81 was sort of a transitional year, because I had been in the legislative office before, and I'd been running the personnel office for the last three years. I was kind of grooming and then handing it off to John. John did it, I think, for two more years after that, as I recall.

- DePue: So the initiatives are something you can't recall specifically? It would have been a tough economic year.
- Kjellander: Yeah. We always had infrastructure initiatives. We did a lot of those. I can't remember if it was that year. We had the Build Illinois initiative.
- DePue: That would have been a little bit later, I believe.
- Kjellander: I can't remember, honestly, what year that was.⁴¹
- DePue: Every year, from 1972 through 1982, one of the things that both houses of the legislature dealt with was the ERA issue, the Equal Rights Amendment. I wonder if you can tell us your memories of that annual fight in the legislature.⁴²
- Kjellander: I guess, from a historical perspective, the ERA fight was the first truly defining moment of the new conservative movement fighting with the establishment because the establishment of the Republican Party at the time was accepting of ERA, but the—
- DePue: To include Thompson?
- Kjellander: Yes. But we didn't do a lot on it. There was the Phyllis Schlafly contingent. This was her first big outing, and this became a cause célèbre for her and kind of the right wing of the party that she represented. It was very contentious. It was demonstration after demonstration in the Capitol building. At the time, while Thompson was pro-ERA, he didn't want to offend a major segment of the Republican Party either. This became a little bit of a difficult dance that I was sort of in the middle of, because I could see both sides. I didn't have a strong feeling one way or the other on it, but particularly the downstate legislators were adamantly opposed. So there was a little sense that Thompson was this kind of liberal from Chicago.
- But then, he'd get criticized from the left as well for not doing enough to pass it. It was a tricky position to be in. We tried to walk our way through it with as little damage as possible.
- DePue: Thompson had the reputation of being the guy who would go down to the floor of the legislature, sit next door to some legislator, and work with him or go into their office at an unexpected moment and sit down with them to move forward his particular legislative initiatives. Did he do that for ERA?
- Kjellander: No. That's where the criticism came from the left. Even within the administration, we had people like Paula Wolff, for instance, who was a very

⁴¹ Thompson signed the Build Illinois legislation in 1985.

⁴² See the interviews collected as part of the ERA Fight in Illinois project.

<http://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/oralhistory/illinoisstatecraft/era/Pages/default.aspx>

avowed feminist and not a Republican really. She was constantly pushing for more affirmative action on the governor's part. The rest of us were trying to say, Okay, you've made your point. You don't need to go down there on the floor and twist arms, because (whispers) it's not going to pass, no matter what you do. (laughs)

DePue: How about Jayne? Was she also very pro-ERA and vocal about it?

Kjellander: I don't recall her being. Now, maybe she was privately with the governor, but I don't ever recall her actively being involved in policy discussions or things like that. Who knows what happens at night, when you're home in the mansion, but I don't have any recollection of her involving herself in legislative or policy matters.

DePue: Now, the big year, the last year of the fight, was 1982. It sounds like you would already have moved on to the campaign by that time.

Kjellander: I was gone.

DePue: But do you recall any Phyllis Schlafly stories? Did she work directly with the legislators, or were her protests more focused on things outside the legislature building?

Kjellander: She wasn't a down and dirty, counting the votes type thing. She was almost larger than life presence. With Phyllis, you either loved her or hated her. There was very few people in between.

DePue: Which side of the equation were you on?

Kjellander: I found her overbearing and strident. She wasn't a particularly easy person to work with. She started from the perspective that, because Thompson was pro-ERA, all of us who worked for him were "the enemy," if you will. So, I didn't have a lot of dealings with her, a couple over the years.

Again, I was probably the most conservative member of the Thompson staff. If there was one more conservative, I'd be hard pressed to come up with it. I was in sort of a unique position, because I was somebody that the people who were more conservative than the governor felt that they could come to me and make the pitch, and that I would try to take their views forward.

DePue: Would the conservative side also include George Ryan and Pate Philip?

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: How about Schlafly's chief lieutenant in Illinois, as I understand it—You can confirm this if you were in a position to see this—Kathleen Sullivan?

Kjellander: I loved Kathleen. If Kathleen Sullivan had been the focal point, instead of Phyllis, it would have been a lot more effective. Kathleen was a very hard worker. She was diligent. She was always true to her beliefs, but she was more of a transactional person, a person you could sit down with and reason with, whereas Phyllis was more the press release type, the big show, the press release condemning this person or that person. Kathleen was a worker bee, somebody who was in the trenches. She did a lot of the interface with the individual legislators that Phyllis did not do.

DePue: In retrospect, why do you think ERA failed in Illinois, a state where, from the surface, most people thought, Well, of course, Illinois is going to pass the ERA?

Kjellander: I think that, particularly downstate, it was viewed as overkill. And it wasn't just the Republicans downstate. There were quite a few Democratic legislators downstate who voted against it, as well.

DePue: Were there parts of the black caucus who were not supportive?

Kjellander: I think that's right; yeah, I think that's right. I hadn't thought about that. It wasn't just R's versus D's. By then, people were so tired of this, year in and year out. I mean, I think this went on for eight or ten years.

DePue: Seventy-two was the first time it came up for a vote in the legislature.

Kjellander: Okay, so '82 was the last. It's a ten-year period, and by the end, people were just tired of it. They were just tired of the rallies and all of the brouhaha; they were tired of both sides. For every Phyllis Schlafly, you had the Dawn Clark Netsches and the very left-wing elements of the Democratic Party. So, as I say, the vast majority of the people in the middle were just sick and tired of it by the end and just wanted it to go away.

It didn't pass, and as you look back on it now, with multiple women on the U.S. Supreme Court, with Hilary Clinton, the odds-on favorite to be the Democratic nominee in 2016, I think you can make the argument that the ERA was not a particularly necessary exercise.

DePue: Well, this is the point in time where we get to leapfrog over the 1982 election year, because the last time we met, we talked about that at great length, had a great discussion on it. Now we get into stepping away from politics a little bit in 1983. I think we mentioned last time, your move to the Medical Society. Is that right?

Kjellander: Yes, I was a lobbyist for the Medical Society prior to joining the Thompson administration in '77. Once the governor had been re-elected and re-inaugurated, they offered me an opportunity to come back as the number two person in the Society, which I did, for a year. I was burned out; I can honestly tell you, because not only did we have the campaign of '82, but then we had

three more months of the recount. And that was as intense and time-consuming as anything else. By the time we hit the January inaugural, I was burned out. When the opportunity came with the docs, I took it and moved up to Chicago.

DePue: I thought you were going to be based in Springfield after that?

Kjellander: No, we lived in Clarendon Hills, out next to Hinsdale, for a year.

DePue: What brought you back to Springfield?

Kjellander: After I had had a year to kind of decompress and figure things out, I had always been... In all of my years in the governor's office, I saw a lot of major corporations coming, hat in hand, to Springfield and not having a clue as to how state government worked. I had this notion of a consulting practice that would cater to big corporations or associations, with a focus on state procurement.

Even though I had a tremendous amount of legislative time, both as a lobbyist for the docs originally, for three years and then having served two stints in the legislative office for the governor, I was not as enamored of going back to the Capitol building everyday as a lot of people are.

So I set up Springfield Consulting Group with the idea that we would focus on helping companies, associations pick their way through the bureaucracy and figure out how to accomplish things that they wanted to accomplish. That's what we did. That was thirty-one years ago.

DePue: Are you still in that job today?

Kjellander: Yep.

DePue: For the next few years, did you have much less involvement in the political arena? Would that be fair to say?

Kjellander: Fair to say, very fair to say. I was involved in fundraising for the governor, when he ran again in '86. Similarly, when Jim Edgar ran in '90, I was involved on the fundraising side, not day-to-day and not active, like I had been in the past.

DePue: It sounds like, to me, that you would have been in an ideal position to be helping on the fundraising side, because you had all of these connections with both parties, especially the Republican Party, and now you've got lots of clients who have deep pockets, to put it bluntly.

Kjellander: Correct.

DePue: Was there any conflict of interest in those two positions?

Kjellander: No, I don't see one. Everybody tries to make politics pay for play. [They think] because you make a contribution, you end up with something. It doesn't work like that.

Did I encourage clients to make contributions? Sure. You want a level playing field; you want to have a place at the table. But just because you're making a contribution...And this is something I have told clients from the first day I opened this place is that put the politics and the fundraising part aside. If you don't have the best proposal and the best price, you're not going to get the award. It's that simple.

The role I played was taking that proposal and selling it as the best proposal and the best price. In those early years, they developed this best-and-final-offer process in which, after everything is done and you've evaluated all of the proposals, then you give each of the proposers the opportunity to give a best and final price, so that the state gets the absolute best possible price for whatever product or whatever contract was up for grabs. Very frequently that best-and-final phase is what ended up determining who gets the contract. I think, for the state, it's a good process. Can it be abused? Sure.

DePue: I would think, in terms of the state's side, when they decide what's the best price or the final price, that future contributions to a political campaign would factor into that equation.

Kjellander: No.

DePue: That would not follow the state's rules?

Kjellander: No, because the people making the determinations, in almost every situation, are bureaucrats. They're not politically active people within the administration. The governor's office, historically, didn't say, "All right, call up the director of agriculture and say, I want you to give this contract to so-and-so," or "Call up the DOT." It didn't work that way.

DePue: Would it have been a violation of law if it had worked that way?

Kjellander: I'm not a lawyer, but probably. But it didn't work that way. You had to convince the people on the evaluation committee that you had the best proposal. It varied from contract to contract, agency to agency. But then, the price is a separate entity. It could be 25 percent of the deal; it could be 30 percent, whatever. You match the scoring on the merits of the proposal, and then you come up with a number, and then you put that together with a number for the cost. The combination of those produces a winner. Can it be fudged? I suppose, but over the years, I never saw it happen.

DePue: Does that include the George Ryan and the Rod Blagojevich administrations, or should we wait to discuss that a little bit later?

- Kjellander: Let's discuss those later. (both laugh) We'll discuss those later, yeah.
- DePue: Let's talk about 1986. That was the year you were no longer running the campaign. You were probably thinking, "Thank God, I'm not doing that again!"
- Kjellander: Exactly. (laughs)
- DePue: On primary night, two candidates emerge for lieutenant governor, on the Democrat side, and secretary of state on the Democratic side that caught people's attention. I believe it was Mark Fairchild who got the lieutenant governor nod and Janice Hart who got the secretary of state nod as Democrats. I'll turn it over to you after that.
- Kjellander: That night, if you were a Republican, you were celebrating especially hard, because the emergence of the LaRouchies on the Democrat side.
- DePue: So these are both Lyndon LaRouche acolytes?
- Kjellander: Yeah, nut jobs. (laughs) You just had to sit back and smile, because the Democratic Party was thrown into absolute chaos. Eventually, Stevenson had to resign as the Democratic candidate and become an independent candidate. I'm trying to remember the chronology here.
- DePue: Calling his new party the Solidarity Party.
- Kjellander: Solidarity, I forgot that, yes.
- DePue: Let me read a quote into here and then throw it back to you. Here's what Stevenson said, after realizing the bind that he was now in, having these two people on the Democratic ticket, "I am exploring every legal remedy to purge these extremists from the Democratic ticket, but one thing I want to make absolutely clear, I will never serve on a ticket with candidates who espouse the hate-filled folly of Lyndon LaRouche and the U.S. Labor Party."
- Kjellander: Yeah, it was the ultimate trick bait. We couldn't have dreamed up... I'm surprised somebody didn't accuse us of doing it or something (laughs). You couldn't have dreamed of a better scenario for the governor's re-election than to have complete and absolute chaos on the Democratic ticket.
- DePue: Before that night, were the Republicans thinking, This is going to be a hard year for us to win, again?
- Kjellander: It was a better year, because the economy was in better shape. But you always think about the last election. When the last election went down to 5,027 votes, or 5,097—I can't remember now, but it was under 6,000 votes state-wide—that sort of haunts you. But, as I say, '86 was a better Republican year.

The economy was better. Reagan was a very popular president, and he had almost a bipartisan appeal, because a lot of the more blue-collar, the Reagan Democrats, were a factor in many elections. That became their title, Reagan Democrats. Today, more what you'd call Blue Dog Democrats. He had a more bipartisan appeal, especially towards the end. That clicked nicely with Thompson, who was as comfortable in a room of union leaders as he was with a room full of business leaders. He cut across all sorts of lines.

DePue: Nineteen eighty-eight is an election where you don't have a governor for the state running, but you do have the presidential election that year. Were you a strong Bush supporter that year?

Kjellander: Not particularly. I wasn't really involved in it.

DePue: So your focus was more at the state-level, would that be fair so say?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah.

DePue: That gets us to the 1990 election. What were your views, by that time, of Jim Edgar? You'd had quite a bit of dealings with him.

Kjellander: Jim and I served, obviously, in the governor's office together but actually went back further than that. When I was working for the Medical Society, back in the early '70s, one of my jobs was to organize a local doctors' committee for Jim in his first race for the legislature.

DePue: His first, unsuccessful bid?

Kjellander: His unsuccessful race. So I went back that far with him. Our backgrounds were different, in the sense that he came up as a legislative staffer. I never was; I came up on the lobbyist's side. But when I was head of patronage and he was head of the legislative shop, we worked very closely together, because there was always something that somebody needed, in order to get the vote. We worked well there. Then, of course, when he moved to secretary of state, and I took over his legislative liaison job, again, a nice transition.

We've been friends for a very, very long time. I was excited that he was going to be our candidate for governor, because I thought he had done an excellent job at secretary of state. While he is sort of the antithesis of Thompson—he's not a gregarious guy—he was very hard-working, very detail oriented. Yeah, '90 was a good year.

DePue: When you discussed Jim Thompson's role in the 1982 campaign, you said he was good at picking up the phone and soliciting money from people.

Kjellander: Tremendous. I've never known a politician as good or as willing to do the fundraising calls. Most politicians hate it. Now, he may have secretly hated it, but he was superb at it.

DePue: Governor Edgar has told me that he made no calls like that, that he didn't pick up the phone and solicit money. Is that consistent with your memory of things, or were you not in a position to see that?

Kjellander: I really wasn't in the position to see that. I can remember Finance Committee meetings, where there'd be a room full of CEOs, and then some of the rest of us, like me and others who raised money from clients, where he would come in and give the overview of the campaign and stuff like that. I was never responsible for what he was doing, and I never had a specific role in either of his campaigns for governor.

DePue: You did mention, though, when we first met, that there was one occasion at least where Tony Rezko helped you raise some money for Edgar.

Kjellander: Yes. Tony was a client at the time.

DePue: What was his business at that time?

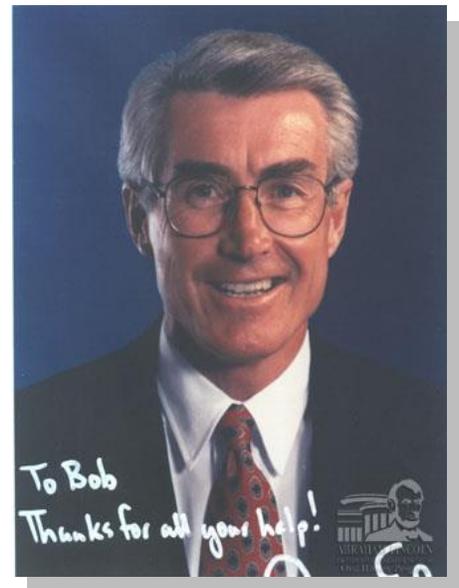
Kjellander: Rezmar Construction was a firm that did Section 8 housing and things like that. I worked with them and with IHDA, at the time, the Illinois Housing Development Authority. This was back in the late '80s. When it came time for the 1990 gubernatorial, Tony was the guy I went to. Tony helped me raise money amongst normally Democratic folks in the city of Chicago, for Edgar.

Kjellander: Any other memories about that particular experience?

Kjellander: No. He was CEO of a company.

DePue: How would you describe him, the person you remember from that timeframe?

Kjellander: The person I remember from that timeframe was an immigrant living the American dream. He was born in Syria, I believe, Syria. To this day, he still talks with an accent. He [was] just one of the nicest people you'd ever meet. Like I said, he was a client for several years. I never had the slightest inkling that there was any issues with him. There was never any hints that he wanted to do shortcuts or anything like that.⁴³ It was all very straightforward and above board. You know, I'd talk to the people at IHDA, "This is what you need to do. Can you do this?" "Yeah, I can do this." We



⁴³ Rezko was a major contributor and fundraiser for Gov. Rod Blagojevich. He was indicted and convicted as part of a federal investigation of corruption in the Blagojevich administration, Operation Board Games.

worked it out. When I asked him to help raise money, he was very pleased to do that.

DePue: What would be your relationship with Bill Cellini at this time? Had you had a relationship by this time?

Kjellander: Oh, yes.

DePue: Let's start with a little bit of an explanation of who Bill Cellini was at that point in time.

Kjellander: He was the executive director of the Illinois Asphalt Paving Association and was the former secretary...maybe before it was secretary. He might have been even the director of transportation under Governor Ogilvie.⁴⁴

DePue: I think he was the first.

Kjellander: He may have been the first secretary. I couldn't remember when the director became the secretary. Bill was a very successful businessman. Of course, I knew him when I was in the governor's office. We became very good friends in those years. He was part and parcel of our kind of kitchen cabinet of political advisors and things like that.

DePue: What timeframe are we talking about?

Kjellander: Basically, throughout the whole Thompson administration, and the Edgar administration, as well. He was a guy who everybody felt comfortable talking to. He was incredibly smart. He was a very, very good friend and is to this day.

DePue: Would it be fair to characterize him as one of the most important fundraisers for the Republican Party?

Kjellander: Absolutely, yes. The dinners that he held were legendary.

DePue: Fundraising dinners?

Kjellander: Fundraising dinners, yes. People from all over the state would come. Yes, he was a very key fundraising person for the Republican Party.

DePue: Your office here is right next door to their offices, as well. Is that reflective of the personal relationship the two of you have had for many years?

⁴⁴ Prior to 1972, most transportation functions were organized under the Department of Public Works and Buildings. In 1969, Gov. Richard Ogilvie appointed William F. Cellini director of the department. Cellini had been Springfield's commissioner of streets and public improvements. The General Assembly consolidated the department with several smaller offices under different agencies to create IDOT in 1972, and Cellini became its first secretary. He was also indicted as part of Operation Board Games, and was convicted of a single, lesser count.

Kjellander: Yeah, when I decided to set up shop, Bill suggested to me that there was a person who had a small consulting [business], that he was going back into state government and I could take over his space, if I wanted to do that. In fact, I think the name, Springfield Consulting, was the old guy's name. For many years, Bill was just right down the hallway here. I miss having him around.

DePue: Would it be fair to say that he is one of your closest friends?

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: Well, we'll pick this part of the story up quite a bit later too. But now we've got to get back to national level politics with you. Let's talk about 1995. What of significance happened that year, as far as you're concerned?

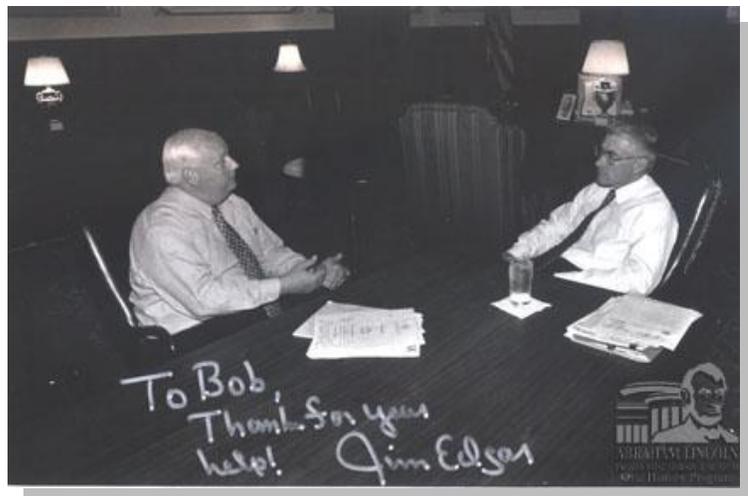
Kjellander: In 1995, Governor Edgar and Harold Smith, who was at the time the Republican state chairman, asked me if I would be willing to serve on the Republican National Committee. I had never really thought about it. But Harold Smith had been the national committeeman for Illinois for twenty-five years.

It's important to note here, the Republican National Committee has three members from each state and territory, unlike the Democratic Party that has an unusually large number of people. You have to have labor unions and minorities and women, and all this sort of stuff. The Republican National Committee structure is much more straightforward; there is a national committeeman, a national committeewoman, and the state chairman.

Harold had been the national committeeman for twenty-five years, and then, the previous year had actually also taken on the state chairman's role. It's kind of hard to do both, so Harold and Governor Edgar asked me if I would consider it, given my political background and everything. I said yes. I was elected and served then for the next fourteen years.

DePue: When I first met with you, this was a point of a lot of confusion for me, but what exactly does a state party chair do, versus a national committeeman or a national committeewoman?

Kjellander: A state party chair is sort of the CEO



of the party. He's the public face of the party, but he hires the staff, supervises the staff. Generally, they have an executive director that does that full-time, but the executive director reports to the state chairman. They do everything from budget to hiring field staff and that sort of thing.

The national committeeman and committeewoman are much more amorphous positions. That was my first question, "What does the national committeeman do?" The answer I always got was, "Whatever you want." I took it as my responsibility to...I did a lot of Lincoln Day dinner speeches and things like that. I continued on the fundraising elements for the state party, just like I'd done for Thompson and for Edgar. But at the national meetings, obviously, I took my cues from Harold, because he'd been on the national committee for a quarter of a century.

DePue: All three of you would attend national-level meetings?

Kjellander: Yes, the three of us, we would go to Washington. The way the room is structured, there are long tables. The three people from each state are seated together, sort of like a little delegation, like a mini-convention almost.

DePue: Did all three of you have votes?

Kjellander: Yes. Each state has three votes on the national committee.

DePue: So, once you get to that venue, there is no difference between the power that you have, versus the state chairman?

Kjellander: No, everybody's equal.

DePue: I think the part that is confusing me though is that I hear the term "national," and I think that it doesn't have a state component, but that would be wrong, wouldn't it?

Kjellander: You represent the state on the national level. That's why it's called the national committeemen. You are one of the three Illinois representatives on the Republican National Committee. But in order to not just get there, but stay there, you've got to do your bit on the state level to keep your support in place and justify why you're on there.

DePue: How about the state party chairman? What is his traditional role in state-level politics?

Kjellander: Every chairman does it a little differently. When there are governors of your party, the state chairman works very closely with the political apparatus within the governor's office, to make sure that the party's in tune with what the administration is doing. I was the interface when I was head of the patronage office. Greg Baise was the interface after he succeeded me in the patronage office.

But it's very different if you have no governor. So, where Harold was in constant communication with the governor on political things and his senior staff on political things... For instance, today Jack Dorgan is state chairman.⁴⁵ He's very independent. He's got to oversee fundraising; he's got to oversee the staff, but he's the guy; he isn't answering to anybody other than the other members of the state central committee. When you have a Republican governor, it's very different.

It's a very similar situation on the national level. When you have a Republican sitting in the White House, they basically tell the chairman of the Republican National Committee what the program is. When you have a situation with a Democrat in the White House, the Republican National Chairman is the top dog. He makes the decisions. Now, he has got to temper that with dealing with fundraising people and all that sort of stuff, but it's a very different thing.

When the executive office is controlled by your party, whether it's state or national, by and large, the shots are called in the governor's office. When you don't, then it's a very much more independent situation.

DePue: From my understanding of Illinois politics, especially by the time you get to the mid-'90s, the House Republican leader and the Senate Republican leader would have taken on the role of finding good candidates to run for contested districts. If there was a vacancy, their job was to find candidates to run for that House or Senatorial district. Would the party chair get involved in that as well?

Kjellander: To some extent, but mostly the legislative stuff, that's left to the legislative caucuses.

DePue: Would the party chair have had a bigger role in fundraising?

Kjellander: Absolutely. Fundraising is very important, in terms of being able to hire the staff and do the technological things that you'd have to do now, in terms of sorting through data, lists and all that.

DePue: But it doesn't sound like that's not the same as fundraising to support political campaigns.

Kjellander: No. The state party focuses on raising enough money to run the infrastructure. When a candidate's running for governor or senator or whatever, he's

⁴⁵ Jack Dorgan became state chairman in 2013. He started his career as an assistant to Roger McAuliffe (R-Chicago), the state representative who called Kjellander to tell him Thompson was losing the 45th Ward in 1982. Monique Garcia, "Lobbyist Jack Dorgan Is New Illinois GOP Party Chairman," *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 2013.

basically got that responsibility on his own. The party doesn't do that. The party raises enough money to keep the infrastructure in place.⁴⁶

DePue: Did you enjoy that job?

Kjellander: I did! It was very interesting. I enjoyed it, but I really got into it after four years. I think it was some time in 1998, my old College Republican friend, Karl Rove, called me up. He said he was going to be in Chicago, and could we have lunch. So we had lunch.

DePue: Before you get any further, were these three positions paid or unpaid?

Kjellander: Oh, no, unpaid. Some states are different, like Ohio pays their state chairman a six-figure salary. Occasionally, they may get like expenses paid or something like that, but no, they're volunteer positions.

DePue: How often would you be heading out to national level meetings?

Kjellander: Generally, three times a year. There'd be a winter meeting in January; there'd be a state chairman's meeting in May, and then there'd be a summer meeting in August. When there was a Republican in the White House, then they'd have stuff in December, because you'd go to the White House Christmas parties and stuff like that.

DePue: But these are Clinton years, so that's not happening.

Kjellander: So that's not happening now.

DePue: I'll turn it over to you for 1998 then.

Kjellander: Karl and I have lunch. He says, "Who are you for, for president?" I said, "I have no idea. Who should I be for?" (laughs) He says, "How about George Bush?" He proceeds to then extoll the virtues of Governor Bush. I say, "Well, I'd



⁴⁶ In fact, an argument could be made that Citizens for Thompson supplanted the regular party organization in these years. See Thomas Hardy, "Thompson's Supreme Court Petition on Patronage is Savvy Stalling," *Chicago Tribune*, July 22, 1990; Jim Fletcher, interview by Mike Czaplicki, March 9, 2015; and Kim Fox, interview by Mike Czaplicki, July 14, 2014.

like to meet him before I commit.” He says, “Well, could you come down to Austin sometime in the next month? We’ll have lunch at the mansion.” So I did...very impressive man. When I agreed to go to Austin, I knew I was going to say yes, but you’ve got to go through the motions. I agreed to support him.

I agreed to become the Midwest chairman of the campaign. But my very first assignment in 1999 was to put together a mass endorsement of Governor Bush by members of the RNC. The January meeting in 2000 was before any of the caucuses and any of the primaries. This is something that had never been done before. I put together a team with people from various parts of the country. By then, I’d been on the committee four years. I knew people in all different parts of the country. We set up a team and basically a whip operation, where everybody would talk to the people in their regions [and find out] if they would agree to support the governor.

Then, as part and parcel of the winter meeting in January of 2000, we had a press conference. We got ninety-five of the 165 members of the RNC to stand up and endorse Governor Bush. It was unheard of. It was absolutely unheard of. It helped create the aura of invincibility around Governor Bush. It was like this is where the establishment of the party is.

Many of the people who actually wouldn’t agree to it, including the then-chairman of the RNC, Jim [Nicholson]... (trying to remember Jim’s last name) Isn’t that terrible? Anyway, he went on to become secretary of veterans’ affairs and ambassador to the Vatican, under President Bush. Anyway, he was angry that we were doing this. It was just kind of a procedural thing. But it was something new. We broke a lot of ground. That became the core of the Bush organization on the national committee that essentially called the shots on the national committee for the next eight years.

DePue: You mentioned that your first meeting with Governor Bush was down in Texas and that he was an impressive man. I think that’s the phrase you used. What was it that impressed you about him?

Kjellander: He was very self-confident. There wasn’t a lot of pretense. I was Bobby, and nobody called me Bobby. Nobody ever called me Bobby except my mother. (laughs) But to him I was Bobby, because he had this thing; he always picked nicknames for people. Rove was Turd Blossom. There’s all of these other...So I was fortunate to just escape with Bobby (laughs). But he was just a very gregarious guy who was very confident in his own skin and very decisive. He was just somebody that I immediately took to. I really, really liked the guy.

DePue: Over the years, you’ve heard all of the criticisms coming from the Democratic venues about who George Bush was, that he was an intellectual lightweight, that he was a cowboy, that he shot from the hip, those kinds of comments. What’s your reaction to those?

Kjellander: I think, when you look at the polling that has occurred since Bush left office, and at the time, the handover to Obama, Bush was way down here, and Obama was way up here. Over the last six years, it has gone this way. Today, George Bush is actually a more popular as a former president than Barack Obama is a president.⁴⁷

After living through six years of professorial indecision, you just have to pick up the newspaper every day, where Obama's drawing red lines in Syria and now the Ukraine and everywhere else, and no one in the world believes it.

When George Bush said something, people believed that he would follow through. There was no question that he had the wherewithal to make a decision and stand behind it, even if it turned out to be maybe a mistake. Everybody in the world was convinced that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. There weren't, but he had to operate on the absolute, best intelligence that was available to him, so he did. I think that's where the cowboy thing comes in. But I think people want a leader. They want somebody that the world will listen to. Nobody ever didn't listen to George Bush, unlike the current situation.



⁴⁷ According to Gallup, George Bush's approval rating was 34 percent over January 9-11, 2009; Obama's was 67 percent over January 19-25, 2009. However, the week prior to this interview, Obama's rating had slid to 42 percent, while between June 2013 and June 2014, George W. Bush's favorable rating increased from 49 to 53 percent. Gallup observes that former presidents tend to be viewed more favorably than sitting presidents. Jeffrey M. Jones, "History Usually Kinder to Ex-Presidents," Gallup Politics (April 25, 2013), <http://www.gallup.com/poll/162044/history-usually-kinder-presidents.aspx>.

- DePue: We've mentioned before that Jim Thompson, a person that you had a lot more dealings with, also had presidential aspirations at times in his career. I think you referred to him as a larger than life person. How would you compare those two men?
- Kjellander: Similar in many regards. When Thompson walked into a room—and part of that truly was his height—he was this larger than life presence. Bush, of much more modest height, but still, he had that Texas aura about him that was basically, don't mess with me. He had an ability to talk to people and work with people and relate to people in a very interesting and effective manner.
- DePue: What did it mean to be the Midwest chair of his campaign? This is something that, way before you even get to the main 2000 election year, you're tagged to do.
- Kjellander: Yeah. You had to organize who's going to be the state chairman in each of the states and things like that. But my biggest responsibility in the Midwest was the Iowa caucuses. So a big part of my responsibility was organizing volunteers, particularly from Illinois, to go to Iowa.
- DePue: Not within Iowa itself?
- Kjellander: Within Iowa itself too. We had a structure in Iowa, but we were bringing people from different parts of the Midwest to help. It got to a point when I was in Des Moines almost every week for a couple of months.
- DePue: I wonder if you can talk about the Republican field that year, in 2000, because it was pretty crowded when you first got into this.
- Kjellander: Oh, yeah. The one that stands out in my mind, from the Iowa caucuses, is Steve Forbes, but there were a lot of different candidates. The reason I pick out Steve Forbes is the Iowa Caucus is a body turnout situation, so at the fairgrounds where this was being held, all the candidates had tents. Various candidates would bring in bands and things like that. I'm trying to remember what month they were held.
- DePue: January. It's always the first thing. This would have been January 24.
- Kjellander: Well then, I'm thinking back to the previous summer, where there was a preliminary function, because it was the middle of the summer.⁴⁸ It was nice weather; it was very nice weather. Forbes had more money than sense and—
- DePue: If I recall, his big thing was the flat tax.
- Kjellander: It was the flat tax. At this event... I guess it wasn't the caucuses; it was the run-up to the caucus. This would have been the summer of '99, I guess.

⁴⁸ Kjellander is discussing the Iowa Straw Poll, which was held August 14, 1999.

DePue: During the state fair, maybe?

Kjellander: Not during the state fair, but it was adjacent to it or something. Anyway, leading up to this, it was very hot. So Forbes, because he had all of this money, air-conditioned his tent. He had this giant, air-conditioned tent. The day before the event, what had been in the high '80s and '90s dropped to the '60s (laughs). It was like the Forbes tent was a refrigerator. We all laughed about it at the time.

Governor Bush was always the frontrunner, and there were many, many, many other candidates. Probably the most serious was John McCain, in terms of being a long-time senator and a war hero. But this was his first time out, and he didn't have the name recognition that Governor Bush had. Governor Bush was the odds-on favorite, almost from the beginning. The organizational structure, the establishment of the party and all that was all there for him. Karl Rove did a masterful job of using his network all over the country to develop an organization for the governor. It was very interesting and impressive to be part of it.

DePue: Being the Midwest chair, what states were included in that?

Kjellander: We had everything from the Dakotas and Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio. I don't remember if I had Missouri or not—

DePue: Indiana?

Kjellander: ...but Iowa and Indiana.

DePue: Most of that is reliably Democrat turf, or a lot of it is, at least.

Kjellander: A lot of it, but certainly the western parts of it were not. They were Republican. Indiana was always very solidly Republican. In 2000, Illinois wasn't a lost cause. We didn't win Illinois, but—

DePue: Did you focus much of your energies on Illinois, because it was probably, at that time, the most Democrat-leaning state that you had to deal with?

Kjellander: Yes, it was. We didn't...It would have had to have been a tsunami to win Illinois. So, no, the focus was in other places.

DePue: I know that, for the Iowa caucuses on the twenty-fourth of January, Bush has 41 percent, and Steve Forbes ended up with a respectable 30.5 percent. Alan Keyes, an African American from Delaware or Maryland—

Kjellander: Maryland.

DePue: Fourteen point two percent. He came in third. Did that surprise the team?

Kjellander: A little bit. But by then, many of the more credible candidates were dropping.

DePue: The name that I didn't include there was John McCain, who you said was probably your main threat.

Kjellander: From a substantive point of view he was, because Steve Forbes wasn't a substantive candidate. He was an effective business leader, but he had no political background whatsoever.

DePue: Did McCain not focus on Iowa?

Kjellander: No.

DePue: I would guess, though, that he must have focused a lot on New Hampshire, the first primary.

Kjellander: He focused on New Hampshire, and, because of that, teed off the people in Iowa. McCain was negligible in Iowa, because he ignored Iowa and focused on New Hampshire.

DePue: This would have been the next one up, as it traditionally is. McCain won 48.5 percent in New Hampshire, and Bush came in second with 30.4. So a significant victory there. Did you think, at that time, that McCain might have been in the lead?

Kjellander: No. No, because we knew we had the structure in the other parts of the country. New Hampshire is frequently an anomaly. We wished we'd have won, but the fact that we didn't, didn't deter anybody's enthusiasm or conviction that we were going to win the whole thing.

DePue: The next one I've got listed, I don't think is the next sequentially, but certainly an important one in that electoral year was South Carolina, February 19. Bush wins the state 53.4 percent to McCain's 41.9 percent. By this time, a lot of the other Republican candidates are starting to fall off. But I want you to respond to the many allegations, during that campaign and that we've heard ever after, about the way Bush won in that state.

Kjellander: Allegations about—

DePue: Let me quote. You might get a response with this Bartcop website. It's about Karl Rove and that particular campaign. "After Rove denied a role in the McCain whisper campaign, reporters concluded that he was behind it." There were whispers about homosexuality, that McCain had fathered a child from a black woman, all kinds of things were out there. The allegation now, according to this article, is that Karl Rove was behind it. "In December 1999, the *Dallas Morning News* linked Rove to the series of campaign dirty tricks, including his College Republican efforts." (laughs) What we talked about last time.

Kjellander: Well, I don't know how you balance homosexual rumors with fathering a child with an African American woman. I'm not sure how that translates, but I know some of the folks in South Carolina, some of the ones that I dealt with back in the College Republicans that came up with the Lee Atwater group in South Carolina. I don't believe for a minute that Karl Rove was planting stories about McCain being a homosexual. I just don't. The Karl Rove I know would not do that. Is he tough? Yes. But I don't believe... Now, do some people in a campaign situation get out of control? Yeah, but the notion of somebody sitting in Washington, D.C. and saying, "Whisper to some people that McCain is gay or that he had this black child," and all of that—

DePue: Or that he was unstable because of his POW experience. I think there were lots of things flying around at the time.

Kjellander: There were, but to say it was a concerted effort on Karl Rove's part, I never saw any evidence. Now, I wasn't in the upper echelon of the campaign. I had no responsibilities in the south, so I don't know. But having lived part-time in the south for quite some time—we have a home in Georgia—people can get pretty exercised about different things. I don't think it takes somebody sitting in Washington to start any kinds of rumors that are out there.

DePue: Rove was the guy who brought you on the team. Did you have a lot of dealing with him, over the next couple of years as the campaign was unfolding?

Kjellander: Yeah, he regularly talked to the regional chairs. But he had bigger and better things... He was calling all the shots; he planned the campaign, and he orchestrated it. He was the guy.

DePue: We mentioned before, the George Bush that you knew, especially from that first meeting, versus the George Bush reputation that developed over the years. The same thing could be said for Karl Rove, that many people have since portrayed him as—I don't know that this would be quite the phrase—the evil genius behind George Bush.

Kjellander: Or Bush's Brain. In fact, I think somebody even wrote a book, and that was the title, *Bush's Brain*.⁴⁹ No. Karl and President Bush had a very symbiotic relationship. It was deep; it was very strong. But George Bush made his own decisions. Late-night comedians like to joke about the fact that he was dumb. He was not a dumb guy. This was a guy who was Yale. This is not a dumb guy. But when you don't like somebody's policies, it's sometimes easier to denigrate the person than debate the policy. I think there is a lot of that.

DePue: Let's move to the Republican Convention in Philadelphia that year, July 31 to August 3, probably a little bit before the Democrats had their convention.

⁴⁹ James Moore and Wayne Slater, *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003).

What was your role as the Midwest chair, going into the Republican convention? I'm assuming you were there.

Kjellander: Yeah. I was part of the whip team.

DePue: What does that mean?

Kjellander: A team of people who work the floor on whatever issue is coming up, in terms of whether it was committee votes, issues on the platform, whatever. I had the responsibility for the Midwest, because that was my territory. I think I was also the vice chairman of the Rules Committee in 2000, as I recall.

DePue: The rules that govern the convention?

Kjellander: The party, every four years, has a Rules Committee at the convention. That Rules Committee presents a report; it is adopted by the convention, and that's the rules for the party for the next four years. I think in 2000, I was the vice chairman of the Rules Committee, and then in 2004, I was chairman of the Rules Committee, yeah.

DePue: It sounds like, by that time, you were fairly prominent in Republican circles, one of those behind-the-scenes guys who made things happen. Would that be fair to say?

Kjellander: Yeah, I was part of the core group that ran the RNC in those days, yes. And then, in 2005, Ken Mehlman, who was then chairman of the RNC, asked me if I would become treasurer, so I did that for two years as well. Then I was one of the top four officers.

DePue: Being in that key position, does that mean that the Republican Convention is tough? It's just a lot of hard work, or was it fun or maybe a combination of both?

Kjellander: Mostly hard work, a few parties here and there, but mostly it's just a lot of work, because you're trying to make sure that the Bush agenda is adopted, whatever it is, whether you're talking about budget issues or you're talking about platform issues or rules changes, things like that.

DePue: Were you comfortable with Bush's political views and the platform of the party?

Kjellander: Yes, I was.

DePue: Do you have any special memories of that convention?

Kjellander: Of 2000 or 2004?

DePue: Two thousand.

Kjellander: Two thousand. Nothing that really jumps out.

DePue: What did you think of Bush's nominee for the vice president position, Dick Cheney?

Kjellander: I was a little surprised. The few interactions I'd had with Cheney, he wasn't a really outgoing, gregarious type of guy. He was almost the exact opposite of the president. He'd grudgingly fulfill his duties to do fundraisers and things like that. But you can just tell when a politician likes what they're doing and when they don't. He didn't like it. I think it's one of the main reasons that, towards the end of the Bush administration, Cheney wanted nothing to do with running for president, because it would have forced him to go out and glad-hand and ask people for things, and he just didn't like doing that.

DePue: So, separate from actually doing the job, it was the politicking side that he didn't like?

Kjellander: Yeah. Some politicians, you can just look at them, and they're comfortable. They're in their element talking to people, backslapping, and all that sort of stuff. I'll never forget. The vice president was our keynoter at...I want to say the only Republican state convention here; it was here in Springfield. Most times when you have a very important person, people are just flocking around and wanting access and all that. He sat off by himself on the back of the stage, and there was nobody talking to him, because he really didn't like interacting with people. At least, that was my perception. So when he decided not to run for president, I was not surprised.

DePue: Anybody else of the key people on the Bush team that you'd want to mention?

Kjellander: Jack Oliver was the fundraising person. He was quite the guru, terrific guy from the neighboring state of Missouri, actually, good guy.

DePue: What was your relationship with Jim Nicholson as the national chair?

Kjellander: He was from Oklahoma, I think; I'm not sure. Anyway, he was the national chairman. [I] did not have a good relationship with him. I thought he was a very ineffectual chairman.

Jim was first elected, I think, in 1996, and then 1998 was the midterms. The Republicans did not do particularly well in the 1998 midterms. I'll never forget. He called me...As the incumbent chairman, when he was running for re-election, sits down in his office and calls all of the members and asks them for their support. He called me up, and I said, "I don't think so. I don't know who is running against you, but I want to see, because..." (laughs) So he and I were never very close. (both laugh)

Then, of course, when I organized this endorsement of Bush at the 2000 winter meeting, he [Jim Nicholson] was infuriated, because he thought it

was undermining his leadership and all this sort of stuff. I always kidded Rove later. I said, “This is a guy that tried to stop us from doing the endorsement of Governor Bush at the time, and you guys make him secretary of Veterans’ Affairs and then ambassador to the Vatican. I said. How does that work? We always kidded about that, but I was never particularly impressed with Jim Nicholson or his abilities.

DePue: Once you got past the convention, your guy is now the Republican candidate. What is your role in the general election? Does your job as the Midwest chair end at that time?

Kjellander: No, the structure’s in place and weekly coordinating conference calls with the state chairs of the various states. It became more of a communications function than almost anything else. If somebody was having trouble getting something out of the national headquarters—and I don’t have anything specific—but, let’s say, just as an example, the state chairman of Minnesota is having trouble getting a surrogate or something like that, they’d call me, and then I’d call somebody and get it done.

DePue: Was more of your focus then on Illinois, rather than the rest of the Midwestern region?

Kjellander: We never really thought Illinois was too serious. I had stuff going on in all of the different states at the time.

DePue: Did you feel like the media was treating your candidate fairly?

Kjellander: The media never treats Republicans fairly, in my opinion. (laughs)

DePue: I’m shocked to hear you say that.

Kjellander: No, the media was enamored of Gore. They just were. They went to great pains to try to portray the Florida situation as a snatch and grab.

DePue: Well, let’s stay with election night, first of all. Going into the end run, were you confident that Bush was going to win?

Kjellander: Yes, I was. I thought we were going to win.

DePue: Why did you feel that way?

Kjellander: I just thought the tone of the campaign was such. I never thought Gore was a very impressive guy. You had the antagonism that was going on between he and Clinton at the time, which was, I thought, undermining their efforts around the country. I was pretty optimistic going into Election Day.

DePue: Where were you on election night?

Kjellander: I was probably in Chicago. I guess I was in Chicago.

DePue: That would have been the location for the state's party or whatever you call it?

Kjellander: Yeah, we would have had a big reception in Chicago in some downtown hotel, probably the Hyatt.

DePue: That was a pretty long night. (Kjellander laughs) You probably knew pretty soon what Illinois and many of the states were going to be, but it didn't take long for the focus of the entire nation to end up on the state of Florida. Reading about this, the networks apparently called Florida for Gore at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, so it would have been 7:00 p.m. here. Then they had to back away from that. By 2:30 [a.m.], they were declaring that Bush had carried Florida. Were you still up at that time?

Kjellander: I probably was, yeah.

DePue: By 4:30 [a.m.], the networks were saying, "No, it's too close to call." It just kept going back and forth. I think the initial vote ended up something like a 900 vote margin for George Bush, but obviously there is going to be a recount. What's the mood of the campaign by that time?

Kjellander: The mood was that we've got to double down and work the recount and make sure they don't steal it.

DePue: Let's just run through the area that you were nominally in charge of here. Gore wins Wisconsin by .22 percent. In Iowa, he wins by .31 percent. You can't get much closer than those elections, either. Minnesota was a more comfortable 2.4 percent. Bush carries Missouri. You're not sure about Missouri?

Kjellander: Yeah, I think I had Missouri.

DePue: But the other state that's always up for grabs and always gets a ton of attention is Ohio, and Bush wins by 3.51 percent, so a decent margin in Ohio in 2000. Were you satisfied with how well your candidate did in the Midwest?

Kjellander: No. (laughs) We really thought we were going to carry Wisconsin. We thought we were going to win Iowa too. Those were disappointments.

DePue: I'm sure the irony struck you immediately.

Kjellander: It did.

DePue: In 1982 and 2000. You probably were one of those guys who had more experience with doing a close election recount than anybody in the campaign.

Kjellander: Yeah. So in the early days, we did a lot of talking, strategizing about how to handle things, but it ends up pretty much with the lawyers.

DePue: Do you remember any of the advice you were offering up?

Kjellander: Just general things like, "Make sure you've got a lawyer in every county, who monitors exactly what's going on," just kind of general stuff like that.

DePue: What's your feeling about how that long, agonizing recount process went?

Kjellander: Agonizing is exactly the right word. It was very difficult, but in the end, it worked out all right.

DePue: Do you remember the basic argument that the pro-Gore forces were advocating, what needed to be happening in this recount?

Kjellander: Not off-hand, because I wasn't involved in the day-to-day.

DePue: The final result is the U.S. Supreme Court overrules the Florida Supreme Court. Obviously, you would have been happy by the outcome of that.

Kjellander: Correct.

DePue: Were you concerned that the election had to be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court?

Kjellander: Well, better than by the state Supreme Court.

DePue: I guess my question is the damage that would have been done to the constitutional process and to the faith in the new president.

Kjellander: It was challenging. It was unfortunate that it had to go that far, but in the end, I believe that Bush overcame that. Probably the single most important element in his overcoming that was 9/11 and his decisive response as president in the 9/11 situation, I think, basically eliminated whatever residual issues there were from the Supreme Court ruling.

DePue: You're a partisan guy; I'm going to ask you a partisan kind of question. How do you think Al Gore would have dealt with 9/11?

Kjellander: I think he would have dealt with it much more like Obama is dealing with Syria and the Ukraine. He would have talked a lot but not have been the decisive person that George Bush was.

DePue: Were you proud then in how George Bush dealt with 9/11?

Kjellander: I was never prouder, watching him stand there with that megaphone. It was a hellacious, horrible, horrible thing, but he made me proud that day.⁵⁰ I said, all of the work that we did was right, because this is the guy who needed to be here at this time.

DePue: I want to jump back a few years—a little bit back and forth here—but go back to the state level and George Ryan’s 1998 gubernatorial campaign. He was running against Glenn Poshard. Ryan had been around for a long time. He had been Speaker, as we mentioned earlier today, and back in the early 1980s had been lieutenant governor for Thompson. He had been secretary of state for eight years, and now, I guess, it’s his turn in 1998. Were you a strong supporter at that time?

Kjellander: Well, George was the obvious candidate for us. You’ve just recited all the credentials. There was nobody that held a candle to him. Some people wanted Edgar to run for a third term, but he didn’t want to. Once Edgar made the decision that he wasn’t going to run for a third term, George was the odds-on candidate. It was basically acclamation. There was no serious opposition. Jack Roeser ran against him in the primary. (laughs)

DePue: From a conservative challenge?

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: You didn’t really answer my question, if you were a strong supporter of George Ryan?

Kjellander: I supported George, but I had serious reservations about his senior staff person, Scott Fawell.

DePue: Even during the election itself?

Kjellander: Yeah. Scott always made me uneasy.

DePue: Was Scott with him at the secretary of state’s office?

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: What was it about him that made you uneasy?

Kjellander: Everything with Scott was a deal. It made me uncomfortable because I always presumed that what he was trying to accomplish had some monetary thing at the end of the day, for him. (laughs) I’ll never forget—and this is after George was governor, when we were doing the Bush campaign—he [Fawell] called

⁵⁰ George W. Bush, “Bullhorn Address to Ground Zero Rescue Workers” (New York City, September 14, 2011), American Rhetoric, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911groundzerobullhorn.htm>.

me in one day, and he said, “I want you to have the Bush campaign hire Roger Stanley to do the direct mail for the Bush campaign.”

I just looked at him, and I thought, That isn’t going to happen. I said, “Karl Rove made his bones in politics by being a direct mail guy, and I know what kind of crap Roger Stanley puts out.” (laughs) I said, “I won’t even ask the question.”

Scott and I never got along. I always felt that he undermined the basic goodness of George Ryan by making everything on a transactional basis, whatever it was.

DePue: So what does that say about George Ryan, who kept him close all those years? This was his chief of staff while he was governor, correct?

Kjellander: Yeah. He was chief of staff, I think, in the secretary of state’s office as well. It’s bad judgment. Scott Fawell was a bad person.

DePue: In the 1998 campaign, did you continue to do fundraising for—

Kjellander: Yeah, we did.

DePue: At the same level?

Kjellander: It’s hard. When you think back, there’s so many campaigns. Did we do it at the same level? I’m not sure. We were all on board with George and did the fundraising stuff. But I purposely steered clear of Fawell at every opportunity. I had enough of a personal relationship with George at the time that I didn’t need to go through Scott Fawell.

DePue: As I recall, even going into that election year, there were already whispers about corruption and dirty dealings in the secretary of state’s office, things that were associated with George Ryan. Do you recall that and your reaction to it?

Kjellander: Yeah, there were rumbles. Frankly, when I’d hear them, I wouldn’t be surprised because, like I said, I thought Fawell was a bad guy. Nothing that Fawell did and that came out later surprised me, because he was that kind of a mercenary individual.⁵¹

DePue: Was Bill Cellini also still active in fundraising?

Kjellander: Yeah, we all were.

⁵¹ As part of the corruption case against Gov. George Ryan, Fawell was convicted of stealing government funds, perjury, mail fraud, racketeering, obstruction of justice, and filing false tax returns. Matt O’Connor, “Jury Convicts Fawell, Ryan Campaign of Fraud,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 20, 2003.

DePue: When we first met, there was another name that you mentioned in connection with Ryan, Larry Warner.⁵²

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: What can you tell us about him? Who was he?

Kjellander: He was one of George's closest personal friends. Four out of five times you'd have dinner with George, Larry'd be there. He was part of the hanger-on crew. Larry was a guy out to make money on different things. Nothing wrong with that, but he—

DePue: Was he a lobbyist by trade?

Kjellander: No, he was more of a business guy. I don't know that he ever lobbied. Maybe he did, but I don't think so. But he was always making deals and using his influence to make deals.

DePue: Did you have any first-hand knowledge about some of the corruption that was going on in the secretary of state's office or perhaps once Ryan became governor?

Kjellander: No. Fawell and I rarely spoke because he didn't like me, because I wouldn't go along with some of his stuff, like the Roger Stanley thing, for instance.

I may have told you this last time. I'm not sure. But I had a client, when they were still in the secretary of state's office, so I had made a call over there to set up an appointment with somebody; I can't remember who.

When the FBI started investigating Fawell, [an] FBI agent came to see me. He asked some sort of some of the same questions that you just did about, "Did you have any knowledge?" and all that sort of stuff. I said, "No, not really." Then, the FBI agent says to me, "Well, I probably shouldn't show this to you, but I will." He takes out of his valise an email. It's from Scott Fawell to the cabinet-level folks in the secretary of state's office. The email is very succinct. It says, "F--- Kjellander and all of his clients," (laughs) which I think back on in later days.

It was the biggest favor Scott Fawell ever did for me, (laughs) because it showed that I was not part of any inside anything within the Ryan administration. And I never felt like I was, because Fawell disliked me very much, and the feeling was mutual.

⁵² Governor Ryan appointed Warner to the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority board. Federal prosecutors accused Warner of trading on his access to Ryan, when Ryan was secretary of state, to steer state contracts in exchange for kickbacks. He and Governor Ryan were convicted in 2006.

DePue: Was there a specific incident that that animosity sprang from, from his perspective? Do you know?

Kjellander: No. It could have just been the Bush direct mail thing, because I'm sure that he had a deal cut with Roger Stanley to get part of the action or something.

DePue: So you would have embarrassed him in that respect?

Kjellander: Sure.

DePue: How much did you personally know about the investigation that Patrick Fitzgerald's office, the U.S. attorney from the Chicago area, was doing on the Ryan administration? That was in the news quite a bit.

Kjellander: It was in the news, but because it was pretty clear to them that I wasn't an integral part of that, they really didn't pay much attention to me in that process.

DePue: Would you have been considered at some point in time a person of interest in that investigation?

Kjellander: In the Ryan administration?

DePue: Yeah.

Kjellander: I don't think so. No, because I was never on the inside, because Fawell didn't want me anywhere nearby. Frankly, I didn't want to be anywhere near him.

DePue: By the end of the Ryan years, would you agree that that scandal did an awful lot of damage to the Republican Party in Illinois?

Kjellander: Oh! Absolutely. We haven't recovered from it to this day, not to this day.

DePue: Then we've got the irony that the Republican candidate in 2002 was Jim Ryan, the former attorney general. Any reflections on that particular campaign against Rod Blagojevich?

Kjellander: Jim Ryan was a terrible candidate. He was the worst candidate I've ever seen on the stump for governor.

DePue: In what way?

Kjellander: He was just awkward. He was not polished. He was not a good candidate. I felt so strongly about it that I encouraged and co-chaired Corinne Wood's campaign, the lieutenant governor, against him in the primary, even though it was a fool's errand, because Ryan had it almost locked up. I just thought he was such a bad candidate, I helped her run her race. It didn't work, but I felt better about it.

- DePue: Do you think there was a better Republican candidate they could have put up, or was the bench pretty thin by that time?
- Kjellander: Well, I thought Corinne Wood would have been a better candidate.
- DePue: As governor?
- Kjellander: As governor, absolutely, than Jim Ryan. Ryan's campaign was myopic. It was terribly run. The Republicans had been consistently losing the women's vote. I thought a moderate Republican woman from the Collar Counties would have been a perfect antidote to Blagojevich. Had she won the primary, she'd have been a much stronger candidate.
- DePue: Looking back, then, you've known George Ryan for a long time too. What was it about George Ryan that brought his downfall, his fatal flaws, if you will?
- Kjellander: His fatal flaw was his judgment about the people closest to him. Scott Fawell was an evil person. George never saw the problems with Scott and let him run loose.
- DePue: Does that mean you don't think that George Ryan himself was subject to being corrupted, was willing to do those kinds of things?
- Kjellander: I don't know. I think...George grew up in a different time, and I'm not sure, staying at somebody's villa somewhere, or something like that, that he viewed that as any kind of a serious breach of law. When I think back, over the years, of all the receptions and cruises on yachts and things like that [were] done over the years, I think that blurs. I give George the benefit of the doubt. I don't give Scott the benefit of the doubt.
- DePue: Yeah, that's been pretty obvious, consistently through all of this conversation. (Kjellander laughs) We've had quite a lot to talk about today. There is still a little bit more. I think there is one more session that we need to put some polish into, because there are a couple more things that you're still going to be doing, both at the state and the national level. So, thank you very much, and I look forward to the next session.

(End of interview 3)

Interview with Robert Kjellander

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, March 11, 2014. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. And today, for the fourth time, I'm meeting with Bob Kjellander in his office, right here across from the square and Union Station, a block away from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. Good morning, Bob.

Kjellander: Good morning.

DePue: Good to be back with you again. Last time, we talked a lot about Illinois and national-level politics. We have more of the same here. Last time, you made just a couple of comments about the 2002 gubernatorial election. You mentioned that you didn't think the Republican's candidate that year was up to the task. That was Jim Ryan.

Kjellander: Jim Ryan, the attorney general.

DePue: You didn't think that he was a good campaigner. With the situation with Governor Ryan and all of the allegations and the impending indictment that most everybody expected, do you recall who the Sangamon County Republicans were backing in that election cycle?

Kjellander: I'm sure it was Jim Ryan. Jim Ryan was basically the next guy in line. So most of the establishment of the party went with him. I just felt strongly that it was a mistake to do, so I supported Corinne Wood.

DePue: I have heard that Bill Cellini actually did some fundraising for Blagojevich during that campaign. Does that sound familiar to you?

Kjellander: No, it does not.

DePue: Did you have any view of those two main Democratic candidates? It would have been Rod Blagojevich and Paul Vallas, the former chief executive officer

of the Chicago schools. That was his claim to fame going into the Democratic primary.

Kjellander: The people that I knew on the Democratic side were mostly for Blagojevich, so I assumed he would beat Vallas.

DePue: Did you know either of the men, going into the election?

Kjellander: No. I had never met either one, to my knowledge.

DePue: Blagojevich, obviously, wins the primary. He rather handily wins the general election. What were your views, especially from the position you're in, with lots of ties to the legislature, watching the early days and months of the Blagojevich Administration?

Kjellander: It was, in my judgment, a calculated disaster. Blagojevich was of the mind that he got there all by himself. You see a lot of narcissists in public life and politics, but he took the cake.

This is a guy who owed his entire political career to his father-in-law, Alderman Mell.⁵³ Alderman Mell made him a state rep; Alderman Mell made him a Congressman, and then Alderman Mell helped convince the Democratic establishment around the state that this was a guy to be trusted. The minute he got elected, he washed his hands of Mell and became this, "I did this all on my own" kind of thing.

He dealt with the legislature in the same manner. Everything was over the top, intimidation, I don't need you; I'm going to go straight over your heads to the public, that sort of thing. It had the smell of a disaster from almost the beginning.

DePue: Were you hearing about this from a lot of your friends and connections in the legislature?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah. Blagojevich had been out of Springfield for a long time. He'd been in Congress, I don't know, eight or ten years, I think. Most new governors would come to town and they would make an effort to court legislators, make alliances, so that they could have a successful administration. Instead, his forte was just confrontation over things that were silly. I can't give you a specific example, but he would pick fights on inane, stupid things, just to show who was the governor. Whatever residual goodwill there was from his being elected, quickly dissipated.

DePue: One of the things that he became infamous for, if I can use that word, was special sessions, bringing the legislators back into Springfield to talk about one issue or another that was important to him.

⁵³ Richard Mell was the powerful alderman of Chicago's 33rd Ward from 1975 to 2013.

- Kjellander: Right, even if he had done no preparation work. Oftentimes those special sessions became complete disasters. All they did was waste state money by paying legislators their per diem for two, three, four, five days, whatever it ended up being, and accomplishing absolutely nothing.
- DePue: I'm sure you were hearing from a lot of the Republican representatives. How about the Democrats? Were they talking to you, as well, about their difficulties with Blagojevich?
- Kjellander: Yeah, pretty early on, the Democratic legislators knew that this was a mistake that the party had made. They were just going to grin and bear it and move forward.
- DePue: Were any Democrats in particular coming to you and telling you stories and tales about what was going on?
- Kjellander: I can't remember any specifics at the time, but almost every time you ran into somebody, they'd have a Blagojevich story.
- DePue: Well, he didn't lack for being colorful, did he?
- Kjellander: No. I mean, you talk about a potty mouth... And that isn't just on those tapes; he was that way in person. Everybody I talked to just [said], He would cuss them out with the drop of a hat. It was really quite something.
- DePue: Let's move on to the 2004 election cycle. Of course, it's not a year for a gubernatorial election in Illinois. It is a year that you're going to have an election for the Senate, and obviously it's a presidential election year as well.
- Let's start off with the Senate-level. Let's start off with Peter Fitzgerald, who was the Illinois state senator who was up for re-election that year but decided rather early on to bow out. What did the party leaders in Sangamon County think about Peter Fitzgerald?
- Kjellander: Well, it's not restricted to Sangamon County. It was basically state-wide. Just like Blagojevich alienated Democrats, Peter Fitzgerald spent his career alienating Republicans by constantly attacking, attacking, attacking.
- He decided to not run, because his polling numbers were terrible, and the family didn't want to spend millions of dollars on a losing effort to retain the Senate seat. So he opted to retire.
- DePue: What were the things for which he was taking on the Republican establishment?
- Kjellander: Almost everything. For instance, you're the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln [Presidential] Library. He made totally unfounded allegations that Bill Cellini had some involvement in making money off the

library. It was ridiculous stuff, absolutely ridiculous kinds of things. But Peter used the bully pulpit of the Senate seat to make accusations, whether or not he could prove them or not.

DePue: Things that Cellini wanted to land favorable contracts for some of his buddies, that kind of thing?

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: Well, it certainly was no secret at that time that Bill's wife, Julie Cellini, was one of the main forces pushing for the presidential library and museum to be built.

Kjellander: Correct, and it's an enduring legacy for them. But Peter wants to make everything a conspiracy. He is very similar to his namesake, who he appointed U.S. attorney, Patrick Fitzgerald.

DePue: Any relation?

Kjellander: No, other than both paranoid, conspiratorial folks, who see everything in government as bad and corrupt.

DePue: Since I am an employee at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, we always try to find out more about our own history. Anything else that you can tell me about that?

Kjellander: No. Peter just tried to use it as one more... In fact, he tried, I believe—we'd have to go back in the newspaper archives—to put a hold on the federal money for the library, because he trumped up this ridiculous thing about this was somehow a Bill Cellini plot. [He] didn't go anywhere with it.

You had the contrast of Senator Durbin, [who] was a strong supporter of the library, and you had Peter doing whatever he could to wreak havoc on it, just over his petty, political games.

DePue: There was a lot of talk and controversy that was stirred up over who would be the director and what would be the institution that would control the library and museum. I believe, at one time, George Ryan was trying to advocate that his then-chief of staff, Bob Knudson—

Kjellander: Yeah, I do recall that. Yeah, George did try to put Bob in there.

DePue: Were Fitzgerald's objections anything to do with that?⁵⁴

⁵⁴ In 2000, after cosponsoring a bill with Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) that authorized \$50 million of federal funds to help build the library, Senator Fitzgerald amended it to require federal procurement standards, arguing that Illinois state standards would result in sweetheart deals for insiders. When Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-IL) moved \$10 million in funds to a separate appropriation bill, Fitzgerald called the shift "morally and

Kjellander: Not that I can recall, but a governor would normally put people in positions, and he thought enough of the library...Everybody that knew Bob, over the years, knew him as a professional. He was not a political hack by any means. He was a professional. Bob had a very good reputation. In the George Ryan world, Bob Knudson was the total antithesis of Scott Fawell. If you ever had a situation where you had good cop and bad cop, Bob was the good cop.

DePue: Were you disappointed when Fitzgerald decided to bow out of the race?

Kjellander: No, I was happy. I didn't support him in the first place. I supported Loleta Didrickson, the state comptroller. She narrowly lost the primary to Fitzgerald, six years previous.

DePue: So then the question is, who are the Republicans going to put up, in what looks like it's going to be a bad year for the Republicans at the state level?

Kjellander: Correct. It was a difficult time. The two leading candidates that we had, initially, were Jack Ryan and Jim Oberweis.

DePue: I believe there was an effort to convince Jim Edgar to come out of retirement and do that as well.

Kjellander: We tried very hard. I actually hosted a dinner at Ditka's Steakhouse in Chicago for Jim and Brenda. It was Jim, Brenda, myself, and the then-chairman of the U.S. Senate Republican campaign committee, from the state of Virginia, who subsequently lost his seat. Now I've lost his name.⁵⁵ Anyway, he was the United States' Senator from Virginia. He was chairman of the committee. We had dinner. He made his pitch.

DePue: It wasn't John Warner at the time, was it?

Kjellander: No, it was not Warner. I can see his face. The pitch was made, but the bottom line was Jim had been governor of the state for eight years. The idea of becoming the junior member of a group of 100 was not appealing to him. So, in the end, he opted not to. It would have been a very competitive race if Jim had run, but he chose not to. So, we ended up with a primary; there were several candidates, but the two top vote-getters were Jack Ryan and Jim Oberweis.

DePue: Ryan, that name keeps coming up. Any relation to the other two Ryans?

ethically wrong" and filibustered the bill when it reached the Senate. His filibuster consisted of a lecture on political corruption in Illinois. These actions helped alienate many party leaders and much of the state's congressional delegation. Lynn Sweet, "Senator Peter Fitzgerald: Why He's the Lead in an Unfolding Illinois Republican Soap Opera," *Illinois Issues* (March 2001), 20.

⁵⁵ Sen. George F. Allen (R-VA) was chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. For Edgar's recollection of the attempt to draft him, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, November 18, 2010, Volume V: 1047-1051. This volume also has Edgar's thoughts on Blagojevich's administration.

Kjellander: No, no relation to Jim Ryan and no relation to George Ryan. We just have a lot of Ryans in Illinois, a lot of Irish. Ryan wins the primary, and then a sex scandal develops.

DePue: Let's just put a couple of other things in here. Barack Obama wins the Democratic primary against Dan Hynes, who, I would have thought, going into that race would have been the prohibitive favorite, and Blair Hull.

Kjellander: Right. And Blair Hull spent...I can't remember, \$29 million or something like that, some unbelievable amount of money and ended up running third, I think, in the Democratic primary, to Obama and Hynes. So, money isn't everything.

DePue: At that point, was Barack Obama a well-known figure in Illinois politics?

Kjellander: No. Not at all. Not at all. But, interestingly enough, he was mentored by and had many, many doors opened for him by Blagojevich's chief fundraiser, Tony Rezko. So much has been made of Rezko being his... John Kass likes to refer to him as "Obama's real estate fairy," who bought the lot next to his house and sold it to him on the cheap and that kind of stuff. But Rezko's involvement with Obama was far more extensive than a real estate transaction. He opened many doors.

I remember, very, very early in the process, I was having lunch with Rezko, and the topic turned to the next election cycle, as it always does. I said, "You guys going to make nice with Hynes?" He said, "No, we're going to be for Barack Obama." I'll never forget it. I said, "Who the hell is that?" (laughs) He said, "State senator from the South Side of Chicago." I said, "You are kidding me, right?" and he said, "No."

Rezko and the rest of the Blagojevich operation put the hammer on people around the state. They raised gobs of money for him [Obama], and he came out of nowhere and won the primary. Tony Rezko was a prime mover in that process, from the get-go.

DePue: Can you reflect on the other person who is sometimes suggested to be a mentor of Obama, when he was in the state legislature and the state Senate. That would have been Emil Jones?

Kjellander: Yeah. Emil was an old-fashioned, transactional politician. It's, You scratch my back; I'll scratch yours. He saw in Obama the potential for the future. Nobody was thinking president of the United States, but certainly somebody...a very articulate, attractive, young African American candidate, whether governor or United States senator, as it turned out. I don't think anybody was thinking president. Emil was a mentor of Obama's, and Obama did Emil's bidding in the Senate.

DePue: We're talking about the late 1990s, up to this period in 2004, when Obama was as member of the Illinois State Senate. Correct me if I'm wrong, but

you're working with Illinois senators, because of your business, on a regular basis, are you not?

Kjellander: I didn't really do that much in the legislature. My work is primarily within the executive branch. I did not do day-to-day legislative stuff in those days.

DePue: Does that mean you wouldn't have had an opportunity to observe or to see the role that Obama had in the Illinois Senate during those years?

Kjellander: Yeah, I really wasn't over in the legislature, hardly at all. But, through conversation you pick things up, and...Obama was not a superstar legislator, by any stretch of the imagination. He probably voted "present" on more bills than almost anybody in the Senate, trying to make sure that he didn't offend this constituency or that constituency for future races, that sort of thing.⁵⁶

DePue: Did he have a leadership role in the Senate?

Kjellander: No.

DePue: To use the vernacular of politics, was he a player?

Kjellander: No, not at all. The only type of player he was was he played cards a lot at night.

DePue: Poker?

Kjellander: Yes. Yeah, he was a regular in a couple of different poker sets.

DePue: That gets us up to the general election. Now, you've got Jack Ryan and Barack Obama, running for that coveted Illinois Senate seat in the general election, until—

Kjellander: The sex scandal breaks.

DePue: Tell us about the sex scandal.

Kjellander: It came out that Jack and his then-wife, Jeri, the actress Jeri Ryan—

DePue: Of *Star Trek* fame?⁵⁷

Kjellander: *Star Trek*, yes.

DePue: I think she was the one who looked like her outfit had been sprayed on her.

⁵⁶ Although voting present can serve various tactical purposes, it is commonly viewed and used as a way for legislators to avoid taking a position. Obama's 129 present votes were a subject of frequent discussion by his opponents and the press. A good overview is Raymond Hernandez and Christopher Drew, "It's Not Just 'Ayes' and 'Nays': Obama's Votes in Illinois Echo," *New York Times*, December 20, 2007.

⁵⁷ A former Miss Illinois, Jeri Ryan starred in *Star Trek: Voyager*.

Kjellander: It could be. I'm not a *Star Trek* person, so I didn't watch that stuff. Their divorce decree became public. In it, she alleged that Jack had coerced her into having sex in a window of a store, I think, or something like that, in a sex club type situation. You can imagine the brouhaha. The thing that was totally ignored was the fact that this was a legally married couple, but that didn't really change much.

DePue: How about the allegations that these were court records that had been sealed? I think they dealt with the adoption of their son, and it was California court records that were sealed. The allegations were that some Obama operatives were behind making sure or pressuring that they got released. There were news media outlets that were pressuring that they be released, as well.⁵⁸

Kjellander: The news media was. I never saw any evidence of the Obama operatives doing that, but anything's possible. Somebody was driving the story. I always took it that it was just some media guy [who] was trying to make his bones. But you never know. It could have been the Obama folks. It could have been; I don't know. I have no knowledge of it.

DePue: The end result is, on July 29, 2004—that's pretty late in the campaign season—Ryan bows out of the race. So now what do the Republicans do?

Kjellander: I'll never forget the press conference [that] Judy Baar Topinka and I were at, in which it was announced. Then, what we ended up with was a special meeting of the State Central Committee to pick a replacement.

DePue: Were you part of that committee?

Kjellander: I was ex officio. As national committeeman, I do not have a vote on the State Central Committee. The only people who vote on the State Central Committee are the ones who are elected from each of the congressional districts.

DePue: But you're there at the meeting?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah, and the lead-up to the meeting, because several members of the committee...First of all, Jim Oberweis wanted it, even though he'd lost the primary. He thought he ran second, so he deserved it. Well, nobody thought that was a good idea at the time.

DePue: Why not?

Kjellander: Because he was a terrible candidate. He was just not a good candidate.

DePue: He's running for state-wide office again this year.

⁵⁸ The records were opened in response to a lawsuit filed in Los Angeles by the *Chicago Tribune* and WLS-Channel 7, Chicago's ABC affiliate.

Kjellander: Yes, he is. Enough said.

So, some of the members of the committee got it in their heads that we should import, from the state of Maryland, Alan Keyes, who had run for the Senate, I believe, from Maryland and had lost overwhelmingly. But he was sort of a media phenomenon. He was a very conservative African American, who liked to say outrageous things and got a lot of publicity.

I knew many of the leaders from Maryland in the Republican Party. When this first came up, they called me and said, "You really don't want to do this." They said, "You're going to be embarrassed." The more I looked into it, the more convinced I became, so I tried to convince the members of the committee that this was not a good thing to do.

DePue: I'm going to jump in here. If not Oberweis, if not Keyes; Edgar had already turned you guys down, who?

Kjellander: Good question. That was the problem. We didn't have a good alternative. There was not a good alternative. A lot of names floated up, but nothing really got anybody's attention. So it became Alan Keyes or what? Because of the calendar problem, since we were so late in the game, the meeting was called early, before there was any time to really round anybody else up, and Keyes won. Of course, he came in.

It looked terrible. Here we've got the first, I believe, African American U.S. Senate candidate in Illinois—

DePue: Carol Moseley Braun would have been the first.

Kjellander: That's right. I take that back. So what does the Republican Party do? They import an African American candidate from Maryland. It just looked awful. It just looked awful. Keyes just said outlandish things. It was clear. He wasn't able to raise money, because that was the big thing, "Oh, he can raise lots of money." He couldn't raise hardly any money, and Obama swamped him.

DePue: And the election result, when you got to November, Obama polled 70 percent of the vote, and Keyes got 27 percent. Less than 30 percent for the Republican candidate. The question, then, is what had happened to the Republican Party in Illinois that there were no other candidates waiting in the wings.

Kjellander: It was a tough time. It was a very tough time, because you had the Ryan scandal and the Ryan trial. I'm not sure when the exact trial dates were, but it was a terrible time.

DePue: So the George Ryan trial was still very much in the news at the time?

Kjellander: Yeah. So, it cast a pall over the party. Judy Baar Topinka did a tremendous job, trying to hold it all together, but we had the early stages of the Tea Party right-wing stuff was going on. At the time—

DePue: That would have been a little early for the Tea Party.

Kjellander: But it was the beginnings of it.

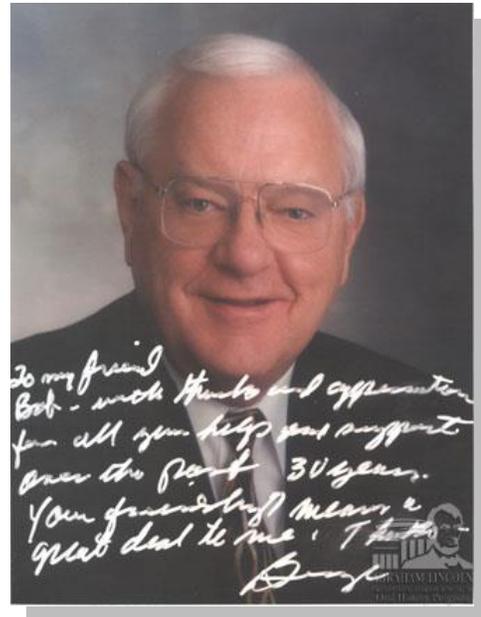
DePue: The conservative movement.

Kjellander: The very conservative, right-wing part of the party. People who had come up through the Thompson and the Edgar administrations just didn't want anything to do with it anymore. Where Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar both produced new generations of leadership, in both the governor's office and the cabinet, it just went away.

Anybody associated with the George Ryan administration had a cloud over their head, even though they didn't do anything wrong. So it was just a very bad time for the party. And frankly, they haven't yet recovered.

DePue: Do you think part of that was because Jim Edgar and George Ryan were not grooming that next generation of Republican leaders?

Kjellander: Oh, I think Jim Edgar was. The Ryan administration did not groom. They did not groom. But the Edgar folks did; the Thompson folks did.



DePue: Well, we got a little bit ahead of ourselves. We already mentioned what the margin of victory was for Obama in the general election in November. But the Democratic Convention was in Boston that year, July 26 to 29. I'm sure you watched their convention almost as closely as you watched the Republican convention. Do you remember Barack Obama's speech and the nation's reaction to that?

Kjellander: Yeah. He got everybody's attention. He can give a good speech. What he's proven in six years is rhetoric doesn't produce any accomplishments. That's, to me, the big thing.

DePue: Before that time, you stated yourself you had no idea who the guy was really. Were you surprised at his speech and the reaction to the speech?

Kjellander: Yeah. He was clearly making his mark. It was a good speech. I contrast that with the Bill Clinton speech, when he was first thinking of running for president, back in the '80s. His keynote speech at the Democratic Convention in '88 was just awful, because it was long and ponderous. He just wanted to stand on that podium as long as possible. Obama has a real sense of theatre when it comes to making a speech.

DePue: In the presidential election that year, obviously the Democratic candidate was John Kerry. Any reflections on that campaign?

Kjellander: Kerry was the gift that just kept on giving. He was a terrible candidate. He's found his niche, I think, as secretary of state, where he doesn't have to pander to people. His impression on people was similar to what Romney's was on people, rich and kind of aloof and out of touch.

Whereas, with George W. Bush, even though he was from a storied political family and had a lot of personal wealth, being the owner of the Texas Rangers and all that sort of stuff, he was still an everyman, who could cut brush and talk with the average person on a peer level.

DePue: That gets us to 2005. I guess the Republican Party came courting again, didn't they?

Kjellander: In 2005, yes. Then-chairman of the party, Ken Mehlman, asked me if I would be willing to serve as treasurer of the RNC, as part of the Bush leadership team on the RNC. They wanted me to take that position, so I agreed. For the next two years, I was back and forth to Washington, once a month, to go over finances and sign checks and that sort of thing.

DePue: A paid position?

Kjellander: No.

DePue: Tell us a little bit more about what it meant to be the Republican Party treasurer.

Kjellander: I would be involved in fundraising events. My name would be on lots of fundraising letters and things like that. As I say, on a monthly basis, I would spend a couple of days with our finance team, going over the books. In certain cases, not all cases but sometimes, I would sign a check. If it was a special circumstance. I would go over all of the checks that had been signed in the previous month, ask questions, and they'd come back. My job was to oversee the Finance Department and just make sure that everything was on the up and up.

DePue: Is your fundraising strictly for the RNC, or is it also on behalf of candidates or campaigns?

Kjellander: No, it's strictly for the RNC.

DePue: What kind of things was the RNC doing on a day-to-day basis that needed the funding?

Kjellander: Everything from [the] Research Department to field operations, Policy Department, political shop, just everything you can imagine. In those days, there was a tremendous amount of direct mail, so there was a lot of oversight of that, things like that.

DePue: Polling efforts as well?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Was there a media aspect to the RNC as well, to reach out to the media?

Kjellander: There was a Press Department, yes.

DePue: How difficult was it to raise money for the RNC, compared to raising money for a political campaign or a candidate?

Kjellander: Actually, easier, because with the RNC, you have this bedrock of people who just always give. The job that you have to do in fundraising is, each cycle, each effort, the goal is to increase it by X percentage. That's the game, because you start with a good base. There are people, organizations, PACs that just normally give to the RNC. You just have to keep them happy, so I did a lot of donor events and things like that.



DePue: You mentioned before, in this 2004 campaign for Illinois Senate, some internal divisions within the party. The right wing of the party was becoming more vocal and more activist. Was that going on at the national level in these years, as well?

Kjellander: Not really. No, that hadn't come to fruition yet.

DePue: Were the finances of the RNC in good shape during your years?

Kjellander: Yes, very good shape. When you have an incumbent president, it helps a lot, because, if you have an event and the president comes or the First Lady comes, it's a guaranteed winner. (laughs)

DePue: By the time you get to late-2006 into 2007, much of the political talk ends up being about who the next candidate for president is going to be. Were you or the party taking sides on that issue, by that time?

Kjellander: No. I had Senator [John] McCain ask me to come out and sit down with him one time when I was in Washington. The late Rich Williamson, actually, set that up.⁵⁹ He wanted to go after the Bush leadership structure on the RNC and try to convert it from Bush to McCain.

DePue: So not an attack against but a campaign to—

Kjellander: No, to draw us all in.

DePue: Is that the way you folks saw yourselves, you were part of the Bush team?

Kjellander: Yes. Oh, very much so. We'd have regular dinners at every RNC meeting. The president would have us over to the White House occasionally. Yeah, the Bush team was an identifiable group. It goes back to, from our earlier conversations, back in 1999, when we put together the endorsement of then-Governor Bush at the 2000 winter meeting of the RNC, before all of the primaries and caucuses started.

That was the core of the Bush team. I had somebody in the Northeast, somebody in the South, somebody in the West, somebody in the Midwest. We had a structure, and that was the core of the Bush team. Then, of course, the second piece of the core was all ninety-five of the members who stood up that day and endorsed Bush.

DePue: Were there any tensions that were growing within that team, as Bush's poll numbers started to plummet, especially when the war was not going well in

⁵⁹ Richard S. Williamson (1949-2013) was chairman of the Illinois Republican Party from 1999 to 2001. He had a long career as a diplomat, serving the Reagan and both Bush presidencies, and was his party's candidate in the 1992 Senate race won by Carol Moseley-Braun.

Iraq, and then you've got Hurricane Katrina and all of those things that were pulling down his numbers?

Kjellander: Absolutely not. I was amazed at how much time he [President Bush] spent with us over the years. He genuinely appreciated the work that we did. I can't remember a single RNC person grousing about the president. I really can't. It was like, These are tough times. We've just got to put our head down, move forward, and we'll get through it.

DePue: Two-thousand seven, now they've got another job for you. (Kjellander laughs) How did it happen that you became the co-chair for the committee to arrange the 2008 Republican Convention? That doesn't sound like the kind of job that one would eagerly seek.

Kjellander: Well, conventions for political junkies are a big thing. Obviously, I've been a junkie my whole life. So, when the chairman came to me and said, "I really would like you to do this, because I need somebody I can trust up there, who I can pick up the phone and call on a daily basis. I really want you to do it."

DePue: Who was chairman at that time?

Kjellander: Mike Duncan from Kentucky.

DePue: Before you get too far beyond this, did you think Ken Mehlman was an effective chairman?

Kjellander: Very, a very effective chairman. Then Mike succeeded him.

DePue: How effective was Mike?

Kjellander: Mike was very effective, as well.

DePue: A lot of these positions, either Republican or Democratic chairs, have a public presence as well. They're expected to be the voice of the Republican Party. Maybe I'll admit my own ignorance here, but I don't remember either Mehlman or Duncan being a very prominent face, pushing Republican tactics, candidates, platform positions or things like that.

Kjellander: They both did their share of the Sunday morning talk programs and all that kind of stuff. Mike was much more of an internal...He's almost a historian by nature. He viewed everything at the RNC in the context of how it had been done before. He knew more about the history of the RNC than anybody. Likewise, on the conventions, he was meticulous about the various details. He wanted to make sure that everything was done exactly right. Like I said, he asked me to do this.

It was actually one of the more fun assignments I've had in my career, because we had a young team of a hundred-some young people who were

organizing the convention. For a year and a half, I travelled back and forth every week to Minneapolis. It was a lot of fun. It was very interesting. [I] met a lot of fascinating people.

DePue: I want to take some time and try to understand what it is that somebody who's in charge of the Arranging Committee has to go through. Early on, what essentially were your responsibilities in this respect?

Kjellander: The first responsibilities were hiring staff. That was the first thing I had to do, was hire staff.

DePue: Was this staff going to be in Washington, DC or on the ground in Minneapolis?

Kjellander: On the ground in Minneapolis. Some may have started in DC, especially if they already lived in DC, but eventually everybody was on the ground in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

DePue: These are the young people you were referring to before?

Kjellander: Yes, uh-hmm. We made a really good decision early on to hire the gal who had been the political director of the Bush Campaign in 2000, Maria Cino, who today is a vice president of Hewlett Packard. Maria was our CEO. She was the full-time, paid person. But then we had transportation staff; we had political staff; we had people who interfaced with the chamber of commerce in the Twin Cities with all the different venues. It was a fascinating process.

I'll never forget, I rode with one kid when his job was to drive around the Twin Cities and take pictures of all the large signage in the city. We put a freeze on all of them so that you didn't get in a situation where some wild protest group puts up a billboard that says something that's anti-Republican. So we, two years out, reserved all of those billboards. We had a file on them. Of course, then we had to sign off on who got them. It was all sorts of little things like that. That was just a fascinating, fascinating thing to watch.

DePue: Where was the venue?

Kjellander: The venue was the... What was the name of it? It was in St. Paul. I'm just drawing a blank.

DePue: The Xcel Energy Center?

Kjellander: Xcel. Thank you, the Xcel Center in St. Paul. We had complete control of all of the hotels. This hotel would be the headquarters hotel. Then you've got to deal with every state wants the best hotel, and you've got to juggle that and things like that. Then, you've got somebody to deal with all the different interest groups that want to come in and do receptions and things like that. Coordinating all of those venues, it's a nightmare, but fun.

- DePue: So the convention happens in a lot of places around town, not just the convention center?
- Kjellander: Oh, absolutely! And it happened both in Minneapolis and St. Paul. You had a number of events in Minneapolis, but the convention itself was in St. Paul. We all stayed in St. Paul.
- DePue: How many people are we talking about, who come to the convention either as delegates or as somebody who wants to do some courting of the delegates or to make their case for a particular issue? How many people were coming to Minneapolis-St. Paul for that?
- Kjellander: Probably 15,000 to 20,000.
- DePue: Were the Twin Cities a good place to hold the convention?
- Kjellander: Absolutely. It was a unique situation. The mayors of both cities were Democrats, but they could not have been more cooperative or more helpful, because it was all about their city. Their city was going to get all sorts of publicity, and they wanted it to be good publicity.
- DePue: How big a concern, going into this, was security?
- Kjellander: It's huge. In 2008, it was closer to 9/11, so you had a lot of concerns. The Feds provided, I can't remember, \$30 million or \$40 million at the time for security. They oversaw a lot of that, but we had our own security people as well. So, that was a big, big concern.
- DePue: By that time, the candidate has Secret Service protection?
- Kjellander: Yes.
- DePue: Do you know when a candidate gets that?
- Kjellander: It varies. Sometimes they don't want it, initially; the candidate would rather stick with the private security at the early stages. I don't think there's a hard and fast date that they get it. I think it's more that they have to make a determination that it's a serious candidacy, before they get that security.⁶⁰
- DePue: I'm sure that one of the things that's tough to sort out is developing the agenda, developing a list of speakers and who's speaking when and those kinds of decisions. How much did you have a role in that?

⁶⁰ The Secretary of Homeland Security consults with a bipartisan committee of the congressional leadership to decide who qualifies as "major presidential and vice presidential candidates." By law, these candidates are entitled to Secret Service protection within 120 days of the general election. However, Barack Obama reached another, less uplifting milestone on May 3, 2007, when he became the earliest candidate to receive protection. Nedra Pickler, "Obama Gets Secret Service Detail," *Washington Post*, May 3, 2007.

- Kjellander: Quite a bit of a role. The chairman of the party was very involved himself, Mike Duncan, because this was his show. He wanted it to come off well, for the good of the party. So you had to coordinate the efforts between a lame-duck White House that was basically on its way out. You had the candidate and his folks. By the time we got closer, it was clear that McCain was going to be the candidate. Then you had the RNC. So you were juggling all of these different things. I think everybody felt that the convention went off well.
- DePue: Is there a point in time when the candidate's team feels like they need to step forward and take over a leadership role of the convention from the RNC?
- Kjellander: Yes, that happens every four years.
- DePue: What happens to your job then, as the guy who is supposed to be in charge of arranging this?
- Kjellander: It didn't really change. We just worked with the McCain folks and tried to accommodate them and everything they wanted. There was not a lot of tension or problems.
- DePue: Are there a lot of people, let's say politicians, with their own aspirations, who are trying to step forward and get some kind of a speaking opportunity, or is the party reaching out and finding people they think are the future of the party to speak?
- Kjellander: Both. You have some people putting their hand up, saying, "I'm happy to speak if you want me to." But by and large, in coordination with the White House and the candidate's campaign structure, we would figure out who we wanted to be in what slot, then we'd reach out to them.
- DePue: One of the names I saw on the list of speakers was a young kid named Aaron Schock.
- Kjellander: Yes.
- DePue: Do you remember how he got onto the list of speakers?
- Kjellander: Yeah, it was a desire to showcase the fact that the Republican Party wasn't just old, fat, gray-haired, white guys. (laughs)
- DePue: Like you and me. Sorry about that! (laughs)
- Kjellander: (laughs) Me, for sure.
- DePue: Going in, it was a crowded campaign during the Republican primary. I will just list some of the names here: John McCain; Mike Huckabee, he won some states early on; Mitt Romney; Ron Paul, on the conservative wing; Rudy

Giuliani, certainly on the more moderate wing and somebody with a national presence; Fred Thompson; Alan Keyes—

Kjellander: Yeah.

DePue: Duncan Hunter.

Kjellander: I forgot about Duncan Hunter.

DePue: Were you trying to stay out of throwing your support towards any of those, as the person putting together the convention, or was that—

Kjellander: Yes. I stayed out of it. I had my own preferences. As I indicated, Senator McCain, real early in the year, had reached out, because he was trying to court the whole Bush leadership team of the RNC. But I was treasurer at the time, and I said, as an officer of the RNC, I had to remain officially neutral. I dodged it in that way.

DePue: Who were you leaning towards?

Kjellander: I was a very early fan of Mitt Romney's. But I didn't really do anything about it. Many of my good friends were involved in his campaign.

DePue: Why Romney?

Kjellander: I had spent some time with him, early on. I really liked the guy. I thought he had done a great job in Massachusetts. Coming from a tough battleground state like Illinois, I was impressed that a guy could get elected in an incredibly blue state like Massachusetts. I thought that might be a good thing, as we moved around the country. It didn't turn out.

DePue: Why not McCain early on?

Kjellander: I always thought he was a little bit of a shoot-from-the-hip kind of guy. I wasn't sure that he had that judgment thing. He was a great senator; he was obviously a war hero, but I just never sensed in him that quiet deliberation and judgment that you would want in a president.

DePue: As I recall that year, the Democratic primary season went on even longer than the Republican season, because you had, I'll say, two heavyweights. You've got Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Your impressions of that campaign.

Kjellander: I, like everybody else, was stunned that Hillary blew it. I just never sensed that Obama, other than his rhetorical gifts...He hadn't accomplished anything in the Illinois State Senate, of any significance. He had accomplished nothing in the United States Senate, because virtually, from day one, he was wandering around the country, starting to lay the groundwork to run for

president. I just saw him as all show and no go. I was astounded that he was able to do as well as he did.

DePue: You said that Hillary blew it. Does that mean that she did something wrong, that she made an error?

Kjellander: I think she took a lot of it for granted. I see the distinct possibility of that recurring in 2016, because right now almost everybody on the Democratic side and the media all say it's hers to lose. So that sense of entitlement, I think, is to a certain extent, what undermined her in the race with Obama.

There were a lot of things. When Bill Clinton was campaigning in South Carolina, he said something that somebody interpreted as racial in nature. That blew up a little bit. From what I gather, again, not being a Democratic insider, [there are] so many different factions within what they call "Hillaryland." You've got the faction that were part and parcel of Bill's administration, versus the people that have been with her since she was in the Senate or the secretary of state's office, and lots and lots of tension. You've got the overlay of the Clinton Foundation that's now the Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Foundation. The *New York Times*, maybe a month ago or six weeks ago, did a big expose of all of the problems within the foundation, even some issues, raising questions of financial impropriety on different things.⁶¹ She's going to have to deal with all of that.

DePue: I want to go back to the general election. But first I want to ask you about the convention itself. Up to this point, we've been talking about the build-up to the convention. Once you get to the convention, is that the fun part, or are you sitting there on pins and needles hoping and praying nothing's going to go wrong?

Kjellander: The latter, just to make sure that nothing goes wrong.

DePue: What were your biggest headaches, going into the convention?

Kjellander: Oh gosh! There were so many. There was some problems with the staging. The contractor almost didn't get it done on time. There were all sorts of little things. At the time, nothing that really jumps out; just dealing on a daily basis with dozens and dozens of different egos, trying to get this person to agree to do this. "I want the hotel ballroom." "Well, it's been booked. Sorry, you'll have to settle for something else." All that kind of stuff, but nothing really crisis-oriented, because the thing was done well in advance. We were ready.

DePue: Only because I interviewed her before, and I know that Phyllis Schlafly has been at every Republican Convention since, I think, 1952 or something. Do you remember her at that convention?

⁶¹ Given his description of the piece, Kjellander is probably thinking of Nicholas Confessore and Amy Chozick, "Unease at Clinton Foundation Over Finances and Ambitions," *New York Times*, August 13, 2013.

Kjellander: Not really.

DePue: By this time, she's very much in the background, I would think.

Kjellander: Yeah, I don't recall her at all. I'm sure she was there, but—

DePue: Is it a challenge to work with the media on these kinds of things?

Kjellander: It can be. I did a lot of media events and things like that.

DePue: By this time in American history, there are divisions within the media as well. There is what was known, at that time, as the mainstream media, and then you've got Fox News that played a role. Any impressions about how that played out at the convention?

Kjellander: Not really, no. We tried to treat everybody fairly. I know the mainstream media tries to make it out that Fox is the media voice of the Republican Party, and all that kind of stuff, but we treated everybody the same.

DePue: How about any internal tensions, not necessarily at the convention, but among Republicans, the growing emergence of the conservative wing of the Republican Party? Did that manifest itself at the convention?

Kjellander: There are always platform issues. I can't recall exactly what they were, but there's always issues, where you will get interest groups that disagree with the potential nominee, especially on platform stuff. We relied almost entirely on the McCain folks, because he's got to run on the platform, so he's got to be comfortable with it. At the time, the Libertarian element in the party was more of a fringe.

DePue: The Ron Paul folks.

Kjellander: The Ron Paul folks, whereas today, you've got Rand Paul, who is certainly a significant player in the 2016 race. His father was never a significant player. He was always the outlier on the fringe. His folks would come to the Platform Committee and rant and rave about America's being too interventionist and that kind of stuff. It wasn't that significant.

DePue: Were there any divisions on some of the hot button issues, like abortion, something that the party's had divisions on in the past?

Kjellander: No. Pretty much everybody in the Republican Party today is anti-abortion. You see, even when you do polling, where it used to be there was a majority of pro-choice people in the country, it's now shifted to there's a majority of pro-life people in the country. The better technology about showing that there is actually a live child within the body of the mother, I think, has really injured the pro-choice movement a lot.

DePue: Before the election campaign season, John McCain was known as one of the Republicans who was advocating for some significant immigration reform, along with President Bush himself. By the time you get to the campaign, he had become more conservative in his expressions. Was that an issue at the convention at all?

Kjellander: To a certain extent. President Bush's unsuccessful initiative on immigration reform, I think if you asked him today, he would tell you that his biggest disappointment as president was not getting the immigration reform done.

McCain was always on the cutting edge, and he was a key ally of the president in trying to pass immigration reform. McCain really didn't shift his views until he was running for re-election to the Senate, later. At the convention, we were all basically pretty much pro-immigration reform, but you had some of them, like the Newt Gingriches of the world, who were more negative. McCain was pretty much in sync with the president at the time. He did shift to the right when he ran for re-election to the Senate after the presidential race.

DePue: Any other hot-button platform issues that you can recall? This is a month or two prior to the economy melting down.

Kjellander: No, I don't recall too much of anything.

DePue: No divisions on the war?

Kjellander: Not really. I mean, again, the Ron Paul folks, but they came in beards and t-shirts and sandals. They had that kind of hippie, old hipster look, if you will. They were a distinct minority and, I think it's fair to say, kind of the fringe. Now, that's different today. It's different today, because that Libertarian element of the party has grown significantly, and it isn't just a bunch of long-haired, hippie-wannabes. It's a lot of mainstream, young conservatives, as evidenced by the CPAC [Conservative Political Action) Conference this week.

DePue: Is that a good thing, do you think, for the Republican Party?

Kjellander: I like Paul Ryan's view of that. The liberal media's trying to talk about this civil war in the Republican Party. Paul Ryan said the other day that the civil war is far overrated, and that what we have is a vigorous debate about issues.

The Democrats have the same thing. You've got union Democrats who want the Keystone Pipeline done, and you've got the environmental Democrats who want to kill the Keystone Pipeline.⁶²

⁶² The Keystone Pipeline links the oil sands of Alberta, Canada, to oil refineries and storage facilities in Nebraska, Illinois, Oklahoma, and Texas. The controversy is over the proposed Keystone XL extension, which

Yes, I think it's a good thing. I think it's a good thing, because Obama carried the millennial vote close to 70 percent, I think, in the last election.⁶³ His numbers amongst Millennials today have dropped off 25 percent. He has lost touch with a lot of his younger people who don't truly believe that he's been a very effective president. I think that's been a combination of things, but most probably significant, the NSA [National Security Agency] spying thing has hurt the president with the Millennials.

DePue: It used to be, in the olden days of party conventions, no one knew who was going to be the candidate until the end of the convention. Those days were long gone by the time you get to 2008. So, one of the big mysteries is who's going to be the vice presidential candidate? I'll turn it over to you to discuss that one.

Kjellander: It's very interesting, because I was having lunch with Paul Caprio, who is the head of Family PAC in Illinois. He had come out the week before the convention for the platform stuff. He's a very conservative, insider guy in the national conservative movement. I've known Paul forever. Paul was my boss at the 1972 Nixon Campaign, so I've known Paul a long time. We were having lunch, and he was the first person to say to me, [to] mention Sarah Palin. This was before it had been announced. I said, "Who?" (laughs) "The governor of Alaska." And by golly, he was right

I have to say, John McCain is not the most charismatic, energizing person. I saw him on *David Letterman* last night, and he said, "Well, you know, I've been in the Senate since the Coolidge administration."⁶⁴ I mean, he's an old guy. He doesn't create that energy and enthusiasm.

But I have to tell you that, when I sat in the hall and watched Sarah Palin's debut, it was mesmerizing. She turned up the notch of enthusiasm amongst those delegates like I have never, ever seen before. It was electric. Now unfortunately, shortly after that magnificent debut, she fell off the rails. (laughs) But that first time at the convention, I thought, McCain threw a real Hail Mary here, and I think he might have connected, because she was that good at energizing the base.⁶⁵ To this day, she still energizes the base, but it's a much smaller base.

DePue: What other highlights do you remember from the convention?

would build nearly 1,200 miles of pipeline to link the Bakken field in North Dakota and Montana with Alberta and the existing Keystone system in the U.S. The primary source of conflict is the extension's route in western Nebraska.

⁶³ Teenagers, twenty- and thirty-somethings have been dubbed the Millennial Generation, or simply Millennials. The term Millennials generally refers to the generation of people born between the early 1980s and 1990s.

⁶⁴ David Michael Letterman was an American television host, comedian, writer and producer. He hosted a late night television talk show for 33 years, beginning February 1, 1982.

⁶⁵ A very long, typically unsuccessful, pass made in a desperate attempt to score late in the game.

Kjellander: That was the big one, I think. Again, I remember her speech; I don't remember McCain's at all. (DePue laughs) Isn't that interesting? I don't remember McCain's at all. I think it's fair to say, people left the Twin Cities feeling like we had a shot at this.

DePue: Had a shot. You figured that the winds were blowing in the Democrats' direction, though?

Kjellander: Yeah. Whenever you've got a two-term president retiring—

DePue: And his numbers were in the thirties.

Kjellander: His numbers were not good. And on top of that, you had two wars going. You've got a lot of head wind. But people walked out of there thinking, You know, we might have a shot at this. It turned out we didn't, but—

DePue: Any other memorable stories you want to share from the convention or from working on the convention?

Kjellander: Oh, gosh...Nothing really that jumps out.

DePue: How about memories from the general election? Let's start off with something you had just mentioned before. The news media certainly picked up on Sarah Palin. I think they were just as surprised. Let's just talk about the news media in general and how the news media dealt with that election campaign.

Kjellander: I think they pounced on her early, and her lack of preparation was clear. She was almost deer in the headlights on a lot of things. She wasn't ready. Again, I wasn't involved in the campaign, but clearly somebody in the campaign dropped the ball, in terms of, if you're going to pick an outlier as a VP, who's got no serious national media experience and no Washington experience, then you've got to do intense training.

You read some of those books, and they'll tell you she resisted the training and all that sort of stuff. But still, the ball was dropped, and she was out there, and she looked like she wasn't up to it. In spite of her continued popularity on the right, I think she only got like 2 percent on the straw poll at CPAC this week. Even the conservatives, really hard-core conservatives, don't view her as a competent potential president.

DePue: You've mentioned CPAC a couple of times. Conservative—

Kjellander: Political Action Conference.

DePue: That's a yearly thing.

Kjellander: It's an annual thing in March.

DePue: How about your impressions of Barack Obama as a candidate?

Kjellander: I think he was smooth. They showcased him well. He did a good job. He's a good campaigner. The problem is he's not an administrator.

DePue: Any critiques of the campaign that McCain and Palin ran?

Kjellander: They were never really in the game, after the convention. They just kind of went downhill. The debates, Obama handled himself well enough that nobody was uncomfortable with him being president.

Again, McCain came off a little bit like a cranky, old man. You put cranky old man together with Alaska governor, who clearly is way over her head in national politics and government issues, and it didn't look good.

DePue: Some would say that one of the mistakes that McCain made was that he didn't get aggressive in going after Obama's record and some of Obama's connections, like the Jeremiah Wright issue.

Kjellander: Yeah, he put a lot of things off-limits. The Jeremiah Wright thing...that's a serious thing. I can't figure it out, other than, I think McCain maybe felt like he was overly cautious about not wanting to seem racist or something, because Jeremiah Wright's African American as well. I don't know. I don't know what their thinking was.

Obama had no record, but that point wasn't made. You can't point to a single accomplishment that he had in either of the Illinois State Senate or United States Senate; you can't. But that point was never made. That point was never made.

DePue: The other thing that can't be ignored in this campaign season is that by September of 2008, the housing market is starting to come unglued. By the time you get to October, there are major banks that are looking like they're going to fail. Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae look like they're going down. The stock market plummets. By this time, weeks away from the election, it looks like the American economy is in a meltdown.

Kjellander: And McCain handled it poorly. He just handled it very, very poorly.

DePue: In what way?

Kjellander: They had a conference at the White House that, I think, included both Obama and McCain, with the president, one of those things in the cabinet rooms.⁶⁶ I can't remember exactly what McCain said, but it came off like he hadn't

⁶⁶ President Bush invited the two candidates to a meeting he held with congressional leaders on September 25, 2008, to discuss the financial crisis, particularly his administration's proposal to buy up to \$700 billion of Wall Street's distressed assets.

thought about it. The impression I walked away with, after listening to it, was McCain's an armed forces guy. He's focused on the military and strengthening our position in the world, but on the economy, he doesn't have a clue. That was the way I walked away from it. I think that that put the nail in the coffin. The economy was starting to tank, and McCain looked like he didn't have a clue about what to do.

DePue: It wasn't too long after that meeting, a couple of weeks or the next month, that Election Day comes, and Barack Obama wins a resounding victory. Were you surprised at all?

Kjellander: No.

DePue: What was your gut feeling after that election?

Kjellander: I'm not sure any Republican could have won with the economy starting to tank like it did, but I certainly think that a Mitt Romney would have done better, in dealing with that set of economic issues, than McCain did. McCain truly spoke and acted like he didn't know what to do, and maybe nobody knows what to do. But campaigns are about image, and his looked befuddled.

DePue: Would you agree that most of the country, though, felt very positive and felt that this was an uplifting situation, that now we've got the first black president, and he can do things that are going to transform the United States in a positive way?

Kjellander: Yes. I think a lot of people hoped that. I'm not so partisan that, just because somebody's a Democrat, I want them to fail. I was hopeful that he would succeed, but he's turned out to be a disaster.

DePue: About a month after the election, I think it might have been December 8, Illinois politicians were making the news again, because Rod Blagojevich was arrested.⁶⁷ It was, in part, because of allegations that he was trying to sell the Senate seat that President Obama had just vacated. Your thoughts about that event?

Kjellander: I couldn't believe it. When you read those transcripts of his telephone conversations, it was phenomenal to me. First of all, when somebody wants a major appointment, like a United States Senate seat, sure, they're going to be aggressive. Sure, they're going to talk about, "I've got an ability to fundraise; I've got this, and I've got that." But for Blagojevich to have put it in terms of, "I'm not going to give this away for f---ing nothing," or whatever it is he said; I can't remember exactly. It's so stupid and so juvenile and so... I couldn't believe it. But then, things started clicking in quickly. The Democrats that he'd alienated in the legislature all started lining up for impeachment. (laughs)

⁶⁷ FBI agents arrested Governor Blagojevich and chief of staff John Harris on December 9, 2008.

DePue: You chuckle about that.

Kjellander: Well, he had it coming, because that's the way he treated them. So they're saying, Now, I've got a chance, 1) to stick it to him, but 2) to look like I'm a reformer. (laughs)

DePue: You're being a statesman by doing that.

Kjellander: Yes, yes.

DePue: He was impeached in January. It didn't take too long.

Kjellander: It didn't take very long. Mike Madigan moved that along really quick.

DePue: And Pat Quinn becomes the governor at that time.

Kjellander: Pat Quinn becomes governor.

DePue: Patrick Fitzgerald now has a second governor's scalp on his belt, so to speak. He got George Ryan, and practically from the earliest days of the Blagojevich administration, he'd obviously been building a case against Blagojevich, as well. He was casting a wide net.

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: So, that leads us to your good friend, just down the hall here, Bill Cellini. I want you to discuss how that all played out, in terms of how he ended up getting indicted as part of this whole effort to go after Blagojevich.

Kjellander: We have a history of a lot of corruption in state government, in politics in general, in Illinois. And we've had a lot of bad characters hold important positions. I think Patrick Fitzgerald [U.S. attorney] is probably the worst public official in my lifetime. I think he was so convinced that everybody in government is corrupt, and it's up to him to figure out what they've done. Whether or not they've done anything wrong, it's catching them for what they have done. This is the mindset.

He utilized that office, in my opinion, abused that office all the time in an effort to make himself the shining star. He retired as the media darling. But, I think, in the end, because of the abuses that went on in his office, I think he was the most corrupt person I know.

DePue: What were the allegations that got Cellini indicted?

Kjellander: There was the telephone conversations. If you read those transcripts, there was no smoking gun.⁶⁸ There was no smoking gun whatsoever. What you had was

⁶⁸ Federal prosecutors claimed Cellini conspired with Rezko, Teachers' Retirement System trustee Stuart Levine, and Blagojevich fundraiser Christopher Kelly to extort Capri Capital, a firm co-owned by movie

a very corrupt person, in Stuart Levine, cutting all sorts of deals with different people.

I worked with Stuart myself, going back to the 1990s, when he was a principal in a company that hired us to do some things. He never asked us to do anything wrong. But Stuart was one of these people who was always at the right dinner, always at the right event. He was a donor to the Lincoln Park Zoo. In fact, there was the Levine Polar Bear Exhibit at the Lincoln Park Zoo. He got me to go to Jewish-American dinners. He was always the honoree of the dinner, with this award and that award. Nobody had any clue that the guy was dirty, nobody. He never asked me to do anything that I thought was improper anywhere, actually, on anything.

But they had his phone tapped. Again, I didn't read all the transcripts and things like that, but I've known Bill Cellini for thirty years. I know he's a smart man, and I know that he would never do anything that would be remotely illegal. I really, truly believe that. I think that what happened was that the U.S. attorney distorted some of the things that were on the tapes and got a conviction.

DePue: But you haven't been specific about what the indictment was about.

Kjellander: It's been such a long time. It had something to do with raising campaign funds, but I can't remember. I just don't remember.

DePue: From a Hollywood producer who was—

Kjellander: Oh, Rosenberg, yes. That's right. You're reminding me of that now. Again, I'm uncomfortable speaking for Bill, so I don't want really want to do that. I'm sure he'd sit down with you if you asked him to. But I don't believe for a minute that he tried to trade political contributions for getting projects approved by the TRS Board. I really don't believe that.

Stuart, on the other hand, who was the chair of the Investment Committee of the Teachers Retirement Systems at the time, **no** allocations got done without Stuart. I mean none.

DePue: You're obviously very bitter about Patrick Fitzgerald. Were you a person of interest during this investigation as well?

Kjellander: Oh, yeah, anybody involved in government. I spent years of legal fees dealing with the U.S. attorney's office and their fabricated scenarios.

producer, Thomas Rosenberg. According to the indictment, the four used their influence on the TRS board to block a planned allocation of \$220 million in pension funds to Capri Capital, unless Rosenberg made political contributions to Blagojevich. A federal wiretap on Levine's phone was the primary source of evidence at the trial. Kjellander is referencing the transcripts of these recordings. Annie Sweeney, Rick Pearson, and John Huston, "Republican Power Broker Convicted of 2 Counts," *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 2011.

DePue: Can you kind of flesh that out for us, what your dealings were with the U.S. attorney's office?

Kjellander: They called me in on all sorts of stuff to do with... Early in the administration, the Blagojevich administration, I had a client, Bear Stearns. Bear Stearns had just done a pension bond deal in the state of New Jersey that had really gotten a lot of people's attention. It had really helped the New Jersey retirement system. So they said to me, "Can we approach the Blagojevich folks?" So, I approached Tony Rezko, and I laid it out to Tony.

At the time, almost every week in *Crain's*, there would be an article about this former Blagojevich staffer or that former Blagojevich staffer going to this investment banking house or that one.⁶⁹ So there were a coterie of former employees who were in various investment banking firms.

So, my pitch to Tony was, "Look, you pick any one of those, you're going to have all sorts of stories about an insider from the Blagojevich campaign getting all this state business. I'm bringing you Bear Stearns, who is the preeminent company in the country on these pension bond deals. They're represented by a Republican, so there is no insider deal. I wasn't part of your campaign." Evidently, those arguments held sway, because Bear Stearns was picked to do the pension bond deal. I'll never forget, the legislature had authorized up to \$10 billion in bonds. The plan was to do three, and then do incrementals over the next couple of years.

The morning of the sale, Bear Stearns came back with such a fabulous interest rate that the governor's office called and said, "At this interest rate, could we do all ten, instead of just three?"⁷⁰ They [Bear Stearns] said, "Yeah. I think we could do all ten," and they did. There was a crisis in the pension system at the time.

This saved the crisis. It saved the situation, because the interest rate was so good. But it tripled my fee, because my fee was tied to the amount of the bond. So, my fee went from X to Z. Eventually, when all of that came out, it looked like, whoa! But I had never thought about getting that. Instead of getting a \$1 million fee, I thought I was getting a \$300,000 fee.

But the most important thing is, in spite of all of the backroom deals that the Blagojevich folks... They never asked me for a nickel, not a nickel, not a campaign contribution, not a dime, not a dime! But the U.S. attorney's office was convinced that I was giving them all this money.

⁶⁹ *Crain's* is a weekly business newspaper in Chicago, owned by Detroit-based Crain Communications, a privately held publishing company with more than 30 magazines.

⁷⁰ Governor Thompson's former budget director was critical of this deal on financial grounds. See Robert Mandeville, interview by Mike Czaplicki, February 20, 2014.

- DePue: Isn't that a matter of public record, if you're giving contributions to campaigns?
- Kjellander: Yeah.
- DePue: Was Bill Cellini giving contributions to the Blagojevich team?
- Kjellander: Not that I'm aware of. I don't know what he did. He represented, at the time, the Asphalt Paving Association, so their groups, they contribute to whoever is in office; that's just part of the deal. I'd be surprised if Bill gave any personal contributions. I don't know, because I—
- DePue: Now, this pension bond deal you're talking about, it sounds like that had happened before the meltdown, before 2008. Would that be right?
- Kjellander: Oh, yeah, that was like 2003? I think it was the first year of the Blagojevich administration.
- DePue: Was Bear Stearns one of those banks that got themselves in serious trouble when the housing market crashed?
- Kjellander: They later did, yeah. Bear Stearns is no more.
- DePue: Yeah, they went bankrupt.
- Kjellander: Yeah. But at the time, they were the preeminent company in the pension bond business.
- DePue: Do you remember at what point the U.S. attorney's office backed off from investigating you?
- Kjellander: Just years; it was years, years and years. It just went on and on and on. Every time they'd get somebody to say something, then I'd get called in, and we'd have to go through the whole rigmarole. I literally spent years of legal fees. To this day, nobody ever accused me of doing anything wrong, but they made my life miserable for years and, of course, leaked all of this stuff to the newspapers. This is the thing that—
- DePue: The U.S. attorney's office?
- Kjellander: Oh, yes. They leak like a sieve.
- DePue: What other tactics did you object to, in terms of the things that the U.S. attorney's office was doing?
- Kjellander: I'll give you another example. The U.S. attorney's office was focused on Lee Daniels, the former Speaker of the Illinois House and the former, long-time

Republican minority leader. His chief of staff was a friend of mine, a guy named Mike Tristano.

They called Mike into the U.S. attorney's office one day and said, "We want to know about a meeting that was held up in some resort in Wisconsin." He said, "I wasn't there." They looked at him, and they said, "Well, why don't you go home and think about it? We'll get together next week."

So, Mike's a very meticulous person. He had not gone to this meeting. So the following week, he comes in, and he's got his phone records, his credit card records for all of the dates that are in play, lays it out and said, "I wasn't at the meeting, and here's the proof." They said to him, "This meeting is over."

Two weeks later, they indicted him. They tried to get him to lie. They tried to coerce him into fabricating a story about a meeting that he didn't participate in, in an effort to get Lee Daniels. I think that story has been repeated many other times. It's an abuse of power. It's an abuse of authority. The fact that Patrick Fitzgerald walked away from the U.S. attorney's office with all of these media accolades, to me, is a travesty.

DePue: You mentioned that Tristano was indicted. Was he convicted?

Kjellander: Yeah, he spent a year and a day in jail.

DePue: Your view then when Cellini was convicted?

Kjellander: A **total** miscarriage of justice, totally. They were so convinced that he had done all of these insider deals that nobody ever caught. They were just possessed with the notion that nobody could make the kind of money he made and create the kind of empire, if you will, that he had created without doing something dirty. So they were bound and determined to get him for something.

I truly believe that was the mindset with Bill. I think they trumped this thing up with Rosenberg.⁷¹ Rosenberg was angry, but the person he should have been angry with was Levine, not with Bill. That was the craziness of all that, because Rosenberg was the one... When Levine was putting the pressure on Rosenberg, Rosenberg went to Bill and asked him to see what he could do to find out what was going on. Bill, I think, basically came back and said, "Look, Levine's in charge. He controls all of this." Somehow, they manipulated that into, He's part of this conspiracy to get it done. Bill wasn't reaching out to Rosenberg. Rosenberg was reaching out to Bill to assess the situation of what was going on.

⁷¹ Prosecutors contended Bill Cellini was at the center of a plot to extort money from Hollywood producer, Thomas Rosenberg.

- DePue: It sounds like you don't have any sympathy for Levine, though, in any of this.
- Kjellander: No, no. Stuart was a manipulator par excellence. He was a totally amoral person. I put him in the same category as Scott Fawell. They're similar types.
- DePue: And Rod Blagojevich as well?
- Kjellander: Yeah, absolutely.
- DePue: What is it about Illinois politics that brings out these kinds of characters? (Kjellander laughs) Is Illinois more corrupt than a lot of other places around the country?
- Kjellander: I think we get more publicity about it, because of the Democratic machine in Chicago, and then of course, the Blagojevich thing and the George Ryan thing.
- DePue: No one got more colorful press out of this than Rod Blagojevich did.
- Kjellander: No. Of course, none very good either (laughs). But then he's got fourteen years to think about it.
- DePue: Do you think that was an unjust number of years in his case?
- Kjellander: (pauses, sighs) I don't know; I really haven't thought about it, because I have so little sympathy for him, because he was so bad. It's probably overkill, fourteen years, is probably overkill. But again, he's such an unsympathetic figure, I don't have a lot of—
- DePue: I think George Ryan got seven years.
- Kjellander: I think he got five.
- DePue: Five?
- Kjellander: I thought it was five, and he served three and a half or four.
- DePue: Do you think his sentence was not justified?
- Kjellander: That's hard to say. I really didn't pay that much attention to the details of the Ryan trial.
- DePue: Let's move on in Illinois politics, because it certainly doesn't end there; it never ends. Any thoughts about the 2010 gubernatorial election? Essentially two years after Blagojevich's downfall, Pat Quinn is running for his first time for governor. It's between him and Bill Brady.

Kjellander: I happen to believe that, had Kirk Dillard won the Republican primary, if he had gotten 193 more votes than he got, that Kirk Dillard would be governor today. I don't think Pat Quinn would have been re-elected.

DePue: Would Illinois be in better shape today if Kirk Dillard was governor?

Kjellander: Absolutely. Kirk has that Thompson/Edgar training of working across the aisles and trying to get stuff done. Had he been governor, there'd still have been Democratic majorities in both houses, but Kirk is the kind of person who could have sat down with Mike Madigan and with John Cullerton and cut deals to make the state work.

Madigan and Cullerton, they dismiss Quinn. They don't respect him. I think they would have respected Dillard, because A) he's been one of them for a long time, but B) they know that he comes out of that Thompson/Edgar mode of let's figure out what we can get done to accomplish stuff together.

DePue: You already said that, even in 2008, your guy was really Mitt Romney more than it was McCain. Any thoughts on the 2012 presidential election?

Kjellander: It was cringing to watch. Unfortunately, Romney just stumbled from one thing to another. That 47 percent thing was a killer.⁷² They were able to portray him as an elite, aloof, rich guy. He is a rich guy, but he's not aloof. He may be elite in certain regards, but I think he certainly would have had a better economic approach. We wouldn't have the stagnation that we've got today, if Romney had been elected.

DePue: We're in the midst of the primary season for yet another gubernatorial election [in 2014]. You've got four Republicans that are lining up against Pat Quinn this time. That's Bruce Rauner, Bill Brady, Kirk Dillard and Dan Rutherford. Is Dillard your guy again this time around?

Kjellander: I think, of the four, Dillard would be the best governor, although probably Rauner's going to win.

DePue: Why do you say that?

Kjellander: Because he spent \$16 million on TV ads, and Dillard hasn't been able to raise much money. He's got some [TV ads] on now. I think it may be too little too late. The sexual harassment thing, the Rutherford thing, is destroying Dan's

⁷² Two months before the election, *Mother Jones* magazine posted secretly recorded excerpts of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's remarks from a private fundraiser. Attracting the greatest attention was Romney's claim that "There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president, no matter what...who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it." David Corn, "Secret Video," *Mother Jones*, September 17, 2012, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/09/secret-video-romney-private-fundraiser>.

campaign.⁷³ I think Brady's fading, so I think Dillard will run second. There's an outside chance that, in the next couple of weeks, he could overtake Rauner, but I'll be surprised if he does.⁷⁴

DePue: If Dillard emerges as the candidate, would you predict he can beat Quinn?

Kjellander: Yes.

DePue: If Rauner gets the nod, do you think Rauner can beat Quinn?

Kjellander: I think it's much more questionable. He'll have the money, but he's also got baggage. The unions have been putting on some pretty effective ads about how his firm, when it controlled different companies, the companies weren't run very well. You've got that one nursing home, which had three deaths in this nursing home. That's attributed to poor management and oversight by the owners.

But you have an interesting other name, and that's Stuart Levine, [who] comes back to the fore. Stuart was employed by one of Rauner's companies to get business. He was being paid like \$25,000 a month by one of Rauner's companies. At the very same time he was paying Stuart \$25,000 a month, he was appearing before Stuart as the chairman of the investment committee of the Teachers Retirement System and got \$50 million of TRS money invested for his company to invest. So there's a significant piece of pay-to-play problem here that, I think, will get a lot of attention, if Rauner is the candidate in the fall.

DePue: Pay-to-play, that has some relevance in Illinois politics, doesn't it?

Kjellander: (laughs) Yeah. Well, especially for a guy who spent millions of dollars trying to say, "I'm going to clean up Springfield and kick the bums out." The reality is a little bit different when you look at his business history.

DePue: On the Democratic side, I mentioned already that Pat Quinn is the candidate. That's in large part because Lisa Madigan decided not to run, not at the same time her father [Mike Madigan] was the Speaker of the House.

Kjellander: Correct.,

DePue: I've heard you say this before, but I want to get you to say this on tape, your comments about Pat Quinn as the Democratic candidate.

Kjellander: He's the best possible candidate we could have as a Republican, because he isn't respected by the Democrats, and he hasn't done a particularly effective

⁷³ The sexual harassment lawsuit that derailed the political career of former state Treasurer Dan Rutherford was dismissed on November 22, 2017 in federal court in Chicago.

⁷⁴ Kjellander's analysis proved correct. A week after this interview, Rauner defeated Dillard by 23,814 votes, while Brady and Rutherford finished a distant third and fourth.

job as governor. Again, it's who you're running against. I think that Quinn's got a very decent shot if he's running against Rauner. I think he has less of a chance to win against Dillard.

DePue: Maybe it wasn't you who told me this. Was it you who said that Pat Quinn's got to be the luckiest guy in politics?

Kjellander: Yeah, absolutely. I said that. He is the luckiest guy in politics. He was lucky that we nominated Bill Brady last time, because if there hadn't have been four candidates from DuPage, Dillard would have won the primary and would have beaten Quinn in the general. I think almost anybody who looks at Illinois politics, studies Illinois politics, will agree with that statement.

Now, four years later, he lucks out because Lisa Madigan, I think, would rather run for the Supreme Court or something than be governor. So now he's got a four-way Republican primary. They're all tearing each other down, and like I say, if Rauner wins, I think he'll be a very flawed candidate in the fall. But we'll see.

DePue: Well, you and I have had quite a long conversation for a guy who has kept himself out of the public eye most of his life and career. It's been a fascinating discussion for me, but I've got some closing questions for you.

Kjellander: Sure.

DePue: Let me just start with this one in a general sense. Many political pundits would state—with regret, I think—that American politics and probably Illinois politics have become much more divisive over the last couple of decades. Would you agree with that?

Kjellander: One hundred percent. I attribute a great deal of that to Governor Quinn; not Governor Quinn as governor, but Governor Quinn as bomb-thrower, populist do-gooder who passed the Cutback Amendment, in which we used to have three representatives in each Senate district. His Cutback Amendment partisanized both sides. I think that's had a tragic impact on things, because the Republican caucus used to have legitimate members from Chicago, and the Democratic caucus used to have legitimate members from Republican areas like DuPage County. It moderated both caucuses and enhanced the ability to make deals and get things done.

With the Cutback Amendment, Chicago dominates the Democratic side, and a far more conservative element dominates the Republican. It leads to a lack of cooperation, and I think it poisons the well.

DePue: One of the themes that you hear many conservatives express about that question of increasing divisiveness of American politics and Illinois politics is that the news media is seriously biased in the way they discuss and portray politics and politicians, that it's much more liberal, and they don't tell the

same story, and they don't focus the same way on Republicans as they do on Democrats. Would you say that's a fair critique?

Kjellander: Yeah, I would. It's less so now, on a national basis, primary because of Fox [Broadcasting]. Fox turned that around, in the sense that, like they always say, "fair and balanced." They focus in on a lot of different stories that the so-called "mainstream" media ignores. But it's gotten to the point where, if Fox highlights things enough, the mainstream media's forced to deal with it. Benghazi is a perfect example of that.⁷⁵

DePue: Benghazi is going to play a role in the next presidential election, if Hillary Clinton is the candidate.

Kjellander: No question about it.

DePue: We've discussed this quite a bit already, but in just summing up, how would you explain the Republican Party's continued weakness in the state of Illinois?

Kjellander: I think it's a combination of things. We've had not particularly outstanding candidates. We were able to elect Mark Kirk to the United States Senate. The last time, four years ago, we were able to elect a treasurer and a comptroller. I think Judy Baar Topinka is still an outstanding public official, and she'll get re-elected, I think, this year. But we've had problems at the top of the ticket, and, unfortunately, if things are headed the way I think they are, we'll probably have that again this time.

DePue: How much of it is explained by the changing demographics in this state?

Kjellander: To some extent. Demographics are important. The Hispanic population is growing, as is the Asian population, particularly in Chicago. Because of our intransigence on immigration reform, we've been, to a certain extent, rightfully portrayed as being anti-immigrant and anti-minority, and as a party, if we are going to survive, have to change that.

That's a minority opinion within the party right now, I'll tell you that. George Bush was hammered for advocating that. It's not just the right political thing to do; it's just the right thing to do. Take some of these families that have been here for one and two generations, to rip them up and talk about deporting people is ridiculous. It's inhumane. We have to figure out a way to give these folks a legal pathway to citizenship.

DePue: You've been involved in politics for a long time, always—from everything you've said—happy to be the guy out of the public arena, out of the public

⁷⁵ Refers to an attack on the U.S. diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012, in which the U.S. ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, and three other U.S. nationals were killed. Hillary Clinton was U.S. secretary of state at the time.

eye, but very much involved behind the scenes. What would be the thing that you're most proud of in your long involvement with the Republican Party?

Kjellander: I would say the thing that I was most proud of was two things. My work to re-elect Jim Thompson was something I thought was very significant, and I'm very proud of my contributions to nominating George Bush and electing George Bush in 2000. Those were two things that really stand out.

DePue: We might already have addressed one of these, but your most exhilarating moment?

Kjellander: I guess sitting on the platform for Bush's inauguration in 2001. That was a big deal and then going to the balls and all that stuff. Those are kind of a pain in the neck, but my wife liked that part of it. Sitting there and just watching him sworn in, that was probably the most exhilarating.

DePue: What, the sense of closure after all of those months of work?

Kjellander: **Years** of work, yeah, a couple of years of work, easily.

DePue: How about on the flip side, your biggest disappointments?

Kjellander: I would say the assaults on my character by the innuendos from the U.S. attorney's office were very bothersome to me and my family. And they were picked up by their unofficial mouthpiece, John Kass, in the [*Chicago Tribune*]. Whenever the federal government wanted to take a shot at me, they gave Kass the heads-up, and Kass did a column. It got to be pretty tiring every day when you open the *Tribune* to see, are you in it today? (laughs) Now, fortunately, that's all done and gone, but it was unpleasant.

DePue: What would you like to be remembered for?

Kjellander: One of the things that I was most proud of in the governor's office was the creation of a year-long fellow's program. I think, to this day, there's a segment of it that's still there. I had this notion of picking eight fellows for a year and then rotating them between the legislative office, the Bureau of the Budget, and two different agencies. They were called the Thompson Fellows, at the time. I know Edgar kept it going. He obviously gave it a different name, because it wasn't the Thompson Fellows. I thought that was significant.

I did a lot of heavy lifting. I was chairman of the Rules Committee for the RNC and did a lot of...It's all gone now, but we revised the election timeframes and institutionalized the Iowa caucuses in January and then the primary in New Hampshire in February and the South Carolina primary in early March, as the three starting points. That sounds real easy, but it took years of negotiations to get everybody to agree to that as a structure, so that was interesting.

DePue: You've fifty states pulling in fifty different directions, huh?

Kjellander: Absolutely. "Why should those farmers in Iowa get the first dibs on everything?" (both laugh) It was hilarious.

DePue: I think you've been very candid throughout this discussion. I want to thank you very much for that and give you a chance to make any closing comments that you'd like.

Kjellander: I've tried to be as candid as I could be. I guess I'm getting old, because sometimes I've had a hard time recalling some of the stuff. It's a good thing you've got some notes to ask me stuff from, because I was a little surprised at how vague I was on some things, because it's been a long, long time, and I'm not the meticulous note-keeper that some people are.

DePue: A lot of these events are only thirty-plus years behind us.

Kjellander: Yeah. (laughs) All right. Well, this has been fun.

DePue: Thank you very much, Bob.

(End of interview)