

Interview with Julie Cellini

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Monday, March 9, 2015. My name is Mark DePue, Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I’m in Springfield, Illinois in the home of Mrs. Julie Cellini. Good morning, Mrs. Cellini.

Cellini: Good morning.

DePue: How are you today?

Cellini: I am very good, thank you, a little disorganized.

DePue: That’s authorized.

Cellini: Okay. We’re going to talk about me, which always makes me nervous (DePue laughs). I’d love to talk about other people.



Julie Cellini

DePue: There will be an awful lot of discussion about other people as we go through this as well, but I always like to start with the beginning. That means when and where you were born.

Cellini: I was born in Springfield, Illinois, 1941. I am the daughter of people who came up the hard way, children of the Depression. My mom was the daughter of... She was first generation. Her parents emigrated from Eastern Europe. My dad was the son of people who had been in the United States for a long

time, probably had been Virginia planters, maybe as far back as the Revolution, the Revolutionary War period. They were an odd mix, to say the least. It probably explains a lot, because I think those things play out.

DePue: I saw someplace that your birthday is actually on Christmas day.

Cellini: Christmas. I was born on December 25, as my mother always said, the last doll she ever got for Christmas; it was always a family joke. Consequently I really never had a birthday.

DePue: Yeah. Do you have any siblings?

Cellini: I have a brother, [Bill England]. He's four years older than I am. He is retired now, but he was an art director for Koplars Enterprises in St. Louis, very, very talented, kind of otherworldly, was an artist as a small child. I always remember him as drawing, sketching. We had not a lot in common, unfortunately, because people who are that creative and that talented and people who are as ordinary as I am, you don't have a lot of common ground. But we've remained, I think, close over the years. He's married, has children, lives in St. Louis, and I see him as often as I possibly can.

DePue: Being born on December 25, 1941, that's only three weeks beyond the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: So, the question always has to be asked; was your father was in the military during World War II?

Cellini: My dad was not. He volunteered and had had a back injury and was not able to go.

DePue: What was his name?

Cellini: His name was William England, E-n-g-l-a-n-d, just like the country. He was, his entire life, with Illinois Bell Telephone Company. He was actually a really interesting guy, very interested in education, a child of the Depression, so he didn't have the opportunity to go to school. He quit high school to help support his parents and siblings and then went back to high school and graduated high school at age twenty-one.

DePue: Wow.

Cellini: That took a lot of courage, but he was committed to education and never reached more than middle management at Illinois Bell. But he was convinced that his children would go to college, which back then, was kind of a feat.

DePue: And during the Depression it was almost rare that somebody had a chance to finish high school.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: It certainly wasn't necessarily the norm.

Cellini: Yeah. But think of the courage to go back. For a long time—I probably still have them someplace—he even edited the high school newspaper, which was kind of amazing.

DePue: And you get to inherit a little bit of that later on.

Cellini: Yeah. He was my hero.

DePue: I also saw that your name, your birth name, isn't Julie.

Cellini: Yeah, it's Julianna, J-u-l-i-a-n-n-a.

DePue: Is England your middle name?

Cellini: No. I technically don't have a middle name. I was raised Roman Catholic and took Maria as a confirmation name. So probably that's my middle name, but...

DePue: England is the family name.

Cellini: England is my family name, yes.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about your mother. What was her name?

Cellini: Her name was Anna Booker, B-o-o-k-e-r. Booker, I think, is probably a name that was changed, because her father came from Yugoslavia, and they probably wrote anything they could when they came through.

DePue: Do you know what ethnic background she would have been?

Cellini: Well, we've always said just Eastern European; Yugoslavia, the borders changed so much. That's where he was born.

M1: Thank you.

Cellini: Bye, boys!

But...

DePue: So, you don't know, Serbian or Croatian or...

- Cellini: I know that the Serbs were people that they did not like, so I am assuming that he was Croatian. By the time I wanted to ask those questions, he was long gone, and I was not raised around them, so I never really got to know them well. There was a lot of cross-current between my very English, very Protestant side, which was my dad, and my mom's very ethnic, old world, deeply Catholic side.
- DePue: Roman Catholic?
- Cellini: Yes, So mostly I kind of walked that fine line and tried not to ask too many questions.
- DePue: Was religion an important aspect of growing up in your family?
- Cellini: It was in that it was conflicted. It was bigger than it might have been because it was a source of tension. It's hard to explain that now, but at the time, Catholics were suspect of Rome. Think back in your lifetime; President Kennedy, whether or not a Catholic could be president of the United States, for heaven's sake, because wouldn't they have to take their orders from Rome? Well, that sort of permeated it. So it was difficult, and it was, for my brother and me, kind of an uncomfortable thing.
- DePue: Did you go to church?
- Cellini: We did. We did go.
- DePue: Which church then?
- Cellini: Well, I had a half a dozen hometowns. This is during the time that Illinois Bell... Every time my dad would get a promotion, we'd move. So, yes, we'd... We were in a lot of little towns, and we'd get comfortable there, and my brother and I would come home from school, and my mom would say, "All right, don't you cry. You're not allowed to cry. I've got something to tell you." "We know, we're going to move."
- DePue: Your family might as well have been in the military, moving that much, huh?
- Cellini: Well, maybe, so, yeah. But that's what we did. I look back now, and I think that was the way my dad, with not a lot of education, moved up and did pretty well.
- DePue: But I'm curious about whether you went to Protestant churches or Catholic churches.
- Cellini: Catholic churches.
- DePue: So, your mom...

Cellini: But I went to Protestant churches because I always... I never had a Catholic friend. Usually, the kids in the neighborhood were all Protestants. So, as I grew up, I went to a lot of Protestant churches because there was usually one Catholic Church in the town, and they never had much for kids, whereas the Protestant kids had all this cool youth group (DePue laughs) and Sunday night suppers and just really fun stuff to do. So, I tagged along with that stuff.

DePue: Tell me more about your mom's personality.

Cellini: Very hard, very tough, a very, very, capable person, no education at all. [She] quit school in the eighth grade to clean people's houses and take in laundries. This is as a young teenager. [She] helped support her family, and probably, in another time and other circumstances, could have done something with her life.

I don't know what it was my mom couldn't do. I have this funny story about when I was in high school. I came home one day and couldn't find my mom and went all over the house looking, looking, looking, calling her, couldn't find her. [I] finally went out in the yard and started calling her and looked up, and there was my mom, putting a new roof on our house, which maybe says it all (DePue laughs).

DePue: Which one of the parents do you take after?

Cellini: My dad, 100 percent.

DePue: In what respects?

Cellini: Books, history, education, words, writing. [I] used to have great discussions with him. We'd read the same books and talk about them, that side of it. I attribute a lot of what I grew up to be to that influence. I'm convinced that young women, to a great extent, get their sense of who they are from the messages, subliminally maybe, that they get from their fathers, and...

DePue: More than their mothers, you think?

Cellini: My mom was certainly an influence in my life, but I never wanted to disappoint him. I think that, in a great measure, I decided to marry Bill, based on what I learned knowing my father.

DePue: Do you think your brother had the same kind of relationship with your dad?

Cellini: No, no, it's kind of a sorrow really. My brother, I don't know that he ever felt really comfortable with either of my parents. I wish that weren't the case, but I don't know who he was closest to. He was extremely talented. I remember him as a little kid in his room, drawing. He went to the U of I [University of Illinois] on an art scholarship. He did very well career-wise. But I don't know that he had a very good, close relationship with either of my parents.

DePue: You said you moved around quite a bit. What are some of the towns you went from and to?

Cellini: Alton, Centralia, Mt. Vernon...Southern Illinois.

DePue: Any that you feel more attached to?

Cellini: No, I got something out of every place we ever lived. Far and away, the longest I ever lived anywhere is Springfield; this is home.

DePue: Moving around quite a bit, do you think that was a good thing for you, in retrospect?

Cellini: Good and bad. I envied kids who had families in the same town they lived in. I had a certain amount of envy for kids who had been in the same sort of environment. You get a little tired of being the new kid. Maybe tired isn't the... I think, because I have such a love of history, I'd have liked to have had probably a more complete history, instead of "That was when I lived there. This is when I lived there."

DePue: You mean your own personal story?

Cellini: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

DePue: What's the earliest memory you've got?

Cellini: Good question. I have very early memories, actually. We had a house that was on a hill above a military academy, and I remember as a very, very young child standing on the hill and looking at the military academy and watching the cadets march. I'd really be young then. I remember the end of World War II.

DePue: You wouldn't have been even five years old at that time.

Cellini: Yeah, yeah. I had an uncle who was in the military, and I remember going to the train station. They had troop trains then that ran all over the U. S. to drop off soldiers. Transportation wasn't that advanced at that time. We had an uncle. He was married to my mother's sister, and he was coming into the train station. We lived in Alton, Illinois, and I remember going to the train station and watching all the soldiers come off the trains and wondering about their stories and wondering about some of them, nobody met them.

Others, there were crowds of people and flowers and [I remember] feeling sad for the people who didn't have anybody and then looking off in the distance, and here was my uncle. He had some big bag on his back, which was probably all his possessions. They probably gave him a duffel or something. He's running, running, running. He runs up, and the first thing he does is take

off his military hat and puts it on my head. I had to be maybe—I don't know—four maybe, something like that.

Now that I'm a grandmother, I research what kids are at that age, and they say you really form your memories at about age four. Our granddaughter just turned four, and she clearly has sharp memories. Now, I don't know that they'll stay, but right now she remembers... For example, when Bill was incarcerated, she was two. We bought a house in Terre Haute, Indiana, lived there for a year, off and on. Bill was there nine months. We bought the house and moved into it in January, and we moved out of it when he left in November.

She and her mother and father, her parents, are very successful business people in the United Arab Emirates. They moved to Terre Haute—God bless them. Is that terrific?—and brought her, of course. She and I would do the neighborhood. It's her first brush of actually living in a real neighborhood because they were behind walls in the Middle East. You know, it's very closed. We'd take her tricycle, and we'd ride around, and we'd meet all the neighbors. She was two, two-and-a-half, three. How she remembers so much of it...

DePue: Wow.

Cellini: We talk about Terre Haute. She wants to go back to Terre Haute. We joined the museum there, and she and I would go to the museum. We'd play the musical instruments; they'd let you play, and we'd dig in the sand pile, and we'd do all this fun stuff. She talks to me about it now. We'll Skype, and she'll say, "You know, we should go back to Terre Haute."¹

DePue: That's where the family was together, as far as she's concerned.

Cellini: Maybe, that was it. We sat her down—it was a big house—and we set it up so our son and daughter-in-law, who lived in Chicago, they had a room. My sister-in-law and her significant other had a room. My other sister-in-law had... We all made sure that the house was always full, and maybe that was it. She just liked the joy of all of that. I haven't thought about it that way. It's a good way to frame it up.

DePue: I know you remember this. Remember the first book you read?

Cellini: Yes. I remember the first book I received, which was a book about Lincoln. It was under the Christmas tree. It was a gift from my father, a real book with a hard cover. This was long enough ago that to give a little kid a book was a compliment, and we read the book.

¹ Skype is a free service that enables people to make and receive free voice and video calls over the internet using a computer, web browser, or mobile phone. (<https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-skype-3426903>)

My father was from Springfield and loved history, was a great student of history and had actually gotten the history medal that the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] gave when he was in grade school or high school, grade school, maybe. [He] was very proud of that and passed that on to me. So, I knew a lot about Lincoln, as a very little kid.

I know it sounded really corny the other night when I said I only ever loved two men, but—probably more than that—but I really fell in love with Lincoln. Did I think, Oh, someday, I'm going to push this thing to get it done? No. But what it instilled in me is, this is one of the great stories in all of American history. There are others, and there are other really exciting, stellar men who've risen to the presidency. But this guy by sheer force of will pulled himself out of this dirt farmer existence and moved himself along and rose to all these challenges. And then, I think everybody ought to see the Steven Spielberg movie. Is it *Team of Rivals*?² Is that the one where he...

DePue: *Lincoln*, I think, is the name of the movie.³

Cellini: *Lincoln*, that's the one. It's based on *Team of Rivals* [by Doris Kearns Goodwin].

DePue: Right.

Cellini: Yeah. It's not an especially great movie but it...

DePue: (interrupts) You're talking about the one that deals with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, right?

Cellini: Yes, that's what I'm getting to ...because to me you get the quintessential Lincoln at that point. This is a guy who was a master at politics, and politics is a science of the way things get done. You see that woven through when you know his life, and you know the things he did. And it happened **here**. He figured out a way to pull people in, and not to use people but to facilitate through people. He did it here as a hometown guy. He took it around the circuit and he took it to Washington. He took it to Cooper Union. He just did it. I just always was fascinated and in awe and kind of in love with him.

Then, when I saw what was happening with the old capitol—I was a reporter then— and when I saw... I'd never seen historic preservation before.

² *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* is a 2005 book by Pulitzer Prize-winning American historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, published by Simon & Schuster. The book is a biographical portrait of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln and some of the men who served with him in his cabinet from 1861 to 1865. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_of_Rivals)

³ *Lincoln* is a 2012 American biographical historical drama film directed and produced by Steven Spielberg. The screenplay was loosely based the biography *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, and covers the final four months of Lincoln's life, focusing on his efforts to abolish slavery and involuntary servitude by having the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution passed.

Nobody was doing it. Are you aware of that? This was probably the first major thing happening in historic preservation. It was happening with the old capitol.

DePue: I definitely want to talk about that at some length. Do you mind if we discuss a few other things before we get to that point?

Cellini: You're in charge. You're in charge. You're in charge. I just ramble.

DePue: I didn't say this up front; I should have said this. The reason we're having this conversation is because you had an instrumental part, perhaps the most important part, in the creation of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum but also a long involvement with the Historic Preservation Agency. That's what this is all about. It's a discussion about that history.

It's so obvious, just listening to you already, that even from a very early age, it was all about the story. It was about the story of these people who weren't being met at the train and the story of Abraham Lincoln. It sounds like that's had such a powerful impact on you, even at a very early age. You must have been an observer; you liked to watch and learn.

The 1950s is an interesting time in American history for young kids to be growing up, the '50s and into the early '60s, but especially the '50s in your case. How would you describe your childhood? We have a tendency today to kind of romanticize that period of childhood.

Cellini: I would say mine was typical, normal. I might have been a little different, in that I read newspapers, so I kind of followed the news.

DePue: Politics of the day as well?

Cellini: Yeah, because I had my dad there to discuss politics. I always knew who my parents were going to vote for. Most of my friends, their parents probably didn't even vote.

DePue: Who were they voting for?

Cellini: My parents were Republicans, so usually they voted that way. My mom would sometimes like somebody from the other side, but essentially... I don't know why it was they were Republicans. It may have had something to do with, on my mom's side, because her dad had been a coal miner, and they had been the Progressive Union and the strikes and all that. But I remember that they always supported Republican candidates. The first person I ever voted for was Jack Kennedy [Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1960].

DePue: So you broke with the family in that respect?

Cellini: Yeah, but who wasn't in love with Jack Kennedy?

- DePue: Do you remember having discussions with your dad about things like the Civil Rights Movement in the late '50s, about the Little Rock Nine in 1957, those kinds of issues?⁴
- Cellini: Yes, and it was something that my parents didn't really understand. My dad, and more so my mother, was extremely prejudiced. You would think, with her background, she wouldn't be, but very anti-black. So most of the time I didn't raise those issues because it was so contentious. I had a black friend at school who was ten times smarter than I was, top of her class.
- DePue: Is this high school?
- Cellini: Yes, early high school, and could not... Was bluntly told I could not associate with her because... Now my dad probably would have been fine with it, but my mother was just... That also constricts, sort of, your thinking at that time.
- DePue: Did you obey your mom?
- Cellini: Yeah, I had no choice. I lived in their home. I followed their rules. In my heart, I thought she was bigoted.
- DePue: Where did you go to high school?
- Cellini: I went to high school in Mt. Vernon, Illinois. [I] was lucky; I got to go all four years at one school, loved high school. Who doesn't love high school? You either love high school or you really don't like high school.
- DePue: Those are especially important years not to be moving around.
- Cellini: Yes, yeah. My brother, unfortunately, did not because he was older, so he had to change schools. But I got to have four years at one school. So I had a set of friends. I go to my high school reunions. I still go off to Mt. Vernon, Illinois. It was a big, consolidated high school. There were 400 kids in my graduating class. It was a big school, and I just loved it. I thought it was such a great, carefree, happy time.
- DePue: It sounds like you were involved in lots of extracurricular activities.
- Cellini: Yeah, editor of the school paper, a little on the bookish side, but...
- DePue: Not into the sports?

⁴ "The Little Rock Nine" was the name given to a group of nine African American students enrolled in Little Rock Central High School in 1957. Their enrollment was followed by the Little Rock Crisis, in which the students were initially prevented from entering the racially segregated school by Orval Faubus, the Governor of Arkansas. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Rock_Nine)

- Cellini: No. I'm very klutzy. I work out; I'm serious about that, but I've never been... I played basketball because we played basketball, but I was never very good at it.
- DePue: That was the years too, when there weren't many opportunities for girls in sports.
- Cellini: No, and you had to play... If you can believe this, you played girls' rules. So you played on one side of the court. Are you familiar with this ...?
- DePue: Growing up in Iowa, that was the rage of all the small towns in Iowa. It was six on six girls' basketball. You stayed on one side of the court. But, the little towns loved that sport. I don't know if that was the case...
- Cellini: No.
- DePue: My understanding is that wasn't the case in Illinois.
- Cellini: No, it was not. But Friday night football and then basketball. I actually learned the rules and knew the... I was always really interested in what the referee's calls were. Everybody else was like, "There's Johnny Jones out there. Can you believe how cute he is?" (DePue laughs) I was more like, "Why did they call that shot that way?"
- DePue: Were you reporting on the sports activities of the school?
- Cellini: I was not because girls didn't do that. I wrote lots and lots of features, lots of interviews. I'm convinced everybody has a story. Like Bill says, "You don't have conversations. You interview people." (DePue laughs)
- DePue: This won't be a surprise when you answer, but what were your best subjects?
- Cellini: English, history, anything in the humanities. I was musical.
- DePue: Did you play an instrument?
- Cellini: Unh-uh.
- DePue: Sing in the choir?
- Cellini: Sang in the choirs, always, all of that stuff. But, math and science were a struggle. I liked the story side of science, how they got to where they got to and what was the background behind it, but math is still...it just eludes me, always has.
- DePue: Did you work in high school?
- Cellini: Always, always had a job. I started out as a candy striper and got hired by the hospital and did probably more things than a kid should do. But I was always

interested. I actually thought about a career in medicine for a while because I was so... I was very empathetic and still am. I sit on a whole bunch of boards now that are all involved with kids and...

DePue: But, going into medicine or nursing or something like that would require a lot more science.

Cellini: It would have, yeah. I toyed with the idea of nursing for a while, but realistically I didn't think I could handle it.

DePue: Now, from what you've already said, I assume you grew up with an understanding that you were going to go to college. Would that be right?

Cellini: Un-huh.

DePue: That was your dad's understanding?

Cellini: That was it, never a doubt.

DePue: What did you think you wanted to do with your life, beyond college even?

Cellini: I majored in journalism. The idea of being a reporter, of telling people's stories, that was hugely interesting to me.

DePue: Before we get beyond the high school years, is there anybody else who had an especially strong influence on your life? Would you say your father had the strongest influence on you?

Cellini: Certainly, my dad, yeah during those formative years. I had several teachers, my social studies teacher my freshman year, who I actually still hear from. Which is amazing. He was very young, first year teaching, so he was open to anything. He had us... I can't remember who was running that campaign, but he had us all take an issue and research it and present it and...

DePue: For a presidential campaign?

Cellini: Uh-huh.

DePue: It probably would have been Eisenhower.

Cellini: Yeah, I guess it would have been that, now that I think about it. Yeah, he was influential. I had a world history teacher that I just... She did it strictly lectures, more like a college course, and I loved those classes. I liked English.

DePue: The literature side of English or the mechanic side of English?

Cellini: I liked lit., but what I remember is they dissected it to the point that it lost its flavor. I hated things like diagramming sentences and all that stuff (DePue laughs). I understood the value of it, but the essence of the story is what

matters. That's the thing that gives you a message you can take into your life, not subjects and predicates.

DePue: I'm not sure they diagram sentences anymore in school.

Cellini: Oh, I hope not.

DePue: You wouldn't bemoan that one?

Cellini: Oh yeah, remember that stuff? You're younger than I am, so maybe...

DePue: I do remember that. Were you dating in high school?

Cellini: Always, yeah.

DePue: Steady or...

Cellini: Yeah. I never had trouble getting dates.

DePue: That was back in the days when the girls had to wait for the boys to ask, I would assume.

Cellini: Yeah, oh yeah, but, no, socially I've...

DePue: You wanted to do journalism. Where did you decide to go to college?

Cellini: I flirted with the idea of going to Mizzou [University of Missouri], and it was pretty expensive. They had the best journalism school in the Midwest. I didn't know... My brother was just finishing at the U of I, so my mom and dad had had that as a burden.

DePue: So, they were helping pay for his college?

Cellini: Oh yeah, yeah. My dad said, "That's what parents do." And my brother and I worked. We always had jobs, and we always put money aside. We understood that that was part of what you did as a responsible person. But still, that was tough, heavy-duty tuition.

I had the advisor to the school newspaper—I was the editor—she was from Kentucky, and she had been to a school called Murray State in Murray, Kentucky. It's a university now; it was a college then. She had been editor of the paper there and had met her husband there. She advised me I ought to go look at Murray. She said, "You can be editor of the paper. You could get a lot of what you need there, and the school is very affordable."

So I looked at Murray. I really liked it. It was a beautiful campus, very southern, very genteel, very gentle, and so I went there. [I] edited the paper, was pretty successful. At the end of my sophomore year, I'd pretty much done it all and really wanted something bigger. So I transferred to SIU [Southern

Illinois University] in Carbondale, a journalism major. [I] went into a sequence they had for magazine writing; did that, did the sorority girl thing...

DePue: What was the sorority?

Cellini: Tri Sigma...and had a ball, loved it, loved college. The only problem with college is it ends (both laugh).

DePue: You loved high school. You loved college.

Cellini: Yeah, wow, what's not to love?

DePue: You were working on the school newspaper. What was your job on the newspaper?

Cellini: I was features editor. I did not want to be editor. I did not want that kind of responsibility; that was more managerial. I just wanted to write and features were...

DePue: In features, you get a chance to learn somebody's personal story a little bit more?

Cellini: Oh yeah, yeah, absolutely. It's all stories, and everybody's got a story. Somebody sits down with you and says, "I don't know why you're interviewing me." I remember a class I took, gosh, sophomore year. We had to interview the person sitting in back of us. It was this really pretty dull girl, and I said, "Well, tell me about..." "No, no, no. I'm from a little town. I live on a farm." I said, "Tell me what farming is like. Tell me, do you have any animals? What did you...?" I remember, at the end of it she said, "I never talk to anybody this way." I said, "You're really a very interesting person." "No, I'm not." I said, "Yeah." Everybody's got a story. And I wrote her up.

DePue: What were your impressions of Carbondale?

Cellini: The campus was... These are the years of Delyte Morris, who was president of SIU and took it from a normal school, remember...

DePue: Which means a teaching college...

Cellini: Yes, yeah, the normal schools started... I think that they were land grant, and I think they were mainly funded through federal and state, when they were trying to turn out enough teachers for... The schools just exploded because of the Baby Boom. Delyte Morris came in and figured out that if you ingratiated yourself to the Illinois Legislature, and you made your case to the feds, you could build a big school.

By the time I transferred to SIU, it was exploding. He had new buildings going up everywhere, and they were cutting ribbons right and left. It

was the heyday. He also was smart in that he... They didn't just hire academics, so I had teachers who had been real journalists with real newspapers and magazines. Those were the classes that were just terrific. You got to do stuff, and they showed you how to place your stuff. I actually sold things when I was in college.

DePue: Sold things?

Cellini: Sold articles.

DePue: Oh, so this would be to local newspapers?

Cellini: I sold one to *Ford Times*. The Ford Motor Company used to do their own magazine. I sold an article to them. I don't know what it was about. But I actually got a check for it because this guy [the instructor]... "You guys are going to have to make a living. For God's sake. Here, let me show you how it's done."

DePue: That's got to be exciting to actually get paid for doing all of this.

Cellini: Yeah, yeah, I got paid for my job on the school paper.

DePue: Really?

Cellini: Yeah, SIU was a very progressive place. It was...

DePue: Later on SIU got the reputation for being quite the party school as well.

Cellini: I was there before that era, really. I lived on Greek Row, but life was so much tamer then, and frankly, I was always a good girl.

DePue: You graduated in 1964, correct?

Cellini: Uh-huh.

DePue: I have to ask a journalism major questions like, do you remember the Cuban Missile Crisis?⁵

Cellini: Sure.

DePue: October of '62.

Cellini: Sure. I was going to quit school and join something for John Kennedy. I felt I had to do something for my country.

⁵ The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 was a direct and dangerous confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War and was the moment when the two superpowers came closest to nuclear conflict. (<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/cuban-missile-crisis#:~:text=The%20Cuban%20Missile%20Crisis%20of,came%20closest%20to%20nuclear%20conflict>).

DePue: The Peace Corps maybe?⁶

Cellini: Something. I remember I had a girlfriend, who was a sorority sister, actually, who was the only female in ROTC at SIU.⁷

DePue: Air Force ROTC? They had Army and Air Force, I believe.

Cellini: She was Army. She was Army, and she was very much a renegade. I don't know how in the world she pledged a sorority. She was not cut out for that, I don't think. I was always finding somebody who was off the reservation a little, and she and I [wondered], what can we do for our country? We were in love with Kennedy.

DePue: So, that famous inauguration speech...

Cellini: "Ask not..." I remember when Sargent Shriver came to the campus and talked to us about the Peace Corps. "Gosh, should we join the Peace Corps? Could we do that?"

DePue: Were you also enamored with Jackie Kennedy?

Cellini: Oh, who wasn't? Do you realize she was thirty-two, and she was First Lady? One of those silly people, I remember where I was. I turned on the radio. I was one of those few people who... If you had a break in classes, most people go to the student union and hang out and ate. I'd go back to the sorority house and do whatever I needed to do, and I always turned on the radio to listen to the news because I was a news junkie even then. I heard it on the radio, and I thought, Who can I tell?

DePue: Are you talking about President Kennedy's assassination?

Cellini: Yeah, yeah. They broke into the news show. I'll tell you. Was it Edward R. Murrow? Is that who? No, it was Walter Cronkite.⁸ They had Walter Cronkite on.

DePue: I think I can even picture that because he took his glasses off when he was reporting that.

Cellini: Yeah, but this was radio, so they must have broadcast him from...

⁶ The Peace Corps, established by President John F. Kennedy, is an independent agency and volunteer program run by the United States Government providing international social and economic development assistance. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_Corps)

⁷ The ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) is a group of college- and university-based officer training programs for training commissioned officers of the United States Armed Forces. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reserve_Officers%27_Training_Corps)

⁸ Walter Leland Cronkite Jr. was an American broadcast journalist who served as anchorman for the CBS Evening News for 19 years. During the 1960s and 1970s, he was often cited as "the most trusted man in America" after being so named in an opinion poll. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Cronkite)

- DePue: What was your reaction when you heard the news?
- Cellini: (long pause) I think I thought about Mrs. Kennedy because we all wanted to look like Jackie Kennedy. Everybody who got married when I got married, their entire bridal party wore pillbox hats. It was just the thing then. She had such a profound influence, and I remember thinking about her. She was a beautiful young woman. I believed in the dream. It wasn't until I read all this stuff later (both laugh) that I got a different view.
- DePue: I remember when you mentioned this earlier, you said, "Who can I tell?" So, there's the journalist's side of you.
- Cellini: How can I be first with the news? Here's a scoop.
- DePue: Yeah, and that wouldn't be the typical response of people hearing that news at the time. But, everybody remembers that day.
- Cellini: Well, you saw the thing on *Saturday Night Live* about—this was years ago—about...⁹ It was a spoof on my generation. Everybody remembers where they were when they heard about Kennedy. They were trying to explain it to kids or to people who were younger, and they said, "Well, yeah, I was at Boston College, and I read about it in a book, that Kennedy had been shot. I didn't realize Kennedy had been shot." Well, it was generational. Unless you were on the ground, and you knew it, you'd been... It was a John Belushi thing.¹⁰ I don't know why I still remember that. But we all knew.
- DePue: It sounds like you were working all the way through college as well. What did you do?
- Cellini: Um-hmm. Worked on the paper.
- DePue: Oh, that's right. Now that you were getting close to graduating, 1963 and 1964 timeframe, you've got to decide what kind of journalism you actually want to pursue. I would guess that a lot of the guys, they start in sports, but maybe they tend towards crime or politics or something like that. What did you think you wanted to do with all of this?
- Cellini: I just knew I wanted to write. I knew I wanted to tell people's stories. It was one of the few things I was good at.
- DePue: Were you thinking more in newspapers or magazines?

⁹ Saturday Night Live (also known as SNL) is an American late-night live television sketch comedy and variety show. The show premiered on October 11, 1975. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturday_Night_Live)

¹⁰ John Adam Belushi was an American comedian, actor and musician, and one of the seven original cast members of the NBC sketch comedy show *Saturday Night Live*. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Belushi)

- Cellini: I had a couple of offers. I did an internship for Sears one summer in Chicago, and I wrote advertising copy for them.¹¹ They offered me a job, and I'd seriously considered going to Chicago and working for Sears. That was advertising, and my heart really wasn't in it. The offer was a good one, and it was for a kid right out of college and for a woman, especially.
- DePue: I would imagine it was probably better pay than going into newspapers, something like that.
- Cellini: Yes, yes, it was, yeah. They were looking, at that point, to hire women and to broaden their scope. So it was...
- DePue: To appeal to the people who were spending the money, probably.
- Cellini: Yeah, and it was a good opportunity, where before, if you'd gone in, you would have been offered a secretarial job. They actually were recruiting young women. They'd have programs where they'd show us all that Sears had to offer. Sears was a big company then. You could do this with your talents or you could do that. So I seriously considered it.
- DePue: Your mom sounds more traditional in terms of her cultural values and things. What did she think about you being a career woman?
- Cellini: I think she was conflicted. I think half of her was very proud, and the other half... There was a certain amount of envy that went with it too. I had a complicated relationship with my mom; maybe, a lot of people do. I always loved my mom. It was hard to like her. But, she kind of yielded to... I was so much my father that she was maybe a little in awe. It was okay, and when my mom stepped up in my life, my mom stepped up. I have good memories of my mom from that.
- DePue: Where did you land your first job?
- Cellini: I came to Springfield because I didn't have any money, and my mom and dad were here, and I could live for free. I interviewed at the *Journal-Register*...¹²
- DePue: Was it the *Journal*...?
- Cellini: ...which was then two newspapers, two totally separate newspapers, and...
- DePue: One company running both papers?

¹¹ Sears, Roebuck and Co., commonly known as Sears, is an American chain of department stores founded in 1892. It began as a mail ordering catalog company, then began opening retail locations in 1925, the first in Chicago, Illinois. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears>)

¹² The *State Journal-Register* is the only local daily newspaper for Springfield, Illinois, and its surrounding area. It was founded in 1831 as the *Sangamo Journal*, and describes itself as "the oldest newspaper in Illinois." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_State_Journal-Register)

Cellini: Yes, yes, it was owned by Copley Press, but they were two separate staffs and the whole shot. [I] interviewed there, wasn't sure what I wanted to do. My brother was working here in Springfield, and I could live at home with my parents for nothing, which is a pretty good deal. My brother said, "Why don't you stick around Springfield a while? This is what I did when I got out of college, and you could save some money and decide what you wanted to do later on." I really hadn't been home very much at all. I'd been away summers, working. I thought, You know what? I'll do this.

They were just starting a new newspaper, a weekly, the *Springfield Sun*. It was a younger group of people. Anyway, I went down and interviewed, and they hired me right away. And I can pretty much do anything I wanted to do.

DePue: Now, this is a newspaper that has nothing to do with the *Journal* or the *Register*.

Cellini: No, no, and it died. It lasted maybe three or four years. But I'd have an idea, and the editor would say, "Oh, okay, go do it." Then, I said, "I'm doing all these features. Why don't we do a bridal section, and we'll have the ad guys sell all the ads?" "Well, what's that mean?" I said, "We can do it." I said, "As a matter of fact, I'll sell the ads." So, I put this whole thing together and wrote all the copy for it and did all the layouts, sold all the ads, did the whole thing, and they were so knocked out. They said, "You're wasting your time writing stories. Go into advertising." (DePue laughs) I didn't go to college so I could sell ads.

So, then I ended up going to the *Journal-Register* and went into... There was the women's department at that time, and [I] worked for a terrific boss named Pauline Telford, who...

DePue: Pauline... What was the last name?

Cellini: Pauline Telford, T-e-l-f-o-r-d, who had been a reporter there, had started out... She was probably the first woman that ever got hired there. She was really a mentor to me and gave me all the plum assignments. It was just great.

DePue: I assume primarily these are human interest stories that you're pursuing...

Cellini: Yes, yeah, yeah.

DePue: ...not the hard news stories.

Cellini: No, no. I can do hard news, who, what, where, when, why, you know, but who wants to do that? Yeah, the story is always under here.

DePue: But the stories you're writing aren't getting on the front page.

Cellini: No, but she liked me, so I got good placement, and I won the Copley Ring of Truth Award.

DePue: What was the award?

Cellini: It was called Copley Ring of Truth Award.¹³ They gave them for sports writing and news, hard news, and features, and I won.

DePue: Copley, at that time, was that just locally Springfield?

Cellini: No, Copley was out of California. They owned a chain of papers all across the country, and a lot of my stuff appeared in their national papers as well.

DePue: So, winning that award was quite a prestigious accomplishment.

Cellini: Yeah, it really was, and I was very young. So it was, yeah...

DePue: This is also during the timeframe... I'd assume we're talking about '65, '66, that timeframe, when the Vietnam War was starting to warm up.

Cellini: No, no, no, this is...

DePue: The Civil Rights Movement was going on and the Student Rights movement.^{14, 15}

Cellini: Yeah, which was happening totally out of my purview. I met Bill, and Bill is older than I am. He was still living at home, an Italian boy. He really was looking for a wife. I was not looking to get married. I didn't know whether I ever would get married. But, that's what women did then. It was expected of you.

My plan was that I would always work, always write, and that was what I was going to do with my life. Bill was very... He was a comer, politically. So we got married. I'm getting ahead of myself but...

DePue: I wanted to ask you a few more questions.

Cellini: Okay, let's do that.

¹³ The "Ring of Truth" annual awards for excellence in reporting, editing and news photography were inaugurated by James Strohn Copley, chairman of the corporation publishing Copley Newspapers in California and Illinois. He also was chairman of the board of Copley News Service, publisher of *The San Diego Union and Evening Tribune* and editorial page editor of *The Union*, the "flagship" of his publishing empire.

¹⁴ The 1954–1968 civil rights movement in the United States was preceded by a decades-long campaign by African Americans and their like-minded allies to end legalized racial discrimination, disenfranchisement and racial segregation in the United States. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights_movement)

¹⁵ An outgrowth of the Civil Rights Movement, the Student Rights movement began when students who had participated in the Civil Rights marches brought that same activism right back to the college campuses. (<https://www.hiplanet.com/hip/a-trip-thru-the-sixties/a-trip-through-the-sixties-the-student-rights-movement/>)

DePue: How did you meet Bill in the first place, where and how?

Cellini: I was working for the *Springfield Sun* at the time, and there was a contest that they had for grade school or high school kids or something, a writing contest. They asked the media to come and judge it, members of the media. I represented the newspaper I was working for. We were supposed to read all these essays. This young city councilman, Italian guy, was in charge of it. We read all these essays. I think we started at breakfast, and we were there all through lunch and into the afternoon because you had these piles and piles and piles to read. It was the radio guys and everybody from... I was the only female there.

I remember thinking, These guys are not taking this seriously (both laugh). I read them all, and I'm leading the discussion. Somebody says, "You know, I don't think the kid really wrote this thing." I said something about, "Well, I don't think we're here to make value judgments," They all looked at me like I was from Mars. It was maybe the first time that I noticed that Bill kind of got it, what I was trying to say to the guys at the table.

So, he started calling me afterwards. He's about eight years older than I am, and at the time, that was a big jump.

DePue: You said he was an alderman at the time.

Cellini: No, he was the commissioner of streets. This is back before Springfield had aldermanic government. They had the commission form of government, so it was this odd thing where you ran at-large, and you were elected a commissioner. The only person who actually ran for a specific office was the mayor. Then the commissioners got together, after the election, and decided who would run the various aspects of city government.

DePue: It impresses me that... You say he was older than you, quite a bit older than you, but he still would have been a very young guy to be running for office like that.

Cellini: Yeah. He was working on a master's at the U of I. I'm not sure what he was doing for a living. Anyway, he was already in office by the time I met him. But he was elected, I think, when he was in grad school, yeah, doing all of that.

DePue: Wow.

Cellini: Bill has always been extraordinary.

DePue: Was he one of Springfield's most eligible bachelors at the time?

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: Obviously, you accepted the date. Was that the first time he called and asked you?

Cellini: No. I assumed that he was married. People got married then. I thought, What's this old guy doing calling me? (both laugh) The whole thing was just so silly. Finally, one of his friends—actually, it was a guy working at the paper, now that I think about it—he said, “Why won't you go out with Bill Cellini?” I said, “Are you kidding?” He said, “No, he's not married. As a matter of fact, he lives at home on the north side of Springfield with his mom and dad.” I said, “He's a city father.” He said, “Grow up.”

So, on our second date, we were at a big St. Patrick's Day party, and everybody was really drinking a lot. He said something about... Oh, most everybody there were people who were married. His friends were all married people. I said something about “All these people are married.” He said, “Yeah.” He said, “Well, whenever you're ready, we'll get married.” This was our second date.

DePue: (laughing) What was your response when he said that?

Cellini: I said, “Maybe we both better not have any more to drink.” (both laugh) It was just sort of... Years later, when people would say, “Well, how did your husband propose?” I said, “Well, he never really did. He just, ‘Whenever you're ready to get married... I realize you're younger than I am; it will probably take a while, but...’”

DePue: It sounds like he made up his mind much quicker than you did on this whole subject.

Cellini: He was, what, thirty-two or thirty-three or something. All his friends were married, and he was living at home. His brother, who was my age, was already married and had kids. So, yeah, I don't know that it was like, “Wow, this is the woman I want to spend my life with.” It's more, “Well, she's Catholic; she's educated; she's reasonably intelligent; she's young enough that she's probably programmable.” It was more a merger than it was a (both laugh)...

DePue: I would guess that he was physically attracted as well, that you were a very lovely young lady at the time.

Cellini: I don't know. I never played on that. That might get you in the door, but that wasn't... I never traded on any of that.

DePue: Over a few dates and over a few months, whatever the timeframe was, I'm sure that you got to know Bill quite a bit better. What was it about Bill that attracted you?

- Cellini: He was, is one of the most likable people I've ever encountered. First of all, he's genius smart. He is organized, where I'm not. He has the other half of... The things that I would have liked to have had, he had. I think he saw that in me. He knew what he wanted to do with life, and he knew he needed a mate to do it, and we just seemed to complement.
- DePue: In what way? How would you describe his personality?
- Cellini: (long pause) He's very engaging. He's very warm and embracing with people, but there's a humility about him that is genuine. He's a kid from the north end of Springfield who never left it behind and never wanted to, and that shows. There's a genuineness about Bill that, to this day, Bill has been... What's the... *If you could walk with kings and have a common touch of everyone, matters to you but none too much...* That pretty much describes Bill.¹⁶
- DePue: Are you more of the extrovert of the two?
- Cellini: Situationally, we're different. I interview people. I don't have conversations. So, yeah, we are very, very different, but the secret of our success is that, at the core, our values are exactly the same.
- DePue: How else are you very different? I guess that's what I'm looking for.
- Cellini: Intellectually, our interests are quite different. We'll see a movie, and I'll dissect all the motivations in it, and he's like, right across the top, "Was the music any good?" (DePue laughs) I'm a prober and a digger. He's more results-oriented: "What does it take to get from here to there?"
- DePue: And you're looking for understanding why and how things happen?
- Cellini: Yes, yeah, who, what, why, where, how, yeah, the precepts of it. But, like you and your wife, just having dinner with the two of you, I thought, How did these people ever have a date, let alone a successful marriage?
- DePue: We are a little different.
- Cellini: Holy moly, yeah! How long have you been married?
- DePue: Since 1981, so 33 years, I guess. But enough about me. How long did it take the two of you to decide to get married? It sounds like it took him the second date.
- Cellini: Yeah. It wasn't that, "Wow, I met the greatest woman ever." It was, "I need to get married."
- DePue: Do you remember meeting Bill's family?

¹⁶ Words from Rudyard Kipling's poem, "If—"

Cellini: Oh yeah.

DePue: I would imagine that was a big thing.

Cellini: I expected them to really check me out, "What do you mean? He's our fair-haired boy." Instead, it was, "Take him. Oh my God, we don't want him home forever." I laugh about it. I could have had two heads. "Marry Billy!" (both laugh) So, it was not a hard sell.

DePue: Was Janis [Cellini, Bill's younger sister] still living at home at the time?

Cellini: Oh yeah, and she was the same. She's always so weird, "You really ought to marry him. Somebody ought to marry him. He's so weird." They are as close as they can possibly be, even to this day. He's like another dad to her.

DePue: What is your anniversary date?

Cellini: We were married June 11, 1966.

DePue: A June bride.

Cellini: Yeah. We picked June because it had something to do with politics, and Bill was in the National Guard and had to go away to camp. So, we just picked...no big romantic thing. It was, "Ah, okay."

DePue: Apparently it was a stylish wedding from what you described.

Cellini: Yeah, it was huge, absolutely huge. But he was running for re-election, so we invited every precinct committeeman and their family. My father and mother were like, "We're going to do this?" I said, "I know. It's not what I want either."

DePue: What was your thought then about continuing work after marriage?

Cellini: Oh, I was absolutely... Yeah, I was going to have a career.

DePue: So, you stayed with the *Journal-Register*?

Cellini: Uh-huh.

DePue: Were you getting articles in both papers at the time?

Cellini: Yes, yes, I was writing for both papers, and I was headed for an executive position there. That was my goal. That was unusual back then. Bill very much wanted a family, and I was lukewarm about the idea, but I knew that that came with the package. I was raised Catholic, and I understood that as well. I can't say I had a burning desire to have kids.

Anyway, I had a very, very hard time having children, multiple miscarriages and then had our son, who was born with profound birth defects. There was no way I could continue with a career. This was a child who... It's a miracle that he's forty-five. He has lots of challenges, but he's married. He's productive. He's smart. He does well.

DePue: Is this Bill, Junior?

Cellini: This is Bill, Junior. But it was life-changing, to say the least. It set me on a whole different course.

DePue: So, it was not possible, after his birth, for you to continue working?

Cellini: No, no.

DePue: Did you quit the job only after he was born?

Cellini: I had no choice but to... I actually left with a story in my typewriter and went to the hospital—it was a very, very difficult time—and stayed home on bed rest. I just couldn't continue. Then...

DePue: When was he born?

Cellini: He was born in 1969, and he was... We lost several pregnancies before him. He was born with what's called a gastroschisis. Everything but his liver was on the outside of his body, and there was no hope for him. We were at Children's Memorial in Chicago for months, and we finally found a doctor who could work with us. It was just a whole series of operations and failure to thrive.

DePue: How did that experience change you, or did it?

Cellini: It certainly changed the course of my life. It made me a mom, and it gave me a perspective into myself that I didn't know was there. It sounds really corny, but these fierce, protective... Maybe [for the] first time in my life there was somebody I'd give up my life for, and that was my kid. So, life changed.

DePue: I that same time period—this may be just the years leading up to this—while you're still, I think, working at the newspaper, I understand you were the style editor at that time.

Cellini: Um-hmm.

DePue: Was that considered an executive job?

Cellini: Probably. The guys were all getting paid more than I was, but that was back when women didn't know they could have a say. But, yeah, it was a good job.

DePue: Any particular jobs you remember during that timeframe?

Cellini: I remember really getting to know Springfield. I'd get an idea for a feature. I'd meet someone. Because Bill was so active in the community, I'd get to meet people, and everybody has got a story. So, I was writing about, god, anybody I... We went to something, something with international visitors, and I met all these people who were from different countries. So I started picking off all those families and writing features about them. I don't know. I'd meet somebody who sold cars, so I'd write a feature about what it was like to run a car dealership and who bought cars, and what do cars cost?

DePue: I know there's one story in particular that you remember, and I think this is a good place for us to finish today. Tell me about watching the Old State Capitol be dismantled and then put together again.

Cellini: Ah, by then, I was doing freelance. I'd get an idea for a story, and I'd sell it someplace.

DePue: I understand this is from 1966 to 1969 that this was happening.

Cellini: Okay. I was still working then, okay. I got my dates wrong because I did sell some stories on that place.

DePue: That was during the [Governor] Otto Kerner administration.

Cellini: Yeah, yeah, okay, that was earlier then. I had never seen historic preservation, didn't know what it was and went down there and met this young, hotshot architect. Wally was as dumb as I was...

DePue: Wally Henderson.

Cellini: Wally Henderson. Dumb as I was in that you're fearless at that time. I'd interview him, and there'd be cranes moving walls and plaster flying everywhere, and I'm right... I look back now, and I said, "Where was OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970]?" (both laugh) Staircases would be out, and you'd crawl over things. Anyway, I did a series of articles on Wally. To know Wally was to be pulled into his orb. He was so much fun.

Years later, when I was freelancing for the *Journal-Register*—I'd gone back as a freelance feature writer—I did another feature on Wally, and we talked about those years and that which had been probably the highlight of his life. I said, "Do you realize how dangerous it was when we were done?" He said, "Well, yeah. But you were this good-looking girl reporter, and I could strut my stuff. I was this hotshot young architect."

There was no place in the United States where this was being done. When Wally went to architecture school, they were taught that in your lifetime as an architect, you will rebuild America's cities twice in your

working career because old buildings are not to save. They have a certain finite life; they do their usefulness, and then they're done. They tear them down; you build something new and modern. That was the thinking in this country then. You think what cars looked like then; you know, the new, the future, bigger fins. That was the prevailing feeling.

Otto Kerner was a different stripe of cat. He was Chicago Line—this is back when governors really lived in the mansion—he really was a guy about Springfield. I think he joined some men's group that was doing something about historic Springfield or something then—women weren't doing those kinds of things then—and they were going to take down the Old [State] Capitol. Kerner knew his history.

The old capitol was this really wretched building. When I was still working, press covered the last wedding in the Sangamon County Court chambers in the old capitol, and it was really a terrible, awful, dirty, crummy building. That was the last one because the building was going to come down. Otto Kerner says, "The building is going to be restored." He looked around Springfield and nobody... Who was doing anything like that? Wally and his partners...

DePue: Was Don Ferry one of the partners?

Cellini: Don Ferry and, oh, gosh, who was the other guy? I've got my notes there somewhere, a young partner, young associate probably. They figured out... I mean, literally, wrote their own...

DePue: It's a great story, and we've had the opportunity to interview Wally.

Cellini: Oh, okay, then you... Someplace I've got the story I did on Wally, which might help you.

DePue: I'd like to see that too. But, it's just amazing to me that you dismantle this. You number all of the blocks; you take them out to the state fairgrounds and you build this huge hole underneath for a...what, double-tier parking lot?

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: What did you think at the time about putting the Illinois State Historical Library underneath it as well? Did you even think about it at the time?

Cellini: I knew they were going to do it. I didn't realize what a mistake it was until, in the next part of my life, I became chairman of the Illinois State Historic Preservation Agency, another job for which I was totally unqualified.

DePue: I think this is probably a good place to finish today. So, if you don't mind, we'll call it a day and pick it up again.

Cellini: Great. That's super. That works out great. I can take a shower.

(end of transcript #1)

Interview with Julie Cellini

HP-A-L-2015-013.02

Interview #2: March 11, 2015

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, March 11, 2015. My name is Mark DePue, Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I've got my second session with Julie Cellini. Good afternoon.

Cellini: Good afternoon.

DePue: We should have started this about forty-five minutes ago...

Cellini: We should have.

DePue: ...but we've been talking about all kinds of other stuff before we got started here, which is always fun. Last time, we talked about your early life, meeting Bill, getting married, the challenge you had with the children early on. Before we get too much farther, I wanted to ask you if you had any comments. Do you remember when Bill became the director of the Illinois Department of Transportation? I believe it was a brand-new department. That would have been '69, maybe.

Cellini: Yeah, I think '69. Bill had been the downstate coordinator for a Peoria businessman named John Henry Altorfer, who wanted to be governor. I don't

know how Bill met him, but anyway Bill literally put Altorfer's on-the-ground campaign together for him at our kitchen table. Bill was streets commissioner for the city of Springfield at the time. He did it.

A great deal of it had to do with transportation in Illinois, which was in very sad shape. He did it in terms of transportation infrastructure, helped him with speeches... It was a good campaign, and Altorfer was quite a colorful candidate. He was pretty much out-moneyed by the Cook County sheriff, whose name was Dick Ogilvie [Richard B. Ogilvie, Illinois Governor 1969-1973].

When it was over, and we thought that probably Altorfer was going to win—I think it was close—we got a call at the house [from] Dick Ogilvie. He asked Bill if Bill would come to Chicago and meet with him for lunch. He offered Bill the job of secretary of transportation. Bill said, "I thought maybe you guys didn't like me much." Ogilvie is a tough talker, and he said, "Yeah, because you almost beat us." He didn't put it that way.

But, he said, "I really want to do something about the roads in Illinois. A lot of my campaign was about that. I saw what you did with the speeches for my opponent, and I'd like you to do that." So, Bill then became the director of roads and infrastructure or something; I don't remember what his first title was.

Then there was a movement around the country to create DOT, and states were then going to Department of Transportation. So Bill became, from that, the first Illinois secretary of transportation, again, under Ogilvie.

DePue: How old was he at that time? I think he was a pretty young man to have that kind of responsibility.

Cellini: Thirty-five, something like that, yeah. It was early on, but Bill is extremely smart, maybe genius. He'd be the first person to say, "Ridiculous." But Bill really, really is capable.

DePue: When he came into that position, I would think there may have been some expectations for you, as his wife, in terms of entertaining and getting into a different circle of friends and associates. Was that the case?

Cellini: Yeah, yeah. I remember when it was announced. It was on the front page of the newspaper, of course. It was a big, big deal because he was certainly Springfield's most popular city father at the time.

DePue: We're talking about an agency that's going to deal with lots and lots of money, both state and federal money, at the time.

Cellini: Oh, huge, yeah, roads and bridges and transportation and... It consolidated everything. It was enormous. So, I was on leave from the newspaper, trying to

hold onto a pregnancy, and was lying on the couch. I remember, we lived at 1445 North 4th Street. It was, to say the least, humble. I remember lying there on the couch because I wasn't supposed to move around or anything. It was a very boring time of my life. You can imagine.

There's this guy, and he is looking at the place. Then he steps back out, and then he looks at it again. And he looks at a piece of paper like, this can't be it. (DePue laughs) This can't be it. He knocks on the door, and I went over, and I said, "Excuse my appearance. I'm on bed rest." He said, "Can you tell me where the Cellinis live?" Anyway, it turned out it was the head of one of the many transportation associations, and he had a gift for Bill. Why he was there in the middle of the day, I don't know. But, that was sort of the...

I bring this up because that was the juxtaposition between how big this was and where we were in terms of our life. So, was I prepared for what was expected? No, but I... You figure things out, you know; you pivot; you move around. It was really fun and really exhilarating. I had been to the mansion before, to the executive mansion before, when Kerner [Illinois Governor, 1968-1974] was there, when Otto Kerner was there because Bill had been in city government, and Otto Kerner was very fond of Bill. But, I hadn't been in that big circle of things. We go from this pretty humble place where we lived and being just Springfield people to being statewide and beyond. Yeah, back then, wife of was very social. I don't remember it as particularly difficult and terribly challenging, maybe because I had a journalism background, so I'd spent a lot of my life interviewing people. Mostly you ask questions of people, and that starts a conversation.

So, it was four interesting years, punctuated by great personal difficulty because of our son and a lot of great kindness and support from all of those people who were... The cabinet always lived in Springfield then, so there were lots of people that we met and got to know.

I couldn't go back to work. I knew that that phase was over. I was going to be a freelancer. There were always plenty of opportunities to do other things too, but I found that I could be of great help to all these other wives, who were coming in not knowing Springfield.

John and Judy McCarter, we became good friends with them and traded off kids. We were actually with John when Judy had a terrible automobile accident. It happened that Bill had a car phone in his DOT car, and we were able to connect him with Judy and get him to the hospital. It was a very good time. And we still remain like very good friends with Brian and Sheila Whalen. Brian was Ogilvie's chief of staff. Every time we're in Chicago, they come in from the suburbs, and we all have dinner, and we talk about remember when.

DePue: I would assume you got to know Governor Ogilvie as well.

Cellini: I did. I did.

DePue: What did you think of him?

Cellini: I thought there were several different Governor Ogilvies. He was the tough Cook County sheriff, had that demeanor. You're probably aware that he had had some facial disabilities, and it really caused him to not be able to emote. He had this cold, hard, tough façade, and he was this warm straight-shooter underneath it, not that far underneath it. We would go to the mansion for things, and he would...

This was during one of... I lost a series of pregnancies during those years, one right after another, and then had this very difficult pregnancy, holding onto our son. Through it all, I still had obligations that you step up and do it. He was so kind to me, and I remember at one particular party... I had been on bed rest, and my doctor said, "Yeah, you can get up and go." It was important that Bill have a wife with him. I don't know who was there, someone from the federal government. It was a big deal. Governor Ogilvie got this little gold chair, and he would carry it around and come over and sit beside me at the party. "You know, you really should not be getting up and moving around that much. You ought to be more careful." I'd say, "Well, you know, it's a party." "Well, we'll sit here, and people will come over." That was Dick Ogilvie.

DePue: He has a reputation among a lot of Illinois politicians today. When I ask them the question, "Who do you look back and admire most as governor?" His name comes up a lot.

Cellini: Have you ever seen the Mike Royko [Chicago newspaper columnist] column about him, "A Governor with Guts"?

DePue: I have not.

Cellini: It appeared in the paper the day after the election, when Dan Walker defeated him. It talked about all of the drawbacks to being Dick Ogilvie, the cold, hard, tough Cook County sheriff [who] didn't emote, and then Dan Walker, who was all flash and, "I'm going to walk this state from here to there," and what Ogilvie did. He populated his cabinet with literally the best and the brightest. For him to take the key person, who almost beat him in the primary, and give him the top job in his cabinet... That was Bill. What's that say about what he was made of? He did that. You look at all the superstars that were in that cabinet.

I remember when he put in the income tax, and everybody who knew politics at all said, "You're a one-termer." I remember him saying, "I did not run for governor to preside over the destruction of the State of Illinois, the crumbling of its infrastructure. And if I'm a one-termer, I'm a one-termer."

DePue: After you say that, you've got to wonder how he'd feel about Illinois politics today, wouldn't you?

Cellini: I don't think he ever would have gotten into it. I didn't ever know him as well as I would have wanted to. I knew her [Mrs. Ogilvie] better. She was easy and fun and kind of sparkly. I actually wrote some speeches for her.

DePue: What was her first name?

Cellini: Dorothy. She literally disappeared after he died. I never saw her again. She kind of faded away. They were quite a couple. It was four very interesting [years], very.... Life was changing; culture was certainly changing.

DePue: Sixty-nine to '73, January '73, there was a lot of American history in those years.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: After you got through that... Let me ask you this before we get beyond it too far. What were your impressions about that '72 election campaign? That's one of the more memorable and eventful gubernatorial campaigns, in part because that was such a lively Democratic Primary. Everybody was assuming Paul Simon was the heir apparent. He would be the logical choice for the Democratic candidate, and then there's, as you mentioned, this guy, Dan Walker, who decides to walk across the state, and the whole time he's walking, to go after the Richard J. Daley Administration. I kind of set it up a little bit too much for you, but what were your feelings about that whole series of events...

Cellini: I can't say I knew Paul Simon. I had been in his company, respected him enormously. One of my closest friends since college is Julie Dirksen, and Julie's husband then, Len, was working on the Simon Campaign. Here I was (laughs), but it's never been any kind of problem or any kind of anything. For example, she's very close to the Durbins. I worked with Dick on a mayoral campaign here in town. Dick Durbin is... He is a treasure.

When my daughter-in-law couldn't figure out how to get her citizenship... Here she was with two master's degrees and working in the Chicago Public School System and paying an immigration attorney on a teacher's salary [and] could not get to first base at all. I called Durbin's office, and they said, "Look, this happens all the time. Tell her to stop paying an immigration attorney. There's no such thing. She needs to..." They didn't grease the skids for her, but they were just so kind. They always have been. Dick Durbin is... He is an outstanding public servant.

I'm sorry I digressed. Back to when Paul Simon didn't get it. Everybody was just stunned. We thought, This is not going to be the campaign that we were gearing up for because I was writing position papers,

and it was going to be a very intellectual, deep... It wasn't going to be on personalities and bow ties and silly glasses that Ogilvie was wearing at the time. It was going to be substantive. Instead, it was just this...

It was really too bad because Illinois was headed in a very good direction at that point, certainly with the infrastructure, which Governor Ogilvie was very, very concerned about, roads, bridges, buildings, but lots of other things, too. He cared about mental health. He cared about education. He was a serious person. It was his loss.

DePue: That gets us to early 1973. At that point in time, was your focus on being a mother? You had some serious challenges in that respect. When did you start looking for volunteer opportunities?

Cellini: I joined the Junior League. Since I had done women's news, I knew there was something called the Junior League.¹⁷ I didn't exactly know what it was. I had been a sorority woman. I'd been on boards and things by then, even though I was pretty young, so I sort of had an idea of... I knew *Robert's Rules of Order*, and I knew how things kind of worked and how to put a meeting together and those things.¹⁸

I started going to these meetings and realized there was this whole group of women who were really capable and really knew how to get things done and knew how to call on... Most of them were married, so they called on people they had met. They used their contacts, not unlike politics. So I started out; I think I chaired something in the arts, and then I chaired something in something else, and then... I actually found out I was a pretty good fundraiser, and I'd never tried that before. It gave me a perspective on volunteerism and how you don't have to be in the workforce to marshal the resources that you have and get some things done.

Maybe, they're not going to take you seriously the first or the second or the third time, but you still make yourself presentable, school yourself in the right things to say, and keep trying. I think, certainly being married to a politician taught me a lot. Being a journalist taught me a lot. But, being a volunteer in this community taught me a lot too, and it also gave me entrée to meet a lot of people I wouldn't have met. It got me into the schools. I became a school volunteer, which gave me real empathy for teachers and set me up probably to be a better mom, as a result of it. But, I really credited that organization [Junior League] as being enormously helpful in my formative time.

¹⁷ The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc. is a private, nonprofit educational women's volunteer organization aimed at improving communities and the social, cultural, and political fabric of civil society. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junior_League)

¹⁸ *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, commonly referred to as *Robert's Rules of Order*, *RONR*, or simply *Robert's Rules*, is a political book written by Henry Martyn Robert. It is the most widely used manual of parliamentary procedure in the United States. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert%27s_Rules_of_Order)

DePue: We're talking about the early- to mid-'70s now?

Cellini: Um-hmm.

DePue: When did you start then volunteering at the Old State Capitol?¹⁹

Cellini: I can't really remember for sure when I went down there, but I remember... I think I told you, I had actually done stories on the restoration of the old capitol, once I met Wally Henderson and was just enchanted with historic preservation, such as it was, in this country. So it had been an interest, but I had, by then, two kids. My son was beginning to not have to see doctors regularly, and we had this hale and hearty little girl. I thought, Well, I'm not going back to work—a lot of my friends were going back to work at that point. I'm not going to do that, but I'm going to start looking around and doing things.

There was a volunteer program that was starting at the Old State Capitol, and I thought, I'm in love with this place, and I've got all my notes, and I can probably tell them more than they ever want to know about it. We wore costumes; we wore hoop skirts, and we took school groups through. Man, I fell I love with that building all over again. But it was not well-kept, and the guides, who were state employees, were not very well-trained, and they were resentful of... Here are these young, well-dressed women from the community who come in, and they're the magic lady. They pick off these school groups, and they take them through, and it's like, "What are we, chopped liver?" So, that was kind of a detriment.

But then the building itself was kind of dirty and not very well cared for. You'd open the door, and all the leaves would blow in, and nobody was around to sweep them up. It was kind of getting short shrift. I thought, This place is a treasure. Why doesn't anybody care?

I also was doing something that had to do with the paper because I'd see Jack Clarke a lot. He was the publisher of the *Journal-Register*.

DePue: Was your son already in school by this time?

Cellini: I think he was. Yeah, by then he was probably in kindergarten or first grade or something.

DePue: Again, roughly what year would that put it in, the late '70s, '77?

¹⁹ The Old State Capitol is a reconstruction of Illinois' fifth statehouse, the first to be located in Springfield. It is here that Lincoln practiced law, served as a legislator and gave his famed House Divided speech on slavery in 1858. The building served as the seat of state government and a center of Illinois political life from 1839-1876. (<https://www.enjoyillinois.com/explore/listing/old-state-capitol-state-historic-site>)

- Cellini: Um-hmm, probably in there, '70s, yeah, '80s, early '80s at the most. Jim Thompson [James R. Thompson, Illinois Governor, 1977- 1991] was still governor; he was governor forever.
- DePue: He was just new as governor. He was elected first in '76, got re-elected in '78, again in '82 and '86.
- Cellini: Okay. I'd say this is in the early '80s by then.
- DePue: So he'd been governor for a little while.
- Cellini: Yeah, yeah, because Bill was running the Asphalt Association then. Yeah, that kind of places it. So I, because of Bill, would be in his company sometimes, and I started telling him about how terrible the old capitol was and what a treasure it was. He said, "Well, I've been there to do a speech. I don't know." I said, "Well, Governor, it needs you." He said, "Isn't there a board or something?" I said, "Yeah..."
- DePue: Wait a minute. Are you talking to the governor as well or to Bill?
- Cellini: I'm talking with the governor.
- DePue: At a social engagement, was that?
- Cellini: Uh-huh, yeah, because we were very political, and I would get to be in his company, and they were younger; we were younger. And people tend to gravitate to each other, after you've shaken hands a lot. So we'd talk, and I got to know Jayne a little bit, who I thought was just the bee's knees. What a great lady. I don't know if you've got time for all these stories.
- Anyway, he said, "All right, just tell me. Tell me what's going on there, and what do you think I should do?" I said, "I think you should appoint somebody to that board that really cares about it, and I think it ought to be Jack Clarke, who is the publisher of the *Journal-Register*."
- DePue: That board is...
- Cellini: That was the Illinois State Historical Library Board. It consisted of the library, which was under the old capitol, the Old State Capitol itself, which was a state historic site, the David Davis Mansion in Bloomington, the Carl Sandburg birthplace downstate someplace.
- DePue: Galesburg.
- Cellini: Galesburg. I think that was it.
- DePue: Right, that's my understanding. That was it.

Cellini: That was it. Anyway, I would periodically see Thompson at something, and Bill would say (laughs), “Back off, please.” And I’d say, “But, Bill...” Anyway, I got a call, and Thompson said, “I was in the old capitol today, and you were right. That place is not good. That’s dirty, and it was cold, and I didn’t see anybody who really cared about it, and you care about it.”

I said, “Does this mean you’re going to appoint Jack Clarke?” He said, “No, I’m not.” I said, “Governor, I’m disappointed.” He said, “No, you’re not.” I said, “Yeah, I am.” He said he was going to appoint me, and I said, “Governor, I don’t know anybody. I’m a Springfield housewife.” He says, “You know me.” So, I go to my first meeting, which is not at the old capitol, not in the library. It’s at the Sangamo Club, and the guys show up.²⁰ It’s two men and me.

DePue: Do you remember their names?

Cellini: No, I don’t. It’s been so long ago. They’ve been gone for I don’t know how long. Anyway, guys I didn’t know. Everybody orders martinis, and the staff gives us an agenda that’s like this big, and I’m saying, “Guys, if this site... And what about the budget? And...”

DePue: I want to just throw in here for those who don’t know Springfield politics, the Sangamo Club was the old, traditional club where a lot of the...

Cellini: Men’s club.

DePue: Men’s club where a lot of the powerful in Springfield...

Cellini: This was long enough ago that women were not... We could not meet in the regular meeting rooms because women were only allowed upstairs at lunch because you’re a woman.

DePue: Can we pause for a second here? (brief pause)

One more question before you continue. What you’ve told me before is Bill didn’t have much interest in all this history stuff. Would that be an accurate statement?

Cellini: Never has had.

DePue: Did you know that Governor Thompson was really interested in all this history stuff?

²⁰ For more than 125 years, the Sangamo Club has had the reputation as the Springfield area's premiere private dining city club for business, government and community leaders. The club is led by an advisory Board of Directors comprised of influential and accomplished men and women from various industries. (<http://www.sangamoclub.net/our-story>)

Cellini: Everybody who's ever been to law school probably started out as a history major somewhere along the line. I just assume, any time I meet a lawyer, they're going to fancy themselves a hobbyist historian.

DePue: Not to mention that... Who's America's most famous lawyer in our history?

Cellini: Exactly. In the world that I've been lucky enough to be into, a lot of people like history. So yeah, Thompson did, certainly. Governor Edgar, God bless him, did.

DePue: So, we're back at this first board meeting you attended at the Sangamo Club.

Cellini: Yeah, and I'm saying, "I'm going to look at the rest of the sites, but I don't think the others could be any better cared for, if this one, which is kind of the crown jewel, isn't." They were like, "Who is she? Let's order." I could get nowhere. I thought, Should I quit? I was just treated like... Anyway, it wasn't happening. I'm going to meetings.

Finally, I had just had it after a meeting and a brassy move. I called Jayne Thompson [the governor's wife]. I said, "I don't want to call the governor. You and I know each other a little bit." I said, "Here's the situation." She said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, I'm heading to the cleaners," or something. It was a Saturday afternoon. She said, "Come on over to the mansion, and we'll talk." I said, "But, it's..." She said, "No, just come over to the mansion." That's Jayne Thompson; she's very easy, smart, capable, no messing around, but never stood on formality.

So I go over to the mansion, and I sit there, and I just give her chapter and verse. "This is what's happening, and I know what I wanted to do, and I never went after this job, and your husband put me in it, and I appreciate it, but I'm just not right for it." She says, "Excuse me. Is this the first time a group of men have not taken you seriously?" (DePue laughs) I said, "Well, I can't get anywhere." She says, "Then, you'd better figure out a way to get somewhere, and you'd better do the job my husband appointed you to do because that's what he expects."

It was like wham! I thought, She's right, and she went to law school. She was just enough younger that she was already experiencing the push-back with women. I'd probably had an easier time career-wise than she'd had, and she'd... Anyway, she was tougher. She said, "Tell me what you want." I said, "Well, the guys there, I'm not going to get anywhere." She said, "Pick some people, and I'll mention it to the governor." So, I picked two Springfield people who I knew I could work with.

DePue: Men or women?

- Cellini: One woman, one man. One of them was a buddy of the governor, and the other one was somebody I just **really** admired. It was a strong community person. And he [the governor] fired the other guys on the board.
- DePue: Who were those two people that you brought on board?
- Cellini: Sally Schanbacher and Frank Mason, both of whom are no longer on this earth.
- DePue: Roughly, how long after you had been appointed to the board did that happen?
- Cellini: Within the first six months, and things began to change. Because I had some entrée, I could find help for the sites, and I could get attention to what Illinois had and held. Governor Thompson really liked the sites. He liked history, and I think he was having a personnel situation because the bulk of Illinois's historic sites were under [Illinois Department of] Conservation, and Conservation was doing wildlife and a lot of things that didn't mesh with history. I think that was kind of hard.
- I don't know what was happening internally. I just know that I got a phone call from Thompson's office. They said—I was chairman of the little board that was just the three of us—"Show up tomorrow morning in the press room. The governor is going to make an announcement." I said, "Should I prepare anything? Is there a briefing you want put together for him?" They said, "No, but you and your two board members need to sit on the front row."
- DePue: You didn't know what the press...
- Cellini: No, no.
- DePue: Before you get to that point, I want to make sure I understand in my own mind; are you chair of the board at this time?
- Cellini: Yes.
- DePue: What power did the board have over the rest of the state library and these historic sites?
- Cellini: We set policies. We picked the head, the director. We had some say-so about who headed up the sites, who the site superintendents were at those places. We certainly visited all of them and went to their events.
- DePue: So this is a lot more than just an advisory board.
- Cellini: Yeah, it was a policy-setting board. We were the governing body. We were the gubernatorial appointments, and we served at the pleasure of... But if there was a complaint, they'd call us.

We get to the meeting, the press conference. We sit there on the front row, and Thompson comes out and greets everybody and says, “Today, I’m going to do great things for history.” He looks straight at us, and he separates by press release, all of the historic sites and puts them under some unnamed entity. Somebody says, “Who’s your governing board?” He says, “These three people right here.” They said, “Who’s going to chair that?” He says, “Julie, you’re going to chair that.” Then, the press conference is over, and we all look at one another like, what just happened? (both laugh) That’s how I met Bob Coomer [assistant bureau chief of the Illinois Department of Conservation from 1978 to 1985].

DePue: Do you mind if I interject a little bit of background for that?

Cellini: Unh-uh.

DePue: I had no idea what story you were going to tell me. I thought maybe you were more involved with some of the planning about this new agency as well, but...

Cellini: Oh, hope you smile. There was no agency. There was a press release.

DePue: Periodically, any state but the state of Illinois, would look at how they might want to reorganize themselves. And 1976 would have been right before the Thompson Administration. There was an Illinois task force on governmental reorganization, and one of the recommendations was... I’m just going to read from a document that one of my colleagues put together. “They proposed a long-range plan for Natural Resources that would affect the State Historical Library”—your institution. “They argued...”

Cellini: This is what date again, please?

DePue: This is a ’76 document. But this is a planning document. It had been around for a long time.

Cellini: Yeah, yeah, a lot of those.

DePue: It identified four state agencies that shared the function of history, basically: Conservation, Mines and Minerals, Museum Division, Department of Registration Education, and the State Historical Library that had these three other historic sites. A lot of these historic sites had always been part of the Department of Natural Resources, I understand. “One plan would consolidate these components into a Parks and Recreation Division.”

Cellini: You know, it was. It was called “Natural Resources.” It wasn’t called “Conservation.” Okay.

DePue: “Decentralized management of the museums and the recreational areas.” But, apparently in 1985, Thompson rejects the board’s Natural Resources idea and decides he wants to merge the historic sites with the state library and form this

new agency, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The legislation created it and stood it up as of July 1, 1985, I believe. So, there was legislation. It sounds like this press conference would have happened before that.

Cellini: Much before that.

DePue: So this is before there is even a piece of legislation.

Cellini: Well, months, months before that...

DePue: Oh, months.

Cellini: I was there to watch the legislation go through. This thing didn't even have a name. Literally, he just said, "We're going to put history under one umbrella. You guys are the board." That was it. So then, I started interfacing with his staff because people like Bob Coomer came to me and said, "Excuse me, I'm Bob Coomer. Apparently, you're chairman of the board of this agency that doesn't have a name that I now work for. We don't have a lawn mower. We don't have a truck. We don't think we can make payroll." It literally was done by press release and the infrastructure...

DePue: Who is Bob Coomer before this? Where was he?

Cellini: He was at Conservation, at Natural Resources.

DePue: The site division manager for Conservation?

Cellini: Uh-huh. So, it's like you're chairman of the board; what are you going to do for us? (DePue laughs) That's how we bumped along. Thompson had a lot of young, new people, comers, who were in his line-up of staffers. Well, obviously, the older, more experienced people don't want to deal with this. They've got other fish to fry.

So I would go over there and try to get somebody to understand, "We've got to do more than just have a press release." "Well, there's going to be legislation, and it's going to be..." "But you don't understand. These people are in limbo, and I don't think the Conservation people are all that happy about this. So, it isn't working, and what are we going to call this?"

We were going to call it History, Inc. We were going to... It was just silly. We spent a lot of time talking about what the name of it was going to be. I said, "Wait a minute. We've got to do more than that." Anyway, I came up with IHPA [Illinois Historic Preservation Agency] just because I couldn't think of anything else, and we had to have a name for it to even start talking about it. Now, does it say, IHPA? Does it create IHPA and the agency?

DePue: That's what I understand. Yes, the legislation created that.

Cellini: Okay, in the legislation, yeah, because I remember being there for it with the... Wow, that was '85.

DePue: As I understand, right from the beginning, part of the new agency was going to be the federally-mandated historic preservation aspects that have to occur.

Cellini: Yes. And that was a sticking point because we realized it was going to be more. There was going to be a regulatory body under it as well. So we needed something a little more formal than History, Inc. or whatever, all the ideas that were coming forward. The Thompson staffers are all kind of rock 'n roll and cute, so they're having fun with it.

It's important enough to talk about this because, Mark, this is what, I think, is going to happen. Now, this is off the record, just you and me, but I think this is what's going to happen if they go through with some sort of separate the library and museum from the rest of the sites or whatever it is that's going to happen. I'm not part of that. I don't want to be part of it. The thing that's going on now, with possible legislation that Speaker [Michael] Madigan has proposed and all that, how is it going to... Who's going to be there? Who's going to care, once it happens?"

The easy part is, have an idea. Okay, but who's going to push this? Who's going to make sure that the library, the museum, that they get what they need, that there are staff there to do things that are being done now by staff who are not necessarily assigned to them? How in the world is this going to work? You plan it all first, and **then** you roll out the name change and what it is. But, that's not usually how it happens. It's sure not how IHPA happened. Unless there's somebody in a back room some place now saying, "Okay, this staff is going to go there, and now the payroll's going to come out of here, and telecomm is going to be here..." I haven't heard any of that, where the support is going to come from. Plus there was money back then, when IHPA was created.

DePue: I wanted to go back to the 1980s, just to get a sense of how this fits into the overall state structure. I hope this doesn't come across wrong, but I'll just say it. In terms of what the governor is responsible for and the scope of responsibilities, IHPA would be a tiny, tiny piece of the state government, and yet, in the interview I've had recently with Susan Mogerman, who came in quite a few years later, but when she came in, she recognized, "Oh, my gosh, this is all the stuff the governor really cares about."²¹

Cellini: (whispers) Exactly.

²¹ Susan Mogerman was a Chicago native and longtime Springfield resident, described as a major force behind the inception of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, is remembered as a tireless advocate for Springfield.

DePue: So you would agree wholeheartedly with that.

Cellini: I was just about to say, because IHPA has got the stuff, and it's a lot more fun. Most everybody... How can you not love Lincoln? Lincoln is such a great big part of it. It's just so much cooler to think, I could go put my hands on the Gettysburg Address.

DePue: We haven't even gotten that story yet. Tell me about the first time you saw the Gettysburg Address. Let's start with roughly when that occurred, if you can try to figure that out.

Cellini: Okay, back up. I was this young trustee of the small agency, the State Historical Library and Museum.

DePue: This is after it's been created?

Cellini: No, this is... This is before IHPA. I was either down there as a volunteer at the old capitol, or I was down there as a trustee, but this is before IHPA. So, this would have been just the library, with the sites, with the three sites. I was—researcher that I am—wanting to know a lot more. So I asked if I could have a tour of the old capitol, and if I could... I was trying to jazz up... They had a volunteer program. I was trying to jazz it up and make it even better. Maybe, I was a volunteer but... I can't place it in time.

But, I asked Jim Hickey if I could see the Lincoln Collection, and he took me through and showed me. A lot of it was locked away and a lot of it was documents; some of it was artifacts. Then he took out some white cotton gloves, and I said, "Why the gloves?" because what did I know about preservation? What did anybody know back then? He said, "I'm going to hand you the Gettysburg Address." What? Garry Wills' line, "Two hundred and thirty-three words that remade America," [*Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* by Pulitzer Prize Winner Garry Wills] right there in my hands.

Boy, was I hooked. As they used to say in all the charrettes, what was your entry point? That was probably my biggest entry point. I liked it all a lot before then, but holy moly.

DePue: How can you explain why that particular moment was so meaningful to you?

Cellini: Because it was such a privilege, such an out of the box experience. How many people get to do that? I knew enough. I'd read enough. I understood why the document was so important and what it... fundamental to what this country would eventually evolve to become. I knew a lot of the stuff that Steven Spielberg did in *Team of Rivals*. No, in *Lincoln*, sorry. I always want to do that because I've read Doris's [Doris Kearns Goodwin] book so many times. But, all the horse-trading, all the hard, hard work it took, that was a piece of politics that I understood because it happened in my house.

I saw how you never get from point A to point B. It [unintelligible], and then you get back to this person. It's consensus and pulling together and what Lincoln had to do. It was all of that story again, the story with it. And I was holding it. I thought, A Springfield housewife, and I'm holding this thing in my hands. That was big.

DePue: Beside the point that Jim Hickey is wearing white gloves, were you impressed that it was being maintained well?

Cellini: I was underwhelmed with pretty much everything. To me, we could have been, should have been, so much more than we were.

DePue: Where exactly did this happen?

Cellini: In the bowels of the Old State Capitol, in those awful, moldy rooms. I think it was already moldy down there—they put a library underground?—some place there. I think he had locked safes and things then. I don't remember the atmosphere so much. I just remember the stunning things. And he had lots of stuff that was just in boxes. First of all, it wasn't all that secure, except you were down there. I don't know how they could have gotten down there, other than...probably the historians could. But it was a lot of material, certainly, not an awful lot of artifacts, but still things that he could show me, things that the Lincolns had owned and touched. It was just really, really a privilege, certainly something I don't... You're a historian; maybe you get to do things like that.

DePue: I'm sitting here listening to you, and I'm wondering, at that time or even today, if someone were to put a dollar value on a copy of the Gettysburg Address—there are only two or three out there—what would the dollar value be? I have no idea.

Cellini: I don't know either.

DePue: It would be astronomical, I would think...

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: ...for all the reasons you talked about, the most iconic American president and the most iconic document that that president created.

Cellini: Yeah, in Lincoln's hand. So, yeah, no wonder I always wanted to do it. I just always wanted to do it.

DePue: I'm going to ask you a couple hard questions here now.

Cellini: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

DePue: You're appointed to this board. You are now the chair of the new IHPA Board of Trustees, correct?

Cellini: Um-hmm, I think we were directors for a while, and I think eventually we got started being called "trustees."

DePue: Would it be fair to say that you got this position, in large part, because you are the wife of Bill Cellini?

Cellini: Of course.

DePue: What were the advantages, once you got to the position of being the wife of such an influential player in Illinois politics at the time?

Cellini: Access. It's very hard to get time with people, to be able to just get in their stream of thought. So, yeah, did I parlay it? No, I had Bill's name, and so I could. Then once I could get there, I'd tap dance as fast as I could. I think a lot of the time they thought, Ah, maybe she'll go away. I was never the smartest person in the world, by a long shot. I was never the most articulate, never the... The list of nevers goes on and on. I was the person who was not going to give up.

So once we finally got the dream of what this could be or what it could evolve to be, I just wasn't going to give it up. It was like having a...hoping I'd have another child maybe...I didn't, but...or to bring something else forward, something so much bigger than yourself, to get just to be aligned with it. It was always like... I won't say I'd wake up every morning and think, What am I going to do for Abraham Lincoln? But, I thought, If not here, where?

DePue: That's one of the things I want to ask you about because this is very much, as I understand, after trying to understand it myself—I'm repetitive there—what was the original vision when you... In 1985, you've had your hands on the Gettysburg Address; you've seen it. You've got this new agency. What was it that you and others envisioned would happen, could happen?

Cellini: A something in Springfield that would be underpinned by all of these things that Illinois has and its historical library, as well, which isn't necessarily Lincoln or even that era. It's Illinois history, a something. But it would be some place so that everybody, from scholars to school kids, could have a personal encounter with the man who saved this nation. Did we know what it was? No. It was just this amorphous idea.

Then Judy Barr Topinka, God bless her, read in the paper that we kept the Gettysburg Address in a little case that you could open with a Phillips

screwdriver, and it was in danger.²² It was erroneous, but it was enough that I think she pulled it out of her budget. She may have been just a state senator at the time, but anyway, she got us some money. I remember something like \$40,000 to \$60,000, something like that; other people remember as much as \$80,000. I don't remember what it was.

DePue: I need to track that down. I've done a little bit of work on it. I've asked a few questions. I believe the time frame was 1991, in that era, and she was an Illinois state senator at the time.

Cellini: Yeah. Anyway, she got this appropriation, and it was a very kind thing to do. But we really didn't need a case; we needed a place. So the money sat there and sat there. It may have been as simple as a meeting with Susan [Mogerman] and Bob [Coomer] and me, sitting around talking about the grand idea that never seemed to get anywhere.

I said, "Maybe, the problem is because we don't really have anything to show anybody." So one of us called Judy, and she said, "Yeah, I'd forgotten that money was there. Yeah, go ahead. Do it for Lincoln." She was such a wonderful character. She loved the idea of a something. I remember saying to her, "If we ever get anywhere, it's because you believe in it." She said, "I don't even know what it is, but yeah." She was...

DePue: She was an Illinois original.

Cellini: Oh, yeah, smart. Do you know she was a product of a very exclusive private school for girls? Can you believe that?

DePue: She certainly never came across that way.

Cellini: When I read that obit, I thought, Oh, my God, she went to Ferry Hall.²³

DePue: Ferry Hall?

Cellini: Ferry Hall.

DePue: I should mention that she just, within the last couple months, passed away. Right after she was re-elected as the comptroller, as Illinois's comptroller, she passed away. I've got an awful lot more questions about the early days of IHPA because what I don't want this interview to be is... We're going to culminate with the creation of the presidential library and museum, but there

²² Judy Baar Topinka was an American politician and member of the Republican Party from the U.S. State of Illinois. Originally a journalist, Topinka served in the Illinois House of Representatives from 1981 to 1985 and in the Illinois Senate from 1985 to 1995. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judy_Baar_Topinka)

²³ The Ferry Hall School was a girls' preparatory school in Lake Forest, Illinois. In 1974, it merged into Lake Forest Academy. Originally named The Young Ladies' Seminary at Ferry Hall, the school was founded in 1869 and immediately became known as a school for daughters of the Midwestern social elite. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferry_Hall_School)

is so much more about the history of the institution, that we need to understand and preserve those stories as well. So bear with me as I go through all of this.

Cellini: Let me just inject something here because I'd forgotten to tell you this the other day. Those pictures that Jerard Hilferday did for us of what you could have as a library museum, I think they are still at that little IHPA office, over on...is it 6th Street?²⁴ Downtown, where IHPA is located, the offices. I think...

DePue: The old *Journal-Register* building?

Cellini: Yes. I think they're still on the wall in the conference room there.

DePue: I think you're right. I think I've seen those.

Cellini: Um-hmm. Think about... That's where we started, and that's where we ended up. But, at least, we had something to show people.

DePue: Going back to the early days of IHPA, here's a list. I looked at the list of IHPA historic sites today. I'll just let you review that. You inherited an awful lot from the Department of Natural Resources, far more than the three that were part of the state library, anyway, and I... Let me interject this. That's a curious marriage in the first place. The historical library has three historic sites, and those are quite different missions. Are they not?

Cellini: I have no idea why it was that way, but you try to make sense out of government. (DePue laughs)

DePue: Looking down this list, what are the ones that you remember that you suddenly inherited and had oversight for? If you would, just read them out loud.

Cellini: I think, by the time I left IHPA, we had fifty sites and memorials around the state. But memorials can be a big rock on a mound someplace too.

DePue: Can I just ask you about some of the ones I would think would come to mind? Cahokia Mounds, was that already part of the package?²⁵

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: New Salem, another Lincoln site.²⁶

²⁴ Jerard Hilferday is founder, president and creative director at Hilferty Museum Planning & Exhibit Design, a design firm based outside of Athens, Ohio. The business manages planning and design projects for museums, exhibits, and visitors centers in fields that include history, science, sports, and nature. (<https://www.hilferty.com/team>)

²⁵ The Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site is the site of a pre-Columbian Native American city directly across the Mississippi River from modern St. Louis, Missouri. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cahokia>)

- Cellini: Definitely, definitely New Salem.
- DePue: Was the Pullman site in discussion at that time?²⁷
- Cellini: Pullman was always in discussion. We got Pullman under Jim Thompson, I believe. It was not part of the original package, but we...
- DePue: How about Grant's Home in Galena, Illinois?²⁸
- Cellini: Uh-huh. Is that on here? Yeah.
- DePue: There's something about the Galena sites on there. I guess there's a collection of sites there. Dickson Mounds?²⁹
- Cellini: Dickson Mounds was there, yeah. I don't see...
- DePue: Again, the ones that originally were part of the package were the Old State Capitol, the David Davis Mansion, and the Carl Sandburg Home.^{30, 31}
- Cellini: Uh-huh. We eventually got... Gosh, I know because I did all the ribbon cuttings.
- DePue: So there was a group of sites, but in the next few years, the state was adding quite a few more?
- Cellini: Yeah, yeah. Dana-Thomas is the one I was trying to think of because I'm seeing myself at all these dedications of all these things.³² Thompson added sites as we went along.

²⁶ Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site is a reconstruction of the former village of New Salem in Menard County, Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln lived from 1831 to 1837.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lincoln%27s_New_Salem)

²⁷ Pullman National Monument, also known as the Pullman Historic District, is located in Chicago and was the first model, planned industrial community in the United States. The district had its origins in the manufacturing plans and organization of the Pullman Company. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pullman_National_Monument)

²⁸ The Ulysses S. Grant Home in Galena, Illinois is the former home of Ulysses S. Grant, the Civil War general and later 18th President of the United States. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulysses_S._Grant_Home)

²⁹ Dickson Mounds is a Native American settlement site and burial mound complex near Lewistown, Illinois. It is a large burial complex containing at least two cemeteries, ten superimposed burial mounds, and a platform mound. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dickson_Mounds)

³⁰ The David Davis Mansion, also known as Clover Lawn, is a Victorian home in Bloomington, Illinois that was the residence of David Davis, Supreme Court justice and Senator from Illinois. The mansion has been a state museum since 1960. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Davis_Mansion)

³¹ Carl Sandburg State Historic Site was the birthplace and boyhood home of author Carl Sandburg in Galesburg, Illinois. It is operated by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Sandburg_State_Historic_Site)

³² The Dana-Thomas House is a home in Prairie School style designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Built 1902-04 for patron Susan Lawrence Dana, it is located in Springfield, Illinois. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dana%E2%80%93Thomas_House)

- DePue: My understanding is that the state had already purchased the Dana-Thomas House, but it was a long way away from being presentable. Would that be correct?
- Cellini: Thompson had purchased it, without any appropriation. He just inked a deal with Payne Thomas, and then he went after the money. But, yeah, it (IHPA) grew a lot under Thompson. I don't remember us taking in any new sites after the Thompson years. Well, you know, we had nothing but austerity budgets after Thompson left.
- DePue: I understand, during the end of that, maybe the Vachel Lindsay Home was purchased?³³
- Cellini: Yeah, because hadn't it been run by the city or...?
- DePue: I think there was a foundation that ran it for a while.
- Cellini: Yeah, maybe that was it, yes. No, we did, but I don't know who we took that over under. Was that under Edgar?
- DePue: I think it was the '90 or '91 timeframe.
- Cellini: Okay, then it was Thompson. It grew because we did a lot of ribbon-cuttings with Thompson, as I recall. I would write something for him, and he'd just wing it; get up there and sound like he was a scholar.
- DePue: As I understand, the major components of IHPA, once it's created, are all of these historic sites, which obviously were growing during those early years, the Illinois State Historical Library and then the Preservation Services—I'm not sure that's the correct title—but...³⁴
- Cellini: Yes.
- DePue: ...those people who were there, the lawyers and the architects and the archaeologists who were there.

³³ The Vachel Lindsay House is a historic house museum in Springfield, Illinois. Built in 1848, it was the birthplace and lifelong home of poet Vachel Lindsay. It was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1971. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vachel_Lindsay_House)

³⁴ The State of Illinois's preservation services division helps determine which Illinois buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its staff reviews construction projects that might affect cultural resources and administers a tax incentive program for rehabilitation of historic buildings. (<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnrhistoric/Pages/default.aspx#:~:text=Our%20preservation%20services%20division%20helps,for%20rehabilitation%20of%20historic%20buildings.>)

Cellini: Yeah, that was the national register interface, and we had a state register at that time. I don't know if that's still a going thing or not.³⁵

DePue: Which part of that was getting the most attention? Which part was the sexiest, I guess, would be...

Cellini: Well, the sites certainly because that was a thing you could experience. But you always had people who wanted tax credits, and so it was always important that you had the regulatory piece of it, as well, that went along with it. The board probably did the least amount of interface with that. Frankly, we tried not to because those people were the pros and, as board members, we shouldn't have been saying, "This should have a tax credit. This should have that status." I mostly referred people to the right people there, and we always had a good staff. The sites, I certainly did more with. I think at one time I had seen almost all the sites, some of which are pretty sad.

DePue: Sad in terms of how many were being maintained?

Cellini: Yeah, and they didn't really have any relevance anymore. They were something that a county historical society had maybe valued and then wanted to give over. The hard part [is that] you've got to find the story, and the story has to engage people and pull them in.

Like the David Davis Mansion, for example, beautiful, beautiful house. I never did get to how much of David Davis was actually in that house. I mean, I think his career was far from Bloomington. So it was hard when you'd go there to think that people were getting that kind of experience. They might get the experience of living at that level in that period of history, but I don't know that you got all the interesting...the long-term relationship with Lincoln and Davis's distinguished career. We didn't give people those kinds of things.

DePue: What were some of the gems, in terms of the historic sites, that you did get caught up into the background story?

Cellini: Oh, the Dana-Thomas House. I was all over that. What a terrific thing to get to do.

DePue: It doesn't hurt that you've got America's most iconic architect involved with it.

Cellini: Yes, yes, it was. But we didn't have enough money. So Bob Coomer, who is just a genius at making do with not much, he set up a workshop, and he had the staff trained so that they could spiff up all the furniture, some of which

³⁵ The National Register of Historic Places is the United States federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects deemed worthy of preservation for their historical significance. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places)

really needed spiffing up. Thompson found out about it, and honestly, he was so angry. I thought he was either going to slug Bob Coomer or possibly me. I had just stupidly mentioned it to him, thinking, Isn't he going to be proud that the staff was able to do this?

DePue: What's wrong with spiffing up the furniture?

Cellini: Oh, well, because he was a collector, and you don't do that to treasures, to real artifacts of the period.

DePue: Are these original pieces, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright?

Cellini: Originally designed and constructed for the Dana House, but they'd been pulled in from other places. But here he is in New York, at Christie's, is bidding on things.³⁶ Here is the staff, polishing them up (DePue laughs), big mistake. Honesty will get you whacked (laughs).

But, they were heady years, and we had the governor's attention and his love. When anything would happen at a site, he was there. He'd come. I started to say, I'd write things out for him to say. He'd say, "Give me the press release." "Well, but, Governor, these are the..." "No, just give me the press release." He'd read the press release in the car on the way to the event, and he'd get up, and he would sound like a scholar. The man is masterful.

DePue: May I ask you about a couple that come to mind for me as we're sitting here? Bishop Hill, was that part of the original package?³⁷

Cellini: Um-hmm, um-hmm. He opened the Olof Krans Museum there.³⁸

DePue: Olof...

Cellini: Krans. It's all this very primitive art that was done by an itinerant artist, Olof Krans, who was a guy about Bishop Hill. Somebody gave us an endowment or something. Anyway, we built a museum there to house it all.

DePue: That one comes to mind because it has such a... When I first stumbled across it and visited there, what a bizarre background story it's got. What a fascinating story it's got.

³⁶ Christie's is a British auction house founded in 1766 by James Christie. Its main premises are on King Street, St James's in London and in Rockefeller Center in New York City. Its sales in 2015 totaled £4.8 billion. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christie%27s>)

³⁷ Bishop Hill Colony is a historic district in Bishop Hill, Illinois. It was the site of a utopian religious community that operated as a commune until its dissolution in 1861. The Bishop Hill Colony was the landmark Swedish settlement in Western Illinois, leading several other large Swedish-American communities in the area. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_Hill_Colony)

³⁸ A museum building at Bishop Hill Colony houses a collection of early American primitive paintings by colonist and folk artist Olof Krans. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_Hill_State_Historic_Site)

Cellini: Um-hmm. Thompson cut the ribbon on that. You would have thought it was filled with Rembrandts.

DePue: How about Cahokia Mounds? As an archaeological site in Illinois, I don't think you can...

Cellini: I don't think you can beat it.

DePue: That's the ultimate.

Cellini: We had a lot of money to do that visitors' center. We hired someone—I don't remember the name now—who did those fabulous doors that never worked, the encrusted doors that's all bas-relief [sculptural relief] and wonderful. And then we found out they were too heavy for the school kids. We were trapping kids in the doors. We did a lot of boneheaded things over the years, but...

DePue: New Salem was certainly a very important part of the Lincoln heritage.

Cellini: It was. In those years, it was thriving. There were artisans in every cabin. It was magnificent. We had the staff. They actually worked the land. We had guys who would demonstrate to school kids. Coomer really did one heck of a program; he was a terrific guy. And Thompson loved it, loved all that stuff, just...

DePue: So, it doesn't hurt to have a friend in the mansion.

Cellini: There are friends, and then there are people who get something out of every day. That was him [Coomer], and he was there so long and he cared a lot about all the parts and pieces of the job. He was so bright that he could learn it quickly and then kind of make it his own. He really latched on to the history thing. That's why we had IHPA, and he latched on to what we could do with it, how we could merchandise it.

It was just not the right time to actually move ahead with the library and museum, that whole concept thing, which changed constantly. It changed when you tried to sell it.

DePue: Did it start basically as, "We need to get out from underneath the Old State Capitol"?

Cellini: Yeah, sure. But we also needed to... There wasn't any place where you could get the whole Lincoln story. If not in Springfield, Illinois, where? You have the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, and they do a pretty good job with American history there. There is certainly some of the Lincoln story there, more now as more museums have gone up but no place where you got it all. This was a hometown guy.

So, we needed to tell it here to the travelling public. That was one of the first things we started in the charrettes is how much do we tell. Bob Rogers will give you this when you finally get to talk to him. We spent weeks and weeks and weeks. Do we just do the Springfield years? Well, if we do that, we fall short of our subject because he was more than just the guy from Springfield who had a very interesting career here. So what do we leave out of it? Well, we sure can't leave out the Civil War. Then what else do we leave out, other things that were going on in the White House? We can't do that. So very quickly it began to be, this will be Lincoln central for a worldwide audience. I see very quickly; it was a lot of talking.

DePue: Most of this is what I want to get in the next session. That will be a fascinating discussion. But, while we're still talking about IHPA in these early years, you also have in Springfield, the Lincoln Home. Was there ever any consideration that the Lincoln Home ought not to be a federal park, but part of the state system?

Cellini: It was part of the state system, and the state did a miserable job.

DePue: Do you know when it reverted to federal control? Before your time?

Cellini: In the '70s, I think. Wally Henderson might know, if he still remembers. He probably told you. Have you done an interview with Wally?

DePue: We've done an interview. I wasn't the interviewer.

Cellini: Wally used to tell the story of when he was trying to get the feds interested in taking on Lincoln's Home because the state was doing such a lousy job.

DePue: Now that I think about it, I think Paul Findley, Representative Findley, had a lot to do with that as well.

Cellini: Yes, and Wally was working with him.

DePue: I did interview Findley about that. I should have remembered that better.

Cellini: Yeah, well, there's a lot to remember. Wally tells the story of... He had all these people from whatever agency—I don't even know if it was the Park Service at that point; maybe it was—who came to look at Springfield. Here's the only home that Lincoln ever owned, and there's a Piggly Wiggly grocery store across the street. They actually were renting out the upstairs rooms as a profit center.

DePue: Of the Lincoln home?

Cellini: Yes. And Wally is walking down the street and saying, "You can do this, and you could do that, and think how fabulous this would be." At that point, a window opens up and someone throws a mattress out the window, and it

booms on the sidewalk on 8th Street. They said, “Mr. Henderson, good luck with your project.”

DePue: A different attitude about it.

Cellini: Of course. “You’re going to rebuild America’s cities twice in your career.” That’s what they told architects like Wally Henderson. Who cares about that old stuff? New is good. I mean, pushing history has not always been all that appreciated.

DePue: It’s like your husband. I’m sure that there are lots of discussions at the Illinois Department of Transportation like, “OH, the archaeologists say there are some kind of Indian relics there, and we’ve got to stop the whole project for months while we do that.” That might be a bit of a stretch, but perhaps the same kind of attitude?

Cellini: I’m sure it’s true, but how much of that really did get saved? There weren’t a lot of strictures on it at that point.

DePue: To change the subject a little bit, when you came on board, even before there was an IHPA, was there a journal that the historical library was doing?

Cellini: Yes, always had been a journal.

DePue: What can you tell us about that journal and that experience?

Cellini: We didn’t have that much involvement. We struggled for funds to keep it afloat. My interface was with Janice Petterchak, who was there, who did an excellent, excellent job.³⁹ She would sometimes find something that the board might be interested in, and she’d usually copy it and send it off to us. It was more a scholarly arm, more a research arm, more a genealogical arm. So we supported it; we respected it. The sites took much more of a spotlight than did that, but it didn’t mean that we didn’t care about it.

DePue: But you didn’t need to spend as much time on it?

Cellini: We were volunteers. There was only so much you could do, so many big ideas you can chase, plus you had to fight for the budget. You had to get in there and try to figure out how... “Excuse me, our prisons need money, and, excuse me, what are we doing about educating children? There are health concerns and, by the way, you people do history?” So, yeah. Did you always need

³⁹ Janice Petterchak is a researcher and writer of biographies and business histories. Her subjects include Andrew McNally (of Rand McNally), sportscaster Jack Brickhouse and W.D. Boyce, founder of the Boy Scouts of America. From 1987 to 1995, she was director of the Illinois State Historical Library. She has also held several key positions with the Illinois State Historical Society and for six years directed a project of the National Endowment for the Humanities to catalog newspaper collections in Illinois repositories. (<https://www.amazon.com/Historic-Illinois-Illustrated-Community-Heritage/dp/1893619494>)

money for something? Will you always need to feed every kid? But we did what we could. We were a board of volunteers.

DePue: I understand there is the Illinois State Historical Society as well. What was the relationship between the historical society and your institution and the historical library?

Cellini: They pretty much hated us.

DePue: Now, they had been around for a long time, hadn't they?

Cellini: A long, long time.

DePue: "They hated us," as in the board of trustees or as in...? Why, because you were just interfering with what they wanted to see happen?

Cellini: Yeah, because they were only about the manuscripts, the library, and they thought that was the agency. We tried to explain that there were many mouths to feed, and they figured, "You guys are the board. Go out there and get us a new building. Get us out from underneath the old capitol, where there's mold everywhere."

DePue: So, that's a connection between themselves and identifying much more strongly with the historical library than the rest of the historic sites.

Cellini: Um-hmm.

DePue: Do you care to say any of the names that were involved in that time period?

Cellini: No, I really don't. I just remember that they'd come to our meetings, and it was contentious. They finally separated from... I assume they're still around.

DePue: They are, but the separation occurred well into the '90s.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: Long after this period we're talking about here.

Cellini: Yeah. But it had always been a rocky sort of situation. It's so hard to explain state government and how it works and how it doesn't work and appropriations and how they get done. When you care mightily about one thing, then everything looks like a threat to that one thing. That was what I found in the dealings with them. By the time they really separated, it was just as well. I never felt good about it, but it was like a marriage that needed to not be a marriage anymore. I really don't remember all the people involved in that. I remember the nasty letters and the unhappiness. God, I'd forgotten about that. That took a lot of time too.

DePue: Another change of gears here, I guess. We've been talking about Lincoln a lot. Where in this process did you really decide that you needed to learn a lot more about Lincoln and do a lot more background reading of your own? Was that just kind of ongoing?



Julie Cellini relaxes in her Springfield kitchen in front of a series of photos showing Lincoln through the years.

Cellini: Yeah, I've always been a reader, and I've always liked history. I probably really started boning up when the Lincoln Bicentennial came along, and I served on that federal commission.

DePue: So this is well beyond the time frame we're currently talking about.

Cellini: I remember doing a lot of reading then and during that period because that's all we did on the federal level. But I pretty much always tried to keep up on it. I'm at best a hobbyist with this. I'm not schooled in American history, but I was always fairly good at being able to remember.

Then, when we really began to get serious about building the library museum, I had the drawings. I could go out and try to sell it. You have to have the patter down, and I got to be pretty good at that.

DePue: In the process of learning more about Lincoln, did you form an opinion about one of the more controversial figures in the Lincoln universe, his wife? What would be your opinion of Mary Lincoln?

Cellini: I think she was a product of her time. I think one of my favorite Mary books is Jean Baker's book, which I think is just called *Mary Lincoln*, [*Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*] where she goes through and actually presents the case that had Mary been able to testify on her own behalf, this is what Mary probably would have said. I thought, My gosh, either Jean Baker is channeling me, or I'm channeling her because I would have written that, right down to the curtains. Remember, they brought that up in the trial, that she bought curtains, and she doesn't own a house. Well, clearly, she was thinking she was going to own a house someday. She didn't want to live out her days in an old hotel room.

It was just all those things; Robert with the money. I thought, How many loans had she made to Robert before that? How dependent had he been on her? I'm all over the lot here, but these people had always been kind of real to me, she, especially. I had great empathy for her because what a constricted life it must have been, and she was bright. If she could have had the advantages I did. I got to go to college; I got to start a career before it kind of got put aside.

She had so much, and no wonder she was frustrated in that little house and all these kids coming along and not much money. She actually had had some education. Of the two of them, she was certainly more schooled and learned and worldly than he. But women had such a constrained life. Then, look at everything that happened to her.

DePue: Yeah, she certainly dealt with plenty of grief in her life.

Cellini: It was never-ending, and then she got all that awful press, and people just turned on her when she needed warmth and compassion the very most. Instead, the nation just poured it out on her. No wonder she went to Europe. So, I have a huge amount of sympathy for her. Maybe, if she'd married David Davis (both laugh), it might have been a better deal.⁴⁰

DePue: Or Stephen Douglas, who also...

Cellini: Stephen Douglas was the one I was thinking it was, not Davis.

DePue: Some more personalities, but these are people that you were dealing with while you were involved with IHPA and even before that time. Maybe you won't remember much about a couple of these. William Altorfer, I think you mentioned him already; didn't you?

Cellini: Um-hmm.

DePue: He was the state historian and library director when you first got there?

Cellini: He was, yeah.

DePue: Any other comments about him?

Cellini: Never got to know him very well. He was scholarly, not an administrator. He probably was one of the people that I thought about when we picked Richard Norton Smith to open the library/museum because he had all the educational credentials.⁴¹ He was a history guy but didn't have the forensic skills to sell a project. He was one of those people I...

I remember when we picked Richard. I had this file in my head, of the historians I had known. Everyone assumed it should be a historian, of course, and I said, "Wait a minute. We have Tom Schwartz. He's the backbone of this

⁴⁰ David Davis master-minded Lincoln's convention strategy in 1860 and was named to the Supreme Court by President Lincoln in 1862. Davis eventually became the target of much of Mary Todd Lincoln's animosity. He arranged with Robert Lincoln the legal admission of Mrs. Lincoln to an insane asylum. (<http://www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/residents-visitors/notable-visitors/notable-visitors-david-davis-1816-1886/>)

⁴¹ Richard Norton Smith is an American historian and author specializing in U.S. presidents and other political figures. In the past, he worked as a freelance writer for The Washington Post, and worked with U.S. Senators Edward Brooke and Bob Dole. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Norton_Smith)

project. You can't duplicate Tom Schwartz. We don't need to duplicate Tom Schwartz. What we need is somebody who can shout down the naysayers because they're going to come because of what we're doing with the Lincoln story. We're doing it for audiences of the 21st century, not for people who look at stuff in glass cases." I remember thinking of Bill back then, that he was a nice gentleman, but he would not have been that kind of historian, didn't have the background, wasn't schooled that way. And he wasn't the only one.

Through the years, I was always privileged to meet some really interesting people who sent me book lists or told me, "Gosh, you ought to see this," or something. But, what I always thought we needed and then as we got into it realized what Bob Rogers was going to do, we needed a salesman, and most of the people I've met who are professionals in history are not necessarily salespeople. Doris Kearns Goodwin comes to mind. She can sell you shoes.⁴²

DePue: The next name I've got on my list here is Olive Foster.

Cellini: Yeah, lovely, lovely, lovely lady.

DePue: What was her role, the state librarian?

Cellini: Uh-huh. She was director of the library museum [Olive Foster, IL State Historian, 1981-1985]. I don't know if she was state librarian. The state librarian was something under...

DePue: You're right. She would have been the director of the historical library.

Cellini: Yeah, state librarian was under the secretary of state, I think. I think that was actually [Governor Jim] Edgar's title when he built the state library. He was called the state librarian.

DePue: Yeah, the series of titles goes along with the secretary of state, so you're correct on that. Jim Hickey, who was the Lincoln curator until 1984, as I understand. You've already told that story about Jim Hickey and the white gloves. How would you describe him?

Cellini: Kind of a cowboy, fun to be around. I knew him; I didn't know him. He certainly knew his Lincoln stuff. I don't really have any big memories. I knew Betty, who always came along with him, who was this sweet, lovely wife. Jim was very close to Louise Taper, who sold major pieces of her collection to the

⁴² Doris Helen Kearns Goodwin is an American biographer, historian, former sports journalist, and political commentator. Goodwin has written biographies of several U.S. presidents. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doris_Kearns_Goodwin)

[Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library] Foundation.⁴³ I just didn't have an awful lot of traffic with him.

DePue: What was the connection between IHPA and another Thompson project, I believe, the Lincoln Legal Papers Project, which also started in February of 1985? At least, that's when it was getting off the ground. And over the next two or three years, it's where they were going to start to build some momentum.

Cellini: IHPA was the home, the nominal home, for the Lincoln Legals, but as far as the board was concerned, it was something that was a piece of the main. They would, once in a while, come and tell us what they were doing. I think their appropriations probably came through the IHPA budget, but I'm not even sure about that.

DePue: I think maybe it even came through the Sangamon State University [later named University of Illinois at Springfield].

Cellini: Maybe that was the reason, yeah. It was much more a scholarly component.

DePue: There are a couple or three names that come to mind here: George Curtis; I don't know that he was there that long, and then Roger Bridges.

Cellini: Roger was there a while.

DePue: Any reflections on either of them?

Cellini: I met them, knew them as very nice gentlemen but did not have a lot to do with them. They would come once in a while to our board meetings and talk about the Lincoln Legals.

DePue: I would imagine this next name is going to register a little bit more strongly, Cullom Davis.⁴⁴

Cellini: Why do you think it will register more strongly?

DePue: Because he was there longer, and he's more of a Springfield fixture.

⁴³ Louise Taper is a historian and collector of Abraham Lincoln artifacts. She created the exhibition "The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America," which was at the Huntington Library from 1993–1994 and at the Chicago Historical Society from 1996–1997. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise_Taper)

⁴⁴ Dr. George Cullom Davis taught and served as an assistant to the president of the newly formed Sangamon State University in 194 and was also responsible for establishing the university's Oral History office. He quickly developed a national reputation in the oral history community and served as president of the Oral History Association from 1983–1984. In 1988 Dr. Davis became Director of the Lincoln Legal Papers, where he served until his retirement in 2000. (<https://presidentlincoln.illinois.gov/oral-history/collections/davis-cullom-1-1-2/interview-detail/>)

Cellini: Cullom probably took it to the level it needed to be. It would start, stop, depending on funding, and Cullom is a guy who understands how things get done. I think the project really got its legs with Cullom taking it forward.

DePue: Somebody who knew how to work with the legislature?

Cellini: Sure, yeah. Here again, politics is the science of the way things get done. In its true definition, it isn't Democrats or Republicans or Liberals or Conservatives. It's how things get put together, how you work with people. I was not... I am not a scholar or anything, but I remember talking up the Lincoln Legals. It comes with how to do this.

We need this scholarly underpinning of all that we have and hold here. Don't you want to be associated with something that will last and go on? So, yeah, it was a part of it. I don't know that it needed the board that much, other than come funding time, talk it up and be very favorable. I think Cullom did his own sales job, and did it well. He's a good historian. He's a good guy.

DePue: He started as an oral historian. At least, he started the... I'll throw that in there because he is my mentor.

Cellini: Is he? Wow!

DePue: I would like to consider him as such. I think he'd be happy to have me call him that. Do you remember anything about the King Hostick Collection?⁴⁵

Cellini: I remember that we had a trustee named Frank Mason, who was convinced that there was all sorts of skullduggery going on there. I never knew whether it was true or whether it was just Frank spinning tales. But, I guess we bought it; didn't we?

DePue: Yeah.

Cellini: Frank handled that and got it done. It was something that we all agreed was worth pursuing, but Frank seemed to have the inside on that. Frank was... Boy, talk about a character!

DePue: In what way?

Cellini: Just...

DePue: You said he was a friend of the governor?

⁴⁵ The King Hostick collection was a lot of 12 Abraham Lincoln photographs, taken on June 3, 1860 by Alexander Hesler and printed from negatives owned by King V. Hostick, at the Herbert Georg Studio in Springfield, IL. (<https://www.bidsquare.com/online-auctions/cowans/king-hostick---georg-studio-collection-of-abraham-lincoln-photographs-104388>)

Cellini: Oh, a close, close friend of Thompson's. I met him at a cocktail party when I first came to Springfield.

DePue: So he's a Springfield native?

Cellini: He's a Springfield guy, been here forever. I don't know whether Bill and I were engaged at that point; maybe we were already married. Mason started talking about being on the Orient Express and being drunk and getting rolled and losing all his money. He's telling this story, and there are always people around, and everybody... My God, what a story. I, of course, want to know why he was on the Orient Express. So I followed him...

DePue: Always the feature writer.

Cellini: Yes, yeah. Anyway, I started asking him questions, and he starts telling me all this stuff about his background in Springfield and all that. I said, "A lot of the names that you're talking about, when you went to these villages, those resonate with me." He said, "Where are you from?" I said, "I was born here, but I'm not from here." I said, "My mother and father were from here." So, cocktail party chatter.

I get a thing in the mail from him, and it's this family tree. It's all these people from Eastern Europe on it. It's his family, and it's his family, and it's his family and all that. And all of a sudden, here's my mom and my dad and my brother and me (both laugh). I showed it to Bill, and Bill says, "Oh, my God. You have almost no relatives, but you're related to Frank Mason." (DePue laughs)

Then, it turns out that Sister Marilyn Jean Runkel, who is on staff at Benedictine, who's very prominent in the Dominican Order, she's on there. Then, she and I were on some committee or something for Sacred Heart-Griffin, I think, years ago. Anyway, I said, "Sister Marilyn, is it possible? No, I'm not related to you." She and I are on this thing, and I said, "I've got a real big surprise for you. Guess who else is on this?" (both laugh) Frank, he was a character around Springfield.

Anyway, he and I served for years together on that board. When we needed something, Frank and I would double-team it. He'd open the door with Governor Thompson, and then he'd say, "Take it, Julie." I'd do the Lincoln riff, if it was the David Davis Mansion, if it was the Olof Krans Museum, whatever it was. We were this unlikely team. But, he was one of the people I counted on through all those years.

See, it was never the Julie show. I was the person who could maybe do the sales or maybe do the... "Okay, let me throw a dinner party. It will take me an hour to put it together. Can you bring these people to my kitchen table?" Frank could do it. So, we got a lot of things that way.

He loved history. He loved antiques. He loved very fine things. I have some beautiful, beautiful things that he'd bring me. He'd go to Tiffany's [Tiffany & Co.] and show up at my door with something.

DePue: There's the natural connection to Governor Thompson.

Cellini: Yes. He went with Thompson to almost all of those auctions. I suspect Frank might have been part of brokering, buying the Dana-Thomas House. Frank was a self-made guy, bought a lot of property here in Springfield, owned a lot of businesses. He was amazing.

I was in Florida, and I got a phone call from my sister-in-law. I was with my gal pal. We were travelling. She said, "I know you're having fun, but I think you'd better sit down. I have to tell you something." I said, "Just tell me. Is it Bill or the kids?" She said, "No, it's Frank Mason. He dropped dead in the shower." I caught a plane and came home. He was...

DePue: What year was that? That's the kind of thing we can get into the record later on. We can look that up and make sure it's in the transcript, at least. [Frank Mason passed away in 1994]

Cellini: Yeah. He was a trustee when he died.

DePue: Died in the saddle, so to speak.

Cellini: Yeah, I think it was towards the end of the Thompson years. Maybe we were already into Edgar by then. It might have been Edgar by then.

DePue: A few more names I wanted to ask you about, and this is into the IHPA years. David Kenny was the first director. I think he lasted about two weeks.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: Do you know that story?

Cellini: Yeah, I do.

DePue: Can you tell that story?

Cellini: He wasn't prepared to deal with the board, especially a serious board. As I've told you before, this thing was so loosely... I actually thought Jim Thompson kind of woke up in the middle of the night and thought (snaps fingers), I'm going to do something for history. That's how loosey-goosey it was. So here's Dave, who had been moved over from Conservation, I guess, not been made director of Natural Resources, and was going to head up whatever this amorphous thing was going to be. I think he was as surprised as we were. I think he [Thompson] probably said, "Show up. I'm going to do something really interesting. You're going to like it, Dr. Dave."

Dave, I think, was a friend of Thompson's, liked Thompson very much, and I think nobody filled him in. Certainly, nobody told him, he was going to report to a board, because he'd been a director of this big agency. So, it just really didn't work out.

DePue: In other words, he resented that he had to answer to the board of trustees?

Cellini: I think he resented the whole thing. He went from being head of a big agency to suddenly having to scramble to get resources, to do a budget, and portion out what looked like it was going to be a much smaller pie. He had the things he wanted to do, and our board always had this big vision. We didn't have time to get together to know each other. He was just this nice gentleman that I met a few times, but I didn't know him. Sally and Frank didn't know him at all. It just didn't work.

DePue: Did he resign, or was he fired?

Cellini: I think he retired or... I don't really remember what happened after that. I just remember that we didn't have any more meetings where we all were singing from many different chapters of the hymnal.

DePue: The next director is Michael Devine. I don't think he'd been there that long, either. What are your memories of Michael?

Cellini: Scholarly, not real comfortable with state government. I don't know that we grew that much. I don't remember much that was significant from it. Likable guy, but I think those years were more kind of marching in place. I don't remember it being a particularly exciting time. I always knew I wanted to do more.

DePue: That would have been '85 to '91.

Cellini: Um-hmm.

DePue: And it sounds to me like there are a lot of new historic sites that were being added during that time.

Cellini: There are, but not the support services we needed. Then we board members would have to go out and try to figure out a way.

DePue: It sounds like you guys were scrambling more to get the support you needed.

Cellini: Scrambling would be the word.

DePue: One of the things I think he did introduce here was living history programs at the Old State Capitol.

Cellini: Un-huh.

- DePue: How would you describe that? Was that a good thing to be doing?
- Cellini: I don't remember much about that. I remember that he presented them, and he had a good idea. The resources were always hard to come by to do things like that, yeah. But it was an idea that's time was starting to come. I remember going to them. I remember participating, now that I think about it. I think I used to do...
- DePue: More women in hoop dresses, those kinds of things, I would think.
- Cellini: I used to do... In one of the rooms, I'd fill in when they needed somebody.
- DePue: Was that fun?
- Cellini: It was all fun. And none of it was ever... If I needed to grab a broom and sweep the leaves out, I did that too. I never considered myself, "Wow, she's the chairman."
- DePue: Now, you started by discussing how disappointed you were, in terms of how poorly the Old State Capitol was being maintained, that it was kind of a dingy place. What did you do? What did the board do to get that turned around?
- Cellini: We kind of bullied until we got some more resources and we got better treatment for it. There were no advocates for it before our board took an advocacy role. Things get better when you get more staff. So, we'd talk to people who were running the sites, "What do you need?" We'd try to figure out a way to get it. We were supposed to set policy, but I think we were more strong supporters who tried to figure out a way to get it done.
- DePue: The next name on the list here, Tom Schwartz, this new young man coming from the University of Illinois as curator of the Lincoln collection. Remember him arriving?
- Cellini: Oh, yeah, yeah. Who was the guy at the U of I who turned out some really, really good historians? He had a program at the ...
- DePue: All my colleagues would know the name, but I'm not a University of Illinois product.
- Cellini: He came out of that program. I remember early on that I thought, Wow, this guy is... He kind of channels Lincoln, and he's got that engaging way about him.
- DePue: Are you thinking of John Hoffman at the University of Illinois?
- Cellini: No. It's another name. Anyway, he was somebody who had been kind of the premier person running a program at the U of I, and Tom came highly recommended by this guy. I think I might have even been in the panel that

interviewed him. He looked like he was only twelve years old at the time. But, he was the guy you'd go to and say, "Tell me the story. Tell me what might have been happening when Lincoln delivered this." He and I kind of clicked because he so valued the stories. It was like he was in it for the stories because it was just so much fun.

He was the person that really enabled us to be honest with what is portrayed in the museum. He was the one... He'd bring an idea forward, or somebody would talk about something, and it was always... He was our fact-checker, sort of.

DePue: Again, that's going to be the story that we pick up the next time we meet as well and talk a lot more about the creation of the library museum.

Cellini: But I actually was on the panel when we hired Tom Schwartz, which is something I'm very proud of.

DePue: The next name I've got is somebody you've talked about already, somebody who came over from the Department of Conservation, Bob Coomer. It sounds like he was instrumental in moving this whole process forward and figuring out how the new agency would work. Would that be correct?

Cellini: As I said, he was the adult in the room, plainspoken, very modest, always the guy who stood in the very back of the room, never wanted to be singled out. The surprise for me was how much he spoke the other night, when you had that panel. He has sort of a parks and recreation kind of background. He ran the sites. I don't know; I can't say, "Gee, that's the time I met Bob Coomer." I just remember that I never, ever had a conversation with Bob Coomer that I didn't feel like I could take it to the bank." An honest broker, wow, would go out of his way to not offend, to not be abrasive in any way. You knew, when he told you something, it was the straight scoop.

He was so much somebody we relied on through all of this. He also has an uncanny knowledge of how things get done, the interface with the Capital Development Board [CDB], which was then a maze of people. We went through, I think, a dozen directors because that was the place then. I don't know if we'd still say it now, but that was the place then where you got your card punched on your way up to do something else in state government. You had CDB. They were the building arm, and Illinois was building a lot of stuff at that time. Bob knew the guy that signed the papers. He didn't always know the guy whose desk they went over, but he knew how to get it done so your papers got pushed along a little further.

When we did those charrettes, he knew all the people that set up the rooms and made sure we got a better space for what we were doing. He's just the kind of guy, if you'd go to war, you'd want him on your team. But, through it all...

- DePue: One other name here, and you've mentioned her already as well, Janice Petterchak, who is the director of the library, I think, for these early years.
- Cellini: Quiet, unassuming, very smart, a born researcher, loved research, loved the collections, did her job quietly. A lot of people would want to know some obscure something. I'd say, "I'm sorry. You see, I'm not a professional, but we have Janice Petterchak." I'd give them Janice's name.
- DePue: I'll be blunt on saying this, and I'm sure there will be people who would disagree with me, but librarians and historians aren't always known for their excellent leadership or managerial skills. Did Janice have good, solid managerial skills?
- Cellini: It didn't fall apart under her leadership. I think I would have been told. I don't know. I know that she was a go-to person that I, as chairman, could go to.
- DePue: From what you said before, it wasn't a part of the organization you needed to worry about much.
- Cellini: No, no. First of all, it was never a hugely used part of it. It was never so very public. I don't remember ever getting a letter from a scholar who was aggrieved. I remember, as board chairman, getting letters sent to me about dirty sites or surly guides, or you've got your history wrong but [not] complaints about the library other than, "My god, why is it underground?" "Are you people...? How can you in good conscious be on a board that lets mold grow down there?" "The air is awful, and there are exhaust fumes." It was like, "Sorry, it predates me," And "I would not have done it that way. I argued against it, but you work with what you've got."
- DePue: One last question for today. You've got this new agency. You've created part of it from the old Department of Conservation. You've got the Illinois State Historical Library. You've got this... I don't know where the preservationists would have come from before, but these are very distinct aspects of this new agency. Was there any friction or jealousy or tension between the various groups that you knew about in the early years?
- Cellini: Resources, everybody was always scratching for resources, and I just simply... My job was not to run it; my job was to do right by it. So I'm sure there was probably plenty of in-fighting. As my wonderful mother-in-law used to say, "You've got people; you've got problems." But as a board person, certainly as board chairman, I didn't get into the day-to-day. There were good, capable people there who ran things.
- DePue: I would think if there were serious problems within the agency, you would have found out about them.
- Cellini: Probably so, and at the time, maybe they loomed large. But we're talking about a lot of years, and I figured, yes, I took it seriously, like most everything

I've ever done I do about 100 percent, but I wasn't on staff. I didn't draw a salary there. I didn't have a desk, and I didn't have to show up for work and keep hours. I was always mindful of that, that I was a board person, and I was there if they needed something. When they did, I would try to figure out a way to do it.

Policies, we'd go over the budget, and we'd look at... We very seldom had disagreements with the staff. Once in a while we did. We had one trustee who was very mindful of which sites got what. That would cause friction, and I'd often have to kind of backfill after that. But just generally, I kind of stayed in that position and just tried to figure out the things that I could do. There are an awful lot of things I couldn't.

I think about now to be on that board, to have Sunny Fischer's job now. I just recently... Sunny and I have become friends. When I'm in Chicago, we always get together for breakfast or coffee or tea and sympathy. I said, "Sunny, I'm so sorry because if you could have been there in the golden time, you would have really loved it." [She] said, "Well, it isn't always bad." I said, "You've really had a load, and now it's..."

DePue: You're alluding to a lot of things that we're going to be talking about in future sessions, but next time is going to be very much about the momentum as you're building towards what eventually is going to become the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. And that's quite a long and...

Cellini: That's a long one. That's a long one.

DePue: ...convoluted story in some cases.

Cellini: Yeah, we're going to need, yeah, quite a bit of time on that one. What is happening now is, after my time, when Governor Quinn chose not to reappoint me—which was entirely within his purview to do—that was over; I was done, and I hadn't been chairman for a while. It's just such a different time now. It was really remarkable that we got to do everything we got to do.

DePue: That's probably an excellent way to finish for today.

Cellini: I guess it is.

DePue: Thank you very much.

(end of transcript #2)

Interview with Julie Cellini

HP-A-L-2015-013.03

Interview # 3: March 17, 2015

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, March 17, 2015. This is my third session with Julie Cellini. Good afternoon, Julie.

Cellini: Good afternoon. I notice you’re wearing green (laughs).

DePue: I guess it is St. Patrick’s Day, and you aren’t wearing green right now.

Cellini: Well, I’m wearing what I wore when I did my workout a while ago. It gives you an idea of how slovenly I look.

DePue: You look workout-like (Cellini laughs). It was interesting, yesterday was a gorgeous day, and Washington Park was packed. Today is just a little bit colder, but it’s still a very nice day and there’s probably a third of the people in the park today. But, that’s not why we’re here at all. We’re here to talk to you about your experiences as the chair of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency Board of Trustees, and eventually, I promise, today we’re going to get to the discussion about the library and museum.

Cellini: Okay.

DePue: But, I wanted to start with some other questions—this is primarily the early ‘90s that we’re looking at—and ask you about a couple more people. Let’s start with Janice Petterchak, who was the director of the historical library, I believe, in those years.

Cellini: Un-huh.

DePue: Did you have many experiences with her?

Cellini: I often sent people to Janice because, being on the library board, which is how we referred to it, even though we had sites with it, people would say, "Who can I talk to?" a lot of people who were looking at genealogy, for example, or wanted to know if there was a certain book there. So I always kept Janice's phone number, and she was the go-to person with it. I often would get feedback from people [about] how helpful she was, how they got what they needed, and how impressed they were with the way the library was run.

Did I ever get to know Janice personally? Not really. I'd stop in and say hello in her office when we had our meetings there, but I would say we had more of a collegial relationship but not more than that. I'm sorry I don't know her better. She's a neat lady.

DePue: It sounds like since that wasn't really a problem, you didn't have to get involved with the library operation that much?

Cellini: I would say that would be exactly it. The complaints tended to come [from] people at the sites who were disgruntled or staffers who said the sites were starving, internal stuff. There's never enough. Maybe that's true most anywhere, "We need more." "We need more staff." "We need more materials." "We need better support."

DePue: You're certainly hearing that today because the library is at half the staff it was when I came on board in 2006, and it's going to lose a couple more key people here in the very near future.

The next name I don't really know much about. In June, 1991, apparently E. Duane Elbert was appointed the state historian. That's roughly the time, I believe, that Michael Devine was leaving. What can you tell me about Elbert?

Cellini: Not anything at all, can't remember.

DePue: It was also 1991... I just mentioned Michael Devine, he left at that time, and Susan Mogerman was selected as the new director of IHPA. Is that a selection that the board made?

Cellini: The chairman certainly has some say-so in that, but this is something that the board talks about, and they recommend to the governor. It is a gubernatorial appointment.

DePue: Do you remember the conversations the board had about Susan being the person he'd like to have?

- Cellini: Oh, boy, I really don't. I really don't. She had done a lot of things in the community. She was known. She certainly knew state government.
- DePue: And she'd already been the assistant for two years. She came over in 1989.
- Cellini: Exactly, but I think it was that maybe the total package of experience. She came out of the Thompson staff.
- DePue: But total package would typically mean she had a history degree, that she had a historic preservation background, and she didn't have any of that.
- Cellini: No, she didn't. She had what the Italians would call "*furba*." One of our board members at the time said, "She knew which cow ate the cabbage." (DePue laughs) We seemed to be drifting at that point. We were in need of somebody who knew how the system worked, and frankly, we had a lot of historians, good historians. I'm not denigrating anybody, but we just needed somebody who had some moxie. So we looked around, and Susan seemed to fill the bill, and we needed somebody pretty quickly.
- DePue: What was the nature of Michael's departure? Can you go into that at all?
- Cellini: You know, I really can't remember. I never got to know Mike very well. I really can't recall. It's been a long time ago.
- DePue: Yeah, that's twenty-five years or more ago.
- Cellini: Yeah.
- DePue: This is about the same time, also, January of 1991, that you've got a new governor, Governor Jim Edgar.
- Cellini: Yes.
- DePue: How well did you and Bill know Governor Edgar at that time?
- Cellini: We had known Jim and Brenda... I can't say exactly how, but we had known them from the years that he was on the Thompson staff. My sister-in-law, Janis, was a much closer friend of his. We would see him at events, and he and I shared an interest in history and would occasionally exchange books and talk about what we were reading. I really liked her, considered her a friend. Through the years, we'd see them socially once in a while. They're not super-social people, not even at this time. But I would say we had enough of a relationship that we could build on it.
- DePue: How would you compare Governor Thompson to Governor Edgar in personality and style?

Cellini: (laughs) Oh, wow, just very different in approach, but at the heart of it both very smart, had a feel for, appreciation for the science of the way things get done, which is politics, and came up very differently. But in some ways I always saw similarities; both of them, pretty straight-shooters. Governor Edgar wanted briefings. Governor Thompson was, “Give me the Cliff Notes.” But both of them [were] very quick studies.

DePue: Would you say you had a good relationship with the Edgar Administration?

Cellini: I would say so, yeah. It helped that my sister-in-law was there.

DePue: Yeah, she was his personnel chief. In other words, the patronage chief is how the press would label her, I think.

Cellini: Yeah, yeah, well, they called it “personnel.” It wasn’t that she ever did me any favors because we were related. Janis was always professional in her own rough and tumble way and was absolutely 100 percent loyal to the governor, which the best staffers are. I’ve seen enough through the years that whatever it was, he came first. Family didn’t matter. Friends, people she had known forever, his needs came first. She always said, “We are here to take care of the boss.”

DePue: The reality as far as you were concerned and certainly as far as Governor Edgar was concerned when he walked into that office, was that he had a \$1 billion deficit to fill. He took that very seriously, and he was going to fill that hole. So, I think in a time when the country’s economy was in a minor recession that was very difficult to do. So, I would guess that there wasn’t much money for doing the kinds of things that all those site managers wanted you to do.

Cellini: Yes. That’s exactly right.

DePue: Did that make it more—kind of a stupid question—more difficult for you, in those early years of the ‘90s?

Cellini: It was never easy to sell history. Illinois does so many things, and there were so many people lining up, wanting things always. So yeah, maybe it was a little easier for me to get in the door and make my pitch, but it sure didn’t mean the pitch was going to sell. I would say that they were just... They were difficult times all around because he did what he said he was going to do, which is hold the line.

DePue: They called him “Governor No,” didn’t they?

Cellini: They called him “Governor No.”

DePue: I’m going to ask you a series of other questions. I’m not sure that you were involved or might remember much about each of these, but I wanted to give

you the opportunity at least. I'm sure there were still acquisitions, historic sites that were being added. Pullman, was that one that was being discussed that you recall?

Cellini: Pullman was discussed and discussed and discussed. Nobody ever knew what to do with Pullman.

DePue: It wasn't just one building. It was a massive complex, wasn't it?

Cellini: It was a massive complex, and I remember going to the Pullman site and thinking, How in the world do you interpret all of this? Pieces of it were gone. There was a fire somewhere along the line; I don't even remember when. Susan was head of IHPA by then, and we lost a tower, which was a very important, historical artifact and property. There were all these newspaper stories about what a lousy job IHPA was doing, as if... If we'd had guards there twenty-four hours a day, you can't head off somebody who's nuts and who's been told by god to go burn down that tower because it's pagan, which is essentially the story that came out.

There were always things like that, and because I was probably a little more visible as chairman of the board, I'd get the calls. I remember with Lincoln's Tomb, somebody defaced Lincoln's Tomb. Susan and I sat down and said, "What are we going to do? We don't own Oakridge. It belongs to the city of Springfield. We just happen to have a reason that a lot of tourists come there." What do you do in that case? Well, we scratched out some money someplace and put guards out there for a while until the media went away because those are things you have to do.

I guess what I'm saying to you is it isn't a fun and games job or anything. It was, do you believe in this? And if you do, you try to figure out a way to go along with the whole system. It probably isn't all that different from a university, from business, from...

DePue: How much were you being paid for this job?

Cellini: (laughs) I never even took travel, ever, but I didn't have to. I had a very hard-working, very successful husband who believed in what I was doing. I didn't have to; so I never did.

DePue: Just from what you've already said, and I'm sure when we get into other subjects what you're going to say, the job came with plenty of hassles. So why keep doing it?

Cellini: Because I could, because once in a while, I could make a difference, because once in a while, I could bring something to the agency that they didn't have before, and because I always had this amorphous vision of what we could do with the Lincoln story, with all we had and held.

Did that mean it was short shrift for the other sites? I don't think so. If we had to, I went... I went to bat for Pullman. I went to bat for David Davis, for the Bryant Cottage. I look back at all the things that happened. I made myself available to them but at heart, I've always had a crush on Abraham Lincoln.

DePue: We're going to talk a lot more, probably in about an hour from now, on Abraham Lincoln. Do you remember anything about the acquisition of the Vachel Lindsay Home?

Cellini: I remember going over... I think I read a biography of Lindsay, so I at least got up to speed. I was never a great devotee of Lindsay, but I appreciated the people who were. There's a lot to be said for people who will give of themselves for something they believe in. When we got the home, its proximity to the governor's mansion was a selling point. The sheer zeal of the people who cared about it was a selling point. Was I in love with the Lindsay legacy and story? I was respectful, and I think they have, through the years, done a lot with that house that they could do. They have a very strong support group.

Just a few years ago, Bill and I, as volunteers... This is after I'd left IHPA, because some friends of ours who still are very active in that said, "Gosh, we really need some stuff for the house." So, we did a fundraiser for them, the "Lindsay Man of Letters" award that we gave to Governor Edgar. We made a lot of money, and we filled the museum. Bill and I poured a lot of our personal money into it. It sounds corny, but you plant a flower where you can grow one. Lindsay was, in that case, one of the things that I thought, Yeah, we can take this on. We certainly don't want it to disappear.

DePue: In the early 1990s, one of the controversies that I understand was swirling around was Dickson Mounds [a branch of the Illinois State Museum in Lewistown, IL] and the Native American bones that were on display there. Does that sound familiar? Does that bring any memories back?

Cellini: Yeah, it does. I certainly remember the whole controversy, and to be honest, I never really focused on the personal side of that.

DePue: So the board didn't get directly involved in the controversy?

Cellini: We got involved as we were asked to get involved, but I personally had never thought of how wrong it is to be displaying pieces of people and...

DePue: And that was the strong objection that you were getting from some Native American groups at the time.

Cellini: Yes, of course. Governor Edgar—I think was governor at the time—was especially attuned to that because he's really quite the outdoorsman. I think once he became aware, it was really pretty appalling that we had done this. I

confess, I had not been to the site, so I didn't know what we did there. But once we became aware... He and his staff took a personal interest in that, which was very good to do that.

DePue: So you essentially agreed with the complaints that were being forwarded by some of the Native American groups?

Cellini: Yeah, I did.

DePue: About 1993, as I understand, the climate control problems in the historical library got to the point where they needed to do something, and apparently all the books and the artifacts were boxed up and moved out. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Cellini: There was mold. It wasn't a place you wanted to go into. We'd go down there for meetings and feel like there wasn't even any air. I think the staff was unhappy with it, and I didn't blame them for being there. So, yes, it was the right thing to do. The wrong thing to do was to have put it underground anyway.

DePue: That happened around 1970, long before your tenure. Ninety-three also was the time when Tom Schwartz became the state historian. I think you and I have talked a little bit about Tom already, and we'll talk quite a bit more about Tom later on, I'm sure. Kim Bauer was hired as the Lincoln curator. Any reflections on his abilities?

Cellini: I hardly remember Kim, nice guy. That was it.

DePue: That's about the time—I'm sure Tom had something to do with this—there was a major exhibit, *The Last Best Hope of Earth*, that we had the opportunity to display out at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.⁴⁶ Why do something like that?

Cellini: Tom was very, very close to Louise Taper, who was then a very well-known Lincoln collector. Tom had advised her. They had become close friends, and Louise was on the board at the Huntington. It had to go through our board to allow this to happen, and it seemed like a really good idea.

We knew there would be the Chicago Historical Society, which I think is now the Chicago History Museum. They were interested in spinning it off and running it in Chicago as well. So it just seemed like a good way to get these things out and to... Anytime you can focus on what Illinois has and holds and its historical treasures, it's worth doing.

⁴⁶ "The Last Best Hope of Earth—Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America" exhibit, the largest ever devoted to the life and achievements of Abraham Lincoln, includes riches from three of the finest Lincoln collections, the Huntington Library, Illinois State Historical Library, and the private collection of Barry and Louise Taper. (<https://www.amazon.com/Making-Last-Best-Hope-Earth/dp/B000CDNVNS>)

- DePue: Does that mean that Springfield itself really didn't have any place for an exhibit like this?
- Cellini: We didn't. We talked about, "Gosh, where could we bring it back to, after all this work had been done at the Huntington?" Was there a way? Could we raise the money to do it? There just didn't seem to be the infrastructure to do what had been done at the Huntington.
- DePue: Was there any discussion or thought that possibly the exhibit could be done at the state museum?
- Cellini: Probably, because we talked a lot about sites where it could be done. But I don't recall that it ever reached the point where we approached the state museum. Security was a big concern. The Chicago History Museum had the Chicago Historical Society. I went up there and met a few times with them. I don't remember who the director was. I was able to go back to the board and offer them the assurances that he had offered us.
- DePue: Was this fairly expensive for the library to do?
- Cellini: I don't recall how we funded it.
- DePue: It sounds like you were very supportive of the effort.
- Cellini: I was supportive of...yes, of doing more than we were doing. It was a good thing to do.
- DePue: Did it give the institution some more visibility as well?
- Cellini: It gave me more to talk about when I went out to sell the Lincoln Project, to show people pictures. This is what we could do. This is what we did in California, and then a good-sized institution in Chicago wanted to do it. Yeah, it helped. A lot of things helped to be able to reach for that when you're trying to sell an idea.
- DePue: Something a little bit different, King V. Hostick. I guess, he passed away about 1995 [1993] and gave a gift of \$1.43 million to the library. But I think there were some strings attached with that.⁴⁷ Do you remember anything about that project?

⁴⁷ King V. Hostick, 1914-1993, left a bequest of nearly \$3 million; however, his will and subsequent codicils interchangeably used the terms Illinois State Historical Library and Illinois State Historical Society, so that it was unclear which entity was the beneficiary. [At the time, one of the Society's specific missions was to support the Historical Library.] The issue went to court for a final determination, and as a result, the money was split with the stipulation that a scholarship fund be established in amounts up to \$3,000 each for the purpose of historical research, with each entity (the library and the society) providing half of the award amount. The King V. Hostick awards began in 1996. Source: Thomas Schwartz, telephone interview, June 8, 2018.

- Cellini: I remember that the will was ambiguous, and you couldn't tell whether the estate was to be given to the historical society or to the state agency that ran the library. We tried talking. We had meetings. The historical society was not comfortable with our board situation; I really don't know why. I remember one meeting where the room we met in wasn't conducive to talking, anyway, and they were on one side and we were on the other and...
- DePue: "They" being the Illinois...?
- Cellini: The historical society.
- DePue: ...Historical Society.
- Cellini: Yeah. Our board was on the other. We truly felt that Mr. Hostick wanted this to go where the Lincoln collection was, where the historical library [was]. We felt our position, and they felt theirs. I remember a lot of conference calls with our board. What we finally arrived at is nobody's going to divine what he meant in this wording. So why don't we agree to split this, which they reluctantly or whatever... People are always reluctant when money comes in. What we ultimately did was, I think, we split the legacy that he left.
- DePue: Was there a lot of acrimony between IHPA and the society at that time?
- Cellini: It was contentious and kind of miserable because they didn't understand why we were even a board or what we did or why we weren't getting more than we were getting for the sites. And we didn't really know what they did. It just was not a good thing. It was kind of like... Fortunately, I've never been party to a divorce, but it was sort of like maybe when you get a divorce.
- DePue: I discovered that at one time—this would have been late '80s, early '90s and probably much before that as well—that the executive director of the society was actually paid by IHPA.
- Cellini: Which I don't think was all that unusual in the beginning of these things. I think there were more of these relationships than... The society, I think, had been very strong at one point, and they really thought that the staff worked for them.
- DePue: It's not unusual that institutions like the historical library have a foundation or a society that supports their activities. Was that supposed to be the relationship?
- Cellini: I never knew what the relationship was supposed to be. We really only heard from them when they were unhappy.
- DePue: So they weren't involved much in the day-to-day governing, or they weren't funneling money to support activities.

Cellini: I don't think they ever... If they were, I was really not aware of it. And I don't want to be on record as saying they didn't because truly I don't know. As board chairman, you don't know the parts and the pieces and stuff. I was probably more involved than a lot of board chairs would be because I live here and because I understood the politics a lot more than the average person would, but did I know the relationship? Was I ever able to figure it out?

It didn't seem to me that we either had been very mutually supportive or maybe could be. When the society decided they'd go on their own way, I felt sad because it was tinged with acrimony. But I don't know that anybody missed what this quasi relationship had been, after it was no longer there.

DePue: I understand that part of the parting of ways involved that both institutions would develop their own journal. Do you remember that part of the discussion?

Cellini: I do, very vaguely. I remember it only at the board level and not personally.

DePue: March, 1996, Kathryn Harris is appointed as the library director. Was the board involved in that decision at all?

Cellini: I think so. I think we recommended Kathryn. By then, Kathryn had made herself known to the board in various ways, and it just seemed like a good idea. I don't know where it bubbled up from or whether Kathryn, in fact, courted it, but it seemed like a good fit.

DePue: She had been at the state library at the time...

Cellini: Right, yes.

DePue: ...which is a library of record for all the official documents that are created. I know that you are a fan of Kathryn, so tell me about your reflections on Kathryn's tenure.

Cellini: I was always a bit in awe of Kathryn; I still am. Anybody who achieves against great odds usually impresses me, and here was Kathryn, a single mom at a time, who understood that and got herself educated, got a number of... Kathryn has a pretty impressive background with what she's been able to do.

No matter what it was you asked her to do, she'd step up and do it, whether it was impersonating one of her historical characters to start our meetings or just finding something if you needed it at the library. She was just always this personable, go-to, slightly off the center line kind of person. So personally, I just always liked Kathryn. That's why, when I said, "When you're really going to retire, what are we going to do?" "Oh, maybe they'll have cookies and punch or something." "Kathryn!" My gosh, I watched her when she worked with the architects on the library and...

DePue: We should say that she's two weeks away from her retirement.

Cellini: Yes. So I went to her office one day, and I said, "All right, what do you want to do? We can do a party here." I said, "We can do Italian food over at Saputo's nearby." I said, "We can do something at our house." She said, "That's what I'd like to do." So, that's what we're going to do. I don't know how many people we've got coming. Most of them I don't know. But, I said to Bill, "Can we do this?" He says, "Yeah, yeah, I like Kathryn." He says, "Let's do it for Kathryn."

DePue: Kathryn... I don't normally like to do this, but she's not your stereotypical librarian.

Cellini: Not at all, which maybe appealed to me greatly because, frankly, I was never stereotypical in the role that I took, and that always seemed to be just fine with her. And it wasn't always fine with everybody else.

DePue: The next question, the *Looking for Lincoln* project. That would have been 1998. That seems to be a crucial year here. We're going to talk a lot more about some other things that were happening in 1998, but, in roughly that time frame, what do you remember about the *Looking for Lincoln* project? First of all, what was it? What is it?

Cellini: You know, I'm absolutely drawing a blank on *Looking for Lincoln*. I remember the term.

DePue: As I understand it, this is when Bryon Andreasen was... I think this is when he came on board.⁴⁸ I know he was certainly working on it. But, the project was to identify anywhere that Lincoln had some kind of a presence; there was some kind of a story, doing something. So you're talking about lots of different communities around the state, and according to my conversation with Susan [Mogerman], not just the state of Illinois but in Indiana, Kentucky, other places that had that Lincoln connection and developing that story.

She mentioned yesterday that there was an occasion where...and she led me to believe that you went with her to Washington, DC to make a presentation about perhaps the Lincoln...as some place to preserve the Lincoln legacy but also for the *Looking for Lincoln* project. I don't mean to put you on the spot. I guess I have though.

Cellini: Yeah. All right, this would have been '98. I don't have my little cheat sheet in front of me. You're saying the late-'90s or the...

⁴⁸ Bryon C. Andreasen, a historian at the LDS Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, is the author of *Looking for Lincoln in Illinois: Lincoln's Springfield*. He was formerly the research historian at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, and helped create the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition. (<http://siupress.siu.edu/authors/bryon-c-andreasen>)

DePue: That's when it was first started. Whether or not that's when you went out to Washington, DC, I don't know. Maybe what we ought to do is get into the meat of the discussion on the library/museum. If you don't mind, we'll do that.

Cellini: I don't remember much from *Looking for Lincoln*, other than I probably went to some of the events for it. If we did it, I had to have been supportive of it, but I don't really recall. Those were extremely intense, busy years for me.

DePue: That gets us to the meat of the discussion, what we've been building up to for a long time. Let me start with asking you this way. You worked on the creation of what became the library/museum from your earliest days, when you were first starting with the volunteers, all the way through its creation in early 2000.

But you've got a president, the most important—I would say, and most people would agree—the most important president of the United States, in terms of historical impact, with Abraham Lincoln and covering the crucial years of the Civil War, which is the seminal event in American history, what everybody who wants to understand American history has to grapple with and try to understand from that level. So, why wasn't there already someplace, a presidential library/museum for him?

Cellini: The presidential library legislation was much, much, much later. I think the first one was Roosevelt at Hyde Park [opened 1941], which was essentially just his collections, I think. I don't know that NARA [National Archives and Records Administration] came around until... Was it Hoover, the first presidential facility that actually interpreted a presidency under the National Archives and Records?

DePue: I think you're right, and of course, Hoover was before Roosevelt. But you're suggesting that Roosevelt's was built before Hoover's. [President Hoover's Library & Museum opened in 1962]

Cellini: Yeah, I think Roosevelt's, really... His was privately done, but it sort of ushered in the idea that...because before then, presidential papers were... There were presidents that burned their papers.

DePue: And some that wished they had (laughs).

Cellini: Yes, yeah, so I don't know that there was a lot of official stuff being done. I can tell you that we never called this the "Lincoln Presidential Library."

DePue: What was the...

Cellini: We called it the "Lincoln Project."

- DePue: We might be going back and repeating some things, but even in the early '80s, what was it that you had in mind?
- Cellini: I had a Lincoln museum in mind that would tell the whole Lincoln story.
- DePue: Even from the earliest days?
- Cellini: Yes, because there wasn't any place where you could get the whole Lincoln story, and it's such a great story. So the journalist in me had always liked that, and the history lover had always liked that, and I had dragged my kids through historic sites, from Dump Truck [a made up name], Ohio to...wherever there was some place when we were travelling with our kids. "Oh, my god! We've got to stop! Look at the map! We're going to see this." And they're like, "Oh, my god!" I'd always think, We live in Springfield. Why isn't this here, and if not here, where?"
- DePue: But, you had Lincoln here. You had the Lincoln Tomb. You had the Lincoln Home. You had the Old State Capitol.
- Cellini: We had pieces, and we didn't have what happened after he left. There were bits and pieces of that around the country, but there was nowhere where you got the whole experience of this remarkable American story. If you tried to do it in Washington, it was one more thing competing with other things. There were already... Lincoln's got plenty of monuments and memorials and really wonderful things that speak of greatness. But there was no place that gave you the story.
- DePue: It sounded like, even in the early days, you went on the stump trying to sell this idea.
- Cellini: Oh, yeah, yeah.
- DePue: Tell me about that. Where did you go? What audiences did you go to? What was the pitch?
- Cellini: Oh, if I'd just buttonhole somebody, you'd talk about, "Why are you doing this history stuff?"
- DePue: Are you talking about politicians?
- Cellini: Yeah, political types, sure. It's always been a big piece of our lives, but anybody, anything that I was doing in the community. And this was never the only thing I was doing in the community. I've very passionate about education and developmentally disabled kids. There are a number of things that I've always tried to pour myself into because I could. Because, God bless Bill, he made it easy for me to do that and was enormously supportive, still is.

But this one just always... It was always on the back burner, but the burner was never off. I just always wanted to do this and thought there might come a time. But, it was the Lincoln Project; it was not the Library Museum. The library was always to be a component because we had the collections. I thought, If we had this, the collections could grow. That was one of the reasons that I was so high on buying Louise's [Taper] collection.

DePue: You say the collection. Do you mean exclusively or specifically Lincoln collection material or other collections as well?

Cellini: Well, certainly the others, but Lincoln weaves through a lot of what the historical library has had through the years. It certainly isn't all of it by any shot, but that was really what grabbed my attention more than anything out of being associated with the library.

DePue: You've kind of alluded to this already, but what was the typical reception you got when you made pitches. I assume some of it was very informal, when you'd get somebody at a party, but I would assume also that you were making formal pitches in the early days.

Cellini: Yeah, if anybody would give me the time. I'd stand out in a drafty hallway, and I'd get a little window of time with the great person.

DePue: Governor Thompson? Did you make formal presentations to him?

Cellini: Usually. Usually I'd do my pitch if we were going to a site to open something, or if I got a little of his time, or if Bill and I were at one of his cocktail parties, and he's taking me around, showing me stuff from his collections and...

DePue: There's no greater lover of antiques in the state, I don't think. You'd be hard-pressed to find one.

Cellini: Yes. But he didn't have the fire in his belly for Lincoln that Jim Edgar did. Jim Edgar... I remember taking a book to Thompson one year for Christmas, just dropping it off in his office and realizing he was on Teddy Roosevelt at the time. He gave me a Teddy Roosevelt book (laughs).

DePue: But Edgar?

Cellini: Edgar was more an Illinois history, Lincoln... He seemed to get it, but there wasn't any money. We had this austerity budget, and Joan Walters was there. She was a lady that kept hold of the purse strings and...

DePue: She was his budget director.

Cellini: Yes, yes, tough and smart. She held the line because that's what the boss said. He didn't say it as eloquently as I remember Dick Ogilvie saying, when he put in the income tax to fix the roads and the bridges. He said, "I wasn't elected

governor to preside over the crumbling of this state.” I think in some ways I heard echoes of that with Jim Edgar, “I didn’t run for governor so I could see this place into bankruptcy and beyond.” We were only \$1 billion in red then.

DePue: Yeah, saying that, you can’t help but think of some of the governors we’ve had since then. But that’s a story for another day. We have talked about this a little bit, and I think I might even confess that I’m struggling to pin down specific dates for a couple of these events, but I believe it’s in ’90 or ’91 that you got your first glimmer of hope with maybe a surprise from Judy Barr Topinka. Tell me about that.

Cellini: I think you and I touched on it the other day, the erroneous story about the... Was it the Gettysburg Address or the Emancipation Proclamation? It was the Gettysburg Address, I guess, that was in a very unsafe place at the Old State Capitol, under the stairs where nobody saw it. But more to the point, you could open it with a Phillips screwdriver in thirty seconds and steal it away. They were right. It was under the steps in a... But it was a pretty secure place; it was. I think you looked into a little thing and saw it. But there was no story around it—Garry Wills, it would be years before he ever wrote his book on it that I don’t know who else read it besides me—but it was just fine there, and it didn’t...⁴⁹ I don’t think most people even knew it was there.

Why the story appeared in the media, I don’t know, but the impression was that the State of Illinois was not safeguarding this, that the agency didn’t value what it had. None of it was true, but Judy read the story, and Judy had spearheaded the effort to bring [President Ulysses] Grant’s body to Illinois for a reburial. She wanted to do it at the Grant Home in Galena, which was an IHPA site. It was someplace in upstate New York, and it was just not being well taken care of by the Park Service.

Judy really focused on Illinois history at that point and did some interface with Susan, Bob, and the staff, not really with our board but with them about, if she could get this done, what could we do in Galena. Galena was a nicely-run site, not a particularly exciting site. He only lived there off and on for a while, but it was his home. So she wanted him reburied there. Of course, the feds were like, “Who are you?”

Then she set her sights on other things with history, and she saw this and, by golly, “I’m going to fix this.” So, she got maybe \$80,000 out of her budget or something and said, “Here it is. Can you at least put a lock on that case, for god’s sake?”

DePue: That’s probably how she said it too.

⁴⁹ Garry Wills is the author of 21 books, including the bestseller *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (winner of the 1992 Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award). (<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Lincoln-at-Gettysburg/Garry-Wills/9780743299633>)

Cellini: Yeah. Some of us explained to her, “You’re the best,” because she was. “But, it’s okay, and if you want to come over and see it, it’s okay. Yes, we’re embarrassed that it’s stuck under the staircase, but we don’t have this Lincoln place, where it should be and where it should be interpreted. We don’t have that. We’ve got the Old State Capitol.”

Well, all right. So the money sat there, and it didn’t get used, and it didn’t get used. But it sat there, and they didn’t take it away from us. By then the idea had gotten more... I had more time to focus on the idea. I talked to Bob Coomer and to Susan about it. I said, “All I have is this idea that I spin, and it’s amorphous, and people say, ‘Swell idea.’” I said, “If we just had something.”

Anyway, I don’t know who it was that said, “We’ve still got this money hanging there.” So we used Judy’s money to put together a little charrette, and we got these drawings on the wall. I would carry them around in an old folder, and I’d say, “Look at this. We could do this.” I look at it now, and I think, Oh, my god. They must have thought I was an idiot. But we’re visual. As human beings, we’re visual, so at least I had something.

DePue: Who did the drawings?

Cellini: It was done by Gerard Hilferty.⁵⁰ I think they were someplace in Indiana, and Bob got him because we could afford him. They came, and they sat around with the staff. We talked about, “What could it be, and what would the public see when they walked in?” And “Where would your artifacts be, and how would you tell the story, and how much of the story, and could you tell the whole story? Could you only tell the Springfield years?” We kicked around the whole idea.

DePue: To include dollar figures?

Cellini: No, because in order to have an estimate, you had to have, what would this be, and all we had was a concept with some illustrations.

DePue: Certainly people must have been asking you, “How much do you think this will cost?”

Cellini: That’s when you lose people. First, you have to get them with the idea. So I used those as a way to plant a seed.

DePue: Again, maybe this is the historian in me, but I’ve got to think that this is an easy sell. You’re talking about the most important American. Others might disagree, but I think an awful lot would say, “Yes, you’re right.”

⁵⁰ Gerard Hilferty and Associates, Inc. is located in Athens, OH, United States and is part of the Specialized Design Services Industry. (https://www.dnb.com/business-directory/company-profiles.gerard_hilferty_and_associates_inc.9d3ca1cc051ab414b9bd56554b608152.html)

Cellini: Well, then, maybe I was really a lousy salesman, because I sure tried to sell it. But, what I did do was drop enough seeds with anybody who would give me five minutes, give me ten.

“What do you want to do? Your kids are growing up. You and Bill seem to be doing really well. What do you want to do next? You’re still young.” I looked around. What did I want to do? I was always doing freelance. This was never the only thing on my plate.

But, this was just something so much bigger that we could do. Bill was, through the years, offered big positions, other places. We wanted to raise our family here. We didn’t want to live anyplace but here. So I always knew this was going to be our hometown, and this is Lincoln’s town. It just sort of all was together, sort of.

DePue: Could you get people excited, except they’d figure out it was an expensive thing. That scared them off, but they could get excited about the concept?

Cellini: Oh, it’s Lincoln. Who doesn’t love Lincoln?

DePue: It seems to me that every American president, at least recently, has got to get right with Lincoln.

Cellini: Always. They go out to Oakridge, and they rub the nose on the statue.⁵¹ Yes, yeah, and no matter what you’re espousing, you can find something in Lincoln’s words to back it up. He belongs to all of us.

DePue: Were you continuing your own education, constantly learning more about Lincoln yourself?

Cellini: Oh, sure, I’ve always been a reader and an interviewer and... Sure, yeah, I know a fair amount of Lincoln history, never a scholar but certainly a hobbyist’s interest in Lincoln. You have to have that to sell it. If it got much below that level, I would turn to people like Tom Schwartz, who could be a spellbinder when he wanted to be.

DePue: We’re talking about the early- and mid-1990s. By the time you get to the mid-1990s, the economy is obviously doing quite a bit better. I reviewed the comments that I got when I interviewed Governor Edgar as well, and he reminded me of something that I also heard from Lee Daniels, that there were several years... Lee Daniels became the Speaker of the Illinois House just for two years. That would have been ’95 and ’96 that he was Speaker.

⁵¹ A Springfield, Illinois legend says that rubbing the nose of sculptor Gutzon Borglum’s bust of Abraham Lincoln conveys good luck. No one knows where the tradition began. (http://abelincoln.com/ornaments/st_joseph_lincolns_nose.html)

Apparently, he was putting money into the budget to do something about the library. Do you remember meeting with Speaker Daniels?

Cellini: Sure. Our secret weapon was Pam Daniels.

DePue: His wife.

Cellini: Pam was an IHPA trustee.

DePue: How did she end up on the board?

Cellini: I think she was a recommendation from Thompson. I don't remember. I had known Pam. Pam had been a teacher, and Pam was actually very interested in the smaller sites, Bryant Cottage being one of them. She liked education, and Pam's really smart.

DePue: Is this William Jennings Bryan, or is this a different...

Cellini: No, this is... I don't remember who. No, Bryant is the last name.⁵² Bryant Cottage had to do with education and...

Anyway, Pam was a member of our board. When you get Pam, you get Lee. During that fortuitous time, Lee was Speaker, and there was money, and I did my pitch to Lee. Lee liked the idea; Pam liked the idea. Pam was... It was never a "Julie Show." There were lots of people that you called to make a call or to make a pitch, and Pam was part of that. Pam cared a lot about it, and that brought Lee along. You grabbed people as you could, and they were there too.

DePue: All of your efforts came to fruition, apparently, about 1998, which would have been right at the end of Edgar's administration, when governors and presidents look for some kind of legacy. I don't know how much that factored into it. He was always a frugal guy, but there was something in the budget. It had been there before. The money had never been spent, but according to Governor Edgar, he included that in his State of the State Speech.

Cellini: He did.

DePue: So now you've gotten more of a green light and as I understand something like \$4.9 million startup money, with the total expenditure being in the neighborhood of \$40 million.

Cellini: Yes.

⁵² The Bryant Cottage State Historic Site in Bement is part of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and is known as the location that Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln met to discuss the famous 1858 Lincoln-Douglas Debates.

DePue: Where did those numbers come from? Was that something the board was feeding through Daniels and others?

Cellini: We had to have a number; pick a number. We looked at what the state library had cost. We looked at land costs. It was such a rough estimate. We knew that something that was cloaked in a library would be more understandable [with] education along with it, history of course, woven through it.

So, for a long time, we just sort of talked in those terms, the Lincoln Project, but it would be a library component. Do I remember the day that it actually took shape as to what it was? I remember that we knew there was going to be a strong component of it that was going to be a library. We began to realize it needed to be two buildings, based on what was available in downtown real estate, or it had to be a complex that would block the street or screw up traffic downtown. You can't do that. There was all this amorphous stuff going on.

DePue: Did the state library cost about \$40 million?

Cellini: I think that was where we got that amount.

DePue: That's essentially one city block.

Cellini: I think that's where we finally pick that. Consider we're people sitting around a conference table. If you've ever built anything, who knows what it's really going to shake out at the end. Plus we weren't building a house or a garage attached to your house or... We were looking at something big and important. The library was attractive and understandable, but what it was going to be in concept, wrapped around the story of Lincoln, that was still out there.

It actually did not become the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, one name, until Edgar was gone and Ryan was governor. He had a guy named Bob Knudson, who was his chief of staff, and Knudson was in the meeting. He said, "What are we calling this thing?" Everybody looked at me, and I said, "We're going to call it the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum."

DePue: Is that a spur of the moment thing?

Cellini: I was so on the spot, and he was frustrated. He was the governor's chief of staff, and he needed an answer. The Ryans were, God bless them, behind the project, and he needed an answer. We tried all kinds of ideas and things, and it was expediency. It was born of doing your homework and knowing the art of the possible. So that's what it became. We knew that we were not doing what NARA does. It was never meant to be turned over to the feds. At least, I never remember that, and I knew enough about the federal system to know they wouldn't want it anyway.

- DePue: NARA, National Archives and Records Administration.
- Cellini: Yes, yeah, they're the ones that have the Hoover, or Tom has.
- DePue: They have all of the presidential libraries, from Hoover on.
- Cellini: From Hoover on, yes.
- DePue: What was the emotion when you realized in 1998, we finally have a green light to go forward with it, whatever it's going to be? What are the emotions of you, the board, and those who had been working on this for twenty years or close to it at that time?
- Cellini: Well, we didn't exactly have the green light. We didn't have the green light until... I think I told you that story about Governor Ryan calling and saying Bill and I needed to come and spend the night at the mansion.
- DePue: You told me that story, but not on record. I'd like to hold off for now because that's quite a few years down the road.
- Cellini: Yes it is.
- DePue: What were your emotions in '98?
- Cellini: That we have momentum. We have people who understand that this could be a lot more than a place to go read and check out books. We didn't have it all fleshed out, but we had plenty of ideas.
- DePue: I guess I was expecting you to say... This is why we ask the questions, because you don't know what the answers are going to be. I expected that you'd be more excited or optimistic about it or maybe even intimidated by the prospect.
- Cellini: (pause) I remember putting so much energy into keeping the show on the road that I just remember that he wasn't quite as angry with me at the end of the meeting as he had been at the beginning.
- DePue: "He" being Edgar?
- Cellini: No, no, this being Ryan's chief of staff, Bob Knudson.
- DePue: But that's still a couple years down the road.
- Cellini: What you see now went through all kinds of swirling discussions. I don't know how to explain it...without making myself seem devious. If anybody would understand, it would be Lincoln.
- DePue: You've said several times in the interview that politics is about the art of getting things done.

Cellini: Exactly.

DePue: And that apparently was your laser focus through this whole process, if there was anything that was laser about it.

Cellini: Yeah. It was, what can we do not to deceive people but to keep this moving forward? If I hadn't believed always that this was something pretty terrific... I was never selling snake oil. If I hadn't believed that it was going to be outstanding, I wouldn't have stuck with it. I wouldn't... It was not always fun. There were a lot of sleepless nights. There were a lot of come home...the whole thing. It was just, what do I do now?

DePue: You've got \$4.9 million or in that neighborhood in 1998, early '99. What do you do with that money? What's the next step?

Cellini: We looked around at places that we liked. We went on the road. We had Edgar staffers who were interested. We had Edgar's attention. We had money.

DePue: Who were the staffers? Do you recall?

Cellini: Al Grosboll [Edgar's deputy chief of staff] was one of them. Dave Bourland [mansion curator] was there for a while. I'm not sure how but Dave went along, and he was always fun and games.



Julie meets with Governor Edgar in the state capitol late in his eight year administration, circa 1998. Also present were Al Grosboll (obscured), Susan Mogerman and Mayor Karen Hasara.

DePue: The mansion...

Cellini: The mansion guy. Bridget Lamont, who had been his library liaison, a person in his administration who I think had been director of the state library after he built it. Remember, he had built the state library. It was fortuitous for us that the secretary of state is nominally the state librarian, so that [meant] George Ryan had been nominally the state librarian too, which meant that George and Laura Lynn understood libraries as well, understood the value of it. So that was a plus.

DePue: Was part of it selecting an architect?

Cellini: Oh, yeah, yeah. We looked at lots and lots of places that were recommended to us. We talked to people who were recommended to us. Architecture was

never the big thing, I think, with the concept that we were pushing. We wanted a good-looking museum, a good-looking building. But we wanted to spend the money inside.

The library was a bit of a different component. It was dear to the Ryans, so they really took... Mrs. Ryan took a personal interest in what the library would look like. That transitional look that you see in the library, the colors, the big glass... That was actually going to be a reading room, that big glass room on the front.

DePue: The circular room.

Cellini: Yeah. Things like that. Mrs. Ryan, she was instrumental in that because... I think they knew he was probably not going to have more than one term. So she took a big lead in that. They took a big lead in raising private money. They never got credit for that. They would bring me in, and I would help with the sell. But he opened so many doors for private money. The foundation gets a wallop from the media, but there was a lot of private money raised.

DePue: We're talking about George Ryan now, and you brought him up several times. That's because the money didn't come until right at the tail end of the Edgar Administration, so it's Ryan's administration now that's going to have to execute a lot of these things.

Cellini: By saying that, I don't want to sell short what we got from a reluctant and skeptical Jim Edgar, who, rightfully so, needed to be convinced and who certainly bears credit for allowing this show to get on the road.

DePue: What I'd like to ask you—this is a bit of an impolitic question perhaps—even from the early days of the Ryan Administration, he already had a cloud over his head with allegations that were swirling around about things that had gone on in his secretary of state years. He'd been there for eight years. Did that ever factor into the equation of your working with the administration on this?

Cellini: No, unh-uh. It was not easy to work with his staff. I think they were skeptical of me personally. I didn't come up with them. I didn't know them very well. I knew Mr. and Mrs. Ryan, not personally, but they were these warm, embracing people. His staff was another matter, and I don't know what was happening during those years. Maybe... Everybody was really on edge.

DePue: He had somewhat of a reputation of being gruff on occasion. Did you see that side of George Ryan?

Cellini: I did. I did, yeah. When that would happen, it sounds corny, but I'd say to myself, Look at all the crap that Lincoln took (DePue laughs). We're going to get there. We're not going to get there because I folded my tent and went home. So, we continued. And fortunately, the Ryans, particularly Mrs. Ryan,

understood that this could be big and exciting and wonderful and necessary for Illinois to do it, to be the keepers of the Lincoln legacy, the story.

DePue: By now you know that I'm a guy who likes to keep straight with my chronology. My understanding is that shortly—I could be totally wrong in this—but shortly after you had the seed money, the \$4.9 million, that you and Bill went out to California.

Cellini: We did.

DePue: Is that roughly in the timeline?

Cellini: Yeah, yeah. We were moving along.

DePue: That goes to what you're talking about. What's going to be inside the building was always more important. Let's start with why California? Why were you going out there?

Cellini: Bill was representing a lot of associations at that time, and one of them had a convention, a meeting or something, out there. I usually went along and put together all of the ancillary stuff, tours, dinners, things like that. Bill had a small staff, so I sort of functioned as a staffer. I had figured out by then that what I'd seen at enough of the presidential facilities was [in] all my notes: where were people gathered, and what did I hear them talking about in the lobby? So I had this idea.

DePue: Had some of the other staff already gone to some other libraries and museums?

Cellini: Oh, yeah, yeah. As soon as we got money from Edgar, we hit the road.

DePue: Let's talk about that first, and then we'll pick this story up, if we can. Where did you go?

Cellini: We went to the Holocaust Museum [Washington D.C.]. We went to all of the major Washington [D.C.] sites. We went to California sites.



The ALPM leadership team visited museums around the country in 1999 looking for ideas for the museum. From left to right are Gyo Obata, Tisa Poe (from BRC), an architect, Dave Bourland, Lura Lynn Ryan (front), Susan Mogerman (back) and Julie Cellini.

The Reagan [Presidential Library] was then just a shell of what it is now, to the Nixon [Presidential Library]...went to most all of the presidential libraries. We went to Grand Rapids, Michigan, which is where we met Richard Norton Smith. He was at the Ford Museum [Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum]. We took notes wherever we went. I don't know. Susan's memory isn't such, and I didn't keep notes during those years, but god, we went to so many places.

DePue: Maybe a more important question is, what was it that you were learning in going to these places?

Cellini: We were learning, first of all, that they don't have a lot of visitors—this is the presidential libraries—that they tended to tell it their way. It seemed to me, after doing some investigating, that the wives of presidents were front and center on these things, and his cabinet members raised a lot of money for them, and that how the story was told, it seemed to me, was from their point of view, maybe from settling scores, not that harshly but just, okay, now it's our turn to tell how it really happened or how they feel it really happened. That seemed to be kind of pervasive with all of them. We were so lucky that the Lincolns are all gone.

We had Tom Schwarz, who channeled Lincoln, and we had other good historians around. So we're out there looking at things with a...not criticism but with a critical eye. What did people really care about? We went to Ellis Island and had a behind-the-scenes tour of Ellis Island.

By then, architects were calling us, because the word had gotten out that Illinois was going to build something for Lincoln. So entrée became not that tough. Tourism would call Susan and say, "Hey, this architect is interested, and he did the Nixon." I think it was DMCD (DeMartin-Marona Cranstoun and Downes), Alex Cranstoun. "Mr. Cranstoun would like to meet you there and show you what he did for Nixon.

We often got a real good look at things, [a] behind-the-scenes look at things. The name that would pop up periodically was BRC Imagination Arts out of Burbank, California. "How did you do this?" "Well, we didn't do it. We contracted it out, and some pieces of it were done by that firm." So, they were not unknown to us.

I remember talking to my husband a number of times about this, oh god, so many times about this. (recalling a discussion) "I'm the history lover in the family. You're the guy who likes to go places and do things, and I've dragged you to so many historic sites, where you've been very kind about not falling asleep, but what's grabbed you?" Well, he loves the Hall of Presidents. Actually, one of the first things that Bill and I ever did as a couple was go see *Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln* at the World's Fair [1964 in New York

City].⁵³ We weren't even engaged yet. As I look back now, I think, My god, my mom and dad let me go.

DePue: The New York's World's Fair, I think about '64, maybe? Somewhere around 1964-1965.

Cellini: God, would it have been? Yeah. I think I just met him. He was taking flying lessons, and he and his buddy flew us out there. We picked up my college roommate, who was like as close to a chaperone as you'd have, and we saw the World's Fair. We saw *Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln*, the animatronic Abraham Lincoln. I was knocked out of my socks, as was most of the world.

Bill was...kind of liked it. But maybe it planted a seed that you could do this. It had been researched here. I don't know whether you're aware of that, but Otto Kerner had actually opened up the Lincoln collection to... Was the guy's name Moses [Robert Moses, a New York public official], that developed the World's Fair?

DePue: I don't know that.

Cellini: Disney did it. Disney came to Springfield and did all their research and everything and had historians then who helped them with it. Illinois loaned key pieces of that collection. There was actually a scholarly component of that that was available to people too. Bill had always said, "Do something like that. Get Disney to do it." I said, "How am I going to get Disney to do it?"

Bill and I were in California for a convention for one of the groups he represented. I get a call. I had asked everybody I thought might have a connection, "Get me to Disney." I'd written letters to Disney and gotten a polite, "Dear Mrs. Cellini, thank you for your letter of..."

Somebody told me that Dick Durbin's either college roommate or best friend from college was the governmental relations person for Disney. I got a call from him. He said, "Where are you?" I think we were in California, or we were someplace where it wouldn't have been prohibitive [to travel to him]. He said, "I can get you into Disney. How soon can you get there?" I said, "I happen to be out west now." Maybe I was in California. He said, "I don't have any money for you. You'll have to be there on your own dime, but I think I can get you in."

He said, "You need to know that Marty Sklar, who was the head of Imagineers at Disney, had prevailed upon the Illinois governor, who I think might have been Otto Kerner, to work with him on *Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln* and that there were still people in the Disney hierarchy, the

⁵³ *Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln* is a stage show featuring an audio-animatronic representation of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, best known for being presented at Disneyland since 1965. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Moments_with_Mr._Lincoln)

Imagineers, that still remembered this.⁵⁴ So Illinois would get a nice reception because Illinois had gone out of their way for the Imagineers, and a lot of these guys had been there forever.” So, he said, “You can use that. I don’t know; I don’t know what we can do for you because I can’t get you any money, but I can get you in the door.”

I don’t know if Bill went with me or I went on my own. I just remember that story I told that night of getting out of a cab and seeing this big, odd, white building with no signage. The cab driver says, “You’re on your own to get back.” I said, “Well I got out here, I can probably call you. Give me your card.” I went there and finally found a door that had these ears on it.

I walked in, and they were all waiting for me; they were all very nice. They talked about Marty Sklar, about what Illinois had done. What I really think they wanted to do was palm off on us *Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln*, which by that time had had its day. They had it at one of their [locations], whether it was Anaheim or... I don’t know where they had it, Florida or California, one of them. It was sort of, Oh my god, we put all this money into this thing, and it really... It was Lincoln going like this [makes hand motions].

DePue: With his mouth moving and...

Cellini: Yeah, yeah, it was that. I really think that may have been some of their motivation to let this housewife from Springfield, Illinois in. They had artists in there sketching. They had the most wonderful library and art books and all these learned people. It was like getting dropped into... I didn’t know there were worlds like that—I thought somebody sketched Mickey Mouse on a tablet—and animation studios.

I met this cool guy named Van Romans, who had a PhD in art history, and he was running the studios. He was a successor to Marty Sklar. Marty Sklar is like... You get legends in organizations. Marty Sklar was like the guy that really moved them into... He worked at Walt’s right hand.

This was essentially Walt’s dream factory, the Imagineers, and here I was, right there. God, you’ve got nothing, and you’ve got everything, and look at what you could do. Of course, I wanted them to do it, and they were trying to do *Disney’s America*.⁵⁵ Do you remember that?

⁵⁴ Walt Disney Imagineering Research & Development, Inc., commonly referred to as Imagineering, is the research and development arm of The Walt Disney Company, responsible for the creation, design, and construction of Disney theme parks and attractions worldwide. The Imagineers are the people in charge of dreaming, designing and building Disney theme parks, attractions, cruise ships, resorts etc. Basically, they’re about live entertainment. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt_Disney_Imagineering)

⁵⁵ Disney’s America was a planned theme park that was to have been built by The Walt Disney Company in the early 1990s. The park was planned to be built near Haymarket, Virginia, about five miles from the site of the Manassas National Battlefield Park. Faced with opposition from citizen’s groups and historians who

DePue: Unh-uh.

Cellini: They were doing it on the periphery of one of the Civil War battlefields. They had optioned the land.

DePue: I think that was the Gettysburg battlefield.

Cellini: I don't know for sure if it was Gettysburg; there are so many battlefields out there. Maybe it could have been within site distance of Gettysburg or something; I don't remember. They really wanted to do that. We talked about that. We talked... I think they thought, Oh, these people are interested in us. Maybe... Everybody grabs something. Somebody wants blue. You turn on the blue light. Maybe that was some of the genesis of this, but they eventually got so burned with trying to do that, that they said... This is after we began to establish...

DePue: You're talking about "burned" about doing something at a Civil War battlefield?

Cellini: Doing something with history, that they very quickly were not what we could do. But by then, they had been doing charrettes for us. They had sent—on their own dime, never charged us anything—they sent people to look over Springfield. They did ideas for us. They met with our staff. They opened our eyes to possibilities. You've got maybe the greatest figure in all of American history. Don't fail him. Don't do something little.

(engine noise in the background) That's our lawn guys, I think. That was pivotal, and we were off to the races from there. It was stop. It was start. It was stop. It was start. But the races were always going on.

DePue: You mentioned the word "charrette." That's a term that people who aren't in the museum or library world might not be familiar with. What does that mean?

Cellini: A charrette... I think Susan tried to explain it. I think it's an architectural term. It was based on when students would do their final presentation in architecture school. I think



Dec 1998-Jan 1999, historians from all over America gathered in Springfield for a series of charrettes to brainstorm themes for the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

objected to Disney's portrayal of historical events and the potential impact on nearby historic sites, the project was canceled in September 1994. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disney%27s_America)

charrette may be a French term for the cart that carried their slapped-together ideas that were put into visual form to the presentations for the professors.

DePue: At this time were you thinking that maybe Disney would do the exhibits?

Cellini: Oh, sure. Oh, gosh, absolutely.

DePue: That's what they were thinking as well?

Cellini: I don't think so. But...

DePue: Why would they go to all the effort of being so cooperative with you if that wasn't the case?

Cellini: Oh, they also were going to do a project in Chicago. So they were looking for a tie-in to Illinois. There were ancillary reasons why it made sense, and I think they were just so darned taken with the idea. I don't know what went on in their sessions after they met with us, but maybe some of them thought, god, we could do this. Wouldn't this be cool?

Now, did they want it in Springfield, Illinois? No. When we finally told them, "We need to be honest with you. We don't want this in Chicago. It doesn't belong in Chicago. It belongs in Springfield," they still stuck with us, and they sent people, and they gave us ideas.

But, when they finally said to us, "Guys, if you'd been thinking that we will do this, we won't do this, but we'll help you." Then they gave us the names of several people to talk to. One of them was Bob Rogers.

DePue: Can you describe some of the ideas that they were kicking around, that they were presenting? I believe when you...

Cellini: They wanted to reroute all of our downtown with traffic, with buildings, with... "Where's it going to go? Well then, maybe we'll put it right beside Lincoln's home." I said, "Do you understand the Park Service?" They were so used to working on this huge scale, all things possible. But it was just never to be. In the process, our eyes got opened to, "What could we do?" It wasn't enough to just have stuff in cases. We got more and more alive with the story.

DePue: So, the project got bigger and bigger and more expensive as well?

Cellini: The project got to be more of a project.

DePue: Did they ever consider New Salem as a possible site?

Cellini: Oh sure, yeah, absolutely.

DePue: Can you describe some of the other concepts that they were trying to present?

Cellini: Lincoln's Home, they were going to buy up. We were going to buy up every piece of property and have this adjacent to Lincoln's Home. Some of it was just so big and so spectacular that... It was so far beyond us. It was scary.

DePue: So it wasn't in their cards to do something small and modest?

Cellini: Never, other than they'd have given us *Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln*.



Julie examines a bust of Abraham Lincoln at a museum charrette, circa 1999, where the group discussed what Lincoln might look like at different stages of his life. Life Formations was contracted to develop the many figures for the museum.

DePue: What were you hearing from Tom and guys like Dick

Taylor and some of the other historians or maybe some of the other historians that were part of the Lincoln universe, about these ideas and working with Disney?

Cellini: Tom was a trooper, so was Dick Taylor. I was the crazy lady. The thing I brought to the table was I was never going to give up. They were the Lincoln people. They were the... Bob Rogers says it well. "Every project needs a damn fool who never knows when to quit." I was at least smart enough to know I'm never going to be the smartest person in the room. That's why you need the staffers around.

Susan ran so much of the everyday, "Get it done; put it together," in terms of all this being out there stuff that we did because she had an office and a staff and she could do it. I always paid my own way, always reimbursed the state. I did not take travel money, but the staff often travelled on state money because this was a state project.

DePue: We haven't mentioned some of the other board members. Did the other board members get as deeply involved with this as you did?

Cellini: I tried to keep them involved or informed. Pam, certainly. Pam went with us a few times, Pam Daniels. The rest of them, I mainly just filled them in.

DePue: Who all was on the board at that time? It sounds like more than the three that you started with.

- Cellini: Yeah, Sally and Frank were dead by then. Frank was dead by then, Frank Mason, who was a great, great, great supporter. Sally was gone. These people were much older than I was. I look back now. They must have thought I was this idiot. I can't remember because it was a board that kind of came and went. I don't know. Most of the time, it wasn't real interesting stuff. This was the fun, cool sort of thing to get to do, but it was never a committee. I just tried to keep them informed mostly. I worked a lot with the staff, worked a lot with Tom, worked a lot with Susan, Bob...
- DePue: Much more than the other board members did?
- Cellini: Oh, yeah.
- DePue: I want to go back and ask you some of the other things you might have been learning by visiting all of the other museums and libraries that you went to. Does anything else come to mind? Do you remember the place that really stood out as, "Wow, this is getting close to what we think we want to do"?
- Cellini: I don't remember where we were when we decided you needed to make the exit through the bookstore, but I remember it was an "ah-ha" moment. We knew we would always need money. We also saw enough bookstores to realize that you need a bunch of junk, tasteful junk, but you need junk because people buy stuff. It's not a good idea to have a really small store that's just stuffed with books, or you'll miss a lot of... People like to buy something as a souvenir, t-shirts and flags and stuff. We learned that going to those places. We learned that we wanted classrooms that would be within the purview of this facility because we really wanted education to be a strong component of it.
- DePue: Was that something that was lacking in some of the libraries and museums?
- Cellini: Uh-huh, uh-huh. But they had **a** president and we had **the** president.
- DePue: It sounds also that what you knew you wanted to do was not just give this vanilla version of Abraham Lincoln's administration...
- Cellini: Exactly.
- DePue: ...that right from the beginning, you were willing to show the warts as well.
- Cellini: Yeah. We talked for a long time about using the word "nigger."
- DePue: Who's "we"?
- Cellini: The BRC people, Tom, Bob—I don't know if Kathryn was in on that or not—the staff, some of the people from the Governor's Office. By then, it was Governor Ryan's people.

DePue: Let's finish with this discussion today. Which came first—this is the chicken or egg thing—the exhibit design or the architect and then that whole process of selecting them?

Cellini: We talked to the Capital Development Board, and we put forth the idea that the lead on this was always going to be function and that form was going to take the second seat. We wanted the show, the Lincoln experience, to be first and foremost. We knew by then that the library would be another building, and we were pretty sure they'd have to be linked some way. We certainly were sure they'd be linked some way.

This was to be a personal experience with the president who saved this nation, a personal experience with his story. And it was to be for everyone, from scholars to school kids and that this should somehow be linked together architecturally. We didn't know how, but that was the premise that we went into with the Capital Development Board.

DePue: Now, I've heard a couple of you say that CDB normally liked to be much more in the lead and not have so much involvement from the other agencies.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: Why were they willing to have you guys much more involved in the process?

Cellini: I think there are a number of reasons. I think because of Edgar's interest, because of the Ryan's interest, Mr. and Mrs. Ryan, because... It would take some convincing of whoever was the director of CDB, and we went through a lot of directors of CDB.

DePue: That's one of the prime patronage jobs that often gets rotated around.

Cellini: Exactly, and sometimes these were people you could talk to, and they were in league with the person who had... You dance with the person that brings you, Governor Edgar saw the concept. Governor and Mrs. Ryan saw the concept. Governor [Rod] Blagojevich saw the concept.

DePue: In all cases, the CDB and the Governor's Office, the administration got function over form?

Cellini: Overall, yes, they did. Day to day, it wasn't always easy, but what's easy?

DePue: Nothing worthwhile is easy.

Cellini: Unh-uh.

DePue: So if function over form comes first, do we need to talk about choosing the exhibit designer first?

Cellini: Yes. The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. had opened to much fanfare and was briefly the most visited site in the United States. You couldn't beg, borrow, steal tickets to get in. It was done by Ralph Appelbaum and Associates.⁵⁶ They had done a lot of museums. They were on the cover of the architecture chronicles; they were hot stuff.

There were articles in the trade that there was this Lincoln project brewing and that surely it was going to be Appelbaum. Appelbaum was one of the architects that called us, in addition to... I used to know the number; there were something like thirty-seven submissions from architects, from architectural firms to do this project.

DePue: I thought we were talking about exhibit design.

Cellini: I'm getting to that.

DePue: Go ahead.

Cellini: But it was a "really hot stuff" project. We said, "No, no, no. We want to do it inside-out. Lincoln's got enough monuments. We want to spend our money..." Now, this is the museum. By then, understand that the library was more in the Ryans' bailiwick, and there was a lot of influence from Mrs. Ryan, specifically wanting that because they knew they could get that pretty well done in his four years.

The museum itself was... It needed to be selected all at one time, but the museum was pretty much understood it was going to be something a little more down the road. Breaking ground for it, that would come, but the opening would not. So we needed to pick the two as a package deal, the exhibit people, the architect. But the architect needed to understand that the museum was going to be a different thing from the library. I don't know that anybody ever explained that to Gio Obata.

DePue: To whom?

Cellini: Gio Obata. It was HOK, Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, out of St. Louis, HOK, that was selected to be the architect, at the same time that BRC Imagination Arts was selected to be the exhibit designer. I don't think HOK or certainly Gio Obata ever understood, accepted, bought into the premise of the thing. Nobody had seen a project like this before, done by state government. It made it difficult. We picked HOK. I got to be on the committee both times, when we picked the architect and then when we picked the exhibit people.

⁵⁶ Ralph Appelbaum Associates is one of the world's longest-established and largest museum exhibition design firms with offices in New York City, London, Beijing, Berlin, Moscow, and Dubai. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Appelbaum_Associates)

We picked HOK mainly [because of their] close proximity to Springfield. Nobody in Springfield could do a project this large. Nobody had the bonding that it took to do it. There were a lot of reasons why CDB wanted us to come down on the side of HOK. They'd done some very nice buildings, and they'd done a variety of things that led us to think, They're pretty flexible; they can do this. I think they had just done a big thing at Bush Stadium, where they'd redone all the seating. They'd actually made it so that if you got a cheap seat, you still got a view of the field. They seemed to have a human touch. That sounds like a stupid reason to pick an architect, but that's kind of the sell. CDB certainly took the lead on picking HOK, and HOK, I think, had done some kind of museum facility or something too. They were picked simultaneously or somewhat... Yeah, simultaneously with BRC.

BRC then comes in, just presenting among the best of the best, people who really wanted to do this project. We picked BRC for a range of reasons, not the least of which is the Disney people had said to us, "There's somebody you ought to look at. We'll tell you, he's had a checkered history with us, but the guy's a genius, and we think you ought to look at him."

I've got to say that we weren't at all sure BRC was the one. Appelbaum was still on the cover of everything. Do Appelbaum; he knows museums; he knows experience; he knows all that. We actually went, and we talked to BRC a few times on the phone. It seemed to me that he was selling awful hard, and it seemed to me... This is Bob Rogers, who has become a family friend since all this. BRC is Bob Rogers Creative, which is BRC Imagination Arts.

DePue: When we talked about this in the panel discussion, I got the strong impression that there were a lot of different people making the pitch about the same time, that they came... Did they come to Springfield?

Cellini: They came to Springfield.

DePue: Tell me. Can you walk us through that whole process? How did that happen?

Cellini: It was done at wherever CDB had their headquarters then... Oh, the Stratton Building, some really terrible building.

DePue: About as unattractive an architectural building as you can find in Springfield.

Cellini: Yeah, I'm surprised they ever brought their stuff out of the lot when they saw where we were going to meet them. There were twenty-plus people on the selection team, and we didn't leave anybody out.

DePue: Why such a large selection team?

Cellini: Because by then everybody wanted to be on it. We wanted to take somebody from history and somebody from building trades and somebody from libraries

and somebody from the city of Springfield and somebody from some legislator's staff who was... It seemed to be better to be inclusive than exclusive.

DePue: To get buy-in from all these people.

Cellini: Exactly, exactly. You build a coalition; you don't go out in front street alone, unless you can possibly avoid it. I still remember—I'm sure I told you this story—Alex Cranstoun [DMCD Architecture] standing there with this model of the unfinished capitol dome that Lincoln had said, "We have to divert money from the Civil War to keep building this because it's a symbol that will go on and on." He's explaining this. God only knows what it cost him to fabricate this and then ship it to Podunk and reconstruct it in this ghastly building and all that.

He's out there, and all of a sudden... Oh, and then he has a scale model of what this big thing that's all around us is. He suddenly looks up, and he says, "Ladies and gentlemen, I would kill to get to do this project." He'd done the Nixon [Presidential Library]. He'd done some... like his time maybe had passed. We'd seen a lot of what these people had done too, by then.

But BRC, I would say, was not... Appelbaum went into it; it was his to lose. He'd done the Holocaust Museum. You couldn't get in the place! He sent a third-stringer, who had some brown paper drawings that he tacked up around the room, and he... I think Susan said something about it at the presentation. We asked him questions, and he didn't really know. It turned out he hadn't really been a lead person on any of their projects. I just think they thought it was in the bag.

DePue: You don't think they were just making a poor presentation because they weren't interested in it?

Cellini: I don't know. We'll never know. Maybe they didn't want to do a project in Podunk, or... I don't know, maybe they were all busy someplace else, chasing a bigger fish.

DePue: Did you have any international firms? Were these all American?

Cellini: I'm sure we did. I can't remember now. (whispers) We're talking about a long time ago.

DePue: We all know who ended up with the project. So what did BRC do differently from everybody else? Was Bob Rogers there?

Cellini: Oh, sure. They had a good presentation, as I remember. They talked a lot about your story. There's no better story than the story you have. To not do this and have your visitor go away knowing more about Lincoln, wanting to know more about Lincoln, you're going to fall short of your subject.

They talked to us about streakers, and strollers, and stalkers. Those are the people. They talked to us about the science of museum-goers, and there are streakers, who can't wait to get through. There are strollers who will read some things. There are stalkers who will read everything that's on the wall, and they're usually in front of you when your kid is having a tantrum, and you can't get around them. What you want to do with your project is turn streakers into strollers and strollers into stalkers. The people who are going to breeze through are always going to breeze through. You're just always going to get those people, and they're going to walk out and say, "Okay, Margaret, let's cross that one off the list and move on." (DePue laughs) But you have such an important story.

They showed us things that they would do and ideas that they would service and told us what their process would be, much as everybody else did. But then Bob said, "This is unique because we often are called in by people who don't have much but some artifacts and an idea. You guys have a Lincoln collection, and you have a library. You've got a scholarly audience built-in who are going to come to this, and they're going to expect one thing. Then you're going to have the general public, some of whom have been in love with Lincoln all their lives; they're not exactly sure why; they just know he's a great man." They talked to us about the publics we would serve.

Then, they said, "You know, as good as the artifacts you have and the artifacts you are going to be able to draw to this place..." We were thinking everybody in the world is going to have something and want to give it to us. We had lots of grand ideas that didn't always pan out, but we thought we were going to be Lincoln Central for the world.

So, they talked to us. They passed around a little piece of lead that was like a fragment of a bullet. They asked us all to take a look at, and we passed it, person to person. They said, "Now, this is not **the** bullet that killed Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar, but this looks exactly like it. The real one sits in a glass case in a museum in Great Britain, a military museum. It's labeled; there's a little something about it, but the public walks right by because it's stuff in glass cases. We liken this to the things that you have there. When you just put something in a glass case, you don't have the story. You've got to surround it with the story. If you hire us, we'll take things, and we'll put them in your museum, and we'll surround them with the story.

So, the stalkers, who are there to see stuff, will see a Civil War uniform and armaments and things more within the context of it. They'll get the idea of why it's important to even be in your museum. But, if you just put it in glass cases... We think you should have a treasures gallery, but we think it should be at the end of your experience, after you've walked people through the Lincoln story, and they've gotten to know what the Lincolns were, and what they went through, and what he went through, and what the war was like. Then when you show things, there's a context.

But, we also want to try to figure out a way to sprinkle things through, that they used, that they had.” The whole thing was beginning to... Wow, we’re kind of walking through this experience. Then they’d get back to this little piece of lead, and they’d say, “This little piece of lead that people walk right by every day, never knowing...” They told the whole story. Susan, I think, told it that night, and I don’t want to take even more of your time about this heartbroken sailor, that they shipped his body back to Great Britain for a hero’s burial, and they...

DePue: I was looking forward to hearing this again because this might be the only experience that other people who are going to be listening or reading this fifty years from now are going to...

Cellini: Okay, they told us about... It’s a long time ago. Man, am I straining memory. The Battle of Trafalgar, they said, changed the course of British history. If Lord Nelson had died from this bullet, this piece of shot, her sailors would have given up. Instead, he was mortally wounded, but he fought on, and he led them to fight on. They were losing, but they eventually turned the tide.

His sailors were so heartbroken that they packed his body in a cask of rum to preserve it, and they shipped him back to England for a hero’s burial, I think, in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul’s; I’m not sure which. Somewhere along the line, they had a ceremony where they... Once his body was taken out, they dipped their tin cups in the rum, and they drank a toast to him. Of course, the whole room is slightly green around the gills thinking about this because it had to be a long trip home.

But, he said, “You see, what’s missing in that museum is this stirring, wonderful story of a guy knowing, ‘I’m dead, but fight on for king and country’ and this love that his sailors had for him, that they would do this and bring it back and the hero’s welcome that his body got when it came back and then all the pomp and the ceremony that must have gone along with this kind of international honor that he received. None of that story is in that glass case.

“This is going to be your Emancipation Proclamation or your Gettysburg Address, unless you tell the story. That’s what we bring to you. Anybody who’s here can build a good museum for you, but what we bring you is we are masters at storytelling, and nobody’s got a better story than you’ve got. Maybe there’s never going to be a better story in all of American history than Lincoln. That’s why you should hire us.”

DePue: I can’t imagine the old feature writer in you not being blown away by that argument.

Cellini: I was blown away with it, but so were the historians, and so were the tourism people who were part of that selection committee, so were the people... There were representatives of the Governor’s Office because we picked them under

Governor Edgar, and they liked the politics of it because they knew that they weren't going to be around. Who was going to move this forward, and how would you move it forward? Stories, that's why books sell; that's why people go to movies. A really good story gets you.

I think everybody pretty much thought, This is the route we need to take. There were starts and stops and retooling and not enough money and not enough space, but I think we picked the right people. Bob Rogers has been...because he spent so much time in Springfield... We're pretty hospitable people. I can throw dinner for twenty people together in...give me an hour and a half, and I often did. He and his staff became friends, the HOK people much less so. Once Hellmuth or Gio Obata finally understood that we were going to spend the bulk of money inside the building, instead of outside the building, we pretty much never saw him again. I did a chapter in his book on the project because he wanted it in his memoirs, but you could tell he [was thinking], I'm out of here.

DePue: This is probably a pretty good place for us to end today. There is still a lot more to talk about next time, but it's nice to be able to finish off with a wonderful story about the importance of the story. Thank you very much.

Cellini: A great story.

(end of transcript #3)

Interview with Julie Cellini

HP-A-L-2015-013.04

Interview # 4: March 26, 2015

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Thursday, March 26, 2015. My name is Mark DePue, Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I think this is our fourth session. I'm here with Julie Cellini in your lovely house, and we've been talking a lot about your experiences on the IHPA Board of Trustees. In our last session, we really got into the meat of the discussion about the creation of the library and museum. That's where we need to pick it up today. We finished last time with a discussion about selecting the exhibit team and selecting the right architects for it.

What I want to do now is talk in much more detail about the design of the exhibits themselves and listen to you talk about that. Let me start with this. I know it's not necessarily just you, that there were many people in the library or the IHPA who were very actively involved. Tom Schwartz and the exhibit designers, I'm sure, played a leading role in this. What was the grand vision that you all had in mind, going in, for the museum exhibits?

Cellini: We wanted to give people, the travelling public, all ages, all walks of life, we wanted to give them a personal encounter with Abraham Lincoln. We wanted them to leave, knowing more than they knew when they came in. We wanted to hit as many audiences as we could. Bob Rogers defined them as streakers, strollers, and stalkers.

DePue: We did talk about that a bit last time.

Cellini: We wanted to give people in each of those audiences more, not necessarily more information but more appreciation, more thought processes about certainly Lincoln but [also] about what our country went through and survived and changed and grew. It sounds lofty, but with the Lincoln story it's possible to tell a lot of different things about what this nation is. That was, I think, the overarching goal. Certainly it was mine, for tagging along with this thing all those years.

DePue: Was there one individual who really basically designed the overall plan, or was this a collaborative effort from the get-go?

Cellini: I think it was always collaborative, but as I've said many times, Tom Schwartz kept us honest. He was the go-to guy for authenticity. If Tom said it didn't go, then it didn't go. It sounds corny but [he was] the adult in the room always because those of us who were just hobbyists in this whole thing and promoters and all the various roles we all took, we always yielded to Tom's knowledge of Lincoln [and] his good judgement of what the Lincolns would have understood their story to be.

DePue: Did you have an appreciation at this point in the process? We're talking about the iconic president; there's more written and studied about than any other American historical figure. Did you have a sense of how—I'm looking for the

right word—jealously a lot of the leading Lincoln historians would hold onto the way they envisioned the story to be and their involvement in the process?

Cellini: I sure did. That's why I pushed to hire Richard Norton Smith when we opened because I knew there was going to be a backlash against the way Illinois was presenting Lincoln. There is a lot of thinking that it needs to only be done one way. I've said it before in areas with you, if we had done it a traditional way, I think we would have failed our subject.

DePue: At this stage though we're just talking about the earliest days of trying to figure out what exhibits should be included and all. Did Tom reach out and touch base with all of these Lincoln historians to begin with?

Cellini: We had charrettes. There certainly were lots of people included in those, and someplace, I think, you have lists of names of all the people who were consulted. It got pretty arcane. Gosh, I think we spent hours on what Lincoln thought of nature. There were so many themes, so many things that you wanted to include that would have been interesting.

My approach was always as a hobbyist at best in this whole thing, [it] was, let's hit on the things that people can internalize and take home with them after their experience with Lincoln.

DePue: I assume that's why you reached out to the Disney people in the first place, to raise that level of consciousness and their understanding of history.

Cellini: They're storytellers. Do they do it in a way that a more traditional person would appreciate? Maybe not, but we're looking for a broad audience here, everybody from scholars to school kids. So we had to hit a point—Bob Rogers called it “the sweet spot” —where you could reach as many levels of consciousness and appreciation and criticism of Lincoln as you possibly could and still have people come away learning something. It all had to be founded in solid scholarship; that was Tom. But it had to be done in showmanship, and that was BRC.

DePue: I understand that the initial vision or somewhere along the line was even grander than we currently have...

Cellini: Oh, yes.

DePue: ...that there were things that never came to fruition. Can you address some of the things that were in that initial vision that didn't come about? Hold on.

(pause in interview)

We took a very brief break. I was asking about the grand vision and some of the pieces that ended up on the cutting room floor. Let's put it that way.

Cellini: Well, you've heard about the big pieces. We wanted an IMAX theater.⁵⁷ We didn't have a site for a long time. So it was bigger and grander, and there were lots of aspects of the Lincoln story that got a bit squashed and foreshortened. That's always the case with any project. With Lincoln, there is so much story to tell there. I would have liked if we had been able to talk more about his early years. There was material that didn't get into it that Tom had, that would have been... I'm always curious, as somebody with a writing background, how did you become the person you are? How did you get from Point A to Point B? We don't do much of that in it. I would have liked more on the presidency. I would have liked more on the Emancipation Proclamation, all of that horse-trading that went into it that in the Spielberg movie, *Lincoln* movie [released 2012], based on *Team of Rivals*.

DePue: Essentially, just focusing on the passage of the 13th Amendment.

Cellini: Yes, yes, and everything that Lincoln had to do, because it's a primer for politics. Politics is the science of the way things get done, and there's politics everywhere, in your church, in your school, everywhere. It gets a bad name, mainly because of the media, I think. But it's horse-trading because that's part of being human beings. That's how we reach accord. And Lincoln was a master at it. Were there ways we could have shown this?

We could have done a whole museum just on how he pushed through everything he pushed through. Here was this guy that... A lot of people thought he was a bumpkin, maybe an accident, even. Yet, he had the moxie and the ability to work with people and put things together. We maybe don't show that as well. We have his cabinet meeting, where you see some of them wringing their hands and some of them for it, some of them against it. I always wish we could explain that further to people, "Look at what he was doing."

DePue: The museum that we have today is centered on these two journeys, the first journey of his early life in his Springfield years and then the second journey is very much focused on his presidential years. Were there other journeys that were on the drawing table at one time?

Cellini: I'm sure there were. We're talking about a long time ago. I remember being sad every time we cut something, but we could only do so much.

DePue: I guess that's what I'm searching for. You obviously had to cut the IMAX theater. We can talk about that in detail, if you want to. What else was being cut? Do you remember anything?

⁵⁷ IMAX is a proprietary system of high-resolution cameras, film formats, film projectors, and theaters known for having very large screens with a tall aspect ratio and steep stadium seating. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IMAX>)

Cellini: That's something you'd have to go to Bob Rogers for because I think he bled a little (DePue laughs) every time we said, "That one's got to be cut out." We wanted to tell the whole story. We wanted people to have a personal encounter. Instead of a full picture, I think we ended up with a mosaic.

DePue: Were these fundamentally money decisions? They were being cut because you just didn't have the funds to do it?

Cellini: Money is always a consideration, certainly that space. How much can you expect a visitor to take in? You're talking about everybody from scholars to school kids. That's why we do the campaign, the Campaign of 1860, as we do it. We're trying to inject humor, which is always kind of an attention-grabber. We're trying to be relevant. Look at these campaign commercials. Everybody gets sick of campaign commercials. At one time, we even talked about doing... [Do] we need to put a sign on the wall that tells people these are not real commercials from 1860? Those were some of the discussions that we...

DePue: How about the IMAX? What led to the decision to cut the IMAX out?

Cellini: We got practical after a while. When you're looking at blue sky, all things possible. IMAX was a big deal then; people were flocking to IMAX theaters, so we had this idea that it could then be used for lots of other things.

It was a compromise, but we got the Union Theater out of it. The Union Theater serves purposes. I always thought it would serve more purposes than that, but space and staff and regulations... It isn't as much a piece of the community as I had hoped it would be.

DePue: The Union Theater?

Cellini: Un-huh.

DePue: You've talked about this already, how it was essentially Tom who was making sure the history was right, but I understand that, even in this early development stage for what exhibits would be there and how the exhibits would portray the history, there were other people who were brought into the discussions, not just major historians but community leaders and history teachers.

Cellini: Uh-huh. We had teachers who came in and...

DePue: Whose idea was that?

Cellini: I think it was Susan's, maybe Susan, maybe Bob Coomer. We all talked about how important it was to present this in a way that school kids would grab onto it and would internalize some of the learning pieces that we try to offer through the whole place. We decided that kids would be a big part of the audience.

When I used to go out and sell this thing to try to get the funding for it, it was a sales job. “Look at all the things we need, Mrs. Cellini, and you want billions for Abraham Lincoln? Get in line.” I’d always say, “We’re going to reach audiences from scholars to school kids. We think that fully two-thirds of the people who come through this facility are going to be children, are going to be school kids who are there with families or with field trips or whatever, so we want to reach them in a way that they maybe don’t get it in their classrooms because history doesn’t get taught all that much.” I would always emphasize the lessons that could be learned from Lincoln, that you could take inspiration from this man.

A lot of the school kids are not from privileged backgrounds. They’re from backgrounds where it’s a struggle to get to school in a decent pair of pants and a clean shirt; maybe they live in a home that’s chaos. There are such lessons. Here’s a guy who came from really nothing and rose all the way to the presidency. There is great inspiration there, and we wanted to try to get that message across to those kids.

DePue: Do you remember the kind of people who were brought into the discussion, the non-historians that were brought into the discussion?

Cellini: Oh, sure, teachers. Teachers were terrific with it.

DePue: Grade school, high school, both?

Cellini: I think we had a sampling of most levels. I think the ones who were the more vocal were the teachers with little kids. They’re the ones that convinced us, don’t show Lincoln in his coffin. We do have that photo, that famous photo, and we wanted to make that a much bigger part of it than it turned out to be. We talked for a long time about the fact that when Lincoln lie in state at the old state capitol, people actually kind of walked up and looked down into the casket to see Lincoln. They kept it open—you’re aware of this; you’re a historian—they kept it open, I think, around the clock.

We always said, “More people saw Lincoln in death than ever saw him in life, and do we want to do that?” Then, the more we delved into it, the more we realized all that trip on the funeral train, we actually... Somebody, one of the historians, told us that they actually had ground up chalk and pressed it into Lincoln’s face along the way in various funeral parlors to try to make him...because he had turned dark brown by the time he got home. Yet they were going to have for him this long vigil, where people would actually kind of climb up and look in, in the old capitol. Did we want to show that? Did we want to talk about that? Our teachers said, “No.”

We talked about actually having scents in the museum, things that you could smell, a pine forest around the Lincoln cabin, the smell of all those roses and lilies that they had put into the old capitol when he lie in state, not just to

honor Lincoln but frankly [to] make it smell a little better than it probably did. I think of all those people, around the clock walking in and this essentially decomposing body. The reality of it would creep in. And we'd talk about it often in terms of our children in the audience. The last thing that anybody wanted to do was frighten them with history.

DePue: Do you think the BRC team appreciated that kind of input or resented it, perhaps?

Cellini: I never remember any resentment on any level. I remember interesting, rich discussions, but they always yielded to those of us in the room, me, representing, "I've got to be able to sell this project to the people who will fund it," Susan, representing the agency, a gubernatorial appointment, Tom, representing Lincoln, representing the reality of Lincoln, the substantiation of Lincoln.

When we really were not sure, we just turned to Tom. Tom usually was the person who very quietly, very... I always said Bob Coomer was the adult in the room. That's when we dealt with CDB, which is the building arm of state government. Bob was the practical "Let's use our heads here" guy. Tom was our conscience. I never felt we were overstepping because Tom was always there.

DePue: For the people in the agency, for this team of people you brought in, the history teachers and all, were they coming up with the "gee whiz" ideas, or was that essentially BRC? It's BRC Imagineering, isn't it?

Cellini: It's BRC Imagination Arts.

DePue: Imagination Arts. Were they the ones who were coming up with the innovative ways to present this story?

Cellini: Yes, yes. There were always people who had ideas. Susan would periodically convene a community group or something. We tried to figure out ways so that people at least had a say. Susan would often take that. You tried to listen to the public, but it was hard to do because democracy gets in the way of getting things done. We wanted to be as open as we could, but if we were, we ran the risk of being shot down.

DePue: I'm thinking of an analogy of another collaborative art, and that's movie-making. But ultimately, in most of the really good movies, you find that there is somebody at the center of that, typically the director or the producer, who's making sure that all these different ideas are fitting into the big picture. What I'm hearing in this case, it was very much a collaboration from the get-go.

Cellini: It was. That's one of the things that I point out to people. I think I told you I still get calls from people who are looking at BRC to do their project. They'll ask me what it was like for them to work for your group, and I always say, "It

wasn't that way. They assembled a team, and they listened to everybody. It was always collaborative."

DePue: Did you have any hesitation in recommending BRC as the right team for these other institutions to use?

Cellini: Never, never. I would hire them again in a second.

DePue: What I'd like to do now is to take it exhibit by exhibit, and just... If you want to respond to these, then obviously you can. The scale of the plaza area when you came in, was that...? It's fairly expansive when you come in, and right in the center of the plaza area are the figures of the Lincoln family. Was that an area that, right from the beginning, the team wanted to have as large and multi-purpose?

Cellini: Yeah, it was always to be a profit center. We envisioned it as something that would be used frequently. We saw it as everything from weddings to rallies to... We saw it as something that would make a lot of money to help the bottom line. That's why it's so big.

DePue: Are you happy with the way that has been used since that time?

Cellini: It's certainly underused. We were thinking that... Not everything you plan comes to fruition. It can't. But that was the plan. That's why that scale is so large. It was to be a gathering place for everything. We thought people would get married there. You'd have your eightieth birthday party in the rotunda; this would be the grand event. You've been married fifty years; you'd do it at the museum. You announce for governor; this would be the first place you'd gather, and it would be filled with media.

DePue: I'm trying to remember how many visitors we've had so far. It's something like three-and-a-half million or more

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: Any guess of how many pictures with the Lincoln family have been taken in those...(laughs)

Cellini: Oh, that one...that one was so dear to our hearts because we decided... This is long enough ago that nobody had cell phones or tried to buy them. We thought, If you only showed up with an Instamatic camera in your back pocket, and you didn't have any money for our gift shop, you could still have

a lasting souvenir.⁵⁸ That was so important, that we have those authentic figures.

I think there are spare parts someplace, spare eyelashes, spare fingers, spare...because we knew people were going to... “Don’t touch them,” but we knew they were going to touch them. I’ve always thought, I wonder how many calendars there are. Families make a calendar and put that on it. How many Christmas cards? We hired LifeFormations.⁵⁹ We had seen their work in a tribal museum. I can’t remember where.

DePue: These are the people who made all of the figures.

Cellini: Made all of the figures. We had seen their work at...it’s Warm Springs Indian Reservation.⁶⁰ They have a casino on their grounds, which is a cash cow. This is someplace in the east. I can’t remember where...Massachusetts, I think. They have a very, very small visitor number, but the life forms they have that show the way their...what their life was on the reservation or before the reservation and then on the reservation and then onto... They tell it, of course, from their side because you pay for it; you tell your story. But

That was a thing that I carried away from that museum was these people are genius for presenting the human body and faces. We definitely wanted them [LifeFormations] from that. It was one of the reasons that Bob sent us there, was to see their work, and I think they did a really good job with the Lincolns. Surprisingly, people are quite respectful.

DePue: Thankfully so, because there are... I don’t know how many figures there are but a score or more throughout the museum.

Cellini: Yeah, my favorites are the ones in the plaza.

DePue: Journey One starts off with Lincoln’s boyhood home. Any comments about that?

Cellini: Personal comment... The dog on the floor, Honey, was Lincoln’s first dog. Nobody knew anything about Honey, except it was Lincoln’s dog. Finally, Bob and his team went online and found the Indiana Humane Society website, and they picked a dog, a stray dog that was up for adoption; that’s Honey. I remember when they were installing Honey, and I can still see big, beefy Bob

⁵⁸ The Instamatic is a series of inexpensive, easy-to-load 126 and 110 cameras made by Kodak beginning in 1963. The Instamatic was immensely successful, introducing a generation to low-cost photography and spawning numerous imitators. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instamatic>)

⁵⁹ LifeFormations is a leading design and fabrication company specializing in animatronics and sculptural scenic elements for use in attractions, exhibits and place making installations. (<http://lifeformations.com/>)

⁶⁰ The Warm Springs Indian Reservation consists of 1,019 square miles in north-central Oregon, in the United States, and is occupied and governed by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. (https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g52122-d563324-Reviews-Warm_Springs_Reservation-Warm_Springs_Central_Oregon_Oregon.html)

Rogers picking Honey up and adjusting Honey and putting her down and moving her around. What a guy!

DePue: I'm wondering though if even Tom Schwartz, who is the master of Lincoln knowledge, if there are any qualms or thoughts... Oh, gosh, we really had to make a stretch because we have no idea what Honey actually looked like.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: Was there a concern about that or is it...

Cellini: They did...

DePue: ...a compromise that they were willing to make?

Cellini: Well, yeah, but a compromise in that the cabin was in Indiana, rural Indiana. What kind of dog would have been wandering around? The little bit of description that there was, was it was a mongrel, and it was big, and it was honey-colored. At least they went to the trouble to research dogs that roam around in that part of Indiana. That's how thorough BRC was. That's how respectful they were of the Lincoln image.

DePue: You mentioned about the scents, the smells, that that was something you decided to back away from. But you certainly have the sounds, and the first sounds that people encounter... Well, they hear the music all the way through, but you hear the birds singing as... And then these trees. These are not small trees that are recreated outside the cabin.

Cellini: They're actual trees, recreated. They actually went to the trouble to replicate trees from the exact areas where that scene is depicted. So, if you're an arborist, you know that if you're talking about that part of Indiana or that part of Kentucky or whatever, this is authentically what you would see there, as close as possible.

You know the story about the cabin? Has Bob told you about the cabin, that they actually found a cabin, bought a cabin? The whole place is... I would lie awake at night and think, Oh, my god, they're going to kill us. What are the historians going to say? Now I think, How do we tell people that, as much as could possibly be done, this is authentic? If Lincoln could come back, he'd actually recognize..."Well, yeah, that's how we dressed, and that's the cloth that it looked like and..." You get to the Blue Room, for example.

I used to do tours at Lincoln's Home as a Junior League volunteer, and they'd dress us up in these ridiculous hoop-skirted costumes because we were supposed to be ladies that would take people through, a long time ago. I would do the parlor. I'd say, "Are there any questions?" Invariably, a school kid would say, "What's under that dress?"

So, when we got to the Blue Room, I said, “Guys, is there any way we can show what’s under there?” They came up with Elizabeth Keckley.⁶¹ I said, “Well, can we actually show her dressing Mrs. Lincoln in the middle of the Blue Room?” They said, “We’ll work on it. We can do it.”

Then we wanted to tell people that the gowns they see in the Blue Room are, in fact, replicas of what women actually wore. They said (snaps her fingers), “We’ll put a picture of the woman in the dress, and we’ll tell a little about who she was. Then we’ll do a replication behind it.” The Blue Room is there because we took notes at all the places we visited where people gathered, and they often gathered around clothing displays. They talked about it, Ellis Island, for example.

At some of the presidential libraries they show some of the gowns. It wasn’t frivolous. Clothing is an artifact of the time in which people lived and the way they lived. That’s why these particular themes survived all the changes that had to take place, all the value engineering.

DePue: Once you get out of Lincoln’s boyhood home, you start that journey, Journey One, and one of the first things you encounter after that is that slave auction.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: I’ve heard people talk about that, but I want you to have the chance to tell us how it ended up that that’s the way slavery is portrayed in the museum.

Cellini: What I remember is discussions about... We had to bring in more of what Illinois has and holds. We want more artifacts. We knew that we owned the original... I think it’s a glass plate of Gordon, the slave, who has... He’s covered with keloids over...

DePue: You’re looking at his back.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: He’s got his head turned, and you’re seeing these huge, huge welts.

Cellini: Yeah, it’s a remarkable story. It isn’t just huge welts. It’s that lumping of scar tissue that comes over time from being traumatized and traumatized and traumatized. This is a man who shows not just a beating but a life of being beaten, and it’s a very powerful piece. We were thinking in our discussions that this needed to be central to how we presented slavery, the brutality of slavery.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Hobbs Keckley was a former slave who became a successful seamstress, civil activist, and author in Washington, DC. She was best known as the personal modiste and confidante of Mary Todd Lincoln, the First Lady. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Keckley)

It was Edna Greene Medford from Georgia who—whether it was Tom, whether it was Bob, whether it was Susan—had convened a group of historians to come in at some point during it, because there were lots of historians that were always consulted on this thing.⁶²

DePue: Just to make sure that I'm correct on this, she was one of the talking heads in Ken Burns' *Civil War* series?⁶³

Cellini: She was, yes.

DePue: Go ahead.

Cellini: In fact, I encountered her years later on the Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. I was on that one, the national one, and she had no memory of this. It was, "Really? That was a discussion?" I said, "Edna, you changed a whole tableau in that museum."

DePue: What was it that she recommended?

Cellini: I was in the room when it happened. She said, "Excuse me,"—a very polite, very classy lady—"Excuse me. People have been beaten and abused throughout history. That's not the tragedy of slavery. The tragedy is what it did to families. This man, this woman, who formed a unit and had children and had no rights to be together, to raise those children, to see them into adulthood, to protect them. These families were then torn to pieces, never to be... This dad will never see his woman again. This woman will never see her babies again. What's going to happen to them? That was the greatest tragedy, and it still plays out in society today." We were all speechless. I still am. It's still... I had to leave the room.

I look around the room, and here are all the BRC people sketching on the spot. Within a week, we had the sketches of what you see in that tableau.

Fast forward to when we are ready. We're readying the museum to be open, and I am fundraising like crazy. I'm walking around paint buckets and dodging cranes and things, taking donors through, saying, "This is going to be there, and that's going to be there, and you can put your name on history here," anybody I can think of, legislators. "This is why we need all this stuff." I've only ever seen it in sketch form, in pictures from LifeFormations. I've never seen it all put together.

⁶² Edna Greene Medford is a professor of history at Howard University who specializes in 19th century African-American history. She is a member of the board of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation. Medford has degrees from Hampton University and the University of Illinois.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edna_Greene_Medford)

⁶³ This nine-part series is the work that made documentarian Ken Burns a household name. Burns uses contemporary cinematography in addition to thousands of archival photographs, paintings and newspaper images set to music to teach people about the Civil War.

(https://www.imdb.com/video/vi3935158041?playlistId=tt0098769&ref_=tt_ov_vi)

I'm taking a guy through, walk around the corner—I'll never forget it—I see it, and I burst into tears. The donor doesn't get it, and I lose it because it's as good as I thought it was going to be; it's fifteen times better, twenty times better. It says so much without a narrative, without... Yes, it's overblown. The slave auctioneer is the meanest, vilest, worst person in the world figure. But the anguish, the children... It's one of the finest things in the museum.

DePue: Have you heard feedback from other people going through the museum that it has that same impact that you'd hoped for?

Cellini: I often will when I'm there, stand there and just listen to moms and dads trying to explain it to kids. Gordon [the slave] is there, but Gordon's a picture over in the corner. The manacles, the accoutrements of slavery are there, but that's the center and quite often, people are just simply hushed. To me, it's one of the more compelling things in the whole museum, just the sheer power of it. Nothing moves. Nobody talks. It's just...

DePue: There are a couple of other places where, to me, it was obvious that the design team wanted to have that same impact, where people would stop and really truly reflect on what they were looking at, what it meant.

Cellini: Yes, yeah. It's transcendent, I think.

DePue: Moving on, there are things like the New Salem store. There's the courting couch—at least that's what I call it—the Lincoln couple on the couch. Then you get to the Lincoln law office. That's an interesting perspective of Lincoln. Any comments about the Lincoln law office?

Cellini: Well, it was going to be more interesting. You've heard the story about Willie [Lincoln's third son] peeing in the stove. That's in Billy Herndon's book about... He hated those kids.⁶⁴ They'd come, and they'd tear the law office up, and Lincoln would read a book. This is all according to Herndon.

We wanted to tell that story, but Bob wanted to go several steps further and have Willie peeing in the stove and steam rising. Now, I kind of wish we'd done it, but one of our teachers said, "You can't do that. That's all the kids will remember. If I'm taking a field trip through there, we'll lose them." I kind of wish we'd done it, but we didn't do it.

DePue: But, it still portrays Lincoln as a very permissive parent.

Cellini: Oh, yeah.

⁶⁴ William "Billy" Henry Herndon was a law partner and biographer of President Abraham Lincoln. He was an early member of the new Republican Party and was elected mayor of Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: I assume that was the essence of what that room was about.

Cellini: Um-hmm.

DePue: On to something you've talked about a little bit, but I wanted to get some more reaction about the 1860 election, because it's such a unique way of portraying that. Who came up with the idea of having these competing advertisements, as if it was being done in today's media world?

Cellini: I think it was pure BRC. We talked a lot about it with Tom. How the heck do you explain a four-way race for president? BRC came up with this concept. We'll do it with ads. People understand ads. Then it got to, "Well yeah, but are people going to think these are real ads from that time?" It was all very difficult to hash out, but I think it became very effective. Do you want to hear how we got Tim Russert?⁶⁵

DePue: Oh, absolutely.

Cellini: We wanted Tim Russert. We wanted Tim Russert. How the heck do you get Tim Russert? Nobody could figure it out. It was one of those things that... People get these great ideas, "Well, go get Tim Russert." "Well, okay." I have a friend in Chicago, Jo Minnow. Her husband is Newton Minnow. I remember he called television "the vast wasteland." I think he was head of the FCC under Nixon. You know, Newton Minnow, the name. Well, Jo and I have been friends; I can't tell you how it is we became friends. I called Jo and said, "Is there any way that you and Mr. Minnow could get us to somebody who could get us to somebody?" Tim Russert was then *the* face of *Meet the Press* and the honest guy in the room for all of the television coverage on election night. He was famously with a chalkboard; he was the guy.

DePue: Perhaps the most admired journalist of his era.

Cellini: Oh, absolutely, yes, yeah. So, I talked to Jo. I don't know how it happened, but Jo called me back and said, "This is the number for your film crew to call. I don't know how it will come together but have a crew in New York at 5:00 on a Sunday morning, and Russert said he'll do it." I said, "Can you give me more than that, a script?" She said, "Julie, I can't give you any more than that. That's it."

So, BRC sends an entire crew to New York, 5:00 on a Sunday morning. Tim Russert comes in. It's raining. He's flustered. He doesn't know what this thing is. He just knows that Newton Minnow has asked him to do it. He says to the film crew, "All right, give me the script. What am I supposed to

⁶⁵ Timothy John Russert was an American television journalist and lawyer who appeared for more than 16 years as the longest-serving moderator of NBC's *Meet the Press*. He was a senior vice president at NBC News, Washington bureau chief and also hosted an eponymous CNBC/MSNBC weekend interview program. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_Russert)

say?” They said, “Well, we’ll do run-throughs and light checks.” He said, “No. My film crew will do this. You get one take. That’s it. I’ve got a show to run.”

So, if you look at it closely, what you notice is his hair is messed up. His makeup isn’t especially good. He looks tired and a little bit like he’s been preparing for a show. He’s a little bit damp, and that’s one run through. That was all we got.

Then, when he died, totally unexpectedly, not all that long after the museum opened, everybody said, “We’ve got to change this. We’ve got to reshoot this.” It’s got to be by then Brian Williams or whoever was in their ascendancy at that point. I said, “What are you, nuts? We were going to use an actor in that place. It doesn’t matter who’s doing it. Yes, he was iconic at the time, but there are a lot of people who are going to walk through and say, “That’s Tim Russert. I remember Tim Russert.” Why in the world would you...? Of all the things you might want to update, much silliness to do about nothing. He’s still... He’s for the ages.

Now, is that thing a little bit dated, in that TV has changed a bit since then? Would we do it differently? We’d do several things differently now, but this was all state of the art when we opened ten years ago. As far as I am concerned, it’s still the first museum in this country for audiences of the 21st century.

DePue: You mentioned that this was very much rushed through, that Russert only wanted to do it once. Do you think he got it right?

Cellini: Oh, gosh, do you think he got it right?

DePue: I never noticed that he was at all unkempt. I thought he nailed it.

Cellini: An absolute professional, consummate professional. My sorrow is we never got him here to see it. We gave him the Lincoln Leadership Prize posthumously, from the foundation, and we did show it that night to the audience. We do those things in Chicago because that’s where the audience is. Whether it ever brought anybody to Springfield, I don’t know.

DePue: That gets us through Journey One. What happens after that is obviously he wins the election. You’ve got the farewell address in Springfield, and that takes you back out to the plaza area. As you go into this huge façade of the White House, you see several figures out there. I know you’ve got [John Wilkes] Booth, and you’ve got [General Ulysses S.] Grant. Who else do you have outside that?

Cellini: Sojourner Truth [abolitionist].

DePue: Sojourner Truth.

Cellini: Frederick Douglass [abolitionist].

DePue: Do you think that it was a bit too dramatic a scale for the White House? The plaza, as you already said, is a big room in the first place. Do you think they got the scale of the White House right?

Cellini: It's as right as you can get it. We wanted the Lincoln White House as close to what they could get from the pictures. The White House has undergone changes since then. It's probably as close as they could have gotten.

DePue: You've already talked about the next thing you see in journey two. That's... I guess you refer to it as the "Blue Room." I didn't know that was the official name for the room where all the gowns are. Any other comments...

Cellini: We called it the "Blue Room." I don't know. If I take people through it, I call it the "Blue Room."

DePue: Has that met your expectations? You said in the other places you visited, that was always the gathering place. Has it served that purpose for this museum?

Cellini: I think it depends on who's going through. We do a lot of things in there. We wanted to show Elizabeth Keckley taking pains with Mrs. Lincoln, and we wanted to show there... I think I told you I used to be at Lincoln's Home as a Junior League volunteer, and I'd bone up on my history, and I'd tell them more than they wanted to know.

Invariably, I'd say, "Are there questions?" And they'd say, "What's under that dress?" So, that's why we show what's under that dress; that's interesting. I'll hang around sometimes and hear people say, "My god, how uncomfortable would that be? How could you sit down?" Clothing is more than just something to cover you up. Clothing is an artifact of a time, of a society, of expectations, of people's station in life. We try to show that with what people are wearing in there, what they're doing in there.

The women are depicted in the pictures of... Women were pretty ornamental at that time. You were almost an accessory of your husband's success. We try to portray that because it's... Look at the generation of women that are coming along in the U.S. now.

DePue: Shortly after you get done with that room, you walk in, and you see Willie in the bed, his deathbed, and the family around that. I'd like to have you respond to that, but let me start by saying it this way. Abraham Lincoln, there's an incredible amount of information about Abraham, and then you've got Mary.

For much of our history, Mary has not been portrayed very well at all. Was there a lot of discussion about how you wanted to portray Mary and Mary's relationship with Abraham? One of the things you could have

portrayed in the Blue Room was her competing with the other ladies, the other socialites of Washington, D. C.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: I don't think that's necessarily portrayed that way.

Cellini: No. No, it's a bit more of a fashion show than I would like, but...

DePue: What was the nature of the discussions about how to portray Mary and the relationship?

Cellini: From my own standpoint, I always tried to not be... I tried to put myself in the role of the tourist going through. That was sometimes in conflict to the amount of reading I had done on Lincoln and the way I felt about the really bad rap that Mary Lincoln got. It goes back to—it's very personal—I lost two children, and that stays with a person. I always looked at Mary through that lens of... It was common to lose children then. That doesn't make it any easier. I always wanted more sympathy for this woman, more humanity for her. My god, she was... Look at what happened to her after he died, how they turned on her and...

DePue: You're talking about Herndon?

Cellini: Yeah, and then the whole country. Maybe she was tough. Maybe she was hard. If she'd been a man, it would have been so different. Those expectations of women were so different then. I always had a lot of sympathy for Mary.

DePue: So, what we see is Willie in the deathbed, and then right after that, we see this incredibly distraught life figure of Mary, sitting in the dark.

Cellini: Yeah, and the tears.

DePue: It that another one of those points in the museum where the team's hoping that people will stop and really truly reflect on what had happened?

Cellini: Yes, yeah. Is that a successful tableau? I don't know, the music coming from downstairs—I think they're playing a reel or something—the party going on downstairs, and here the Lincolns are, upstairs with their son who would... I think he died two weeks later. I guess it's successful. I don't know that we give Mary her due. We tried.

DePue: The next point on the journey... I'm not sure this is the official title but "Rumors in the Kitchen." You're in the White House kitchen.

Cellini: Yeah.

DePue: Any reflections on that?

Cellini: I thought it would be better. I thought it would be more *Upstairs, Downstairs*, more poignant.⁶⁶ It seems like we've got so much going on there. You walk through and you... Most people aren't even aware... We even went to the trouble to heat the stove. If you put your hand on the stove, it's warm.

DePue: I wasn't aware of that.

Cellini: Yeah. There's a picture on the wall of the White House kitchen, and we actually replicated it. It's not the Lincoln kitchen (I can't remember which president it is), but it's as close as we could get to what the kitchen actually looked like. It's unfortunately kind of a pass-through, and you don't get...

What we were trying to do was get the voices of these servants and what they must have been talking about because you're in the back, and you hear things, and you're not... You're smart; you're picking up on stuff, and you're scared. Is there war coming? And what's that going to do to me?

DePue: Almost an *Upstairs, Downstairs* kind of approach.

Cellini: Yes, and that was what we were going for. Is it that successful? I'm not sure. People walk right through without listening to those voices. It's kind of muddled, and we have that music that's still... We're compressed, and so you maybe don't get the story there. But the story of the kitchen, it became a hallway that... It's one of the things that is less successful, but it's there.

DePue: The next point in the journey is the Emancipation Proclamation. From everything you've already said, you thought that was something you really wanted to have the museum portray well, so people had an appreciation for it. Do you think that was accomplished? There's actually, I think, three parts to that. You've got the cabinet room and lots of figures in there, and occasionally there are actors in there. Then you've got the Whispering Gallery, and then you've got Lincoln at his desk with apparently what's supposed to be the Emancipation Proclamation spread on the desk. Those three things together, do you think it's successful?

Cellini: I think the Whispering Gallery is the most successful piece of it. The cabinet room really needs explanation. You need to know what he was up against and what those men around the table would probably have said. It's such an important thing, and I don't know that we convey what this man did to move this country forward. I don't know how we'd change it, but it's maybe an opportunity that we didn't quite get across.

⁶⁶ *Upstairs, Downstairs* is a British television series that ran for 68 episodes divided into from 1971 to 1975. Set in a large townhouse in central London, the series depicts the servants—"downstairs"—and their masters, the family—"upstairs"—between the years 1903 and 1930.

I ask people when they go through, and all they remember is the guy at the end with the bad wig. We debated that. The guy had bad wigs. We could have done a really good one, and you wouldn't know it was a bad wig. I always thought, we're going to explain, this guy was notorious for these awful wigs that he wore then, just little things like that that sort of detract from [the story]

What he's doing is... It's pivotal in history, and he's going to push this thing through by horse-trading, by sheer force of will. That to me is what the Spielberg movie really showed you, which is, that's the art of politics. That's how this whole thing came together. It was a grand idea that... That was my role, was to take advantage of the fact that I had some access and get in there and try to figure out how to sell it. I so identify in my own tiny way with what Lincoln had to do to sell a grand idea. It'd fall apart, and I'd get, oh, slapped down and get back in there.

DePue: We've got the cabinet room. Was there discussion about wanting to have an actor in there more than we've been able to do since it's been open?

Cellini: That was Richard's idea, Richard Norton Smith's idea.

DePue: That was not part of the original plan?

Cellini: We talked about a lot of things. We had audio that would tell the whole story. It's such a big story to tell and to explain to people. Yet, to me one of the huge things...

DePue: Perhaps even more complex than trying to sort out the election of 1860.

Cellini: Exactly, yeah, yeah. We did an okay job there. [In] the Whispering Gallery, I thought we used technology...and we could really spot on, all this stuff people were saying.

DePue: In the Whispering Gallery and the Cartoon Gallery that was earlier in that journey you see Lincoln being lampooned, just like any politician would be. It strikes me those are the two parts of the museum that you wouldn't find in any other presidential museum.

Cellini: I agree. I agree.

DePue: I would think that that was very deliberate as well, that you wanted to present all of those dissenting voices that are...

Cellini: Yeah. And it was many, many discussions. Whose voice? A lot of voices will get drowned out. If you've got a big crowd, will they stop and listen? They do.

DePue: They stop and listen?

Cellini: Yes. I think they do.

DePue: Do you think just the fact that all these voices are kind of overlapping that that also portrays a message?

Cellini: Yes, yeah. Part of the human condition, you're always going to have people with opinions. I pick up the paper today (laughs), Tony!

DePue: That gets us to a discussion of the war, and that gets us to what's today one of the most popular exhibits in the museum, and that's the *Civil War in Four Minutes*.⁶⁷ It's much more than just that map on the wall. Tell me what it took to get to that particular exhibit. What was involved with that room?

Cellini: Early on, there were long discussions about how do you tell this story? How do you give it the importance it needs and yet not give short shrift to all the other important pieces of this story and not have this be...? This was overarching in the Lincoln presidency, but it was not the whole story. So, how are we going to do it? I think it was Dick Taylor, who had seen something someplace. Dick was a historian on Bob Coomer's staff, and he interjected the idea of, "Let's not do it big. Let's do it small, so they can figure it out." Then we talked about what does it mean?

There have been wars, and there have been wars, and there have been wars. This one was on our soil. But, what grabs people? We were always looking for the emotional entry point, which then led you to the educational entry point, where the emotion was the story. [It] led you to something a little more intellectual to think about and death, the odometer of death. Our cars all have odometers. Why not have an odometer of death that keeps ticking and moving, and the bodies keep piling up?

Then, for the historians in the background, what's actually happening, and here's Vicksburg over here. If you studied it, that probably broke the back of the Confederacy. Then it was, the war would drag on, but here's this point in it. We were trying to hit as many audiences as we possibly could, everybody from scholars to school kids. This was, I think, a genius way to do it.

By the time we had Rick Beard there as our director, Rick loaned it to [the] Field Museum in Chicago. They were doing an exhibit on time, no, maps. They were doing an exhibit on maps.

DePue: Can I just quickly interject?

⁶⁷ To inform and illustrate the scale, scope and tragedy of the Civil War, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum's *Civil War in Four Minutes* was created. It is a large animated map which lays out the progress of the war with continuously shifting battle lines and flare-ups that mark specific major battles. The entire war is presented in this way in roughly 4 and one half minutes.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: What we're talking about, for those few people who might not know, *The Civil War in Four Minutes*, you're looking at this large wall map...

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: ...and you're watching lines moving on the map. As you say, you see a little explosion for Vicksburg, a little explosion for Gettysburg, et cetera. But the lines are moving back and forth between what the North controls and what the South controls, while over in the corner, you're also looking at numbers of casualties, which are constantly going up. Go ahead.

Cellini: Yes, yeah. Okay, very good, very succinct. To that, there is a piece of this that we never tell that much of the story, but the odometer of death continues as the soldiers stop fighting because of weather. There were hiatuses in the war because there had to be, but people kept dying. That's a piece of it too that tells you a lot about war in a sentence or two. We maybe miss that as well because if you notice, we've got the battle lines. The battle lines stop, but the odometer keeps going that talks about all of the ancillary casualties to war as well. It's genius.

I went to the exhibit at the Field [Museum] after Rick had loaned it to them. This was about maps and how they have impacted civilization. There was a very interesting one in the center that showed how a doctor had figured out [that] one of the great plagues in London had all emanated from one pump that was full of typhoid and how he plotted on a map where the centers of dying were and where they got their water. This is [the] 1500s, I think, and it was fascinating. Now you'd think that would be where people would be clustered. Where people were clustered was the little exhibit over off on one side that was the *Civil War in Four Minutes*, with the odometer that kept going. I watched. I hung around for an hour or two.

DePue: That had to be kind of satisfying to see.

Cellini: Yes, yeah, it really was.

DePue: Did you have a sense that it would be that popular, that successful?

Cellini: I had a sense that the whole place would be remarkable, that it would truly be the first museum in this country for the audiences of the 21st century, and I think in many ways we succeeded.

DePue: On the opposite side of that room, you've got these individual portraits, and then you can find out what's happened to these individuals during the war itself. Were they injured? Were they killed, et cetera? Were those two things always meant to be complementary to each other?

Cellini: At one time, everything was going to have its own room. A lot of things got pushed together because you only have so much space. At one time, we thought about the little tableau we have over in a corner about Ron Rietveld discovering the picture of Lincoln in the casket.⁶⁸ At one time we thought, Gosh, we'll do a room around this. We'll make historians detectives across time. We'll show you that, at age fourteen, this... Ron was actually on one of our panels when we hashed out these themes.

We'll make historians... We'll give them their due because this thing is all underpinned with solid history. God bless the historians who stuck with this, who didn't say, "You people don't know what you're talking about. Who the hell are you?" You did what you could do, limitations of time, limitations of money.

I'll give you an example. We did this whole project for \$150 million, maybe more, a staggering amount of money. I just read in the *Wall Street Journal*, the Obama Library, [they] haven't even picketed the site yet; the price tag is \$500 million. Contrast that against the Lincoln presidency. I'm not taking anything away from any current president, but think of what we did with government and private money. We got a bargain.

DePue: A couple more questions about the Civil War presentation. Was there a concern going in that you've got this group of Lincoln scholars and historians, and then you've got this huge audience of Civil War buffs and re-enactors and people who want to make sure that you've got every little dot and tittle right about the way the Civil War is presented. Was there some concern about that?

Cellini: Sure, of course. But as much as we could do it, right down to the regimental buttons on those uniforms, the undergarments in those dresses, that nobody's going to see. Yeah, we got it right.

The music... When David Kneupper comes to talk about the music, all of it is based on music Lincoln would have heard in his lifetime.⁶⁹ It speeds up, and it slows down, depending on the mood that they want to set. There are places in the museum where Dixie is played like a funeral dirge. The attention to detail that went into all of this...and it was...

Yes, we had our names on the line, and we didn't want to get killed after we put it together. We wanted to be able to substantiate it, but we wanted to do right by Lincoln. We didn't want to fail him. It sounds corny, but it

⁶⁸ Ronald Rietveld, professor of history at California State University-Fullerton, is known among historians as the person who found the only known photograph of Lincoln in death. (<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/news/rietveldmem.htm>)

⁶⁹ David Kneupper is an award-winning composer and sound designer for theme parks, museums, branded experiences and new media. Kneupper Music creates turnkey solutions for attraction sound, from concept and design to production and the onsite mix. (<https://www.kneuppermusic.com/#:~:text=David%20Kneupper%20is%20an%20award,production%20and%20the%20onsite%20mix.>)

infused every discussion we had. It was, “Let’s be true to the legacy, as much as we’re able to know it. And let’s not do anything that we can’t explain.” This is how we did it.

DePue: One other question about the presentation of the Civil War. There are no weapons at all portrayed in the museum, as you go through either of these journeys. Was that a conscious decision, and if so, why?

Cellini: I remember one discussion where we talked about audiences and who would come. That’s how the regimental buttons had to be right because there are collectors that would call you up short if the regimental buttons weren’t right. Guns got to be in it. I remember—I don’t know if Bob Rogers remembers this—I remember Bob Rogers saying, “We can’t get into the guns thing. First of all, it will create huge bottlenecks. We can’t have a room of armaments.” That was not something... It got dropped out fairly early in the process.

There was also a lot of anti-gun feeling in this country when this was happening. Columbine and...⁷⁰ There were things on people’s radar then, that it was really offensive, and it carries on to this day. I remember buying a water pistol for my granddaughter, who’s four. Her parents said to me, “Over our dead bodies will you bring a gun into our house.” There is still that kind of feeling out there.

My husband was raised with his father’s service revolver in the hall closet. The kids were schooled from the beginning. He was a police officer from the time he was twenty years old. “That’s Dad’s service revolver. We’re going to show you what it is, and we’re going to tell you what happens if you ever, ever touch that.” And nobody ever did. But, there was a generation coming up when we were planning all this thing, that guns are the worst thing ever.

DePue: Yet, I’m sure you’re hearing the other side as well. I imagine there are conversations about the Civil War. “How do you portray the Civil War when you keep weapons out of it?”

Cellini: Yeah. I was one of those who would have liked to have seen us cater to that audience, but I was only one. Also, we used a California company (DePue laughs), and that’s a very different group. Did you watch the *Academy Awards* recently?

DePue: No, I did not.

Cellini: A sociologist would have a field day with that. They were celebrating a mentality that’s coastal. It didn’t play in the heartland. They were celebrating

⁷⁰ The Columbine High School massacre was a school shooting and failed bombing that occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado, United States. Two twelfth grade students murdered 12 students and one teacher. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbine_High_School_massacre)

movies that nobody in this part of the country, which is the center, had ever seen. They were celebrating events from fifty years ago as if they happened right now and that racism was still the absolute be-all, end-all of what's wrong in this country. And we had a California team. I'm not faulting them. I'm saying you carry values from the part of the forest where you're coming from.

DePue: Moving on from the Civil War and the *Civil War in Four Minutes*...

Cellini: Tell me when I'm going on too long, and I...

DePue: The purpose of this is to get the full story, so this is what I want, exactly what I want.

Ford's Theater, you've got the quick reference to the election and the victory. A lot of these things are portrayed in murals. Do you think the murals help advance the story?

Cellini: I think the murals were affordable, even though those murals are... That's not wallpaper; that is hand-done. Boy, was there a problem with CDB over that. "You've got painters in your budget. We've got union painters." (DePue laughs) "Oh, no, no. Painters are artists, sir." When all else would fail, we'd say to Bob Coomer, "Go over and talk their language, please." And he would. The people we had were indispensable.

DePue: You're saying the people, the Bob Coomers of the world.

Cellini: The Tom Schwartzes of the world.

DePue: The BRC experts of the world.

Cellini: Yes, yes.

DePue: Then, you get to Ford's...

Cellini: Is it too hot in here? Do you want me to...?

DePue: No, I'm fine... Ford's Theater and the assassination, obviously. What's your sense of how that was portrayed?

Cellini: Badly. It looks like something from a museum a long time ago. Do I have any suggestions of how to change it? I walk through, and if I'm taking a donor through or something, I'll walk through fast. It's cartoonish. It's awkward. It doesn't have the feel I'd like for it to have. Here's the man who has saved the union, and he's finally, finally going to get some time and see the world he's always wanted to see. It's coming together, and he's worked so hard. It's all etched on his face, what he's been through, and he's lost another kid. And the guy blows a hole in him.

Somehow we don't get the horror of it. It's people sitting on couches, and you're looking up, and you're craning your neck, and I know you have to be authentic, but it just... We fail in the awfulness of it, I think.

DePue: The next place we go then, I think you might have a different appreciation, and that's lying in state.

Cellini: Um-hmm. I wish we'd gone ahead with the scent of the flowers. I wish we would have been able to explain why that was important. I love the music. The music really... It's David Kneupper at his best. It just sets that emotion.

DePue: The thing that strikes me, and I'm sure a lot of people have the same impression, there's a huge amount of space that's devoted to this part of the exhibit. What was the reasoning behind that?

Cellini: I don't know. Whether they wanted to recreate an authentic space that's right here in Springfield, and you could do that... I don't know whether it was value engineering. It, to me, is very large.

DePue: Too large?

Cellini: Uh-huh.

DePue: Is that effective?

Cellini: Maybe, it is, maybe. You'd have to ask Bob these questions.

DePue: Bob Rogers?

Cellini: Bob Rogers. For example, why do we have the mural and the music and the benches to sit there and look at an oil painting? I don't know the thinking behind all of it. I know when it finally came together, as much as I had been involved and had...

DePue: We just lost the mic here.

Cellini: Is it still... We're back. As much as I had been involved in it from the very beginning, not every part and piece of it came out as I thought it would. It was such a long, long process to keep getting appropriations and then to get them released and then to... I had to know as much as I could know so I could sell it, so I could paint the word pictures. But when we actually saw it, not every part and piece was as I had hoped they'd be. But then there were some that were just wonderful.

DePue: If I can reflect back on some of the things you said, that the slave auction is one of those moments where you hoped, and you did achieve that. People stop and really reflect on what that means. Maybe seeing Mary in her grief, dealing with the death of Willie is another one. Certainly, you get to *The Civil War in*

Four Minutes, and people stand and often times watch that two or three times, as they're absorbing its meaning.

It sounds like you are disappointed that the assassination wasn't another one of those moments. But then, you finish this whole journey off with lying in state. Do you think that is another one of those moments where people do stop and reflect?

Cellini: I think so. By then, you've been through quite a bit of winding territory. Our hope then was that you would go to the Treasures Gallery and have an idea of the importance of the Gettysburg Address, the importance of the Emancipation Proclamation. If you're interested in clothing, Mrs. Lincoln's dress and the Tiffany necklace with the heart that supposedly he gave to her in the White House and said, "Here is my heart." It's a great story. I don't know if it's true, but...

DePue: So this goes back to those original discussions with Bob Rogers about, if you just have artifacts in glass cases, then you're missing the story. So, now you've gotten this long story that people take anywhere from an hour to three or four hours, and then you see the artifacts.

Cellini: Yes, that was always the plan. Does it work? I hope it works. I like it that we also studded artifacts through the museum too, particularly the things that the Lincolns had and held and the campaign banners. Wherever we could, we put things, which is unusual, or it was unusual then.

DePue: Well, Julie, we still have a lot more to talk about...

Cellini: We do?

DePue: ...in terms of the museum. Then there's a lot about the construction and the staffing and things like that for the next session, but we've reached that point in time where we're going to have to stop today.

Cellini: Okay.

DePue: Thank you very much.

Cellini: You're welcome.

(end of transcript #4)

Interview with Julie Cellini

HP-A-L-2015-013.05

Interview # 5: April 22, 2015

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, April 22, 2015. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I’m once again in the home of Julie Cellini. Good afternoon.

Cellini: Good afternoon.

DePue: It’s been quite a while. I think it’s been close to a month, but I’ve been busy, and I know you have been. We’re back at it. This is our fifth session, if you can believe that, and we are well into the discussion about the creation of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. I think it’s worth mentioning here that, since we last had an interview, Bob Rogers [of BRC design company] has been to town, a whirlwind experience for him. I had a chance to interview him. What I found very interesting and important when he gave his presentation that Thursday night on April second, he really paid honor to your participation, your critical role in the creation of the library and museum.



Julie Cellini during the time the design team was visiting museums around the country to gather ideas and lessons of what they wanted for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, circa 1999.

Cellini: I can't tell you how embarrassed I was.

DePue: Was that a surprise that he was going to take that approach?

Cellini: Totally, totally, and how he got that picture, I... Yeah, it was...

DePue: This was a picture of you, I think, from the 1980s, when you first dove in on the project.

Cellini: Yeah. It was very kind of him, and I think people enjoyed the session; I hope they did. People certainly learned a lot about what it took to put it all together.

DePue: What struck me about the evening is the wonderful presentation, and afterwards it was like a rock star had come to town. There was just this huge crowd of people who were gathered around Bob Rogers afterward.

Cellini: That was why Bill and I wanted to do the little reception afterwards; we wanted people to tell him what it meant to them, which is... These people do this as a business, but with him it was so much more than just getting the gig of a lifetime, as he likes to call it. It was getting to tell, I think, one of the most remarkable stories in all of American history and maybe in a lot of history. He not only got to do it, but he got to do a lot of it his own way.

DePue: It's not an accident or coincidence that there are more books written about Lincoln and the Civil War than anybody except, perhaps, Jesus Christ. And it's not just people from the United States who are interested in him. At our library, we've got a huge collection from all over the world, of people writing about it and reflecting on his life.

There's a little bit of housekeeping here. I wanted to ask you a couple questions before we got back into where we broke off last time. The first one is to take you back to 1991, the election of a new governor, Jim Edgar. He comes into office. He's got a \$1 billion deficit that he's inherited from Governor Thompson, his protégé...his mentor, I should say. I understand that one of the things he did, early in his administration, was to take a hard look at the Dana-Thomas House and decided that he needed to close that.⁷¹ Does that ring a bell to you?

Cellini: It does, indeed. It was very, very painful for everyone. I actually had been the master of ceremonies for the opening of the Dana House. I had been there through all of the restoration of the interior, the furniture. I'd heard the stories of when they'd gone off to auctions in New York and brought pieces back.

One of our trustees, Frank Mason, was integral to that. He'd come over to my house and drink coffee and tell me how he was going to raise the

⁷¹ The Dana-Thomas House, located in Springfield, IL, is a home in Prairie School style designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dana%E2%80%93Thomas_House)

money to do it because that was actually private money that bought many of those pieces. There was a Dana-Thomas Foundation that was started under Governor Edgar... I'm sorry, Governor Thompson. Frank, he was this larger than life character that I was blessed to get to know because of the fact that Thompson had put us together as trustees. The Dana House was his passion. You always need to have somebody who, as Bob Rogers says, "A darn fool that doesn't know when to quit." I think that was Governor Thompson, certainly with... Antiques and furnishings were a passion with him.

So was history though. He was a big Teddy Roosevelt guy. I remember that he gave both Bill and me Teddy Roosevelt books and actually started me on that road because I didn't know much about Teddy Roosevelt. But he was certainly passionate about the Dana House, and I don't know how in the world they asked me to emcee the thing, but it was fun. I remember; this was back when women wore very high heels, and I was a lot younger then, so here I was. We had to do it in front of the house because there's not a lot of space inside, and this was a public thing. I kept thinking, Am I going to trip here on this rough sidewalk? Am I going...? Then I thought, Oh, maybe I ought to just take off the shoes, and I think I finally did. I think I did at least half of it in my stocking feet.

DePue: It hadn't been open that long before 1991, just two or three years or even a little more than that?

Cellini: Yeah, not a lot more than that. Boy, I remember the phone call. It wasn't the only site we had to close, but I thought, Oh no, how can we do this, after all that went into this?

DePue: Who was the phone call from? Do you recall? (pause) Was it from Susan? Was it somebody from the governor's office?

Cellini: I think I got a heads-up from my sister-in-law, Janis [Cellini], who was on the Edgar staff, who told me it was... As I think now, she probably front-ended it, so I wouldn't be shocked out of my socks. Then, it probably was either Susan or Bob Coomer who called me and said, "It does actually take board action, but if you, as board chair, will just indicate that you've gotten the message, you can let the board know. Then at your next meeting, you can put it into the minutes," which we did.

DePue: It took board action to approve the closure of it or to acknowledge it?

Cellini: It was an acknowledgement because those are gubernatorial decisions, but he was very respectful of keeping people that he had put into positions in his administration. He was very respectful of keeping you in the loop.

DePue: He being Edgar?

- Cellini: He being Edgar; Thompson before him. But, this was the Edgar Administration and...
- DePue: Did the board try to push back against the decision?
- Cellini: No.
- DePue: Did the community?
- Cellini: Oh, yes. Oh, my gosh, yes, phone calls and editorials and people were incensed. This thing had taken so long, and it had opened with such fanfare. It wasn't Lincoln, but it's an artifact, certainly of design history, certainly of architectural history.
- DePue: You're talking about America's most famous architect.
- Cellini: Uh-huh. It was tough.
- DePue: Any insight into why the Edgar Administration decided to do it? Was it strictly a financial decision?
- Cellini: Having not been there when they had to do what they had to do, I could only speculate. You go back to those years, and he really got the nickname of "Governor No." He is a very moral man. I look back to a wonderful quote from Dick Ogilvie, who said he did not run for governor to preside over the crumbling of Illinois's infrastructure. This is when he put in the income tax. I think Governor Edgar expressed, not that way, but similar sentiments. "I did not want to be elected governor and have the state go bankrupt. So, I'm going to fix this."
- DePue: It's interesting you mentioned Ogilvie's name because Edgar considers Ogilvie maybe his mentor, although that suggests a closer relationship than was there but certainly the governor he most admired.
- Cellini: Yeah.
- DePue: It's interesting in Edgar's case. Some people certainly would speculate that it's Thompson's thing. He just didn't have any regard for architecture or the art that went along and for the antiques, but we are talking about a governor who really appreciated the importance of history as well.
- Cellini: He does. He's a very good non-academic historian. It's fun. He and Brenda still come over for dinner when they're in town, and it's fun. He and I talk about books and Bill and Brenda talk about everything else (DePue laughs). But in his own way, Governor Edgar is one of the least political people I've encountered in the world of politics. He's a straight-shooter. He saw what he had to do, and he did it.

DePue: Do you remember when it was reopened and how that came about?

Cellini: (sighs) Oh, boy.

DePue: It certainly would have been in his administration.

Cellini: It was in his administration because we... Things finally began to loosen up into his second term because we had had all those austerity budgets. I credit Joan Walters for... I certainly would have liked to have been a fly on the wall during those sessions because I know that everybody around that table... He was good about having his line people in there when he had to big decisions to make.

DePue: Joan was his budget director.

Cellini: She was his budget director, and she actually had to wear the jacket for some of those things. Certainly he took flak for it, but she had to hold the line on it. She understood the fiscal side. That's a lot to understand, and I think he was very wise in that he listened to the good people he put in around him. And I think Joan, as much as anyone, weighed in on... "We can't keep doing this, sir." He knew history and [was] a pretty smart guy. That's how he proceeded.

Then, when there finally was an upturn, he looked around at the things that I think meant a lot to him and meant a lot to the state, not necessarily equal parts, but I think he weighed all that in. Then he started doing things that could be helpful, and the sites reopened. We got to hire some staff to get it done; programs began to happen. It was a brief time, but it was a good time.

DePue: Of course, the culmination of his administration is giving that... I think we've determined roughly \$49 million to really kick off the ALPLM Project.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: This might have been something you already mentioned, but I wanted to hear your story about the next governor and specifically about Governor George Ryan's wife, Lura Lynn, because she was brought in on this project, the creation of a new home for the library's collection, as well, when she first got there. Tell me how that happened.

Cellini: I was at a fundraiser. I took the opportunity to sidle up to her. I had known her, not well but nobody... I never heard anybody call her "Mrs. Ryan." She was always Lura Lynn to everybody, and just... What a sensational, homespun helpmate she was to him. You never know somebody's marriage from the outside, but it sure looked like a terrific marriage to me. They were a pair. They were a team. I had remembered all the way back to when she had been championing the milk barn in Kankakee to be on the national register. He was lieutenant governor, I think, at the time.

I could not convince the staff that we're talking about, "At least put it on the state register." We had a state register then. Well, it doesn't qualify because it's got this, this, and this. If you deal with the true believers, you understand what you're up against. I said, "Guys, this is such a big issue." "Well, of course it is, it's..." I said, "No, there's a larger issue around it.

First of all, this is somebody that cares very much." "Well, they all care very much when they come in. Emotion doesn't..." I couldn't get through to him. Apparently, they left her sitting out in a drafty hallway on a folding chair for a long, long time before they even let her come in and make her case. Then they turned her down.

DePue: Who is they? Is this...

Cellini: This was the staff.

DePue: IHPA staff at the time?

Cellini: Yeah, IHPA staff.

DePue: So, it sounds like this would have been the latter half of the 1980s.

Cellini: Probably so, probably so, because they were still living in Kankakee then. But, it stayed in George's mind because "You can offend me but not my wife."

DePue: From what little I know about George, loyalty is an important thing to him.

Cellini: Oh, boy, oh, boy, to a fault, yeah. So it was kind of brazen on my part, I think, to approach her that way. But she was such a magnanimous, really wonderful woman. I said, "I know that some of the staff offended you. Join the club. They offend me. They're smart. They're educated, but they don't understand." And she said, "How to treat people?" I said, "I guess so. But," I said, "having said that, let me tell you that there's this long-held dream, and we've been moving along with it. All I'm asking is, could some of the IHPA staff come in and do a briefing for you of what the project is and what it would mean?" She said, "Honey, I don't need a briefing. I'm in."

She was in, and they raised a lot of private money, a lot of... It was Lura Lynn and Pam Daniels—Lee Daniels had been briefly the Speaker—and myself, who sat down and sketched out what the beginnings of the foundation would be and how we would put it together and how we would incorporate it. We're on the document as incorporating the foundation. We had to do that in order to—boy, talk about today—to create the MOU, the memorandum of understanding, between what would become the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and the foundation that would be charged with being the private sector support mechanism for it. That was the only way

that we could do things, like a museum store, that would not have the funding going to GRF.

DePue: GRF?

Cellini: General Revenue Fund. Nothing wrong with it going into the General Revenue Fund, but the idea was generate that money, and then be able to tell the people who buy the books and the t-shirts and make the contributions that this money will be used for this institution, that we can guarantee it, and that was the way to do it. It will soon not be the way to do it.

DePue: Well, you're referring to... I think you said it just a couple minutes ago, "Oh, boy," because you just came back from a foundation meeting.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: We'll get to this subject later on, but one of the subjects of the meeting at the foundation was the legislation that's currently working its way through the legislature on splitting IHPA and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Cellini: No, actually it abolishes IHPA.

DePue: It puts it under the Department of Commerce and Employment Opportunity?

Cellini: Right, whatever that is, yeah.

DePue: DCEO.

Cellini: Yeah, DCEO.

DePue: We're going to save that discussion until much later here. Going back to Mrs. Ryan, was she a member of the board of trustees?

Cellini: She was the founding chairman of the... She was not a member of the board of trustees of IHPA...

DePue: But of the foundation.

Cellini: ... She was the founding chairman of the foundation board.

DePue: So, much more than just a figurehead or connections with the governor himself.

Cellini: She was never comfortable running a meeting. She always had one of us supply her with a little... They looked like the kind of cards that you'd use in a recipe box, and she'd run the meetings that way. But, whatever needed to be done, she'd do it to raise the money so that we could show that, yes, there is a private sector funding component going into this. That was important in order

to move this forward because the people who had the say-so, that was the first thing they asked is, “Oh, wait a minute, is this all going to be state money, federal money, city money? How are you going to put this thing together?”

Lura Lynn was there as the face of the private sector part of it. She was never the only one. We reached out for lots and lots of people. We formed a board, and she pulled in a number of people for that board. I did a lot of the private fundraising. She and George did a huge amount of private fundraising. They never got credit for it. It’s really a shame.

When she passed away, we put a big picture of her in the museum lobby, a lovely picture. I think she would have liked it because she looked swell. I don’t know that you do these things for credit. I think you do these things because you believe in it and she believed in it.

DePue: Were you also a member of the foundation board?

Cellini: I was the founding secretary. Pam Daniels, Lee Daniels’s wife, but a very, very cool lady, Pam was the founding treasurer. Doug Donenfeld (a Chicago attorney) was the founding vice-president, I believe, or vice-chairman, also an IHPA trustee. We tried to get every IHPA trustee as involved as we possibly could because it was... You had to have people who understood the mission, the passion.

DePue: Were there some that saw it, for lack of a better phrase, a conflict of interest that you’re serving both as an IHPA Board of Trustees member and a foundation board member?

Cellini: You’ve got to start somewhere.

DePue: Did you hear any criticism to that effect?

Cellini: Oh, you’re always going to have naysayers. It was expediency. You had to... Who could sell it better than the people who were selling it? So, it would have been nice if we could have gone out and gotten the heads of the major corporations in Illinois or something, but you want to do what, and you want to put it where? (DePue laughs)

DePue: I’m glad we went back and picked this up because it probably fits pretty well into the timeline. Ryan became governor in 1999. That’s very shortly after you got this initial seed money to really start moving forward in serious way. Do you know roughly when the foundation was established? Was that shortly after that?

Cellini: I don’t know when we incorporated. I could probably ask Doug Donenfeld. He’d know because he was a partner at Sidley and Austin in Chicago, and he did all this gratis, did all the legal work gratis to set it up. I just know that we had to have one. I don’t know that the federal money was received through the

foundation, but I do know we were very quickly out there with... I took anybody to lunch who'd accept (laughs) the invitation.

DePue: I know one of the key roles of the foundation is anybody who wants to give money to the library and museum, they're going to be donating money to a nonprofit organization.

Cellini: Exactly, a 501(c)(3).

DePue: Last time, we were talking, going through, exhibit by exhibit, into the museum and hearing a lot of the creative conversations, the challenges and all. We got through journey one, and we got all the way through journey two, which obviously ends with his assassination and return to Springfield, and that impressive, final stage, where you see him lying in state. We also talked very briefly about the Treasures Gallery.

I want to go back and pick up one thing here. That's how Bob Rogers decided to honor you and several others who were so involved with the creation of the library and museum and some of the paintings that were in the museum.

Cellini: Well, they were crowd scenes. I don't know. I know that, throughout history, artists have always done that. Famously, Norman Rockwell, who's got all of his neighbors and their dogs and everybody and all the things that he did, all those *Saturday Evening Post* covers that was always the lady next door or the guy that sold him the pencils that he did the sketching with.

DePue: I know that Bob is a huge fan of Norman Rockwell because Rockwell's paintings always tell a story.

Cellini: Yes, yes. I suspect that Bob has done this with every project he's ever been involved in. I think, if you went through the crowd scenes at the museum, you'd probably see his staff there. You might even see Bob there. Wherever he needed a person, a face, he might take a face that he knew, and so he did. It was, as I say, no big thing.

I walked by the one where I am. I took so many people through, donors. People never saw it. Somebody pointed it out to me one day, and I still don't think it looks that much like me. But anyway, it was a nice thing to do, but it was, in the scheme of things, not a big thing.

DePue: Did you even know he was going to do this?

Cellini: I had no idea. Nobody had any idea.

DePue: Do you think it was appropriate for him to do that?

Cellini: I think artists do those things.

DePue: We've been talking about Bob Rogers quite a bit, especially last time and now, today as well. Did you find Bob and the team from BRC easy to work with? How would you describe that relationship?

Cellini: It started in phone calls. I thought in the phone calls, he was very smart but a bit commanding. I wasn't sure that he would be able to interface with... We're talking about people who work in State jobs, and I wasn't sure it was going to be the best mix. I did a lot of homework in terms of calling people who had worked with him, but we did this for at least a dozen people in this field. I wasn't exactly sold on him.

The Disney people were. I told you earlier. They had sent so many teams here. We really hoped they were going to do it, that the Imagineers were going to do it because Disney's a misnomer; we're talking Imagineers, the creative island of Disney. But when they weren't, they sent us in Bob's direction to take a look.

At the time, the Holocaust Museum, which is... I haven't been there in a long time, but it was... It still draws a very good crowd. It's very, very well done, compelling. That was Ralph Appelbaum, and that was the speculation. [It] was that Ralph Appelbaum Associates, they were going to be the pick. We met with them. I don't really remember much of meeting with them. I think I told you about meeting with a lot of people who had done other institutions because the word got around that, "Wow, this has gone from pie in the sky to 'I think these people are going to do this.'"

DePue: We've talked about that already. You told that great story about how he convinced everybody that he was the right choice. The question is, once that collaboration started—and we've talked a lot already about a lot of the specific discussions about various exhibits—did you find him easy to work with? Did you find the BRC team easy to work with?

Cellini: I found them as passionate about the whole thing as I was, that this was so much more than a job, that this was doing right by the story of the man who literally saved this nation.

DePue: Being passionate on both sides of the equation doesn't necessarily mean (laughs) that you're always going to agree on certain things. But I would think it also was exciting or exuberating, if that's the right word, to have that relationship with him.

Cellini: Oh my gosh, it was a privilege. I have had... I have a very good life. I've gotten to do so many things for which I have absolutely no qualifications. I've just been really, really fortunate. One of those pieces of great, good fortune was getting to do this project and then getting to do it with BRC because how often in life do you pour a lot in and then get what you thought you were going to get?

DePue: Or maybe even exceeded your expectations.

Cellini: Or exceeded your expectations.

DePue: Let's continue our journey through the museum then. What we haven't talked about yet... We'll start with *Ghost of the Museum*, that particular exhibit. I'm really curious about how the concept came about in the first place.

Cellini: Well actually, it's *Ghosts of the Library*.⁷²

DePue: I always mess that up, *Ghosts of the Library*. And that's important from Bob's perspective too.

Cellini: Uh-huh. *Ghosts of the Library* was supposed to be across the street. It was supposed to be in the library. The whole premise of it was, how do we present historians as detectives across time? Bob came up with a lot of possibilities, and we settled on... I remember reading the script. He's that kind of client. He personally engages the people who brought him to the dance.

You asked how it was to work with Bob. We had Tom Schwartz, who truly channels Lincoln, so I was never concerned that what we were doing wasn't going to be absolutely true to history because I knew that Tom was there to put the brakes on. From the very beginning, from my perspective, the two of them hit it off. Bob and his staff got it right away, that Tom really knew his stuff.

That's a lot, for people from these disparate backgrounds to develop that respect and have a good working relationship. As board chairman and the idiot who didn't know when to quit, that gave me a comfort level. Once in a while, Bob would come up with the damndest idea. And when we'd say, "Yeah, it's a state building. We can't do that." "Oh, okay." Then he'd find something else.

DePue: This might be myself working on the wrong paradigm altogether on this. I look at the very sophisticated technology, the "wow factor" of that *Ghosts of the Library* exhibit, and I always ask myself, Why that particular subject? Why wouldn't they connect that technology with any one of the 100 or 1000 different subjects? Now I'm wondering, which came first, the technology or the decision to have an exhibit that highlighted what goes on in the library.

Cellini: I think it was the latter of what you just said. We did not want the library to get short shrift. That's why we really wanted to put the *Ghosts of the Library* in the library and get people to...

⁷² *Ghosts of the Library* is a dramatic and magical special effects presentation that uses Holavision® to capture the mystery and the exciting sense of discovery that scholars and curators feel as they approach a great research collection. (<https://www.lincolnlibraryandmuseum.com/ghosts-of-the-library>)

It was all going to be one big building. We didn't know where, but it was going to be one thing. We didn't have a site yet. It was important that historians have their due. This is well ahead of the internet. These were the repositories of knowledge for us, the people on the pavement. That's where you went to look things up.

I grew up in a lot of little towns, and I always had a library card. You went there, and there was always somebody, often a lady, who could point you in the right direction for your research or show you, "Have you read this? This is new. You can check this out." So, personally, I was honored that I got to be the chairman, but it was never just about the museum. It was about the library, what a special, honorable place, and you need to give it honor.

Yes, we wanted it to be a library museum, but there was a practical consideration here too. We had Governor Edgar, who had been the state librarian because he had been secretary of state. We had George Ryan, who had been secretary of state, the state librarian. They had, in varying ways, knowledge of libraries and value of libraries and the interlinking of libraries in Illinois and beyond. That helped with the project too, that you could draw on that.

Governor Edgar had actually built that beautiful building in the state complex. I don't know how used it is, but it's a beautiful library building. It just kind of rang their bells. It was easier to understand. But you have to understand, through all of this time, we were not talking presidential library. We were calling it the "Lincoln Project."

DePue: We'll get to that story here a little bit later, though you've mentioned it briefly before. I know in talking to Bob Rogers about this, he got to the point where somebody... Apparently the idea was forwarded to him, "Can't we do something about the library?" To him that was the ultimate challenge, to make what is inherently a boring (laughs) subject exciting. What did you think of the end product?

Cellini: The building itself?

DePue: No, no, the *Ghosts of the Library* exhibit.

Cellini: Ah, ah, I have never been in that that I didn't tear up at the end. It just goes to your heart, and it makes... "Why save all this stuff? Who cares?" I could probably do the script. We nailed it. We nailed it there. We nailed it in the *Civil War in Four Minutes*. There are a lot of places in the whole thing that, "Damn, we did it." *Ghosts of the Library* is definitely one of them.

DePue: I certainly can vouch for this, that the young kids come out of there with the question that's on a lot of people's minds, "How did they do that? Was that a real person in there?" I know that's what Bob would have wanted, and I'm sure you guys would agree with that as well.

- Cellini: I actually had one of our pre-opening parties. Somebody had brought their kids and—this is when I was raising private money for it—and the kid said to me, “What happened? What happened to that person?” I said, “Boy, it’s tough. We have to keep hiring people because they keep disappearing.” (DePue laughs) “Mom! You know what she said?” (laughs)
- DePue: We’re not going to go into the specifics of the technology. Certainly, Bob didn’t want to go there. Let’s just say, anybody who hears this interview, you need to go check it out yourself.
- Cellini: Well, it’s based on—Bob probably told you this—a very, very old concept called “Pepper’s Ghost.” You’ve probably heard this before from Bob. It’s actually pretty simple. There’s a series of cameras. It’s all in what you expect to happen and then what really happens. I love it when I sit there, and somebody says, “Oh, my gosh. He was a real guy. That was a real guy there.”
- DePue: It’s interesting to hear you describe it, though, because it was the emotion of the substance that moves you just as much or more than the technology does.
- Cellini: Yeah, scholarship meets showmanship.
- DePue: That’s what he’s all about. Here’s another homage to Tom Schwartz because the curator that you’re looking at, the name of the curator...
- Cellini: Yeah.
- DePue: Thomas.
- Cellini: Thomas.
- DePue: Only the insiders would be paying attention to that, I would think.
- Cellini: Yeah. But see, that was Bob Rogers too. There are things like that we’d never see them all in the museum.
- DePue: The next thing that we need to talk about is the other big theater production. That’s *Lincoln’s Eyes*.⁷³
- Cellini: Um-huh.
- DePue: (laughs) The way you say that, there’s quite a story involved with the development of that particular exhibit.

⁷³ *Lincoln’s Eyes* is a fully-automated theatrical special effects spectacular presenting the personal and political dramas and key issues of Lincoln’s presidency, especially slavery. The story is told by an artist, commissioned to create the painting of Lincoln for the front of the Union Theater.

Cellini: I remember tinkering and tinkering and tinkering with that script. By then, Richard Norton Smith had come on the scene, and Richard really wanted a different script. It had several endings to it. It isn't as successful as I would... As a writer, as I would have liked to have seen it. It was a group effort. It's not my favorite piece of the museum, but it's sure a piece of the museum.

DePue: Where did the idea of *Lincoln's Eyes* come into it, the difference between the two sides of his face, which I think is a very interesting way to get into the subject?

Cellini: I think that was purely BRC. I don't know who came up with that. I don't remember discussions of that concept. I remember when we saw clips and realized that's what they were going to do. But the script itself came back and forth and back and forth.

I actually had a little mini-charrette around this kitchen table. My family was all here. There were probably fifteen, eighteen of us, and we still didn't have the script solidified. So I ran off copies of it in my office and went over the script with them and wouldn't let them have dinner until we talked about "What was your impression of this?" My cousin was here. He's long gone now, but he had been a high school history teacher. There were several people around the table. My brother is an artist. I remember one of them saying, "Well, you've got Lincoln up a tree, but you don't seem to let him down." I put all those notes together and sent them back to Bob.

It was a long time coming to get a script that actually worked. It works pretty well. People come out of it, and they have an impression of how tough it was for Lincoln, how he had to reach consensus. So it turned out okay. Wow, it's funny; it's like opening a window on what that time was like. It was intense.

DePue: I guess my impression is that the end product was more successful than apparently you feel or others felt at the time.

Cellini: I think so, but it took a lot of tinkering. It was kind of like making pasta sauce. I do a lot of that here. If you've got the people in your kitchen that make their own sauce, then, "Oh, no, it's got to have oregano." "What do you mean, oregano? You'll ruin it with oregano! You only do basil." That was sort of that script (DePue laughs). It went through iterations.

DePue: To which some would say, "There are too many cooks in this."

Cellini: Of course, but that was one of the few aspects of the whole thing that really got other voices into it, because we never really got the... I'd have to ask Bob.

DePue: Bob and I talked about this extensively, to include a couple of the other concepts that were also considered or at least that they made and presented. One of them was discussed in the evening with the creators that we had on

April 2, which I would encourage people to look at as well. Then he and I talked about a couple in our interview.

Part of that experience is, again, the technology, the different, innovative ways that this is projected down to the audience. You've got not one screen but three. You've got layering going on. You've got things going on with the seats and smoke coming out at the audience when explosions occur, when cannons go off. What did you think about all of those aspects of the theater experience?

Cellini: I understood the need for it because you've got a multitude of people coming to this. It was never just for the historians. It was never just for kids. It was never just for the families touring. It was never just for a scholarly audience. You had to please a lot of people, and as Bob Rogers said many times, "All that history stuff is great, but every so often you've got to blow something up in order to get their attention." So that's what we ended up with.

I would leave it to that audience that seems to really like it and really get it when something happens with your seat. But at one point, it was... Oh, we had this awful thing of it rained, and it rained, and it rained. This was the New Salem years. We were going to send fog through the museum, and then there were going to be snakes that were going to be washed up on the banks of the creek at New Salem. You know, it got to be... It was like, "Bob?" "Okay." (DePue laughs)

DePue: At least ten years removed from it, Bob seems to respect the input and the decisions that were made by you and the other board members when you reined him in.

Cellini: But see, we had what's probably never going to ever happen again. We had money to go around and see all of these different attractions and see where they failed at presidential libraries and why they were so deadly to own. We had money and time to actually gauge people's impressions and their... What makes people excited? What makes them linger and want to read something, or what makes them move faster? We got to do all that.

I never took any money because I didn't have to. I was just grateful to be along for the ride, and I felt it would have been inappropriate for me, as a volunteer board chairman, to take state travel money, so I never did. I don't think anybody ever bought me lunch even, if I could avoid it. But the fact is, these were state employees who got to do this. Imagine that now? (DePue laughs)

DePue: Another homage in that particular theater presentation, *Lincoln's Eyes*, that's the artist who is the narrator for the movie that you're watching. I believe the name is Jay William Thomas, which is Jay Mogergerman, William Cellini, Tom Schwartz. Was that also a surprise?

Cellini: Totally out of the blue. I didn't get it until somebody pointed it out to me...

DePue: Yeah, that would be my guess too.

Cellini: ...a long time after it was opened. (whistles) It just seemed like a name they picked out.

DePue: Here's one of the questions about the Union Theater, more than the production that you're seeing in there. I would assume that early on, you all recognized that you needed to have a theater, a place to have shows and lectures and other activities. Would that be the case?

Cellini: That was always on the list because we wanted this to be a place that the community could use as well. It's less used than I would like, but it's more used by the museum. The idea was that this would be more a piece of downtown Springfield, and maybe there'd be movie nights where movies wouldn't have anything to do with the museum; it would just be the setting for those. We had a lot of ideas.

That's why the rotunda is so big. We saw it as this place where... We thought weddings would take place there, and people could rent it for parties. In fact, they can, and things have... You can't do weddings there. But we thought that this would be a downtown gathering spot for a lot of things.

DePue: You might not even know this. I gave a short series of presentations on the Korean War and finished off with one of the nights there. We showed *Pork Chop Hill*.⁷⁴

Cellini: I didn't know that, but that was one of the things we wanted to do.

DePue: *Ask Mr. Lincoln*, How did that concept come about?⁷⁵

Cellini: I was so afraid, as we moved along in this, that the historians would kill us, that they would grab the media's attention and badmouth what we had done. Truly, we created the first museum for audiences of the 21st century, certainly in this country, maybe almost anywhere. We didn't know whether they'd take to it kindly or not. So we thought, Here's a spot right in the mainstream, right there. We could put a kiosk, and we could do what a lot of museums do, where you walk in, and you see a little presentation of somebody giving you the straight scoop.

⁷⁴ Set during the Korean War, *Pork Chop Hill* is an 1959 American film that illustrates true heroism in war, when soldiers in the field fight the real battle while diplomats and UN officials attempt democracy as their troops are bleeding and dying. (<https://tv.apple.com/us/movie/pork-chop-hill/umc.cmc.38b6ahbgz943t3yqj7989zhwp>)

⁷⁵ *Ask Mr. Lincoln* is an interactive exhibit at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, where visitors can choose a question from a list and learn the answer. (<https://nohomejustroam.com/visiting-abraham-lincoln-presidential-library-museum-springfield-il/>)

Mrs. Lincoln's Attic is an interactive exhibit for children to visit at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential

More to the point, this would be where Tom could shine. I don't know whose idea it was that it not just be questions from the public but that it be kids' questions. I don't remember in which discussion that finally came out, but it just made so much sense that we do it that way.

Then, when I was raising a lot of private money... I know enough about fundraising that, despite the fact that I sure have sweat equity in that place, Bill and I needed to make a major monetary contribution. I decided that we would fund that as a naming opportunity. The reason that our name is somewhat still prominent on it is simply because it was our very first naming opportunity in the museum. I thought we were going to do all of them that way. We were building the marquee at the time, so our name was on the marquee. But I especially wanted to fund that because of Tom. I wanted to honor him in some way.

DePue: Was Tom himself eager to do that or reluctant?

Cellini: I don't know. I don't know that we ever really had a discussion with him. I think Bob handled it with him. Bob had a way with... A lot of the staff kind of took to Bob. Did I ever ask Tom, "Should we fund that?" No. I just wanted to do it.

DePue: Basically, how it works is the public is given a whole series of questions that they might want to ask Mr. Lincoln, and they push the button and up pops Tom talking, answering that particular question, things like, "Is it true that Tom Hanks [American actor and filmmaker] is related to..."

Cellini: Yeah, it's a good question, yeah. Actually, a lot of those voices are children of the people who worked on the project; some of them, [children of] the construction people. They did kind of an open casting. Kids came in and read, and they picked the voices they liked. So, there are lots of kids around Springfield whose voices are there until... God only knows what's going to happen.

DePue: Do you think that particular exhibit works?

Cellini: I think it isn't the biggest draw in the museum, but it works. There are enough people that go into it. It also was another way for people like Dave Blanchette, when they got the comments, "My gosh, this is not such a scholarly thing." You could then say, "Wait a minute. We've got real school kids asking real Lincoln questions here. No, it isn't scholarly at the historian level. It's scholarly at the entry level for the Lincoln story." We set out and we said, when we raised the money for it, "Everybody from scholars to school kids are going to find things in this museum."

That's the reason we have *Mrs. Lincoln's Attic* because we went to so many places where we saw restless kids and people who wanted to enjoy the

experience, but they had a whiny kid.⁷⁶ What could we do that maybe Dad could take them for a while, and Mom could enjoy the museum or the other way around. Or if you had a grandparent or an aunt or an uncle with you, you could send them off to this place with the kid and then spell each other. We always had families at the forefront. “How’s a family going to enjoy this?” So, voila, *Mrs. Lincoln’s Attic*.

DePue: You just anticipated my next question. We will have a chance to get your feedback on the response from the community once the museum opened, but it’s going to be a while before we get to that subject. I just wanted to mention that. How successful has *Mrs. Lincoln’s Attic* been? Do you think it works the way it was designed?

Cellini: Just walk by there any day. It’s full of kids having fun. One of my wonderful Bob Rogers memories is the Lincoln dollhouse that we have (laughs). I can still see him. It is made of reinforced steel because Bob was convinced that some kid is going to throw his or her full weight on it, and we’re only growing bigger and bigger kids.

So, I was there the day they delivered it, and Bob Rogers was there. Bob said, “Let me show you your dollhouse.” We walked in there, and he climbed on top of it—Bob is not a small guy—and jumped up and down and threw his body over the top. I thought, Oh, I wish I had a camera to show me no kid is going to break this thing down.

Then I remember Tisa Poe, who was one of the project managers for him. She proudly brought out the bonnets and the hats and everything and showed me how they were lice-resistant—everything could be washed in hot water—and all the things they had meticulously thought through for the touring public and how you don’t necessarily do things that cover the face. You have the masks that you can put in front of it, so you can be some other person for that very reason, not every kid is clean. The attention that has gone into that museum, every aspect of it... I told you about Honey, Lincoln’s dog.

DePue: Yeah.

Cellini: The Indiana Humane Society finally picked the prototype for Honey, based on what they thought a rescue dog would have looked like at that particular time.

DePue: That’s something Bob talked about at great length as well, wanting to get the facts right and the times when you and the board and Bob decided, okay,

⁷⁶ *Mrs. Lincoln’s Attic* is an interactive exhibit for children to visit at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. It includes costumes for dress-up and period-reminiscent play.

here's the time when we need to kind of veer away from the specific facts, like a closed casket instead of an open casket.

Cellini: Yeah, yeah. I don't know; you're a historian. Was that a good idea?

DePue: It's certainly something I can live with. I can completely understand why that decision was made. I don't think that detracts from the quality of the history presentation.

Cellini: Thinking it through. That decision was made when we really thought people were going to get right up and look in. But as it turned out, we could have left it open because you can't get up there.

DePue: Yeah, the public is quite a ways away from the casket.

Cellini: It doesn't mean that if you'd left it open somebody wouldn't have climbed over and done it, but again, it just made everything...

DePue: Close to *Mrs. Lincoln's Attic* is the restaurant. Was there much discussion about the restaurant? What type of restaurant, whether not to have a restaurant, those kinds of issues?

Cellini: Uh-huh. We knew we had to have some kind of food service, and we had all hauled off to the brand-new Bill Clinton Presidential Museum as we were finishing up. We still didn't have the concept of the restaurant down. We had done... Oh, we had all these crazy ideas of things we were going to do there. Somebody's always... "Let's do this, and let's have it be white tablecloths, worthy of Lincoln, and let's serve food that Mrs. Lincoln would have made," all this chatter, chatter, chatter. We went to the Clinton [Museum], and it was pretty straight forward with food service.

On the way back, we all talked about it. I said, "Does anybody get the concept of what it was?" They named it after something, his address or whatever. I think it has a label name on it. I said, "How about we just call it "the restaurant" so that there's no mistaking where it is. That way, we don't have to gimmick it up and make it part of the museum. Let's do a great big window, so that we can look into what's in the gift shop. Let's make sure we've got an outdoor area, so that if people come with their own food, they could eat out there. Or if they want to get something at a restaurant downtown, they can bring it over. Let's make it more utilitarian." As it turned out, we were running out of money anyway, so we did a pretty simple...

DePue: But, there's no window into the gift shop, is there?

Cellini: There is a window where you can... It's glass, so you can see enough of the gift shop to know there's a gift shop there. I really wanted it so you could... I was always looking for "How are we going to pay for this place?" (DePue laughs)

DePue: I can't imagine your focus on that, because the bill kept getting higher and higher, didn't it?

Cellini: Oh, boy. Ever build a house?

DePue: Yes.

Cellini: Then you know.

DePue: We started with a grand plan and just kept cutting things out, as did you.

Cellini: Uh-huh, we sure did.

DePue: We're going to talk about the fundraising. That's coming a little bit later as well. Let's continue with the journey. You just talked about the gift shop. What was the concept for the gift shop? First of all, let's start with the location and then the design and then the kinds of things that are in the gift shop.

Cellini: We made extensive lists of what people buy, and we were pretty sure that books would be a seller. Did we know they would sell as well as they do? No. But it was a good guess. We knew that junky stuff sells. IHPA had had gift shops at a number of our sites, so we knew that kids like keychains and whistles and silly stuff that they can pick up that doesn't cost a lot. We knew we had to have some of that.

We also wanted it to be good-looking. We wanted it to have a certain complementary elegance to it. And I credit Susan Mogergerman's sensibilities for the way it looks because Susan really had a lot to do with the décor feeling of the shop.

DePue: But if I may, it appears to me that that wasn't a concern for the restaurant.

Cellini: No. The restaurant was not a place where we wanted people to linger. We didn't look at it as a profit center. We looked at it as an amenity you had to provide. But in value engineering of the whole experience, we didn't want to waste money on décor. We wanted to get you in and get you out. It wasn't someplace where you should linger.

It was someplace where you should get something and then get back in the museum. We knew we had to offer people something, but it was never to be... We certainly didn't want to compete with the downtown restaurants. We wanted to make sure that they knew that this is an amenity that you have to have because all the planners told us you had to have it, like you've got to have restrooms.

DePue: Certainly though, all the downtown restaurants would see it as competition, wouldn't they?

Cellini: Yes, but if it were as stripped down as what we have, we thought it wouldn't [be competition]. We did the best we could.

DePue: How about the decision to select Augie's as the first restaurant, the people who were actually running the restaurant to begin with?

Cellini: We picked Augie's because he was the only guy who'd roll the dice with us.

DePue: A pretty simple decision, in that case.

Cellini: Very simple. We tried everybody we could possibly think of, and nobody was... They were all like, "Huh? You're going to build a what?" Augie was willing to try.

DePue: Getting back to the location of the gift shop. Was there thought about where in the flow through the museum the gift shop should be?

Cellini: Yes, very much so. We had lots and lots of notes about gift shops. The ones that appeared to be the most successful were the ones where you exited through the gift shop. Disney's famous for that. So that was one of the things on the list.

DePue: I don't know that we've talked much about... We have talked about LifeFormations, about the various figures you see as you go through the museum. Do you have any final reflections on how successful those have been in helping to convey the story of Abraham Lincoln as you go through?

Cellini: I don't remember the moment that we collectively talked about having the Lincolns right there in the rotunda. I just remember that I fell in love with the idea the minute we started the conversation. I remember saying to Bob, "If there is a kid who only has one of those throwaway instamatic cameras and no money for the gift shop, he's got a lasting souvenir of this. We need to make sure that there is something that's there and that people can relate to. From there, it evolved into the Lincolns as they were dressed the last day in Springfield.

Then the sketches started, and boy, I remember thinking, He nailed it! He nailed it! It's going to be great. Then it was, "How are we going to be able to afford all of the outfits we're going to have to put on these people because people are going to kiss them, and people are going to tug on them, and people are going to..." You know, that really hasn't been the case.

We lose a few eyelashes, but mainly... Every time I'm there I see people being respectful of the Lincolns. For the first few years after we opened—Bill and I got a lot of Christmas cards—we got so many Christmas cards where people would snap their family with the Lincolns.

- DePue: I think I might have mentioned this before, 3.7 million visitors. I wonder how many pictures of people with the Lincoln family have been taken.
- Cellini: Oh, my god. I wanted to do it with our family, and they were like, “Haven’t you embarrassed us enough?” (DePue laughs) That was the first year after that that I wanted to do it, and they said, “Give it a rest.”
- DePue: That’s probably almost as universal as going to the tomb and rubbing Lincoln’s nose.⁷⁷
- Cellini: I think so. I think so. It’s iconic. It’s one thing to have a grand idea but to execute it...and look how they executed it, right down to the underwear and the... Those things are very, very expensive because, after they make them, meticulously make them, right down to the stitches have to be exact, then it’s all got to be fireproof and insect-repellant (laughs) and easy to clean.
- DePue: And as Susan mentioned yesterday, when I interviewed her, with interchangeable heads and hands.
- Cellini: Um-huh, because there have been... People have broken off a finger here and there, not much, though, not much for...
- DePue: Ten years.
- Cellini: ...all of that, yes, for all of that. Look at that.
- DePue: The other thing that is very unique about this museum, maybe not so much today but at the time it was constructed, how many museums have their own soundtrack written? David Kan-ep'-per [Kneupper], is that how you pronounce it?
- Cellini: Kan-īp'-per.
- DePue: Kneupper. Did you even consider that when you were going to some of the other museums? Was that something in your mind, or was that something Bob brought to this?
- Cellini: It was Bob, and Bob pointed out... That’s his showmanship coming through, that he wanted people to be immersed in the experience. And what’s your gateway to be immersed? Sound.
- DePue: The soundtrack.
- Cellini: Sound. And at one time, he wanted to do a scent.

⁷⁷ A big bronze head of the great emancipator guards the entrance to his tomb. Visitors have rubbed his nose to a glossy shine for luck. No one knows exactly how the tradition began. (<https://mojotraveler.com/rub-abraham-lincolns-nose-in-springfield-illinois/>)

DePue: We've talked about that a little bit.

Cellini: Yes, yeah. But he wanted to surround people with the era, the story, of course, the ambience or lack thereof of the Lincolns' life.

DePue: Do you think the music is effective, the sounds? It's not just the music but the voices you hear in Ford's Theater, as well as the chirping of the birds and things like.

Cellini: Yes and no. The kitchen is kind of a throwaway, and I didn't think it would be. We spent all that money to have the stove be hot to the touch, and nobody touches it. There's a soundtrack in there of the servants talking about, "Maybe freedom's coming, and what's it look like?" "And what the heck is suffrage?" It's lost, but it's there. We did it to carry the story along.

Where it's especially effective is the Gettysburg mural, where you're really surrounded by music. It's somewhat of a pass-through, but sometimes I see people sitting there and taking in the tragedy of that war and the Lincoln story and all the things that go together to make that an experience. Music certainly carries it along. I think that the music is extremely effective in the *Civil War in Four Minutes* because those are all tunes that the soldiers would have heard when they were marching. But if you notice, they made them into funeral music.

DePue: I questioned Bob about this as well, whether or not, to a certain extent, some of those things, like the birds chirping, like the music playing in the background, are the kinds of thing that the public may not necessarily pay attention to or notice, but it adds to the richness of the experience. Would you agree with that?

Cellini: I think so. I find myself, when I'm there, wanting to go up and tell people more than they want to hear (both laugh). That's why talking with you is kind of cathartic.

DePue: That's why it's so much fun for me, because I get to go into the intricate details of all of this, and the more you get into it, the more fascinating it becomes and the more people, I think, appreciate that.

Cellini: Well, that's how I got my heartbroken today.

DePue: Again, we'll get to that but not right now. How much emphasis was put on, especially when they're about ready to leave the museum, of trying to encourage people to go to the other Lincoln sites?

Cellini: There was a lot of talk. There were a lot of plans, and it's something that just didn't pan out at the end.

DePue: You don't think it works.

Cellini: I don't think it works.

DePue: Although, if you look at the numbers of people going to the various Lincoln sites, Lincoln's Tomb still gets a high number; Lincoln's Home still gets a high number.

Cellini: Yes, I certainly think it helps. But when I was out there selling the thing, I'd say, "Look, we don't want to fill a bottle. We want to light a fire. We want people to go out and see everything else that Illinois, in particular, but Kentucky to an extent, Indiana to an extent, Washington, D. C., of course, all... We want them to have a personal encounter with Lincoln and then take it from there."

That's one of the reasons that your last stop's the museum store, which is essentially a glorified bookstore, because we want you to buy the books and the DVDs. We want you to learn more. We want you to have had your appetite whetted for this incredible story, American story.

Have we elected anybody before or since who put the nation ahead of himself? People idolize various presidents, but [does] anybody else measure up to that?

DePue: This is a different subject altogether. There is one other room that is used quite a bit, that the public sees a lot, that we haven't mentioned. That's the room for temporary exhibits. What I wanted to ask is, what was the original concept for the kinds of temporary exhibits that would be there?

Cellini: I think if you talked to Tom Schwartz, he'd have one idea. If you talked to Susan, she'd have one. If you talked to Bob Coomer, he is so self-effacing that he'd say, "Oh, I just thought it was a good idea, I guess." But, we all thought it would get used in different ways.

I had wanted things as diverse as, "Let's have a contest to dress Barbie in the 1860s, and let's have all of them displayed in our changing gallery, and let's draw an audience of Barbie enthusiasts, and let's do it that way." I envisioned it as being an attractor of people who might not come ordinarily but then get them in the museum and see what happens, much more every person space. It has not evolved into that.

DePue: What do you see that it has evolved into?

Cellini: A missed opportunity.

DePue: That it hasn't been something that draws people in, in and of itself?

- Cellini: Some of the things that have been there... Annie Leibovitz, not a great exhibit but a great name.⁷⁸ Would I make a great effort to see somebody do middle-of-the-road landscapes? No, but I wanted to see what Annie Leibovitz did, those kinds of things. That's what I thought we would be doing with the changing gallery.
- DePue: As somebody who came to the library museum after it had been open for a couple years, one of the things I heard when I first got there was a discussion about "Why weren't there more things about Illinois history, the rest of the incredible stories that involve Illinois history that don't necessarily relate to Abraham Lincoln or the Civil War. There hasn't been much of that." Was that part of the discussion early on?
- Cellini: No.
- DePue: Was there talk that the museum library would primarily be focused on Lincoln and the Civil War and that era?
- Cellini: We wanted to tell the entire Lincoln story for a worldwide audience. It was never envisioned to be a showcase of Illinois anything.
- DePue: Would you have a problem if that's one of the uses it took today?
- Cellini: Gosh, no. But you're asking me, how do we get from here to there? That was not in the discussions, as I recall, but is it a good idea? I think anything that draws people to that magnificent space that we're so lucky to have, that's swell. That's what I said, "Let's have a Barbie Show," anything that gets people in the door because, first of all, it's their tax money that paid for it, and it belongs to all of us. Also, it generates traffic, and you want the traffic. So, yeah, do I think it should be a permanent something, ancillary to what's there? Absolutely not.
- DePue: We're at a point now where we can change directions a little bit.
- Cellini: Do you want a bottle of water or something or...
- DePue: No, no, I'm fine. If you need to take a break, we can do that.
- Cellini: No, I'm okay.
- DePue: We have talked extensively about all of the exhibits, and that the exhibit design kind of came before the architectural design. What I wanted to turn to next is, now that you've got all these exhibits and an idea in your mind of the flow through the museum, let's talk about the architectural aspects of it.

⁷⁸ Anna-Lou Leibovitz is an American portrait photographer best known for her engaging portraits, particularly of celebrities, which often feature subjects in intimate settings and poses. In 2014, her exhibit, "Pilgrimage," opened at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annie_Leibovitz)

Cellini: Oh (laughs). Well, I'll start by telling you that a few years ago, I got a call from a publishing company. They were doing a privately funded book of Gio Obata's life as an architect, and they asked me if I would consent to be interviewed about the Lincoln Project. I said, "I can't say I worked closely with Mr. Obata, but I can tell you that people like the building." They said, "Well, we'd want you to say more than that." I said, "Well, why don't you give me the questions, and I'll see what I can do." It was very difficult because we hired Gio Obata. We did not get Gio Obata.

DePue: You hired HOK (Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum).

Cellini: We did.

DePue: So, I'm assuming somebody from HOK...

Cellini: Well, he was the founding partner. And we, with great fanfare, heralded Gio Obata. I remember him when we announced who it was going to be, that he stood up and said it was the capstone of his career, and he talked about the internment camp experience of his family and how he had escaped that because he got a scholarship to, I think, Washington University, I believe, in St. Louis. It was either that or St. Louis University. Anyway, the Midwest had saved him from essentially being behind barbed wire. This was during World War II, that very shameful piece of American history that had people of Asian descent sent to internment camps and his family. That was the reason he wanted to do this project. That was how we started.

But that aspect of it was handled by the building arm of Illinois government. Illinois was doing a lot of building then, the Capital Development Board [CBD]. I had explained to whoever the CBD director was at the beginning—because, boy, we sure went through a lot of them—that function needs to dominate this project, that form is secondary to this. Don't spend all the money on the building. We want to spend the money on the experience. So, whoever we pick is going to have to understand that. I don't know. Go talk to the wind, I guess. Nobody ever explained that to Gio Obata. So it was as if the right hand and the left hand were not communicating.

Poor Gio thought, this is the capstone of his career. He had envisioned this temple to honor Lincoln, and what we wanted was a nice wrapper, appropriate but not terribly expensive, because what was on our minds is what happens when you walk inside the door. It was oil and water.

DePue: The terms "temple" versus "wrapper." That paints the perfect picture here. You had already explained in a previous interview session about when he realized that. Then he apparently, as you expressed it, disengaged afterwards.

Cellini: Yeah. After that, we saw the assistants.

DePue: Are you happy with the product that you got from the architects?

- Cellini: (pause) I think it's a nice building. It photographs pretty darn well. I think the choice of the marble is...which I think is actually some grade of limestone. I don't even know if it's marble. But I think the building speaks well of what we tried to do, without being ostentatious, without being... I think it's respectful but not over the top, and there are a lot of things inside that museum that are pretty close to over the top, as they were meant to be. So, yeah, I think we did okay. But, boy, was it hard.
- DePue: Hard just because of the feelings that were involved from the architects?
- Cellini: I think if it had been possible, and it wasn't, we should have given the whole project to BRC.
- DePue: But are they set up to do architectural designs like that?
- Cellini: They would have then subcontracted, and it would have been so apparent that... Wrap a building around an experience, instead you got...
- DePue: Is that the reason, when I asked the question if you're happy or satisfied with the end result, you hesitated for quite a while before you answered?
- Cellini: Because I was remembering how contentious it got, and it didn't have to be. You make assumptions that, because we knew what we wanted when we went to CDB, that that's what we were going to get. It was... I'm sure Bob has told you about [how] they'd go in, and this would be in the wrong place or... There were lots of things that made it tougher.
- DePue: I think I put the cart before the horse, to use that trite phrase, because I didn't ask you yet about finally determining where it's going to be. I'm sure there's a story in that as well.
- Cellini: Yeah. Do you want me to walk down that road?
- DePue: Please.
- Cellini: It was the big discussion in Springfield. Where the heck are you going to do this? Susan was director of IHPA, and she insisted on having public forums. People would come up with the most outlandish ideas of monorails that would connect this to that to... You name it.
- DePue: I know that Bob mentioned he wanted to have a rail line connecting all the way out to New Salem.
- Cellini: Yes, yeah. Bob wasn't immune to flights of fancy (DePue laughs). We were pretty sure we had the library sited, where we'd put that, because the state already owned a lot of that land.
- DePue: Where the library is now?

Cellini: Yes. But we did not have the museum. This is very early on. The speculation was, it's got to go in Lincoln's Home area. Signs went up in every yard, all those areas around the Lincoln Home, huge prices because [people were saying,] "The state's going to buy all this land. It's all going to go there."

DePue: Do you mean for sale signs?

Cellini: Yes, yeah, yeah, "Historic site. Lincoln walked here." So there's all this speculation going on. Bill and I were going to Chicago, driving to Chicago, and I always take a book or newspapers or something because I drive him crazy with, "Do you see that semi over there?" or something, a wife thing. So I was reading the newspaper, and I said, "Can we turn around?" We had a business meeting because we were doing a big project there [in Chicago], our company was. He said, "You know we're late for a meeting. What do you mean, turn around?" I said, "I've got to find a phone. I've got to call the mayor"—the mayor was then Karen Hasara, who was here at our house for dinner the other night, by the way—because the front page was that they were going to be able to tear down the old police station, which is catty-corner from that site. All of that was going to come down. They'd gotten a grant.

I said, "That's it. That's where it needs to go." I think Charlie Robbins was then alive. He was the realtor. I said, "I'll call Charlie. I'll call..." Then, I said, "No, maybe you should call. You're better at this stuff than I am." Bill says, "Nobody's calling anybody."

We talked about it. We got to our meeting. I hardly paid any attention. We were spending a lot of money on a big project, and usually I'm like, "Wait a minute." Instead, I was sketching and trying to figure out what would look like, and how could we do it? That was the beginning.

Mayor Hasara, she's a remarkable woman. She got it and talked to the city council, and they got it. From that, we got the TIF [Tax Increment Financing] district extended, in order to...which, by the way, runs out in December of this year. It was running out then, and we got it extended. We got a lot of TIF money for it. We were raising money the entire time.

DePue: From your description of this, it sounds like this is where you get to the library as one building, the museum as another, rather than having it all in the same building.

Cellini: Yes, yeah, all one thing, yes.

DePue: But then you've also got, not just those two buildings; you've got a parking ramp. Does the discussion that comes after that concern the parking ramp? "We need to have a location for the ramp, and then we need to figure out where we're going to get that property and..."

Cellini: We originally envisioned a full-blown visitor center for all of the Lincoln sites and all of Illinois's history at the old Union Station, which was then a slum. You're late to Springfield, but this was an area where... There was a reason why there was a police station there. It was an area that was actually called "the levy." Bill grew up with his dad, chief of juveniles at the old police station, which was a really ghastly place. It was the bars and the houses of prostitution. It was a very downtrodden, pool halls and God only knows what, that whole area.

DePue: Just the kind of history a lot of people are fascinated about.

Cellini: Yeah. But that's what it was. And Karen, God bless her, got it right away, carried the banner for it. It took a lot of late-night strategies and city council meetings to get it done, but we got the land. I remember when they brought in the bulldozers to take down the police station, somebody called me and said, "We saved a big chunk of the building for you. You want me to just put it on your porch?" (both laugh) It's down in my basement now.

DePue: Was the police station where the museum is now?

Cellini: In that general area. We had to reconfigure a lot of that area.

DePue: Well, I know there was an adult bookstore. I believe that's where the parking ramp is now. Is that correct?

Cellini: Yes, yes.

DePue: So, some of this property has to be procured through eminent domain as well.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: Do you remember any problems in that respect?

Cellini: I don't remember a time that there weren't problems (DePue laughs). It was one thing and then another thing and then another thing. I credit Bill. Bill is probably a genius. He's probably a... They used to do IQs. I would think he's probably at genius-level. He sees everything as almost like a giant chess board, how to move things around. Where I'm the story person; I'm the dreamer; He's the make it happen.

Through this whole thing... I got a lot of credit for it, but it was Bill at the kitchen table who, when it would fall apart (and it fell apart so many times)... I'd say [to him], "Give me a strategy. I can sell it. I can the spin tales. I can help people remember why they love Lincoln, but give me the strategy."

I would actually take a big legal tablet and talk to this person and then talk to that person and get back to this person but remember that person

doesn't like that person (DePue laughs), so don't tell him you talked to them, and it would be... That's part of Bill's particular genius. It was always that with everything.

Getting the TIF district extended [was] hugely, hugely important because that gave us money. There is a lot of TIF money in that project. Getting the Readiness Committee, which Marilyn Kushak, a dear friend of mine, which she chaired.

DePue: Is that a city?

Cellini: No, it was a committee that came and went. It came from... God bless Dick Durbin, who was always ancillary but really important, really cared about this. He took a look around, and he said, "You guys are doing all of this. This city isn't ready. What... You're going to welcome the world? Look what our city looks like." From that, we formed the Readiness Committee.

DePue: Is that when the city brought in an outside firm to do an analysis of how to spruce up the downtown area?

Cellini: Exactly, exactly.

DePue: Union Station, was that privately owned at the time you began this? Did Michael Scully still own the piece or the Scully family?⁷⁹

Cellini: They did, yeah, and Michael had this grand dream of a... People would meditate in the tower. [Have you] ever walk up in that tower?

DePue: Not up in the tower. I haven't gotten past the third floor.

Cellini: You didn't go all the way up in the tower?

DePue: I'll just plug my own program here. I had a chance to interview Michael Scully. That was a fascinating interview.

Cellini: Oh, I'll bet.

DePue: But, unfortunately, he died after the first session. The second session was going to include a discussion about the Union Station, so we didn't get that part done. But, he had an amazing story, and his family has an amazing story as well.

Cellini: Yeah. Have you ever read that *Lord Scully*, that book?

⁷⁹ Michael Scully, a Springfield area farmer, was president of the Union Station Foundation, a not-for-profit charity that supports the Elijah Isles House Foundation, the Abraham Lincoln Foundation, Southwind Park, the Lincoln Land Community College Scholarship Fund, the American Field Service and the Lincoln Public Library District.

- DePue: About his grandfather, I believe?
- Cellini: I think it was.
- DePue: Yeah, I've read portions of it, "The most despised man of Ireland" when they came to the United States or one of them at least.
- Cellini: Anyway, we engineered the... Did we buy it? I don't remember how we acquired it, but we acquired it from the Scullys, from Michael.
- DePue: I know that Michael Scully's son had designs to make it some kind of a shopping mall in that area, and that panned out. Then Dad stepped in.
- Cellini: Oh, yeah, it was always... It was really a mess.
- DePue: I can't even recall now what's currently where the park is, directly south of the Union Station. Were there buildings there as well?
- Cellini: Yeah, there were. We had to go to the right people and do the right pitch in order to get all of that.
- DePue: Going back to the Union Station, was it always part of the plan, early on, to take the Union Station and restore the tower?
- Cellini: Yeah. Yeah, we always wanted to do that. God, I'm thinking back to that piece of it.
- DePue: To me, that Union Station, as well as the Old State Capitol, are the architectural gems of downtown. Would you agree with that?
- Cellini: Yeah. It's not all that highly rated. It's Richardson Romanesque. The guy who designed it, the architect, was, I think, kind of a third-stringer. He did a lot of train stations, and that was sort of the look of train stations there. I think it's a handsome building, but it was never really intended for anything other than a space to move people through. So it's never worked for anything else. But that's all it was intended for. It was on the national register, which helped.

At the time, Bill was Illinois's first secretary of transportation. This was during the time I was doing a lot of stuff for the associations that he represented and things that he did and newsletters and stuff. So, I'd get to go along on some of those meetings. That was when I first heard about a federal program that involved historic train stations. You know how you put something in the back of your brain and think, like Bill said, "You are a mountain of trivia"? Well, this was one of those things in that mountain.

We had always envisioned that we would do underground parking, under the Union Station lot. By then, the Ryans were there, and they had a couple of people on their staff that suddenly decided they'd take over this

thing. And they didn't like the idea of underground parking. I remember we built kind of a paper model of what this would look like, and we actually went to the person who was the right hand to Governor Ryan and tried to sell the idea. Honest to God, I thought he was going to bodily throw us out of his office.

DePue: This was one of Ryan's staffers?

Cellini: Um-hmm. I don't want to tell you his name, but he was not a nice guy because he had his own plans of what he wanted to be at Union Station and... That was one of the many battles and mini-dramas.

Anyway, at the same time, when I realized that Plan A was not going to go through, I remembered that at one of these conferences I'd been to with Bill years before, I had sat in on a session that he was presenting something about a highway or something. I had looked in their book of all these things they were doing, and I sat in on a session of historic train stations, historic transportation and that there was money for these things. Well, that went in the back of your head.

I called somebody that I still knew at the Department of Transportation. Oh, I know who it was; it was a guy who had once been the mayor of the town where I had been partially raised in Southern Illinois. He and Bill know each other, so he took my call. I said, "I think you guys have got some money there, and we could really use it for restoration of a historic train station, Richardson Romanesque, and we could do parking with it too, at the same time."

He said, "We've only got \$13 million for the whole state of Illinois. How much do you want?" (DePue laughs) I said, "I can write this grant so that it qualifies on all these levels that you've just outlined to me." He said, "How much do you want?" I said, "I want the whole 13 million," and we got the 13 million, which enabled us to build that parking ramp, to restore Union Station, to acquire the land, and build a park on it. That's all federal money that was administered through Illinois DOT [Department of Transportation], and it was all going to get apportioned out in little things all over. But it captured his imagination. Wow, you could do a lot of little things, and who'd notice? Or you could do this and the design of the park... We didn't have any money for a designer.

My family used to hike in Italy every summer. I took pictures with my instamatic of parks in Italy.⁸⁰ That's why we have a gazebo. That's why we have that curved seating area where people were sitting the other day. We lifted it right out of parks and little towns all over Italy. I mean, they replicated...

⁸⁰ The Instamatic is a series of inexpensive, easy-to-load 126 and 110 cameras made by Kodak beginning in 1963. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instamatic>)

DePue: Just like every other aspect of this story, there are so many little twists and turns that are important to remember and recall. We're right at two hours already, Julie, and the next subject is to talk about the library and the design of the library. That probably will take about half an hour. Do you want to plow forward and continue with that, or do you want to pick that up when we start the next time?

Cellini: Let's go ahead and plow, if you don't mind, because, frankly, this is so cathartic for me after the morning I had. Would you like to use the restroom?

DePue: No, no. I've been fretting over this stupid microphone and making sure... I don't think it's a problem at all, but I just wanted to readjust that cord.

Cellini: What do you need that I can get for you?

DePue: I don't need anything. I just want to get that readjusted.

Cellini: I came home with a broken heart, so this is good. I probably needed to talk. Either that, or I was going to put on my togs and run, but...

DePue: Let's get to the library. We've spent hours and hours talking about the museum exhibits and the museum design and now this fascinating discussion about the siting and all of the different elements that went into it. It's not just the museum or even the museum and library.

The library itself... Now, the architecture for the library and the museum certainly mirror each other. I think they did do a good job on that.

Cellini: I think they did too.

DePue: You've already told us why there are two different buildings. Was the concept of the bridge always part of the design?

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: You told me already—I think we saw part of that—that the *Ghosts of the Library* was supposed to be in the library.

Cellini: Yes and people were supposed to walk across the bridge to...

DePue: Where the multipurpose room is right now?

Cellini: I guess so because it never got that much farther. That was just the concept.

DePue: An early stage concept.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: That was eliminated from the plan early on?

Cellini: Uh-huh.

DePue: Long before the library and museum buildings were designed?

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: It sounds like the walkway still continued on, even though that had been rejected before the architects really drew up the designs. Do you think it plays a role? I think I'd heard you say in some context that we probably don't need that. Maybe I'm overstating the case.

Cellini: No, we don't need that, but we did need that.

DePue: You need to be more explicit on that.

Cellini: It was important to have scholarship and showmanship linked. It was important to make the library as integral visually as it had been integral to the whole concept of what we wanted to do. So that made sense, even though we realized we couldn't have people trooping across to see an exhibit, as we had hoped they would, because *Ghosts of the Library* was to have been in the library. It just didn't work. Structurally and logistically, it just didn't work.

But it was important to have that visual tie between the two for a lot of reasons, for the people to whom that meant a great deal, to the fact that it had already gone very far along. If you've ever built anything, you know it's more expensive to stop and start again than it is to continue. So ideally, if time and money is not a consideration, then you do all the concepts and all of that first. But we had to get something in the ground to prove this was real and administrations change. People want their names on things, and Governor Edgar wanted a library, and Governor Ryan wanted a library. Those are the people who... You've got to have the leaders so us people in the troops can...

DePue: Before, the library, as we've talked about a few sessions ago now, was underneath the Old State Capitol, not a good place for a historical library.

Cellini: Not a good place for anything. It was a basement.

DePue: A moldy, musty basement. I think you've told this story before, but I want to get this story told in the context too. You've got this magnificent, new museum with all these great exhibits and a library that's going to be in conjunction with it. Let's talk about how the name ended up being changing from the Lincoln Project to what it is today.

Cellini: Under duress. Governor Ryan had a rather forceful chief of staff, who in a meeting one day with Susan and Bob and Mrs. Ryan... He got sick of Lincoln Project meetings, and he said, "Sue, what are you going to call this thing?" I said, "Well, you see, we could study that and..." I was making nice. I was trying to backpedal. (interrupting herself) —Would you bring some water

bottles up, Bill?—He said, “Well, you’ve got this thing; you want to tell the Lincoln story, and we’ve got a library.” (Libraries resonated with those people.) He said, “What are you going to call it?” and I said, “Well, we want the Lincoln name.” “Of course you want the Lincoln name.” “We certainly want it to be something that people will see scholarship, but we also don’t want to....” I was tap dancing as fast as I could (DePue laughs).

He says, “All right, give me a name.” I said, “All right, it’s going to be the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.” I thought Susan was going to fall off her chair. He says, “All right, that’s it. From now on, no more Lincoln Project stuff.” Then, as he usually did with our meetings, he abruptly would leave because he was so important.

DePue: You haven’t said his name.

Cellini: And I don’t intend to. Can I give you...

DePue: Well, I know the name.

Cellini: Can I give you another name that is his absolute best friend? Tell me what you know.

DePue: This is a name that’s going to come up later on in the discussion about the first director.

Cellini: Okay, it was Bob Newton. I guess it’s one of the many reasons why Tony Leone hates me. But, then, I think he hates everybody.

DePue: About the naming decision or about the...

Cellini: No, just the...

DePue: ...selection of the first director decision?

Cellini: Yeah, because I think that... I had no idea that Bob Newton, at the time, that he was planning that this was going to be his next career move. I...

DePue: I’m assuming this discussion is early in the Ryan Administration.

Cellini: Oh, my gosh, yes, yeah, yeah, early, early.

DePue: Did you have a sense at the time of the angst that this might cause people in the State Historical Library?

Cellini: (sigh, followed by long pause) Yes. Yes, I did. But I also wanted to get them out of the hole they were in, and this was the only way to do it.

DePue: My guess is they would accept that trade-off but still have a problem with the loss of that part of their identity.

- Cellini: I'm sure they were, but look at everything they've lost since then. At least they got to work in a really cool building for a while, before they all got laid off.
- DePue: Along the same theme, was there concern...? You're the director of IHPA, excuse me, the...
- Cellini: Board chairman.
- DePue: ...board, chairman of the board of trustees for IHPA, and you've got all the other historic sites as well, other aspects of IHPA. Was there some fear at the time that ALPLM would be the 800 pound gorilla, to use that phrase, that it would so over-shadow the historic sites that it might drain resources away from the rest of it?
- Cellini: Yeah, I guess there was, but there was never a time when everybody was happy. Well, no. On opening day, "I hope you smile." I'm sure there was, and I'm sure there was thinking, Well, what are we, chopped liver? Yeah. But you can only do so much, and we ended up with a gorgeous library. Mrs. Ryan got to be there and pick the carpets and the colors. She got to put her stamp on it. It had to have meant something.
- DePue: I know there was no lack of excitement about moving day and moving into that facility. We've talked about this a lot, that function took precedence over form, took over design for the museum. Is that the case for the library? Or was the box designed and then the library fit into it?
- Cellini: Because it was Gio Obata, it was the latter, because I think that's how he worked. We had seen that with so many of the presidential libraries that we'd been to. They spent all their money on the grand building, and then they stuffed things inside. Frankly, I stepped way back because Mrs. Ryan was the first lady. I was just a gubernatorial appointment, with a notepad. I always thought... I really respected her. What a grand woman, and she got to do that.
- DePue: There are a couple public spaces in that library that are very impressive as well. The Lincoln Room, I understand, at one time was supposed to be the reading room? That's the circular area, for lack of a better descriptor.
- Cellini: Does it make sense?
- DePue: As a reading room?
- Cellini: Yes. Does that make sense? In your wildest dreams, would you take books, some of them quite precious, and read them in a room that is floor to ceilings windows?
- DePue: The curators would have a serious problem with that. But, it's worked well for a public space.

- Cellini: For a public space, but it was never designated as a public space when it happened.
- DePue: The atrium area, though, was, I would think. That is because of the expanse of that area and that it goes all the way up to the third floor. You're rolling your eyes to a certain extent on that as well or just...?
- Cellini: Yeah.
- DePue: ...because you don't...
- Cellini: Yeah, it's a goofy building. It's pretty, but it's a goofy building.
- DePue: Part of that we've already addressed, that the shell came before the design of the library.
- Cellini: Exactly, exactly.
- DePue: Now, this might be something that you weren't privy to, but I wouldn't be surprised if you were pulled in on it. There is a philosophical attitude and discussion—again, this is something I encountered when I first got to the library—about the nature of this library, about a historical library. There are some who hold that it ought to be treated like other archival libraries, where the items in the library are not meant to be checked out. It's not like a public library. Therefore, you go through security; you sign in; you make sure your backpack is checked out, that you are really putting that front in center, control of the artifacts and the items in the library.
- There is also the attitude that it ought to be something much more like a public library, where it's welcoming and open, and people can come in and feel comfortable and have that respect. Did you hear any of that discussion during the design phase?
- Cellini: I was not part of the design phase. I was tap dancing as fast as I could to get the wherewithal to build that museum. The library was integral, in that it opened the door. I remember when I first walked in and saw that design and thought, this is wacko! But, expediency...
- DePue: What parts of it did you think were, to use your term, wacko?
- Cellini: Wow, those high ceilings and soaring walls and the reading room with floor to ceiling windows. Okay, I can only fight so many fights.
- DePue: In that case, it sounds like the architects won the debate. That's your opinion?
- Cellini: I don't think it was a debate. I think it was, "Look at us. We all went to architecture school." Oh, yes, sir; yes, sir, which explains why he walked off the job when we started the museum, and we never saw him again.

- DePue: There are a couple of the criticisms that you hear today. One of them is how little storage space there ended up to be for the Lincoln collection itself.
- Cellini: Couldn't agree more.
- DePue: Do you know why that turned out the way it did? You've already said you weren't really involved with the design of the building, so I guess the answer is...
- Cellini: I don't know.
- DePue: And the investment in a very robust photo lab, in an era when things were becoming much more digital and not for labs.
- Cellini: No idea.
- DePue: I think...
- Cellini: Now, did Kathryn [Harris] have more input on that? Maynard Crossland, who was then IHPA director, who I'm sure will not talk to you. He tried to sue all of us. I don't know. I know that Maynard was at Mrs. Ryan's elbow through it all, so maybe he thought all those things were... I just knew we really needed a library, and we really needed to get those people and those collections out from underground, and this was the way to do it.
- DePue: I'm sure this will be something that Tom and I will talk about. He'll have more insights into that and now that Kathryn has retired. I'll wait a few months, about a year, and then sit down. She is certainly looking forward to having the opportunity to talk about this as well.
- Cellini: What an interesting, interesting woman.
- DePue: Let's end on that positive note, that there were lots of moving pieces in here and plenty of colorful characters and very talented people that you had a chance to work with through the entire experience, I would think. Next time, we're going to pick up then with funding. You've already alluded to that a lot, but I wanted to get more into the weeds on that, and that's a lengthy discussion. Then, we'll get into staffing of the museum and the library as well. Do you have any final comments for today?
- Cellini: No, other than I'm really glad we scheduled this for today because it was cathartic for me to remember when a lot of things were possible that aren't possible now.
- DePue: And this discussion has always been, and I'm sure next time will continue to be, all of the challenges that you faced. But then you've always got the library and museum to look at and say, "Wow, we've accomplished it, and it's been a resounding success," if I can put it that way.

Cellini: If we can hang onto it (both laugh).

DePue: I'm optimistic it will continue to be. These things go in cycles. Thank you very much. It's been a fascinating discussion today. I look forward to the next time.

(end of transcript #5)

Interview with Julie Cellini

HP-A-L-2015-013.06

Interview # 6: May 5, 2015

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, May 5, 2015. Julie, this is our sixth session.

Cellini: Wow! (both laugh)

DePue: It's been very interesting for me. I've been working at the library since 2006 and was able to be here for the celebration of the tenth anniversary. I do a lot of political interviews, as you know, and really like the politics side of it. Then I got into this series and, boy, it seems like there is every bit as much politics in this story as there is in talking to any Illinois politician.

Cellini: I think you and I have touched on what I consider the best definition of politics. It is the science of the way things get done, and there's politics everywhere, in churches and in the garden club (DePue laughs), you name it. It's people; it's connections; it's trust; it's learning who you can work with and who has certain abilities and who you can count on for follow-through.

DePue: I hadn't actually thought of it in these terms, but today we get to start about fundraising and your efforts in fundraising and where all of this money came from. If there's any aspect of building this library museum that had political overtones, this certainly was one of them. You have talked quite a bit already about fundraising, especially your involvement in the foundation and the personal side of fundraising. But I wanted to get an overall sense of the fundraising as well and ask you about... Where do we want to start? What was the sense when you were working on this, long before all of this, of the impact this would have in the city of Springfield? And how were you going to be able to sell this in the first place?

Cellini: I had lots of ideas and lots of sales pitches. It depended on who I was talking to. If it was trying to get the TIF district extended and trying to get the city of Springfield to deed over the old police station area to us, then it was economic development. If it was to historians, it was the Lincoln story and the fact that we wanted to do this thing where Mr. Lincoln walked to work. If it was state people, then it was the impact on Illinois. If it was city [people], it was the impact on Springfield and Central Illinois, civic pride, downtown redevelopment.

We always wanted to be built in an area that wasn't the prime area of downtown. It's hard to remember now, but we displaced a lot of things that were not all that desirable when we finally chose the site. I always say "we" because it's always collective. It took a lot of people coming in under the tent to make it move forward.

DePue: We've already talked quite a bit about some of the very early stages of getting the funds necessary, and that first step seemed to be when Judy Barr Topinka was able to find a little bit of seed money, at least to have people in the agency and people like yourself to begin visualizing what might be if you ever got a new Lincoln site. I think that's what you were calling it at the time.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: Then, right at the end of the Edgar Administration, that \$4.9 million, with the promise a little bit less than \$50 million that could be earmarked for this project. That led to finding Bob Rogers and finding architects and really thinking in a much more serious way. What was going on in terms of fundraising beyond that point, because it sounds like in conversations you quickly realized, \$50 million isn't going to be nearly enough. For those next two or three years, what was being done to find money?

Cellini: Well, we finished the Edgar years, and we had quite a bit of work done, but we really didn't have the money to move forward. Meetings began with the Ryan people; Governor and Mrs. Ryan, Bob Newton, who was his chief of staff...

DePue: How about the federal side? Did you make trips out to Washington, D.C.?

Cellini: We did.

DePue: I think that [U.S. Senator Dick] Durbin was instrumental to begin with. I assume that he was an ally all the way through this.

Cellini: Actually, Dick was not involved in that federal money, although I'm sure he supported it because he certainly knew about the project. He'd been briefed all along the way. He's always been a good friend of the project. But, Denny Hastert was Speaker of the House [Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives 1999-2007 from Illinois' 14th Congressional District]. He had been a high school history teacher.

Mrs. Ryan was able to secure a meeting with him. He had the head of his Appropriations Committee there, and Mrs. Ryan, I still remember, was very, very nervous. She was great with people, one-on-one. She was never one who wanted to get up on her feet and make a presentation, so I did the dog and pony show.

DePue: Was this in Washington, D.C.?

Cellini: This was in Washington in the Speaker's office, which is a sight to behold. Boy, you'd think you're in the presence of royalty there when you get into all those offices. I remember visiting Dick Durbin another time, when he was head of the senate...second in command of the senate, I guess. He had the most amazing office. It had a bay window that looked out over Washington. The night that we were there, there was a perfect full moon out the window, and he, of course, had some wonderful artifacts and simulations of artifacts in his office because he's quite the Lincoln guy. I remember thinking, Wow, these guys don't have it too bad when they reach this level.

That's sort of what I remember about where we met with Denny Hastert. It was all gold leaf and quite grand. I remember one of the gentlemen that I presented in front of was from Kentucky. He wanted assurance that we would certainly talk about Mrs. Lincoln as a Kentuckian, and I assured him that that would happen, that she would not get short shrift in this museum. You know, everything's local. I pitched it to an educator because that's what Speaker Hastert had been. I think he was a football coach, but I think he taught history too.

DePue: A wrestling coach too.

Cellini: A wrestling coach too. Because of Mrs. Ryan, I think it was pretty much a done deal when we went in, but we still needed to go through the motions. She was the real deal, very self-assured on some level, and very not so assured on other levels, just a regular person. I admired her enormously. I think of her with great fondness today. Actually, I never met a first lady I didn't like.

They're all quite remarkable, and it's quite an education, I think, to be at the side of a great man as he moves his way up and runs the state.

DePue: About July of 2000, as I understand the timeline, Senators Dirksen, Durbin... Dirksen, that would go back a couple of decades.

Cellini: That would go back too far I think.

DePue: Senators Durbin and Peter Fitzgerald recommended the federal government donate \$50 million to the museum, to the construction project, which at the time, I think, would get you pretty close to your target.

Cellini: That was actually a set of figures that was pretty much hashed out with Governor Ryan and his staff. Everybody said, "What's this thing going to cost? What's this thing going to cost?" Well, who knows? We had rough estimates, but nobody had drawn plans yet. We had picked people but...

Anyway, it was sort of an agreement that it would be... The Ryans were absolutely adamant that there had to be private money raised. So it came to be a \$150 million project: fifty from the city of Springfield, which would include land; fifty from the federal government, with the assurance that we would never go back to the federal government and ask them for another dime—that meant the state of Illinois was going to own, operate, and staff this thing—and fifty from the private sector, that was going to be raised.

DePue: Fifty million from the city of Springfield or...

Cellini: Fifty million, that was the agreement.

DePue: I'm looking at the figures. It didn't actually work out that way.

Cellini: No, but what in life does?

DePue: This would have been circa early in the Ryan Administration, around the 2000 time frame?

Cellini: Around 2000, yes.

DePue: In September of 2000—I suspect you remember this—they started to get some serious pushback from Senator Fitzgerald's people, from himself in particular about that \$50 million coming from the federal government. Do you recall the specifics on that?

Cellini: I do. I do, sadly, because I watched it on television. It was a series of cheap shots and misinformation. It took Dick Durbin to rise to the occasion, as Dick Durbin always does, and eventually it got through. But it was not a good day for Illinois.

DePue: Are you willing to talk specifics to what the nature of his concerns were?

Cellini: No, I'm not.

DePue: I know he was concerned—if you don't mind me saying this—that Ryan would steer some of the contracts towards certain people, and that was part of Fitzgerald's concerns. But you say Durbin was able to calm the waters on that and move forward.

Cellini: Masterfully, yes. Yes, he was very, very good in the role that he assumed for that, and I am forever grateful to him but also for a lot of reasons. He's a terrific guy and a terrific senator.

DePue: What did you think of Fitzgerald?

Cellini: I thought he was way out of his element. I thought, On that level, you ought to learn to conduct yourself as a gentleman, and that didn't seem to be what he did.

DePue: It wasn't too long after that situation with Senator Fitzgerald, then, you get about a year out, and now you've got a completely different economic scenario in the United States. Beforehand, the economy was going very strongly, and I'm sure that was to your advantage for a while. But then September of 2001 comes, and the economy takes a serious dip; the stock market does as well. Did it become more difficult to raise money after that?

Cellini: (pause) I don't remember. I don't remember that particular time period as being any more difficult. It was never easy, ever. It would be one step forward, two steps back. So, to say any particular time or any particular shift in the economy or the bedrock of support or any of the things that you need to move forward, I can't pick one of those out as saying, "This was the most difficult thing," because on any given day, there were lots of difficulties.

It was always about getting consensus and finding the person who could put it back on the rails or help with putting it back on the rails. I still remember you [asking], when we first started talking in these interviews, why it was such a great idea, why did it take twenty years? You had to have been there. It was never a piece of cake.

DePue: Now, you just said—and see if I've got this right—"We already had \$50 million from the state." You now have 50 million pledged from the federal government. You were talking about 50 million from the city as well. Percentage-wise, how much was supposed to be gotten through private donations as well? You said Ryan was strong on that component.

Cellini: Ryan sort of phrased it that he would try to raise 50 million.

DePue: Through private donations?

Cellini: Privately yes.

DePue: That he would?

Cellini: Yes, that it got to the point where we needed a private entity. I didn't realize at the time that the Ryan people were really thinking this was what they personally wanted to do, the Ryan staffers. So I found a person on our board, Doug Donenfeld, who was an officer with Sidley and Austin in Chicago, a very famous law firm. Doug, pro bono, put together the articles of incorporation, and the first trustees were the officers of IHPA because we had to have, I think, five names or something. So, the five of us agreed that we would do it. I called Mrs. Ryan, and Mrs. Ryan said that she would be one of the incorporators. Then I'm not sure that she was able to because she was the governor's wife, but maybe she was.

Anyway, we began to look around for money. I don't remember when it was that I finally became aware that those of us who were trying to move this aspect of it along were counter to what was being planned in the governor's office. At one time, I had gone to Bill and had said, "You're a master fundraiser. Would you consider putting this together, this private entity that has to be put together in order to move forward?" He said, "Yeah." And then somebody asked me about it, and I said, "Bill said he'd help out." Then there was a story in the newspaper that said Bill was going to head up the private fundraising of it, and Bob Newton called me in his office and was angry about it and essentially told me that they would take care of that. I was thrilled. The only people who think fundraising is easy are the people who don't do it (DePue laughs).

From that point on, what I did do was, pretty much on my own, put together the event, *Put Your Name on History*, which I did with Governor Edgar as my co-chair. That was the opening of the museum. We got, from that, I'd say, two-thirds or maybe three-quarters of the founders' names that you see on the wall, and people really ponied up a lot of money. I wrote them all on my kitchen table, all the invitations.

By then we had hired Susan Mogerman and Estie Karpman to be the foundation staff. I think they had one secretary. Estie called me, and she said, "I can't believe this." She said, "Money is literally falling through the transom," and it was happening here at my mailbox. People were... I'm talking \$25 thousand checks. People really were excited about this. So, it was a heady time.

DePue: Now, to get the timelines straight in my mind, I think that Susan got to the foundation around 2004. But the foundation—I think you and I had talked earlier—had existed for a few years before that time.

- Cellini: It had, because we had to have one because the Ryan people, the governor, personally was out there raising money for it.
- DePue: So the money that was being raised was going to the foundation.
- Cellini: Yes.
- DePue: Right from the very beginning?
- Cellini: Yes, and I was raising money too. I don't remember how much we had, but we had a good base of funding. We didn't have anywhere near the \$50 million goal, for heaven's sake, but it was a respectable amount.
- DePue: How about on the corporate side? Were you going after corporate sponsors or corporate donations as well, or was it primarily in the private side?
- Cellini: Mine was primarily on the private side. I did some corporate though. I reached out for people that we knew through our family business or through various things [in] Chicago, Springfield.
- Governor Ryan was always extremely kind to me (still is). He would invite me to come when somebody would give a check. I'd usually do the little dog and pony show about what this meant. He was just great about it, and his staff would just sit there and glower. It was a strange time.
- DePue: Was this later in his administration?
- Cellini: Um-hmm.
- DePue: Did you get a sense that he had an administration that was at risk because of all of the stories that were appearing about the investigation that Patrick Fitzgerald was doing in the office?
- Cellini: Yes. Yes, I did.
- DePue: Do you think that's what some of the tension in the staff meetings was about?
- Cellini: I always felt that (pause) I was not the most popular person in the room.
- DePue: I'll ask one brief question here. Is that because of who you're married to or because of the project that you're involved with?
- Cellini: Bill and George always had a good relationship. Bill and I always had a good relationship with the Ryans, but George was surrounded by people who... I don't think they put him first. I watched because... I had kind of a unique view of government in those years, and it seemed to me that the people who served Jim Thompson took care of him. I certainly saw it with Jim Edgar.

They called him “the boss,” and they took care of the boss. I didn’t see that with Ryan. I saw people who were more self-serving.

DePue: One of the stories you’ve told me a couple times that I don’t think we’ve gotten on the record yet is about a moment in time when you needed that one more large infusion of funds from the state level. That story that involves George Ryan and the mansion.

Cellini: Yeah, this was actually on the eve of opening the library.

DePue: Which was 2004.

Cellini: Yeah. The library was really what Governor Ryan was able to accomplish, because the museum was pretty skeletal at that point. We had always talked in generalities.

DePue: Are you talking about the groundbreaking ceremony?

Cellini: No. I’m talking about... When did we open the library, 2002?

DePue: I know he was out of office after 2002. The cornerstone was placed in June 2002, and the building was dedicated in 2004; that’s when it opened. So it must have been 2002 we’re talking about. He was clearly still governor, correct?

Cellini: Yeah, he was still governor then. I think we had a ceremony... He had a ceremony before the library was completed.

DePue: That would be the cornerstone.

Cellini: Yes.

DePue: That cornerstone has his name on it.

Cellini: Yes, and the night before was the night that he called and said he wanted Bill and me to come and spend the night at the mansion and go to the ceremony the next day with him and Lura Lynn. I had been very focused on all that needed to be done to build... I knew that once we got the library, the chances of getting the museum were greatly enhanced. But it was not a done deal. So Bill and I, we had people here.

We were going to have a little dinner party of our own. I think I took all the food over to Susan’s house and parceled out people. Bill and I didn’t even have any clothes. We just went to the mansion because he was hosting some kind of dinner, and he wanted us to be there.

I had been bemoaning to Bill for days about, yes, we’re going to do whatever it is we do, the cornerstone or whatever the ceremony was to be the

next day for the library. I said, “Sue, that’s great.” There was this thing where the head of CDB was going to hand me a wooden key, a ceremonial key, for the agency to open the library. I had a little speech planned about what was still to come, “Across the street here, you see rising...” You know, the library is going to be scholarship, and the museum is going to be showmanship. They’re going to meet at the bridge and all this symbolism. Nobody had said we’re going to get the money to build that thing.

DePue: To build the museum.

Cellini: To build the museum. So that night at the mansion, Governor Ryan signaled for me to come down—I was at the far end of the table—to come down to his end of the table and sit down. I looked at Bill. Bill said, “Just listen. Don’t talk. Just listen.”

I went down, and George said, “Julie, a big day tomorrow.” I said, “Yes, sir, big day tomorrow.” He said, “Julie, it isn’t done; is it?” I said, “No, sir, it isn’t done.” He said, “It’s going to take a lot of money,” and I said, “Yes, sir, it’s going to take a lot of money. It’s going to be worth it. It’s going to be here long after we’re gone, Governor.” He said, “Yeah.” He said, “I’m going to get that money.” He had his hand on the table, and I remember thinking I wanted to grab his hand, but I didn’t because it was a table full of people, and it would have been inappropriate. I looked down at Bill, way down at the other end of the table, and Bill had a thumbs up.

That was really the first time I knew that we really did have both pieces of the puzzle, this wonderful, beautiful library and this amazing museum that was going to be built for audiences of the 21st century. It was a pretty terrific moment. I couldn’t sleep. I kept thinking. This was way before cell phones, and I don’t know where in the world the phones are in that old, creaky mansion. I kept thinking, If I could just find a phone, I’d call Susan, and I’d tell Susan because we’d been through so much of it together, and we kept thinking, doesn’t anybody focus on the fact that this isn’t a done deal? It was a nice night.

DePue: A very memorable night, it sounds like. A couple things that I need to have clarified in my own mind. This is 2002. The library is obviously well on its way to being constructed. The designs have already been completed. But where was the museum? Was it still a vacant lot, or was construction begun on the museum?

Cellini: I don’t think we’d even taken down the police station yet.

DePue: How much of the planning had BRC done for all of the exhibits at that time?

Cellini: It was all in sketch phases, concept phases.

DePue: They had begun the thought concept but not beyond that.

- Cellini: Yes, because there was money to pay them. There just wasn't money to actually build it.
- DePue: When Ryan was making that pledge, there was no legislation at that time for that additional money, was there?
- Cellini: No.
- DePue: It's just a promise that he'll use his clout to be able to push it through.
- Cellini: Yes. No, there was certainly no bill in the legislature then.
- DePue: One more question, just because I'm nosy, I guess. Bill had told you, "Don't ask questions. Just listen." Did you have a reputation for making your voice heard in these meetings?
- Cellini: No. I think it was more that Bill always knows or often knows his audience. I think his concern was that I'd walk down there and start trying to sell, and that would not have been a better thing to do. And it worked out.
- DePue: An interesting evening at the mansion.
- Cellini: Oh, my.
- DePue: Did George take care of that mansion well? Did the Ryan Administration, I should say?
- Cellini: The problem at the mansion is you're damned if you do, and you're damned if you don't. They appropriate money for capital improvements, but if you spend it, you get a headline. So the roof gets leaky, and there's money there... There's plenty of money now that's been sitting in the coffers for years. The governors don't spend it because the press beats them up over it.
- For one thing, why do we call it "the mansion"? Why don't we call it "the governor's home"? Wouldn't that at least change the perception a little, because that's really what it is? It's where they live. I remember when the Ogilvies were there very briefly. Their dogs were all over, and their teenage daughter had slumber parties. The Ryans had a party every night. The lights were on. People were there. It was their home.
- DePue: Yeah, it's been since that time, especially with Blagojevich really not moving in and making it pretty obvious that he didn't have any intention to stay there most of the time, that it's very much become a political issue on the opposite side. It's a downstate issue. The downstaters care whether or not the governor is there.

Cellini: Yeah, and there was always... We had board members who [said], "Yeah, this library museum is a great idea, but put it in Chicago. Why in the world would you put it in Springfield? Why does anybody want to be in Springfield?"

DePue: Apparently, they didn't want to be in Springfield (laughs).

Cellini: Oh, no.

DePue: What did you get from the city of Springfield when it came down to it?

Cellini: I truly don't know. I know that we had division of labor, and my job was to sell this thing, this concept, this idea, the reality of it to anybody I could pigeonhole.

Bob Coomer kept all of it straight. He's just excellent. I don't know what Bob can't do. He is one of the most modest people, but he always knew where we were in budget. He was the person who interfaced with CDB. We went through, I think, a dozen directors of CDB. It's a political mill. Whoever it was who was in place at the time, he'd go in, and he'd talk figures with him, and he'd talk strategies and he... Bob was an iron worker at one time, so he understood construction. He had managed the sites for years and years, and he understood how things got put together.

He was really good and organized and good with people in an honest broker way, not in a flashy, "Here I am" way. When we did that thing, the founders' thing that you so ably narrated for us, it kept coming up that Bob was the honest broker, I think, with a lot of state government. He'd been around so long. It was extremely helpful to have him there. So, do I know...? There's a long way of saying, "Do I know where every penny came from and every penny went?" No, I don't, but that wasn't my job.

DePue: It's interesting that you mentioned that evening. We had *Evening with the Creators*, and you and Bob and Susan were there. Bob gave me this piece of paper I'm looking at. If you don't mind, I'll just kind of work my way down a pretty short column and cite the major funding sources. Federal funds, \$31,657,000, not even that \$50 million that was initially discussed. What I'd like to do is get your comments about some of these. Non-federal, non-state contributions, this would be the private donations that you were working on and apparently some in the Ryan Administration, \$8, 534,000.

Cellini: Sounds right.

DePue: That's a lot of money to raise on the private side, isn't it?

Cellini: It certainly is.

DePue: Do you remember any of the biggest donors? Wasn't there a corporate donor or an individual who gave \$1 million?

- Cellini: Yeah, it was a friend of the governor's.
- DePue: I think I put you on the spot. Sorry about that.
- Cellini: Who was it?
- DePue: I don't know.
- Cellini: Yeah, it was... I think it was the guy who invented Beanie Babies⁸¹.
- DePue: Oh. That would have been the craze about that time. IDOT Road Fund and the Tobacco Settlement Fund, I think you talked about both of these in our last session. From IDOT, it was \$8,964,000, and from the Tobacco Settlement Fund at \$958,000. Do you think that's an appropriate thing to be using the Tobacco Settlement Fund for?
- Cellini: I don't know how in the world that piece got in there. I know the IDOT one because I researched it and wrote it. It was a grant, matched by the feds, that was for historic transportation, and it was open to any project in the state. I wrote it so that it would all go to one place, with the thought that it won't make a lot of difference in a lot of places; it would make a huge difference in this and would fill a hole.
- DePue: I should have put this together. The IDOT Road Fund was close to 9 million. The IDOT non-road fund was \$4.69 million. Those are the two together that you talked about before. Capital Development Fund, that's essentially state money, correct?
- Cellini: Yeah.
- DePue: One hundred million two hundred and seventy-four thousand. Of course, Bob's got it right down to the penny; \$1,274,810.77 (laughs).
- Cellini: That was Bob.
- DePue: Then the General Revenue Fund, \$589,790, which also would be a state fund, correct?
- Cellini: Yes, yeah.
- DePue: So that all comes to the amount of \$155,667,726.75. The piece of paper I've got has it broken down by line, and I'm sure Bob and CDB could have had page after page after page of the specific costs for the whole thing.
- Cellini: Is there an estimate for the land cost in that?

⁸¹ Beanie Babies are a line of stuffed toys created by American businessman, who founded Ty Inc. in 1986. The toys are stuffed with plastic pellets rather than conventional soft stuffing. They come in many different forms, mostly animals. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beanie_Babies)

DePue: I'm not seeing that here. The construction of Union Square Park, a little over 2 million, and then another 24,000. I'm not seeing anything specific to the land. This is a very detailed breakdown in that respect, and I can appreciate where you're coming from. They had people in state government; that was their job to keep track of these dollars to make sure it was being spent right.

What would you have thought in 1998, when you got at least the promise of some money in that last Edgar budget, that the total would be 155 million before it was all said and done?

Cellini: I don't remember thinking that far ahead. I was so busy tap dancing as fast as I could.

DePue: Since we're talking dollars, and we're a long way ahead of the point where we're going to be talking about the opening of the museum, I'll ask you now, did the state get its money's worth?

Cellini: Consider that they've just announced that the Obama Library is going to be built in Chicago and the...

DePue: The Obama Administration announced that today?

Cellini: Yeah, it's been announced.

DePue: I know the state granted the money or granted the land to do that. I didn't know that the administration had made a decision on that yet.

Cellini: Oh, yeah, I think so. But that's where it's going to be. I thought that was announced. But the estimate is \$500 million of... If you break out in this budget, I think we spent about 91 million on the museum that we have for Lincoln. If you look at the other presidential libraries... I was just at the Carter [Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA] last fall, the newly redone Carter. They're mostly deadly dull. They don't...

The Clinton in Little Rock is... It makes this rock 'n' roll guy—you know, David Maraniss's book, *First in His Class*—just this really colorful, interesting, quirky guy that was Bill Clinton, with a very interesting presidency, it makes him look like a policy wonk. There are columns of folders of materials you can check out. We all hauled off to see it when we were working on this one. We're like, "Where is he?"

I think it was... It is a personal encounter with the president who saved the union, with the president that is still ranked by historians [as] our number one. I think we really got our money's worth.

DePue: We're now at the construction phase, and we've been talking about how this money didn't come all at one time. It came over a long period of many, many years that you're struggling to get the money that you needed. But the

construction, as I understand, started February 12, 2001 with a groundbreaking for... I guess the groundbreaking for the library portion. Do you remember that day?

Cellini: Yes, I remember it. It was not something that I'll never forget. It was a groundbreaking. We all had shovels and stuck them in the ground. I was, unfortunately, wearing high heels, and that's not real good to dig a hole, but...

DePue: Do you remember who was participating and putting that shovel in the ground?

Cellini: I remember a lot of people in a big parking lot, digging a hole, speeches, media.

DePue: Were you one of the people who was expected to give a speech at an event like this?

Cellini: No, I don't remember speaking at it.

DePue: Who was the major contractor?

Cellini: Siciliano (Inc.)

DePue: A local firm?

Cellini: Uh-hmm, Rick Lawrence, terrific guy, community-minded. He and his wife, Kim are involved in a lot of really good things here in Springfield. I was delighted they got it.

DePue: This would have gone through the normal bidding process that CDB...

Cellini: At CDB.

DePue: ...is required to do. Was there a sense that they wanted to spread out the subcontracts as much as possible and get as many involved, or is that pretty much what the contractor arranged in the first place?

Cellini: I don't know. That's a question for Bob Coomer.

DePue: Why the library first?

Cellini: Because it was the easier portion of the project—it was the linchpin in terms of being able to sell the project because that's a lot easier to understand—and expediency.

DePue: Was getting that piece of land a little bit easier than getting the land for the museum portion?

Cellini: Yes.

- DePue: We've talked about that a little bit. You say the museum is where the police station used to be.
- Cellini: Um-hmm.
- DePue: And I think the parking ramp is where there were some private businesses, to include an adult bookstore, as I recall.
- Cellini: Yes, yeah.
- DePue: It was in the private...
- Cellini: Yeah, it was not exactly a charming piece of downtown. I think we referred to it as "the dirty bookstore."
- DePue: (laughs) Which is an appropriate term for it. You and I have talked a little bit about the architecture of the building itself. I think you are satisfied with the architecture. Any thoughts about the decision to use...I think it's Egyptian marble, is it not?
- Cellini: Yeah. It had to kind of match up with the library. Mrs. Ryan took the lead with HOK, the architects, in selecting that and selecting the interiors of the library, which have a bit of a Frank Lloyd Wright feel to them. I think she did a nice job. Is it a practical library? No. I think it's hard when you've got an internationally known architect, and he has a big vision for what he wants.
- DePue: I think, to reiterate what you said in a previous session, essentially, in the museum portion, function came before form,
- Cellini: Yes.
- DePue: And with the library, maybe it was the reverse to a certain extent.
- Cellini: I think it was. Yes, I think it was.
- DePue: We have already talked about this a little bit. The laying of the cornerstone, that's June 10, 2002. It sounds like you remember that day a little bit more. The cornerstone, again, it's got George Ryan's name on it.
- Do you have any reflections on what's happened to Governor Ryan since that time? His name, it's still on the cornerstone.
- Cellini: Well, it should be. No, no reflections. I liked and respected the Ryans during those years. I still do. It was a tragedy that Lura Lynn died early, and it was a

tragedy what happened to Governor Ryan.⁸² We hear from him now and then. I think he's doing okay.

DePue: Since we're in the territory, do you think he was unjustly imprisoned, unjustly convicted?

Cellini: I don't know. It was such a long, long trial, and I... Unless you're really there, how do you know? I think that George is a good, decent man, and I think it's really easy to lose sight of forces around you that maybe don't have your best interests at heart.

DePue: You've mentioned that before. Do you think he didn't choose his friends and associates well?

Cellini: I think that's almost always the case with people who stumble.

DePue: He had a reputation of being a gruff, sometimes overbearing personality. Do you think that would be unfair characterization?

Cellini: From my standpoint, yes.

DePue: You didn't see that.

Cellini: I never saw that, and it wasn't that we were intimates with the Ryans. We knew them socially, but I certainly never saw anything but good behavior. I knew her a little better. She was a devoted mom and a really kind, generous woman. I knew him less, but he was always just fine.

DePue: Do you think you knew him well enough to venture an opinion about what his fatal flaw was, to use that phrase.

Cellini: Too trusting.

DePue: Moving back to the library itself, projects like this don't go without a few hiccups in it, and this one experienced a fairly major hiccup in terms of the HCHV [heating, air conditioning and humidity control] problems that were encountered after it was nearly ready to be open, as I understand. What do you recall about that scenario?

Cellini: I remember that nobody wanted to take responsibility for it. It was always somebody else's fault, and I remember a few meetings where it was decided, "Look, let's not point fingers. Let's get this fixed."

⁸² Lura Lynn Ryan died at age 76 from complications of cancer and chemotherapy on June 27, 2011, with her husband at her side. Former Governor George Ryan was convicted of corruption in 2006 after a long trial. He was found guilty of using his office to for political benefits while serving as governor and secretary of state, as well as providing favorable state contracts to friends. He served over five years in prison in Indiana. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lura_Lynn_Ryan)

- DePue: Were there some that were trying to send blame over to Bob and people in IHPA for it?
- Cellini: I don't remember who blame was assigned for. I just remember that there was a lot of dissension. I think it was embarrassing for CDB.
- DePue: It was also expensive, I would think, to fix that problem.
- Cellini: Yes, very.
- DePue: I should have done more research on how much that would have cost. I don't know.
- Cellini: I think it would be hard to dig it out.
- DePue: Yeah, you'd probably have to go through layer after layer of budget sheets on something like that. Do you recall how long a delay that caused?
- Cellini: No, I don't.
- DePue: I read one article that said two years, but I think that's **way** over the length of delay that it would have been.
- Cellini: Yeah, I don't think that was it, no. But yeah, it was a problem because you have books, and you have treasures. It was problematic, certainly. It was uncomfortable, but life is messy.
- DePue: Do you recall any other specific problems with the library construction?
- Cellini: (pause) No, I really don't, no.
- DePue: Let's move across the street and to the museum itself. By this time in the project, I've gotten the impression from comments you've made that you weren't all that sold on the bridge between the library and the museum. But it sounds like that never really was considered to be taken out of the plan. Would that be right?
- Cellini: It was too far along.
- DePue: How much after the library was under construction do you recall that the museum started construction? Was there a year or two delay between the two? Let me ask it this way. The library was dedicated in 2004. Was the museum already well under construction at that time?
- Cellini: Yes, yeah, because I spoke at the dedication, and I remember talking about what was going up across the street.
- DePue: Did the public or did maybe you or Bob Coomer, others have a chance, in the midst of construction, to go in and see what was being done?

Cellini: Oh, sure.

DePue: I would think it would be really exciting to see, not just the construction of the walls but the installation of the exhibits as well.

Cellini: Terrific. It was just...what a privilege to have seen it all in sketches and presentations and then to actually see what they promised and what they delivered.

DePue: One of the things that Bob Rogers told me about... He explained it was never part of the plan but that the men who were laying down the marble for the plaza area—I think it's in the entrance area as well—were bringing all these, like the points of a compass, towards the center as they're moving in there. They said, "You know, what we ought to do?" Maybe, I should turn the story over to you after that.⁸³

Cellini: I didn't know about the pennies until I took some donors through, and somebody pointed them out to me. I assumed that it was a Bob Rogers thing, and I don't know that anybody ever knew for sure who did it, but what a great idea.

DePue: Was that before the library or museum was even officially open that you...

Cellini: Oh, yes.

DePue: You have to have a pretty good eye to be looking for something like that and find it.

Cellini: Yeah, it isn't like... I wish I could [say] I had this great story, that gee, I stumbled on the pennies. But no, it was pointed out to me, and everybody had kind of a, "Gee, how did that happen?" moment.

DePue: It's almost a no-brainer, when you stop and think about it. But somebody would have had...

Cellini: It's great.

DePue: ...to come up with the idea to begin with.

Cellini: It was just great, and I don't know that anybody ever stepped forward and said, "Gee, I did that."

DePue: Do you recall if there were any significant changes on the layout inside the museum, once it got underway?

⁸³ In the construction of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, the tiles in the center of the main plaza proved to fit imperfectly. A worker placed a penny over the gap; it was a perfect fit. Today, still, the staff puts pennies in that spot for kids to find and keep.

Cellini: I know that there were always difficulties. This doorway didn't quite match up and that. You have to understand that Illinois isn't building much now, but for a long time, CDB did a lot of building. But they built in boxes, not very grand buildings. The state library would be maybe the only notable one I can think of in the time that I was involved with state government.

DePue: There are two very different kinds of architectural pieces. One would be the Thompson Center, up in Chicago. That was long before this. But I think, in relatively the same time frame, was the DNR building [Illinois Department of Natural Resources] out at the state fairgrounds, a very different kind of design.

Cellini: Mostly they did things not nearly as complicated as this.

DePue: This is a change of subject entirely. During this time frame, it's not just the building going up, but it's trying to figure out how to operate. Obviously you start with who's going to be the director. It's about the same time frame that I understand that Susan stepped down from being the director of IHPA, the executive director. Do you want to take it from there? This was July 1, 2002 when she did step down. There was already discussion at the time, but no decision about who the director would be.

Cellini: I'm not comfortable talking about that.

DePue: What I'd like to move to next is a little bit more about the discussion about the governance for this new library and museum because, as I understand, there were several different options that were being discussed. One of them was whether or not it should stay with IHPA or perhaps fall under the National Archives and Records Administration, NARA, where all the other libraries and museums are managed and even some discussion about whether or not it should be turned over to the university, the University of Illinois at Springfield. Can you add some insight into that part of the discussion?

Cellini: I would not even characterize it as a discussion. Those ideas are tissue-thin. First of all, it could never go under NARA. The legislation that established NARA began with Herbert Hoover. Lincoln was born in the wrong century to have been under NARA. The legislation clearly states that it starts with the Hoover Administration.

Secondly, when the deal was struck with Denny Hastert, I was in the room. He said, "Don't come back to us for one penny more. We never want to put any operational dollars into this. That is the understanding that the State of Illinois will own this and will run this." His staff was sitting there and the head of approp [appropriations] was sitting there. It was understood that that's how it was going to be administered. It was going to be a state facility.

As to the U of I, what do they do that would make it any more of a place than it is? You'd have more student interns, maybe, but I don't know that it ever got serious consideration. It certainly never went to the U of I

board. They probably would have been horrified. “Wait a minute! We’ve got to spend mega millions to run this damn thing? You know, why are you dumping it on us?” Yes, it’s a treasure but it’s an expensive treasure.

DePue: I think part of that rationale, and I could be wrong on this; certainly somebody like Tom Schwartz could answer this much more definitively, but there was already that relationship with the Lincoln legal papers and then the Papers of Abraham Lincoln Project, as it’s now called, with the university because of the scholarly nature of that enterprise.⁸⁴

Cellini: Exactly, yeah, which I think has worked pretty well. But this was scholarship and showmanship, and to have foisted this off, as it was created, to a university would just give them, in a lot of ways, a big debt to pay to operate it, to maintain it. And I don’t know that it would have increased scholarship that much, maybe prestige. But I don’t ever remember any big push to do that.

The NARA thing, it still surfaces. “People do your homework, for god’s sake.” It was always going to be a state site.

Now, it was always envisioned to be integral within the other sites. That, to my knowledge, never happened. We had set up that desk at the front that was to be a manned, central area to send people to give them all the information about the other sites and send them out to the sites and tell them where the crowds were. There was to be a link to Lincoln’s Home and to the David Davis Mansion and the Dana-Thomas House and the tomb and the law office and everything that had a Lincoln link to it but also all the other sites in Central Illinois as well, and there would be people there. Somewhere, there are documents that explain all of that. That was a big part of being able to sell the whole idea too. It was to be the premier Lincoln site but a Lincoln site.

DePue: As people finish, they come through the turnstile or they come out of the bookstore. There’s that large desk that you’re talking about and above that, you’ve got all those TV screens that are illustrating the other historic sites. Are you saying it just didn’t work the way it was designed?

Cellini: I don’t know if it didn’t work or Richard didn’t make it work. Richard picked and chose the things that struck his fancy, and he was a short-timer. He was there for the banners and the bands and the big opening. As I said, at Founders’ Night, he told me, “I’ve got too much talent to care if there’s toilet paper in the men’s room.” He didn’t want to run the place. He wanted to open the place.

DePue: Let’s get to that as the next topic of discussion, that’s the selection of the executive director. You’ve already mentioned this several times in here, a

⁸⁴ The Papers of Abraham Lincoln is a documentary editing project dedicated to identifying, imaging, transcribing, annotating, and publishing online all documents written by or to Abraham Lincoln during his lifetime, 1809-1865. (<https://papersofabrahamlincoln.org/about>)

little bit about Richard Norton Smith, but he wasn't the first name necessarily that popped up. Do you remember that process of selecting the executive director that would have happened, probably around the 2003-2004 time frame? I'll see if I can find, while you're talking, when Richard got the position. It was 2004 when he came on board.

Cellini: Yeah. I remember that the Ryan people convened a committee, and they picked a search firm, paid a search firm, and the search firm interviewed ten candidates. I think they picked Harold Holzer.

DePue: A very notable Lincoln scholar from the New York area, I believe.

Cellini: Uh-huh, who might have been very good.

DePue: He turned them down, did he not?

Cellini: I think he did.

DePue: Were you involved with the search in any respect?

Cellini: No.

DePue: Wasn't it the board's responsibility to make the selection ultimately, though?

Cellini: No. Because of the quirky legislation, it is a gubernatorial appointment.

DePue: I thought in the future, though, the board of trustees was involved with the interview process.

Cellini: Well, they might have been, yeah. But they had to recommend to the governor. It is the governor who...

DePue: So, did Richard appear before the board of trustees?

Cellini: Yeah, I think he did. Yeah, he would have had to.

DePue: But apparently you're not remembering much of the specifics about that.

Cellini: No. Because I had been so integrally involved, my fear was what the historians were going to think when we opened those doors and what they were going to say. It was really, really important that the person selected was someone who could talk them down, could make such a case, could have such a background that they would look great on paper; they would be fabulous at the microphone; they would be an excellent writer, a person who can express themselves. That, to me, was the great threat of opening this place. I knew the public would get it. I thought the historians would kill us. So, I pushed hard for Richard.

DePue: He certainly has that reputation, but I think I'm correct to say he also doesn't have the historic credentials. He doesn't have a PhD in anything.

Cellini: I know, but he is forensic, and he was nominated for a Pulitzer, and he's got that "stand up at the microphone" persona. He's very, very good with words.

DePue: Was it important to you or meaningful to you in part of the equation that here's a guy who had been at the Ford and been at Reagan, I think...

Cellini: Sure.

DePue: ...and a couple of the other Republican presidents. He seemed to specialize in Republicans and spent a couple years at each one and then moved on.

Cellini: He was the P.T. Barnum of presidential libraries.

DePue: Did you anticipate, when you were backing him, and he was being selected—and it was October 2003 when he was finally selected—that he wouldn't be there for very long?

Cellini: I never got to know Richard, so I don't know that Richard had a plan, or I didn't know that Richard had a plan. I think he was very unhappy in Springfield. Springfield is not a town where you can't drive. So he was stuck downtown, and there is no grocery store. He didn't make friends. It became apparent... He wanted to leave right away, and Governor Edgar wouldn't let him.

DePue: Governor Edgar?

Cellini: Governor Edgar was head of our foundation by then. If you remember correctly, the first two directors of the library museum were also the directors of the foundation. That was a condition that Richard put on it before he'd take the job. He said he was tired of asking people every time he wanted to get a voucher.

DePue: Was there any concern or push-back when he had that as a condition?

Cellini: No, because nobody really thought it through. I don't know that it became much of a problem until we hired Rick Beard, and then, holy god!

DePue: You've described Richard's personality to a certain extent, but how else would you describe his personality, the private and the managerial side of who Richard Norton Smith is?

Cellini: I would say that Richard, on the job, there was nobody better to sell that place. There was nobody better to have a visiting dignitary or, if you wanted to make the sale for a donor, to bring Richard on. Did he have the ability to run the place? I think Richard's very bright, but I think he had no interest in running

the place, and I think he felt that wasn't why he was hired. If he had had a deep bench there, that he trusted, the place could have run pretty well. But he brought on somebody who he trusted, his whatever, and that person wasn't real good. It just wasn't the opening, the beginning it could have been. After the bands go home, you've got to run the place, and that isn't much fun. That's day to day.

DePue: But just the idea, for people who are going to be working at the presidential museum for Abraham Lincoln, for a lot of people, that should be enough to keep them motivated because of... It's a very prestigious, exciting place to work. One of the people he brought with him was Eric. Did you have any dealings with Eric?

Cellini: Almost none. I never got to know him well. I thought he was... I couldn't figure out what his job was.

DePue: How would you describe your association or relationship with Richard himself?

Cellini: Surface. He would come here for dinner. He was a great dinner guest. If you had somebody that you wanted to impress, plug Richard in; he spun stories. He was a media personality and the next governor, who was Blagojevich, loved that, loved the fact that Richard was on television. I think he was on the *MacNeil/Lehrer Report* that used to be on once a week.⁸⁵ Richard would do the remotes from the museum. It just wasn't his cup of tea.

DePue: You've said this before, but I want to give you one more chance. Was he the right selection to start off with as the executive director?

Cellini: Yes, from my standpoint, yes, because he gave us a great opening, and he countered that wave of "bounce the rubber Lincolns." There was surprisingly little of that. I thought there would be much, much more of it.

DePue: Would I be overstating it to say that, from everything you've already told me about Richard, your understanding of the man, that he had a very large-sized ego?

Cellini: Yeah, I guess so. I never think of people in those terms. I think of them in terms of abilities and how they function with other people. Do they get the job done? Ego aside... Anybody ever run for president that didn't have an ego? Anybody ever head up anything that didn't think well of themselves? That wasn't a big thing. I just feel that Richard should have been... He told me before we opened that he wasn't going to stick around. But to Governor

⁸⁵ The half-hour *MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, a television news program (1975-1983) garnered critical praise and numerous awards for in-depth coverage of a different single issue each evening. (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/about/history>)

Edgar... I remember him saying, "Well, you're a gypsy. You don't stay long anyplace." So, he talked him into staying.

DePue: That does sound like Governor Edgar.

Cellini: Yeah. So he talked him into staying.

DePue: Any idea how well he got along with Bob Rogers, who was still, at that stage, very involved with finishing up all these exhibits?

Cellini: I don't know. I know that Bob's a big boy. He's had a lot of clients, and if you think of the world that Bob lives in and how successful he's been... He famously talks about how he was fired three times by Disney, and yet it was the Disney people who recommended him to us. I don't think there was any great friendship there, but Bob understands expediency.

DePue: I know from what Bob has told us in my interview with him and the *Evening with the Creators* that the staffing was the next thing. I think Bob had a notion that the staffing would be robust. Then it was explained to him by people in state government that it needed to be cut down. Then, I think, he stated that Richard explained it needed to be cut down more to something like 50 percent of what he started with, something in the neighborhood of eighty-something. I'd have to go back and look at the specific numbers here. Were you involved with any of those discussions about the staffing levels?

Cellini: I remember Bob being very, very concerned. I think it was born of people not understanding the whole thing. Richard came in when it was a done deal. I don't think there were any decisions that were ever made. I do remember, I think... I'm not sure this is accurate, but I remember, at one point, Richard was running around, wanting to put up quotes on the walls; some of them weren't even Lincoln quotes. He wasn't a Lincoln scholar. And Tom Schwartz, the soul of gentlemanliness, tried to explain to him, "You know, Richard... No, that's not quite..." I think Richard slapped a few of them up someplace though.

DePue: One of my questions is, the way Bob envisioned this, would there not be a major need or a role for volunteers to staff it, or was a significant level of volunteer staffing always part of the plan?

Cellini: I recruited Julie Dirksen because of her ability with volunteers. Yes, volunteers were always in the picture. Were they going to run the place the way they do now? No, but thank God for them.

DePue: A couple of specifics about the staffing that did occur. I don't know to what extent you were involved with some of this. The Education Department is rather robust. It's gotten weeded down over the last few years, but it's in the process of being plussed up again. Was there always the thought the Education Department would play a critical role in the future of the museum?

- Cellini: Absolutely, absolutely. It was one of the selling points.
- DePue: Selling point to donors, to the legislature as well?
- Cellini: To everyone. Yes, there was always... There would be classrooms. I think Richard called it “classrooms of democracy.” But yeah, there was always to be a strong educational component, and it was to draw on the library. They were to work in tandem.
- DePue: How about the Theater Department? That strikes me as not necessarily one of the components that other presidential library museums have to the same extent that the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum has.
- Cellini: But that was one of the reasons that we picked BRC. IMAX was a big deal then. At one point, we envisioned an IMAX Theater—fortunately, we couldn’t afford it, and that stuff came and went—but always because everything there is story-driven. It’s almost like Shakespeare wrote the Lincoln story. There are all those elements. Did you study much Shakespeare when you were in school?
- DePue: Enough to know that he was the master of both humor and pathos.
- Cellini: Well, look at the Lincoln story, the highs and the lows and the villains and the heroes and then, just when things are good, things are really getting bad and people who are misunderstood, and people who are cast aside. All of that plays out in the Lincoln story. So from the very beginning, we picked a storyteller, BRC, to tell the Lincoln story and to do it in ways that would resonate with audiences of the 21st century.
- DePue: The Theater Department is more than just running *Lincoln’s Eyes* or making sure that the *Ghosts of the Library* is properly staffed and that you’ve got an actor there playing the role. They do much more than that. They put on productions, feature plays that highlight the story of Lincoln and the story of the Civil War era and many more things. Was that always part of the plan?
- Cellini: Always. There are scripts that have never been presented. I have two of them in my office, with DVDs for the music. It was always to be a feature of downtown to draw people back, after they’d seen the museum, to see something else that complemented what they had seen in the museum, to draw from Central Illinois.

Did it quite work out that way? No, but that was the plan, and I still have scripts I’d like to bring to Eileen and try to get her to do them, but they’re expensive to do that, and we’d have to recruit some money to do it.

DePue: But there have been a lot of plays that have played there, either in the outdoor park or in the Union Theater, and how important has Phil Funkenbusch been to that part of the equation?⁸⁶

Cellini: I think Phil is very talented. He makes due with very little and figures out a way. When we recruited Eileen, I said, "One of the people you're going to depend on is Phil Funkenbusch. He's very talented. You'll never have all the money you need." Now, has he pulled ahead with the scripts that was part of our contract with Bob? No. But he does his own things. I think I told you I saw the Churchill one-person play in Chicago a few months ago, and I would **so** like to get Phil to do it.

DePue: Winston Churchill?

Cellini: Um-hmm. It's called *Churchill*, and it's one guy on stage the whole time. Boy, it's really good stuff. We told Governor Edgar about it, and he got the last seat in the house. He called later. He's not an effusive guy, but he said, "Wow! My gosh!"

DePue: I know that Edgar loves his biographies, and that would be right in his bailiwick, I would think.

Cellini: I think people would really, really like it, but...

DePue: The other person I wanted to ask you about in the Theater Department has a very different role than Phil Funkenbusch, but on the technical side of things. That's Sam Cooper. Do you recall when Sam Cooper came on board with the project?

Cellini: I really don't because I was... When Richard would ask me about key people, I knew Julie Dirksen. I knew...

DePue: Julie was Guest Services.

Cellini: Yes. I knew a few others in the community; I knew their work. I could guide him in those areas, but I remember him complaining that he had to hire people that somebody sent but...

DePue: So, you weren't involved directly with any of the hiring, once you got past the executive director position.

Cellini: No, nor should I have been. I was board chair. That was inappropriate.

⁸⁶ Phil Funkenbusch retired from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum after working many years as the show director. Funkenbusch has a long history working in theater, having worked in New York City before making his move back to Central Illinois.

- DePue: This one is a little bit closer to home. Do you remember any kind of discussion about an oral historian for the library?
- Cellini: I remember really wanting one.
- DePue: But isn't that a bit of a stretch? All of the other presidential libraries would have oral historians, but they would be talking to people who remembered the president and the administration. That clearly wasn't going to be the case for Abraham Lincoln's library.
- Cellini: I think because we had Tom Schwartz, who we all kidded, channeled Lincoln... I envisioned a real staff for Tom, but it didn't really happen. Tom doesn't push himself forward. He's more the guy that holds back, that stands back. So Tom never made demands. I remember when Tom interviewed to get the job to run the place, and he doesn't sell himself. He can sell Lincoln. He can sell others. He's a master at telling stories, but his own story, he doesn't.
- DePue: During the process that the library museum is being built, and now you're in the phase where they're finding the staff and doing all the staff hirings and all this money is going towards this project, was there some sense from others in IHPA, especially historic sites and the library, that they're going to be left in the dust, they're going to be overlooked in the process of the...that there's an 800 pound gorilla in the room, and they're not it?
- Cellini: Sure.
- DePue: Were you hearing some of that frustration or resentment? Was there that case?
- Cellini: Yes.
- DePue: You were hearing about it?
- Cellini: Yes. What are we, chopped liver? Yeah, I felt bad. It was like... I never saw myself as the den mother, but I always kind of wanted to take care of all the kids. It was just so damned hard to do it.
- DePue: And from what you said before, that was not Richard's concern.
- Cellini: Um-hmm.
- DePue: We've talked about Julie Dirkson already, but I'd like to have you maybe elaborate a little bit more about the role that the volunteers have played in the museum and the importance of getting the right person to head up that part of the operation. What was Julie's experience before she came to the museum?
- Cellini: Julie started out as a teacher, lower grades teacher. I actually knew Julie; we met in college. Her sorority house and mine were side by side, and we have been friends. We had been social friends and through the years have become

very, very good friends. We were with her last night for dinner. I knew how capable she was. She and I did a lot of community things together. I saw her head things up and figure out how to do something with almost no budget. I just always found her very impressive.

When Memorial was just a hospital, before it was Memorial Medical System, hospital volunteers was kind of in its infancy. They hired Julie. She figured out a way to merchandise that, brought men volunteers into the system, trained these guys and figured out that these were all retired guys. Give them lunch because they'll show up every time because then they sit around and talk to their buddies over lunch, and it becomes a social experience.

She created *Festival of Trees* out of nothing and sold advertising for it. She just had done so many amazing things. I sold her to Richard as this person that could put together Guest Services and could recruit, train volunteers and keep them interested. I'd done enough volunteering to know that you get stale, and you need... First of all, you need a pat on the back now and then, but you need continuing education. Julie knew how to do all that. I thought she was the right lady for the job, and I talked to Richard about her.

It never went well. It was never a great mix, Julie and Richard. Julie has an independent streak that doesn't mix with Richard. So they were oil and water. But she did one heck of a job recruiting and training volunteers and doing Guest Services, making sure people were met and taken care of. If anything went wrong, it was Julie's job. She was terrific. She recruited Clare Thorpe, and I think Clare Thorpe is terrific.

DePue: How about Linda Bee? Was she there at the beginning? Linda Bee was...

Cellini: Linda Bee? Yeah, Linda Bee had been on Bob Coomer's staff.

DePue: I think she had experience over at the Dana-Thomas House.

Cellini: She did, yes.

DePue: I'm always impressed when I think about the pool of volunteers. The museum's got well over 500 now. I think you started with about 200 or something like that.

Cellini: Yeah. I took the volunteer training, thinking I'd go down there and do that. Then I thought, Is this a smart idea? Should I really be doing this, after having done that?

DePue: What was your concern? Why didn't you think that was a smart idea?

Cellini: Because you're trained a certain way. When Richard was there, you were **really** trained a certain way, and that was the beginning. I just knew too much,

and not everything we were telling people was exactly why we did it this way. It was Richard's show, so I didn't... I think about it now and then; God, I so love the place. Would I ever go back and take the training and do it again? My problem is I want to digress and tell them why it looks the way it looks. "Let me tell you what almost was there."

DePue: Maybe there are other ways that you can volunteer in the future.

Cellini: I don't know, maybe.

DePue: I think this is probably a good place to stop for today. We probably have one more session to go, but we've got to talk about the opening, the whole series of events that led up to the opening. We'll pick that up next time. Thank you very much.

Cellini: Thank you.

(end of transcript #6)