An Interview with Governor Jim Edgar Volume I (Sessions 1-5)

Interview with Jim Edgar
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Interview # 1: May 21, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is May 21, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today's an important day for me because I get to start with a series, and I hope it will be a long and fascinating series, of interviews with Governor Jim Edgar. Good afternoon, Governor.

Edgar: Good afternoon. It'll be long; whether it's fascinating, we'll have to wait and see.

DePue: (laughs) Well, it's always fascinating to me to hear these stories and reflections. Tell us where we're sitting.

Edgar: We're sitting in my office at the Institute of Government and Public Affairs on the campus of the University of Illinois. This was an office originally designed for then-president Stan Ikenberry. When he retired, this was going to be his office. He left for a few years and went off to Washington to head up the National Higher Education Association, and while he was gone, they hired me and gave me his office. So it's a particularly nice office because university professor–type offices aren't very nice, usually; they're very small. This is pretty large and has good window sunlight. I'm very happy to be here.

DePue: I've seen some of the offices over in the library, and it would certainly not be anything I would aspire to.

Edgar: No. When Dr. Ikenberry came back to U of I, we had an agreement: he took his secretary back, but I kept this office. He got a little office over in the education building; his secretary retired a year later, so I came out the best on that deal—which is one of the few times I came out better on a deal with President Ikenberry. I tell you, U of I did well when he dealt with me as governor.

DePue: Dr. Ikenberry is going to factor in pretty importantly down the road in these interviews, but I think it's probably four or five sessions from now, at least.

Edgar: That's right. It's a few years from where I think we're going to talk about today.

DePue: Absolutely. Tell us when and where you were born.

Edgar: I was born on July 22, 1946, the same day that the Haganah and Irgun blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem.[1] That's the only thing of major importance that happened that day, except I was born in Vinita, Oklahoma. My parents had moved to Oklahoma right after the war. My dad worked with some of my mom's cousins in a feed business, agricultural-related supplies, and that's where I came along.

DePue: As much as you can, I want you to lay out the family history; I'm always interested in the first generation that got to the United States, and at least in one side of the family and maybe both, that came to Illinois.

Edgar: It was in one that I was aware of: that was my great-grandfather, James Edgar. Now, people think maybe I'm named after him, but as I'll explain a little later, it was kind of an afterthought; it seemed like every generation had a James Edgar. My great-grandfather was a young man; he was in his late teenage years. He came from Suffolk—he actually came from Bury Saint Edmunds—in England and came over to the United States, and, as I understand, came straight to Coles County in Illinois. I'm not sure why he came straight to Coles County, but he did come here, I think, immediately; he didn't stop and spend any amount of time someplace else. He came and got into farming.

Now, one of the things I like to tell about my great-grandfather: before he got very old—he came over here in about 1856—in 1858, he and a group of boys from Humboldt went over to see the Lincoln-Douglas debate in Charleston.[2]

DePue: Wow.

Edgar: So it was a great line I always had to tell about at Lincoln Day dinners, that my great-grandfather went and listened to Lincoln and Douglas debate. Now, I don't point out the fact he was a Democrat. (DePue laughs) Most of my family members were Democrats. He, at some point, moved from Humboldt to Arcola, which is in a different county than Coles but only about eight miles apart. A lot of movement between those two towns. He was a farmer. He had bought, as he got older, a few hundred acres of farmland; was on a bank board; active in the Methodist church. One of his sons became a Methodist minister.

DePue: When he first came over, did he come by himself?

Edgar: Yes. He came by himself. Again, I'm not sure why he settled in Coles County. He came—

DePue: Do you know why he left?

[1] Haganah and Irgun were Jewish paramilitary groups active before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.
[2] This debate, the fourth of seven, was held September 18, 1858, at the Coles County fairgrounds.

Edgar: I think probably for a better life. I had a chance to go to Bury Saint Edmunds and trace some of the family events; saw the house he was born in, or lived in—not sure if he was born there. His family never had much money. They were from Scotland originally. In fact, I think his father—who was James Edgar, who he later brought over to the United States—had moved down from Scotland, along the border of Scotland and England, to Bury Saint Edmunds. Periodically they'd go back to Scotland; some of them would stay. My great-great-grandfather's brothers lived with him.

Back then, in England, they had to fill out a census; they called them, I think, drapers. That basically means "salesman," which means they probably did a lot of everything just to stay alive. So he didn't come from money, that's for sure. What was interesting: while everybody had to be married in the Church of England, they actually attended one of the non–Church of England churches. On the political polls in those days, you had to publicly declare how you voted. My great-great-grandfather always voted for the radical candidate. He didn't vote for the two mainline parties; he voted—

DePue: Was this in the United States or back in England?

Edgar: This was in England. So my great-grandfather grew up in a home where they probably barely got by, and their politics and their religion were somewhat unorthodox.

DePue: That's interesting. Did your great-grandfather, then, have a little bit of money in his pocket when he came here, or—

Edgar: I don't think so. I don't know.

DePue: Farming was pretty cheap to get into at that time.

Edgar: Yeah, I think he probably worked as a hired hand then got some money. No, he did not come, to my understanding, with any money; he just kind of came on his own. And again, he was not twenty yet; he was still in his teens. Then, after he began to get established and do well, his mother had passed away, but he brought his father and his maiden sisters—I guess, is how they were always described—over to live in Illinois. They're all buried out in the cemetery in Humboldt where he's buried.

DePue: It always impresses me the gumption that these people had; to come over as a teenager, all by yourself, to this foreign land.

Edgar: Right, right. Yeah, because England, while it was tough, you'd have thought there were other opportunities maybe you could find. But if you remember your Dickens novels, things could be kind of grim, it seemed like, in England at that time, whereas the United States the possibilities were endless.

DePue: I'm not supposed to do this, but my great-grandfather came over, I think, in 1846, somewhere around there, and landed in Eastern Iowa at the same timeframe.

Edgar: On the other side of my family, my mother was a Moore. Her father—we just know he came from Ohio and then settled in Humboldt—Marshall, who was very important in my mother's life, had a general store. He also was a Democrat, pretty strong Democrat. I don't know much about his family, outside of they came from Adams County in Ohio, where a lot of people in that part of Coles County came from. My mother's mother was a Smith, and you can trace their ancestry back to Revolutionary War days; members fought in the Revolutionary War and things like that. But on my great-grandfather Edgar's side, he married a woman named Helegoss or Hilligoss; her family had come from Indiana—and I think had been in Ohio—as a lot of the people did. Most of my relatives I have looked at came from Ohio, then Indiana, or maybe Ohio and straight into Coles County, or through Indiana into Coles County. Most of them I've been able to trace were here pre–Revolutionary War. In fact, some of them came here in the 1600s to the United States, settled maybe in Virginia or Pennsylvania, places on the East Coast, and then the families slowly migrated.

I had—I don't know how many "greats" back—a grandfather who was, I think, a drummer boy in the Revolutionary War. He had jumped ship from the British; he'd come over and jumped ship and got on the American side. I had another ancestor who fought in the Revolutionary War out in Pennsylvania—probably fought in the Indian Wars more, like *Drums Along the Mohawk*, if you remember that movie.

DePue: Oh yeah.

Edgar: That kind of era, that kind of environment. So we qualified for the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution]; but the one I'm most familiar with is my great-grandfather, kind of my namesake, who I've been able to trace because the Edgars were the last ones to come over. They were of Scottish origin before this. There were some English Edgars, but there were more Scottish Edgars, and he was first generation in England from Scotland.

DePue: What was he doing during the Civil War?

Edgar: I don't know. No indication he was in the armed services, so I don't know if he bought somebody to (DePue laughs) take his place or...

DePue: He would have been pretty close to the age when he could serve.

Edgar: Yeah, he would have been the age. He'd have been in his early- to mid-twenties. But no, there was no indication he was in the Civil War. Coles County itself was a hotbed for Copperheads. In fact, at the square in Charleston by the courthouse, they had the most deadly battle north of the Ohio River between some Copperheads and Union soldiers. I think four or five people were killed in that shootout.[3] So while Coles County probably voted for Lincoln, there still was a good number of

[3] "Copperheads" was the name given to Northern Democrats who opposed the Civil War. See http://www.eiu.edu/~localite/coles/copperhead.htm for an excerpt of the event's press coverage.

Copperheads and people who were not that sympathetic to the Union cause—which is true in a lot of southern Illinois.

DePue: Yeah, if you go much farther south, most of that part of Illinois was settled by people coming from Kentucky and places like that.

Edgar: Yeah, and a lot of people at that time in Coles County were from Kentucky and Tennessee, particularly—

DePue: So that was kind of the mixture area, then.

Edgar: Yeah, the southern half of Coles County was predominantly people from Kentucky and Tennessee. The northern half, where my great-grandfather settled, had a lot of Germans who came; and that was later. They had to drain the swamps because it was all flat prairie and the water stood. It was considered terrible land. Nobody wanted to live there. You'd get malaria and things. And it took them a while to figure out how you drained the swamps. The Germans came over, and they didn't have any money. They got all the bad land, and that turned out to be the best land because they figured out how to drain it. It's probably some of the best farmland in the world.

DePue: I was going to ask you to describe Coles County in terms of its agricultural heritage.

Edgar: Coles County has some excellent farmland. One of the last glaciers stopped right about Charleston. You go south of Charleston, and it's hilly; north of Charleston, it's flat as a pancake. So that land north of Charleston, particularly over where my great-grandfather settled in Humboldt, and where my mother's folks came from in Humboldt, that's really good farmland, very expensive farmland. If you go south of Charleston, where I really had no relatives from—my wife does, but I don't—it's hillier.I It was settled earlier and settled by people from Kentucky and Tennessee, predominantly. But today, it's not the best farmland. The farmers who are better off are the ones north of town, because they've got much more productive acreage up there.

DePue: Yeah, that starts about the border of Illinois and heads right up into northeastern Iowa, I think—that huge swath of land.

Edgar: Yeah. You go west of the Illinois River—it always amazed me when I traveled over there—it's much hillier, because apparently the glacier didn't come straight down all over the state; it was in more the eastern half of the state. So the hills you see in western Illinois, even though it's the same latitude as we are in eastern Illinois's completely different terrain.

DePue: When you were growing up here in Charleston, did you have relatives, who were still involved in agriculture?

Edgar: I didn't have many relatives in Charleston, but I still had a lot of relatives up in the Humboldt area who were involved in agriculture and still are today. My dad's

father—who was also James Edgar—wasn't the first. It's just every generation, as a last thought, Oh, I want to name one of them James. Because I was the last male in my generation of all the cousins, and I was named James, it wasn't to keep that thing going. The same way with my uncle, who was the last one in his generation. My grandfather James—they called him Rue—farmed too, but he lost his farm during the Depression. My dad always wanted to be a farmer, but they lost the farm. After they got married, they went to Chicago and...

DePue: After your parents got married?

Edgar: Got married, and so he never got a chance to be a farmer. But some of my father's sisters married farmers, and their families still, to this day, remain in agriculture. I spent a lot of time out on those farms when I was growing up.

DePue: Do you know, roughly, the year that your grandfather would have lost the farm?

Edgar: No, they just said he lost it during the Depression, so I guess it would have been sometime in the early thirties.

DePue: You said that side of the family typically voted Democrat?

Edgar: I think all my family voted Democrat. (laughs) My mother's family voted Democrat, and my father's family voted Democrat. Interesting; some of his sisters, though, became Republicans—not so much by marriage, as I think they were a little more that way. But I grew up in a family that was nominal Democrats. I was always referred to as the Republican in the family.

DePue: The other guy, huh?

Edgar: Yeah. And even my cousins in Oklahoma, where I was born and we stayed close with, some of them were Republicans and some were Democrats. The some that were Republicans made up about half of the Republican Party in Oklahoma because in the forties and the early fifties, there weren't many Republicans in Oklahoma. That's changed, but...

DePue: That's changed in a big way now.

Edgar: Yeah, but right now, they have a Democratic governor. There are still a lot of Democrats, but they're a different type of Democrat than we run into in the northern states.

DePue: Do you know much about the lore of your parents' courting and getting married?

Edgar: My mother was a freshman at Eastern Illinois University. Her father, who was very important to her—because her mother died when she was five or six years old—she was raised by her father, who had a general store, was a strong Democrat. He also served on a couple education boards that were elected—township things. I don't think it was the school board, *per se*, but he was a prominent person in the

community because Humboldt's a very small town. That was, I think, the only general store. Her mother had been a schoolteacher before she got married. Her oldest sister was a schoolteacher, who also taught her one time in school. So her family was pretty strong on education. All of them had come over to Eastern—in fact, I think her oldest sister had actually gone to high school and finished up over at Eastern in the old lab school high school.

So she went off to college—it was just kind of taken she was going to go to college—and she went to Eastern. But toward the end of her freshman year, she eloped with my father. My father had not gone to college. He'd gone to Arcola High School, then he, I think, was farming, working on farms, and they got married.

DePue: What year would that be?

Edgar: Let me think. I should have checked on that. It would have been...

DePue: Tom was born in '37.

Edgar: So it would have been, probably, '35. Then they immediately went up to Chicago—that's what all the Edgars did—because there were no jobs for him downstate, and all of his brothers had pretty much gone up to Chicago to work.

DePue: It's still in the midst of the Depression, as well.

Edgar: Right, and they didn't have a farm. Even if they had the farm, he [grandfather] didn't have that much farmland; they would have probably had to do other things anyway. So his sisters had married farmers; two of them stayed and two of them went away, but all the boys went to Chicago. When he got married, my mother and he went to Chicago, and they both worked at Marshall Field's, the big department store.

DePue: Downtown Chicago.

Edgar: Downtown, right. They worked in a downtown Marshall Field's and lived on the South Side of Chicago, about Sixty-seventh Street, near the IC [Illinois Central Railroad] tracks. I don't think they realized they were poor, but they barely got by. I mean, Mother and one of her sisters-in-law would walk for miles, where there was a bargain on vegetables or something like that.

My mother loved to dance. My father, I guess, was a pretty good dancer, too—a trait that I did not inherit. That was the days of the big bands, and my mother used to tell me when I was growing up how much she used to enjoy—they'd go hear Guy Lombardo—Wayne King was her favorite—the Dorsey Brothers, or Glenn Miller. There were two big ballrooms in Chicago. The Aragon, I think, was on the north side, and I forget what's the one on the south side, and they lived on

the South Side.[4] On Wednesday night, you could get in real cheap; they would always go on Wednesday night and go to the dances. That's something she always missed, I think, when she came back downstate, because she loved going to those dances. My mother was pretty reserved, though there were stories about her maybe sneaking out occasionally to go on a date—from the house; I don't think it was the dorm, Pem Hall. [Pemberton Hall].

DePue: When she was in college, you mean?

Edgar: I never got it straight exactly when it was, but sometime at that age. Everybody who knew my mother was just shocked to hear that she ever did anything like that, because she was the youngest in her family, raised by her father and some extent by her oldest sister, and, I think, always minded them. But occasionally, she would go do things like that. Early on in that period, she even tried smoking a cigarette once in a while, but it didn't stick with her.

DePue: That was not uncommon at all during that era.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Fred told me that while they were living up in the Chicago area, your father also worked at a steel mill for a while.

Edgar: Right, my father, while he came out of a Democratic family, he worked in a steel mill and got involved in some of the labor disputes on management's side. And there's pictures—

DePue: Was he a manager himself?

Edgar: No, he wasn't a manager, but they hired people that would buck the unions, and he went in and did it. Of course, at that point, he probably just wanted a job. But there's a famous… If you watch labor history stories, they'll show cars going into this plant in Chicago and some people getting killed. He was supposedly in the last car that made it and didn't get killed. The car behind him, the people got pulled out and killed. I can't remember if it was Memorial Day, Labor—it was sometime in the summer months when this happened. But I know I've watched those things, and Mom has said, "That's the one your dad..." And Mom would say that Dad would get trapped in. They'd stay in the steel mill, but the union guys wouldn't let them out. There was a way on the river they could come down, on a barge, and he occasionally would come home. When they would go out, he'd tell Mom, "Don't ever say anything about me being in the steel mill," because union thugs had followed other people home and beat up their families. So Mother had that to deal with. I don't know if Fred told you this story, but Mom said that they lived around the street from the Lady in Red.

[4] Edgar's parents probably went to the Trianon Ballroom, which was close by at 62nd Street and Cottage Grove Avenue. Images of the Trianon as it looked in 1935 are available at http://chicago.urban-history.org/sites/ballroom/trianon.htm.

DePue: No, I didn't hear that one.

Edgar: The woman who fingered Dillinger. That happened, I think, in '34, and I don't think they were up there till '35, so I'm not sure if she used to live around the corner or what. But anyway, that was something she used to always mention whenever gangster movies would come out.[5]

DePue: When did they move away from Chicago?

Edgar: Fred might have had a better idea on this. I think they moved away about 1940. Fred was born in Tuscola, and he was born in the fall of '40. So at some point around there, Dad and Mom moved back to Humboldt to work at her father's grocery store—it was now a grocery store, no longer a general store—with the idea that he would take it over, I think, eventually. But my dad and his father-in-law had different ideas about how you ought to run a grocery store. From the stories my mom told me, my grandfather wasn't big on refrigeration and didn't want to spend all that money on bringing in things to keep things. The thing was you just put ice in something. Dad thought they needed to spend money and refrigerate things and have coolers and become more of a modern grocery store—which they were used to in Chicago—than the old-time general store. Plus, they'd built a hard road, as they always called the highway, from Humboldt into Mattoon, so a lot of people got their groceries in Mattoon; they didn't have to go to the store in Humboldt. So a whole lot of things like that. I think that that probably wasn't going to last, and then the war came along. My dad would liked to have been in the Air Force, but he had two kids at that time and was in his thirties; they didn't take him. But because he had had experience working in factories, they sent him to an armament plant in Kansas. That's how they ended up out in Kansas during the war.

DePue: I've got the name of the—Parsons, Kansas?

Edgar: Parsons, Kansas, in southeast Kansas, pretty close to the Oklahoma state line.

DePue: Any idea what kind of munitions he was working on out there?

Edgar: No, I just know it was ammunition of some kind.

DePue: Did your mom ever talk about those years out in Kansas?

Edgar: We used to visit, because that was just over the state line from Vinita. That's how she went down and met her cousins, because she really didn't know her cousins till then. They went down and visited, and that's when, after the war, my mother's uncle offered Dad a job with the family, as he offered everybody in the family. But anyway, she enjoyed Parsons. She had a good friend there, Thelma Clary was her

[5] Anna Sage, the "Woman in Red," tipped federal authorities to John Dillinger's presence at the Biograph Theater, July 22, 1934; twelve years to the day before Edgar's birth. At the time of Dillinger's death, she lived at 2420 N. Halsted Street. The U.S. deported Sage to Romania in 1936. *Chicago Tribune,* July 26, 1934, and April 30, 1936.

name, and we used to go visit her, even during the fifties. When we'd go down and visit Oklahoma, we'd go visit Parsons, Kansas, too. That's where she spent the war years. I remember them talking about when they got word that Roosevelt had died, and then when the war was over. All the things that people remember from those years; that's where she was, and I would listen to them tell those stories when I was young. But when the war ended, of course, the armament plant closed, and that's when they went down to Oklahoma, and Dad took the job with my mother's relatives. My mother's uncle had several of his sons-in-law in the business, too.

DePue: This is not a small business, then.

Edgar: It wasn't big enough for all the cousins and sons-in-law, (DePue laughs) Dad decided, and that's why they came back to Illinois. But they were in Oklahoma probably for three or four years, and that's where I was born. I was born in '46. And then I think about '48—I was probably about two or three when we moved back to Coles County.

DePue: What brought your dad back to Coles County?

Edgar: Dad was in his mid-thirties at that point—or getting to be toward his late thirties—and I think they wanted a more permanent job. They realized there were too many relatives in the business in Oklahoma; that it would probably never be able to support all of them, or maybe in the style they'd like to be supported. And Mom said, while they're very close to us—those are our closest relatives in many ways—they [Edgar's parents] always felt like maybe the others kind of resented them a little bit because they really weren't sons or daughters of this—they were cousins, and they were kind of late to the party.

DePue: You mean your dad and mom were?

Edgar: Yeah, so they always felt like maybe they had intruded on something there—for a whole host of those. I think, maybe a little, too, they had grown up in Illinois and they hadn't grown up in Oklahoma, and it was a little different. I don't know what exactly sparked it, but Dad decided to go into the office supply business, and took some courses and began to learn how you take care of typewriters and other types of machines like that.

So they came back to Coles County; they wanted to come back and settle in Charleston, they thought, because of the university. Back then it was a teachers college. They thought it would be good to be in a community where there was a college so that if anything happened to Dad, it would make it a lot easier for the kids to get a college education. It was good planning because he came back and got his business going, started it from scratch, and he got the contract to sell typewriters to the university. I remember he spent a lot of nights—there was a big trucking firm in Mattoon, Illinois, that had a pretty complex machine that kept track of information; he had been working to maintain that and had just got it fixed. The retail store was up on the square in Charleston. It just finally felt like things were

moving along where they was going to be able to make it, and that's when he got killed.

But they purposely picked Charleston, because they'd always lived on the other side of the county. They'd lived in Humboldt or been involved in Arcola, and that deals with Mattoon; up and down Route 45. Charleston was on 130; that was the other side. But the reason they came to Charleston—naturally, they should have gone to Mattoon—but they came to Charleston because of the college.

DePue: Why do you say naturally they should have gone to Mattoon? Because that would have been closer?

Edgar: That's where they were from. They were from that side of the county, and it was pretty common for people from Humboldt to go to Mattoon. A lot of people from Humboldt would move to Mattoon. It wasn't as common to come over to Charleston.

DePue: It's not that much spread, about eight, ten miles between the two towns?

Edgar: Yeah, but if you talk to people in Mattoon, you'll find a lot of them came out of Humboldt. You don't find as many who came from Humboldt to Charleston. It's just the way things were back then. That might be an over-exaggeration, but as I said, most of the people I know in Humboldt—Humboldt's part of the Mattoon school district now. That's kind of the natural—you'd never think of Humboldt being part of the Charleston school district.

DePue: While we're in that neighborhood, how would you describe the demographics and the politics between Mattoon and Charleston?

Edgar: I don't know back then, but I know when I was dealing with it, not a whole lot of difference. Both Mattoon and Charleston probably were Republican, Mattoon maybe more so in some ways because Charleston had the university, and college professors always tend to be more Democratic. Mattoon had more factories, so you did have some more blue collar, perhaps, in Mattoon. It probably all balanced out. I know when I was running, Mattoon might have had a couple of precincts that were a little stronger Republican than we had in Charleston, but for the most part, they were pretty similar. North Coles County, Humboldt, tends to be more Democrat—where my parents grew up—whereas the northern—

DePue: All those farmers were Democrats?

Edgar: Yeah. I don't know if some of those Germans had become Democrats when they came over or what it was, but Humboldt township was Democratic. You go over the county line into Arcola, where there was a lot of moving back and forth, it was Republican, much more Republican. So my great-grandfather, who was a pretty active Democrat, was really in the minority. Of course, he was used to being in the minority back in England when they were the radicals. In fact, the first time I was going to run for office, somebody was talking to one of the Republican county

chairmen in Douglas County and said, "We got a young guy from Coles County that we think a lot of, and his name is Jim Edgar." And he said, "Well, I don't know any Edgars that are Republicans in Douglas County; they're all Democrats." Those were all my cousins. They were all Democrats up there.

DePue: (laughs) I know that you were quite young when your father passed away, but I want you to describe the person that you remember.

Edgar: Somewhat remote... My dad—particularly from when I was three to when he was killed—when I can remember, wasn't around. He was working on the business, and I was raised by my mother. I was the baby, so my mother probably spent a lot more time with me at that point than maybe the other two. Fred's six years older and Tom was nine years older, so they were out and about. I just remember my father—I was a little afraid of him because Dad was the disciplinarian in the family, and Fred, my middle brother, used to get disciplined a lot (DePue laughs); I used to watch that, and I didn't want to get that discipline. I think I got spanked a few times, but not anything like my brother Fred did.

DePue: How did he manage to get in trouble?

Edgar: Just being Fred. Fred sometimes would speak his mind when, at that point, young people were not supposed to just say what came to their mind to elders. And Dad was very strict. Fred used to get in trouble. He'd maybe smart off to a neighbor, and Dad did not want his—his children would be respectful to their elders. Or he'd just be Fred; just get in some kind of trouble and come home, and Dad would come home, and he would...

DePue: I know that Tom was that much more older than the rest of you.

Edgar: Tom was older; Tom was smarter. We suspect that Tom probably did just as many evil things, but he had a way not to get caught and probably get Fred blamed for it. But Dad—again, I wasn't around him as much because he was gone a lot of times. I remember this thing at this trucking company; he would get called out in the night—they'd break down, and he'd go over there and work all night trying to get it fixed. But this was important to him, to show he could do that and get a big customer like that. He also would—and this is when he was killed, too—go back to Chicago. He had his younger brother, Jim Edgar, who I guess I was named after, and they'd go up and see White Sox. He was a big White Sox fan, so he'd go up and spend a couple days...

DePue: A South Sider, yeah.

Edgar: Yeah, a South Sider. I remember many a time on a Sunday afternoon, he'd be listening to White Sox games on the radio and fall asleep with the newspaper in his lap. Because the radio, of course—we didn't have television—was the main entertainment thing we had.

DePue: Fred told me that Thanksgivings, he and your dad would oftentimes go to the annual Thanksgiving game between Tuscola and Arcola.

Edgar: Tuscola and Arcola. Yeah. I only went once, and I think it was after Dad was dead. I went with my cousins. Yeah, that was quite a football game. I remember guys would get hurt, and they wouldn't want to go to the hospital till the game was over. They'd want to stay and see how... Dad had played football for Arcola, and so had several of his brothers. In fact, a couple of his brothers were considered some of the better players. One went to U of I on a football scholarship, until he got hurt his freshman year and they took the scholarship away; he never got any farther than that. He ended up in Chicago, too. That was my uncle Jim. But yeah, that Arcola-Tuscola football game back in the twenties and the thirties was a major event; and then when Fred would go with Dad, it would be in the early fifties.

DePue: Your father started off having an interest in farming because he thought he could—

Edgar: He grew up on a farm.

DePue: Grew up on a farm. Headed up [to Chicago] and was at Marshall Field's, then was working the steel industry, was in munitions, and then came back to a business kind of thing. Did he see himself as a businessman, because that's where he ended up?

Edgar: I think he did. I think he was moving that way. I think if he hadn't been killed, he would have evolved into a successful retailer. My dad was a very personable individual. People liked Cecil. He could be a partier, too. He was known to go to the establishment... I envision that business would have done well; he'd have been a member, probably, in the country club, played golf. I watched a lot of my friends' parents who were successful in business in Charleston and lived that life. We never did, but I always felt like he would have because he was a hard worker. Dad worked. He grew up with that work ethic, and I think he did have this business going well. He would provide good service to the customers, and I think that was important. He did business with the university, which was one of the major sources of income in that area. So I think he would have done well in the business.

DePue: I neglected to bring up his name before. Cecil was his name?

Edgar: His name was Cecil. Did not have a middle name. He gave himself a middle name: Edward. I'm not sure why Edward, but that was his middle name. But his birth certificate—as I understand—there wasn't a middle name on there.

DePue: So he would have been Cecil Ed Edgar?

Edgar: Yeah. Cecil E. Edgar.

DePue: And your mother's name?

Edgar: My mother's real name, much to her chagrin, was Onie Elizabeth.

DePue: Onie Elizabeth?

Edgar: Yeah. She always claimed it was Elizabeth Onie, but it really was Onie Elizabeth. She also claimed she thought she was born in 1917, and she was born in 1916. I had to correct her at one point in her life. She was a little taken aback (DePue laughs) when she found out she was a year older than she thought.

DePue: So it wasn't that she was trying to pad her age a little bit?

Edgar: No, I think she was born in the latter part of December, so it was almost 1917; I think that's how she probably rationalized it. But—

DePue: She didn't go by Elizabeth, though, did she?

Edgar: No, she went by Betty, which was a name for Elizabeth back in those days.

DePue: A pretty down-to-earth name.

Edgar: Yeah. Dad was the second-youngest of eight brothers and sisters—four boys and four girls—and Mom was the youngest of...let's see, one, two, three, four, five. She'd have been the sixth. A lot of them got TB [tuberculosis] in that family. Her mother died with it, two of her siblings died with it, and two of her other siblings had it and then survived.

DePue: I just read this article that was something of a—

Edgar: Oh, is that the thing that Dan Thornburgh did on my mom?

DePue: —a biography, and he suggested cancer was why your grandmother passed. (both talking)

Edgar: I tell you, I thought it was. That's what I had heard, but then I was just out in Oklahoma talking to my cousin, who was like my mother's sister. That's one of the cousins we worked in, who had been—my mom was very close—and that's that side of the family. She said that she'd got TB. She had TB, then maybe the cancer came afterwards, but TB was, she [Edgar's cousin] thought, the cause. So I'm not sure which one it was, but apparently she did have TB.

DePue: Did your mother ever talk about what it was like to grow up without a mother, being raised by her dad?

Edgar: She talked a little bit about growing up. Mother was an excellent mother. Mother was a mother twenty-eight hours a day, eight days a week, fifty-five weeks a year. Everything was for her kids, especially for her baby. The other two, too, but there's no doubt I was spoiled. Mother—

DePue: Tom was fifteen or so when [your father] passed away.

Edgar: But she didn't work at that time; as Brenda points out, she wasn't getting paid for her work. (DePue laughs) She just wanted to be a housewife and be a mother, so her kids were everything to her. Mom would talk about being the youngest, sometimes. She had an older sister that was kind of active in Democratic politics in Springfield—probably wasn't her favorite sister—and she would come home and sleep late and just go have lunch with her dad, while Mom had to clean the house, and things like that.

But Mom had great respect for her father. Her father raised her. I always said that Marshall Moore, who I never knew—he was dead before I was born—probably had as much influence on me as anybody because he raised my mother and my mother raised me. She would talk about how they would walk out from Humboldt, out to the cemetery, which is about a mile away, every Sunday to visit her mother's grave, and then she would play cards with her dad. They played Solitaire and things like that. I think her dad spent a lot of time with her, as much as fathers did back in that period. And the fact she was the last one home. She had a brother a couple of years older who would sleep in late, too, and she used to kind of resent that a little bit, because she thought he didn't work too hard.

DePue: Did her father get remarried?

Edgar: No.

DePue: We've kind of skirted around it up to this point. It was 1953, I believe. Can you talk a little bit about your father's death?

Edgar: When my father was killed? I can remember the day. It was a Sunday morning. We were getting ready to go to church. Dad had gone up the day before to stay with Uncle Jim to go to the White Sox ballgame. In fact, I remember watching him—I think I had been at a movie and came back Saturday afternoon and watched the car, the van, go. He had kind of what they called a van. It wasn't a truck because it was enclosed, and we used to all pack in the back when we'd go on trips, but that's what he used where he could...

DePue: Kind of like a panel truck or something?

Edgar: Yeah, and he was driving that up to Chicago. That was the only car we had.

DePue: How old were you at this time?

Edgar: Seven. I had just started second grade. In fact, he had said something to me about it. He said, "If you didn't have school, I'd take you up with me, because I don't spend much time with you." But he went up. Then the next day, we were getting ready to go to church, and one of the neighbors came over and said, "This can't be Cec, can it?" because he had one of the Chicago papers saying somebody had been killed in an accident, and it was Cecil Edgar. We hadn't heard anything at that point. They started making calls up there and found the right authority, and they said yeah, it

was Cecil Edgar from Charleston. That's how we heard it. And again, that was, probably by that time, maybe ten o'clock Sunday morning.

DePue: Do you remember your mom's reaction to that?

Edgar: I remember my mother was very emotional. Mom was pretty solid, but she just couldn't believe it… She was very distraught with that. I have to say I was somewhat indifferent. I was seven. It didn't mean a whole lot to me. Death just wasn't something I related to.

DePue: You couldn't understand it at that time?

Edgar: No, I don't think I did, and again, my father—I wasn't as emotionally close to him as my mother, to some extent.

DePue: Even at that age.

Edgar: That age, yeah. I know I didn't cry. Fred did, Tom—they both were—Fred is always a little more outgoing than Tom was on anything. I just remember they were very upset. Mother was very, very upset. I just kind of wandered around, kind of watched it all, and then we started having relatives come in.

One of the things that was very important to me in that period and that we didn't talk about, something that had an impact when I was young: my mother had polio years before, when polio was huge in the United States.

DePue: This would have been '48, '50, or...?

Edgar: About '51, '52, that period. When Mom had polio, she had to go to Champaign, to a hospital; and nobody knew for sure what polio was, except everybody was getting it. We couldn't go to school. I don't think I was ready to go to school then, but I just remembered my brothers stayed home, and we would play all day. Then the neighborhood kids, when they got out of school, would come over and play with us, even though we couldn't go to school, but nobody really believed it.

DePue: This is not such a bad thing, huh?

Edgar: Yeah. But what I remember happening—the same thing when my dad was killed—is something I think had an impact on me. Particularly the church responded in a way—we never went without food. We never ate as well as we did when Mom was in the hospital with polio, because all the church folks—particularly the church folks, because that was an important part of our life—brought in food; main meals, desserts. In fact, when Mom came home, they stopped bringing it; she really wasn't able to cook yet, and we were kind of worried what we were going to do about food.

And then when Dad was killed, the same thing. We had relatives come in, too, at that point, from Oklahoma; the ones I talked about. As soon as they heard, they

jumped in the car and came up. But it always made an impact on me, both the polio and then later when Dad was killed; that community support, and the church particularly. We were members of the First Baptist Church in Charleston; we hadn't been there all that long. I remember when my mom got polio, my dad had to, of course, go up to Champaign—one of the doctor diagnoses—and he had to take her up there. And he took us over to the—the minister kept us for a couple of days until we got everything worked out.

And so Dad's death—huge impact. I didn't appreciate, until I was much older, what it was to grow up without a father. But the immediate impact, the same as when Mom had polio, was how important that community support is, and the church in particular. That's an extended family, and to this day, those people, whether it's some of our cousins that were there then or people in the church; you feel like that's family. That's always had an impact on me and appreciation for—you need that type of support more than just the immediate family.

DePue: Tell me more about the church that you grew up in. You said First Baptist Church. Is that...?

Edgar: American Baptist Church, which makes it a little different than a Southern Baptist. In political terms, Nelson Rockefeller was an American Baptist and Strom Thurmond was a Southern Baptist, so it's almost that way in religion. The American Baptist—

DePue: Well, you're a historian. The split between the two Baptist—

Edgar: The split occurred before the Civil War. It was over slavery. But later on, the theology maybe wasn't so different, but their take on it was much more different. American Baptists were much more mainline, whereas Southern Baptists were much more fundamentalist.

This impacted, there's no doubt, my political views: American Baptists, out of all Baptists, are great supporters of separation of church and state. No way did they want the state involved in church, and they did not want any state money going to schools, parochial schools—absolutely not. Also, even on issues like abortion, they didn't think the state ought to get involved. That's a personal decision. And the American Baptist Church until recently—they finally changed their position—because we go to the Methodist now; I'm not sure—they never [wanted] laws passed opposed to abortion. They may be opposed to it, but they didn't think government ought to set that. So I kind of grew up in a—where government doesn't get involved in religion, stays away, and those are decisions people have to make. And also, your religious beliefs—that's a personal decision. You've got to make that call. You don't have some bishop or church hierarchy. Baptists are very independent.

DePue: So each church has a little bit of its own flavor?

Edgar: Yeah, and each church hires its own minister; nobody assigned them. And they always said if you get two Baptists together, you're going to have three different points of view, and one will get mad and go down the street and start another church. But that separation of church and state—I remember when I first was going to run for state representative and they wanted to have a gathering. They said, "Why don't we call the church and have it?" I said, "Oh, no, you don't talk to the church about that." I said, "You don't do that in a Baptist church, you know." And I can remember when I ran for—I think I was running for secretary of state. We were going to the Baptist church in Springfield, across from the governor's mansion, and the minister said, "Now, people, don't forget: there's an election Sunday, and one of our members is involved in that." That's the closest they ever came to saying anything, and that was just kind of a reminder: hey, don't forget to go vote. But no, no; you just never thought about tying those things together.

But there is no doubt—and particularly after my father was killed—that that was my mother's support group, too. Her friends were people from church. She socialized with people from church—they had their own groups, and to the day she died, those were her best friends. So I grew up in that environment where I went to church every Sunday, and sometimes I went to youth group on Sunday night and even went to prayer meeting on Wednesday. Early on, I wanted to go to church camp.I If you went to all those [meetings], you got a stamp for each one; and if you got your stamp book filled, then the church would pay half your cost of church camp. So that probably induced me a little bit early on to go to those things.

But for my time and my age, I was a churchgoer compared to a lot of my—most of my friends went to the Methodist Church; or you talked to Tony some, and he was Catholic. We had some Catholics. We knew they were different because they went to catechism on Monday. We didn't have a parochial school in Charleston. It's the largest city, I think, in the state of Illinois that didn't have a parochial school. But they had to go to catechism on Monday, so they used to go off on Mondays someplace to that mysterious thing they did in church. But most kids were Methodist or they went to the Christian Church. Very few went to the Baptist Church; there were probably only three or four. And I always felt a little kind of different because of that.

DePue: Were there some Southern Baptists in town?

Edgar: There was a Southern Baptist church. I didn't know anybody who went to that. It was called the University Baptist, but I didn't know anybody who went to that.

DePue: Fred recalls while you guys were living down in Oklahoma—

Edgar: Fred didn't go that often. Yeah. (laughter)

DePue: He remembers a minister down in—

Edgar: Scotty. Vinita.

DePue: —Oklahoma who was a fire and brimstone preacher.

Edgar: His name was Scotty, and I can't remember Scotty's last name. But that was a Southern Baptist Church. And that's how we kind of got to be—Mother was raised a Methodist; Dad was, too. I don't think Dad was much of a churchgoer. But when they moved down to Oklahoma, because all the cousins went to the First Baptist Church in Vinita, they went and joined. Dad got baptized, I think, while he was down there. And so when they moved to Charleston, they thought, "We'll try the Baptist church and we'll try the Methodist church."

They went to the Baptist church one Sunday. The minister visited them the next day, and they never made it to the Methodist church. And that minister; they were very good at getting them into things, and Dad was active in the church, then. From my understanding from Mom, that wasn't historically true of him, but he was very active at the Baptist Church in Charleston. He was a trustee. Versus a deacon, a trustee is more dealing with the building and things like that. The deacons are more in the spiritual part of it, but Dad was more in the mechanical part of the church. And we went every Sunday. Again, for him, that was somewhat a departure, and I think that had started in Oklahoma, from what I understand. I don't think he was maybe that much of a churchgoer when they were in Chicago.

DePue: Being American Baptist, is it the same tradition as Southern Baptist: you have to declare, and that's the point in time when you're baptized?

Edgar: Yeah. You're baptized as a knowing person. To be truthful, I was baptized when I was seven. I don't know how much I knew—I probably thought it would help get me some more stamps for that church camp. (DePue laughs) But it was a tough thing to go in public, walk down that aisle, and have everybody see you, and then you knew you were going to get in that tank. I didn't worry about getting dunked under water, but it was hard to—I remember it took me several Sundays before I was ready to step forward. I look back on it: I probably was too young to really make that kind of decision. But that's how I was raised. If you're going to be a Christian, you need to publicly declare your faith, and that's how you do it.

DePue: I would assume you weren't alone in being that young and being baptized.

Edgar: No, but again, there weren't many young people in that church. There weren't that many people in that church. In my age group, there was probably three or four that went through that, and I think I was the only boy.

DePue: What kind of lifestyle values were being preached to you from the pulpit?

Edgar: Oh, I don't remember. Basically, live a good life and do what the Bible says; don't go out—but I never felt any great pressure. I never smoke or drank, but that probably had more to do with my mother.

DePue: That was the nature of the question, because when I talk to people about Jim Edgar the politician, things that oftentimes come up are: straight-laced, doesn't drink, doesn't smoke, doesn't swear.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: And talking Illinois politics: not swearing, that's kind of unusual.

Edgar: Brenda will tell you I've been known to let a few go occasionally, but I don't do it in public, and I try to catch myself.

DePue: So that's more of a factor of your mother's influence?

Edgar: My mother's influence and probably the environment of growing up around the church, too. It was interesting. The people I'd see at church, some of them, I thought, Boy, these people have a suit and tie; they're really important; and then I'd see them at work and they might be a clerk in some store, or something like that. That always kind of amazed me because they were up on a pedestal at church, and then I'd see them, and they were just ordinary blue-collar workers. But I'm sure my mother had more impact on me than anything in my life by far. I am the product of my mother's raising me. The things I do wrong, I fell off the wagon. My mother's influence on me is huge.

Because when I was growing up, when I was real little, she'd read to me at night. When I'd get sick, she would read. I liked to get sick just so she would read books to me. Tom and Fred were older and Dad was gone—he had been killed—so every Sunday afternoon, we'd probably play Monopoly or she'd do whatever I wanted to do. We ate all our meals together. Fred would occasionally drop in. (DePue laughs) Basically, when he got into high school, he'd occasionally drop in. But I think I'm a product of my mother's environment. The church was an important part of that, but the impact of the church was through my mother to me.

DePue: You described her character very well. How would you describe her personality?

Edgar: Oh, I think everybody liked Betty. She just was well-liked. People never understood why she didn't ever date after Dad was killed, or thought it was too bad she didn't get remarried.

DePue: Did she ever explain to you why she didn't?

Edgar: She had three boys, and that was her mission in life, to get those three boys raised. Then after a while, she said, "You know, I've gone this long; I don't know if I want somebody's problems. (DePue laughs) First time for love; second time for money," and she never found anybody that had that much money. But guys every so often would call her up. Later on, when I got older, when you could talk—I couldn't talk about those things with her till I was probably in my twenties or thirties—she just said, "I figured they had problems, and I don't need those problems at this age." But it's too bad. I always feel bad she didn't get to travel. She always barely got by

financially. She had pain all the time from polio in her back. Her back was continually, ever since she had polio, giving her real serious problems.

DePue: I want you to kind of lay out, if you could, what she did after your father's death in terms of trying to make a living and make a way in life.

Edgar: Mother had been just a housewife at that point, even though she had one year of college and she'd worked at Marshall Field's, but that was just as a clerk. After Dad was killed, she took some classes at Eastern in typing—I think she knew how to type, but she hadn't typed in a long time—to improve her skills so she could get a job. Most jobs for women at that point were clerical jobs. The first job she got was at Christmas time. Firestone had a toy section, and at Christmas they were busier and needed extra help, so they hired her to come—because I remember I wanted an electric train because my brother had had an electric train. I probably shouldn't have wanted that—we didn't have the money for that—but she worked at Firestone, and they had the Lionel franchise in town. So one of the things she got at cost was a Lionel train at Christmas. Mother, if she could, within reason—whatever I wanted, she would get for me.

People knew that she needed work. Charleston was a small enough town, people knew Betty; she was a widow lady and she had three boys and she needed—because we didn't have any money. Dad had taken out, fortunately, a life insurance policy for, I think, five thousand dollars, which was a lot of money back then. So Mother had that, but that was it. Sold off the business, but the business was at the point where I don't know if they made anything or not; at least I don't think he had any debt from that. With that five thousand, they used it for a down payment to buy a house, so—

DePue: As I understand, your dad was in business with his brother-in-law?

Edgar: Yeah, but he had bought him out. Yeah, my mother's uncle, this one I had told you she thought sometimes slept too late. But he got so he knew typewriters. He had already left the—they were going to dissolve the part—because he had already moved to Decatur to go do his own thing. Uncle Bob had had TB when he was younger, and he was somewhat reclusive. He had been a dancer and all that stuff earlier, but by that point, he was really kind of nervous around people, and he had some ribs taken out. He was always sensitive if you'd walk around him. He would stay, and he'd work on typewriters and things, but he was not a businessman; that just wasn't his thing, so he went to Decatur and did typewriter repair and things like that there. But he had already made that split before Dad was killed. He came back and helped Mom and a friend of Mom's, who was from out in California, a businesswoman, sell off the business.

But Mom was working at a grocery store. You know, when sometimes they'll give away samples at grocery stores? They had her come and do that, and a lady came through who headed up the agricultural department—used to be the Triple-A, they'd call it—every county had an agricultural office where, if you were a farmer,

you'd go and do sign-ups for different programs.[6] And she was a woman running it, which was pretty unusual. Her name was Maxine Mercer, and she came through at the grocery store and asked mother, "Would you be interested in a job?" And my mom said, "Well, yeah, I might be." So Mom went and interviewed, got hired, and she worked there for the next, oh, probably twenty years, until the agricultural department, the only federal agency (laughs) I ever knew that cut back. Mom kept pointing out, "I think I might lose my job." I said, "Mom, the federal government's never cut back." They actually cut back.

She could have taken disability at that point because of her back, but she wouldn't take it. She thought that was charity, and she wasn't taking charity. And the same thing happened when Dad was killed. There was a question about that accident: Dad might have come across the line—the thought was that his tire had blown out he'd come across the line—but the guy in the semi didn't have a valid driver's license, and then there was all this thought that she could have sued. But she didn't want to sue. She didn't want to go through a lawsuit. She didn't want to put the kids through it. There was mixed feelings about that. She didn't want charity; she didn't want public aid. She thought disability was public aid, and she didn't want that—if she'd have taken disability from her job.

DePue: But she was okay if we're talking about family and friends and church, Because that's what churches are supposed to do?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. The church helping out. If anybody gets sick or anything like that; Mom, she'd make up a dessert or a casserole or something and take it. She was very supportive there. But she didn't mind other people doing it; she just didn't want herself. She didn't want something for nothing, was her kind of attitude. So anyway, she went to work at the Department of Agriculture. She never liked the job. She—

DePue: That's a lot of years for a place you don't like.

Edgar: No, but she needed a job. She needed the money. And she used to—the woman who I thought was good to give her the job, but she kind of, I think—I don't know if she resented her. She just never was that happy at that job, and she'd have much rather been at home, been a housewife. That's really what she wanted, to have been taking care of her kids. Saying that, that job—working for the federal government—there were benefits there. I don't know if she appreciated it when she took it, but that was a good job to have. The university was a good job in Charleston, too, but working for the federal government was a pretty good thing. Of course, she knew a lot of the farmers from the Humboldt area, and she got to know all the farmers in the county because she would deal with them there. Twenty years; it might have been more than that. I was trying to think when she left to go work at the university. When they downsized that, they were going to let her go, but they said, "Take disability;

[6] "Triple-A" was probably a reference to the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

you qualify for disability," but she didn't want to do that. So she went out and got a job out at the university.

DePue: Roughly what year would that have been?

Edgar: I ran for the legislature in '74, so it had to be sometime early seventies.

DePue: So you were pretty much grown and out of the house at that time?

Edgar: Oh, I was gone. Yeah. And she first worked for Dan Thornburgh who was—that's who (taps on table)—this…

DePue: What's the last name again?

Edgar: Thornburgh. Dan Thornburgh at the journalism department. She was a secretary there, and she worked there for about a year and a half. Then she got a chance to go to the athletic department, and she loved that. She loved sports because she'd followed sports, and also, she liked being around the young kids. And the athletic directors both were—she was kind of like their surrogate mother. She enjoyed it. Mother on sports: this is very important to understand all of us, the Edgar boys, especially Fred and myself. Mother never missed a ballgame that any of us played in. Nobody had a parent that made as many ballgames as my mother.

DePue: From listening to Fred, just his own experience, that's a lot of ballgames.

Edgar: That's a lot of ballgames. And even if we were sitting on a bench, which I sat often—Fred didn't, but I did—she would be there. In fact, Fred will tell the story about one time, we had this coach at high school that we all kind of idolized, Coach Baker—also, you didn't smoke or drink if you played sports. And that's probably had an impact on me, too: "Boy, you better not get in..." But one time he was on—it was Fred who was playing ball—them about how they got to work harder, and he says, "You guys have got to go out there and do your best. You've got your parents—they've done a lot and they come here. Like Betty Edgar. She comes to every game. She really sacrifices for Fred here." And Fred was a little upset his mom was the... (laughter) But that was Mom.

I knew if I was doing anything, Mother was going to be there. I just kind of took it for granted. And the same thing with Fred. In high school, he was always late from practice or whatever. There was always a warm meal in the oven waiting for him, or she would go in and cook him—it would be ten o'clock sometimes when he'd show up, and Mom just—she would do that. As I said, there's no doubt we were spoiled, but Mother's whole life was her boys.

DePue: How badly can you be spoiled when she can't have that much money to spoil you with in the first place?

Edgar: I didn't have a whole lot of need. It didn't take a whole lot to spoil me. (laughter) Just fix what I wanted for dinner. Brenda, to this day, hates fixing meals because

she says, "You were spoiled." She says you had to fix exactly what you wanted the way you wanted it. I remember when we first got married, one time, I said, "I don't want this." She said, "Well, I don't care. This is what we're having tonight." And I was like, "No, that's not how we do this." (DePue laughs) So we eat out a lot.

But Mother would always have cookies in the cookie jars. And after I left, I'd come home, and she knew I was coming home—no matter how bad she felt, there were fresh cookies in that cookie jar when I got in there; and if I was going to be there longer, she'd fix me fried chicken, which was my favorite, and things like that. And she'd do the same for Fred. Fred liked sugar cookies. Tom, he was a little different. He would be gone a lot. He went out to California, so he wasn't around, and he got rather eccentric and I think used to challenge Mother a little bit just by his life. He'd come and sleep on the floor in the living room and didn't want any noise till noon, and things like that.

DePue: Was that later in high school when you're—

Edgar: In college and later. Tom, in many ways, was the closest originally, but Fred was always—she worried about Fred. (laughs) She worried about Fred getting through school, because Fred—I think he spent at least six years at Eastern. He had a good time.

DePue: Do you recall the day that Fred got banged up seriously in an auto accident?

Edgar: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Had surgery. Yeah, she… Fred was in high school—was he still in high school, or was he in college?

DePue: He was in high school when that accident occurred.

Edgar: Yeah, I was thinking when got his head cut. Yeah. (phone rings)

DePue: I think that was his senior year.

Edgar: Yeah, probably. Yeah. And—if that's really important, they'll call Sue. I forgot to turn that off. Again, I always said I was raised by my mother. Anything good that I ever did or knew, I got from my mother.

I never missed any of my kids' games either. I was fortunate. I was secretary of state, and I could pretty well determine my schedule. I did miss a couple of tennis matches with my daughter because I was governor, or I was running for governor. I remember I had to miss a tennis game for Elizabeth, and I was really upset, and the staff said, "You got a debate with Neil Hartigan. You're running for governor. You've got to be at the debate." (laughs) And I said, "She's got a tennis game!" (DePue laughs) So I think I made more games; and Brenda, usually, as well. Even if Brenda couldn't get there—so I was secretary of state; my schedule rotated around my kids' games. Every fall, they'd get the schedule of Brad's games from the school before I'd get committed. And that's part of being a parent. I have to say, I didn't want to be anyplace other than watching my kids. That, to me, was... But I

think I learned that from my mother. There's nothing more important; and I'm sure sometimes my son wished I hadn't come, (DePue laughs) because he'd come home, and he'd have to relive the game and why the coach did what he did. But my mom never did that. Mom never second-guessed the coach, but she was always there to support us.

DePue: Tell me about growing up in what sounds like something of a boarding house.

Edgar: When we bought the house on Lincoln Street, we were over by the campus, and part of the way to help supplement a very, very limited income was to take in roomers. That was pretty common; the dorms weren't that prevalent at Eastern, and usually a lot of students would live in a rooming house, more or less. And you'd get so many college students, and they had to follow certain regulations and things like that. So for five or six years, probably, we had roomers. Fred would remember because Fred used to, of course, get in trouble with them, and they'd lock him out because he was—he'd have been, what, junior high, about ready to go into high school—always causing them trouble, so they wouldn't hesitate to...

DePue: As I recall, he told the story about one of the kids hanging his mattress out the window, and things like that.

Edgar: Yeah. Fred deserved that. (DePue laughs) I stayed out of that, but by the time I got around them, we had one who was a music major; and I spent time with him, and he'd try to teach me the accordion. He lived with us all four years, so he got to be like part of the family. But Fred was old enough that he was around them a lot more than I was. We had one roomer who actually had been a high school classmate of Tom's, and his family had moved out of—been to the university and moved out of Charleston. But he lived with us a year. We were going to make a telescope together, and we worked on that. But as I said, they probably had more of an impact on Fred, more involvement than I did, to tell you the truth.

DePue: Did that stop because you moved?

Edgar: No, that stopped because Mom just really, I guess, didn't need it, and it got to be more of a hassle in some ways. The music major, when he graduated—I think by the time of his senior year he was the only one left—Mom just didn't really want to go through, because you never knew for sure what you were going to get.

DePue: I'd like to spend quite a bit of time, then, talking about what your life was like growing up. We've spent an awful lot of time talking about your mom and Fred, and Tom a little bit, but what was it like for you?

Edgar: I don't know. I guess I didn't know we were poor—and I think we were poor. After Dad was killed and that car was totaled, we didn't have a car. We didn't have a car until—gee, I think I was almost in junior high. So we had to always rely on somebody else to give us a ride to church and things like that.

DePue: How was your mom getting to work?

Edgar: She'd get a ride. She'd get a ride from somebody every day, somebody down the street, who went to where she worked. We had neighbors that would give us a ride to church. And groceries—I'm not sure how she did that, unless she'd maybe get the groceries when she was at work and get a ride home. Clothes-wise, I always thought I had adequate clothes. It wasn't anything fancy. We didn't eat out. We didn't take trips. Our vacations were to go to Vinita, Oklahoma, and their vacation was to come to Charleston. And they'd come and get us and take us down there.

I had an aunt and uncle—Uncle Everett, who was very important in our family because his wife Maude was my dad's oldest sister, and he really helped out a lot when Dad got killed. He was kind of the advisor. He helped Mom buy the house; and he would come over, and they'd fix things up; and we'd go out to their place a lot.

DePue: Was he something of a surrogate father for you?

Edgar: I wouldn't say a surrogate father. He's more like a surrogate grandfather, probably. That's how I always viewed him, more like what a grandfather might be; though he had his own kids and stuff. We spent a lot of time out; we'd always go out, just like part of them. We'd always go with his kids out there and have Sunday meals, and holidays, and he'd give all the grandkids a silver dollar. Well, he gave me a silver dollar. I give all my grandkids twenty dollars—it's not a silver dollar. It's something I know I learned from him: you give cash; it's not underwear, or things like that.

DePue: What'd you do with your silver dollar?

Edgar: Oh, I saved them. I lost them all, probably. I don't have any of them left today. Spent them.

DePue: But you didn't go out and spend them or anything?

Edgar: Oh, I spent them eventually, yeah. A dollar was a lot of money, though. And I was saving for a bike. My first thing, I remember, I was saving money for a bicycle when I was—first grade on. I think I got it at the end of my third grade year.

DePue: Again, I mentioned that I talked to Tony Sunderman this morning, and he certainly recalls the two of you, maybe a bunch of kids, riding around town, all over Charleston.

Edgar: On our bikes, yeah. That was one really nice thing about Charleston. It was small enough and times were such, you didn't have to have a car, you didn't have to have somebody take you; you just jumped on your bike, and you went there. And I got a bike when I was third or fourth grade; from then on, I was mobile. I could go anyplace in Charleston. And growing up in Charleston, the first school I went to was Franklin, which was four classes—first, second, third, fourth grade—and there was just one class of each. It was the oldest school in town.

You haven't asked me this, and this is something that I think also impacted me. It probably still bothers me a little bit today, though I think I finally got over it. I had to take speech therapy, and that really made me a little conscious if I ever spoke, because I didn't speak clearly. I had trouble with my Rs and my S's and things like that. Speech therapy then, they'd take you out of class. You'd be in class, and all of the sudden, "Jim, you got to go," and you'd go meet somebody in the hallway or in a little room.

DePue: But everybody knows you're leaving.

Edgar: Everybody knew it. Most kids thought I was getting off. (DePue laughs) They thought, That'd be neat. I can't say that anybody ever got on me about it, but I know I was always a little conscious about that. Later on, I was always very nervous, when I'd get up and make a speech, about would people know that I took speech therapy, and do I have trouble articulating my point of view? But that was maybe the only thing different for me.

I was just pretty normal in school. I was one of the kids. I won't say I was the most popular, but I was not one of the least popular. I did well in school. I wasn't the smartest, but I sure wasn't the dumbest. I wasn't the best athlete, but I wasn't the poorest. I was just pretty average. The only thing unique was I took speech therapy, and that always bothered me a little bit. As I said, I think I finally got over it when I was governor, after I got reelected by the largest margin in the history of the state; at that point, I began to feel like I can get up and give a speech and not be too nervous about it.

DePue: This probably has absolutely nothing to do with speech therapy, but I noticed early on when you pronounced "Ohio," you didn't say "Ohio." Is that something peculiar to the area of Charleston?

Edgar: You know, you don't know your voice. When you hear your voice for the first time on a tape recorder, you think, Who is that? And we had a tape recorder, and I was very little. My dad had a tape recorder at the office for some reason. He sold them, so we had one. I can remember that was the strangest thing, to listen to my voice. And it always was strange to me. But somebody did a book a few years ago. There are sixty different dialects in the state of Illinois, and they vary from county to county; and I am convinced that I—Max Coffey—he's the guy we'll talk about later who beat me. I used to listen to him, and I said, "Boy, he sounds like a hick." And then I used to hear me, and I sound just like him. (laughter) And there is a Coles County twang. It's not from Oklahoma, I don't think. I don't think I got it in Oklahoma; I think I got it in Coles County. After that, I realized that guy's probably right about these different dialects—maybe. That might be why. I'm sure there's—like "Warshington"; I've always done that; that isn't to do with the speech therapy; that just has something to do with where I grew up.

DePue: What did you and your buddies do when you're riding around on your bike?

Edgar: I collected. I've been a lifelong collector. Early on, I collected stamps, from which I learned a lot of history and geography. I still collect stamps. I don't get as much time at it. I get it a lot at home. But I've found it to be a great way to, as I said, learn history and geography and kind of the outside world. I collected rocks. I was a rock hound. I would go find granite or split open, and fossils, and things like that; so I had boxes of rocks around the house. Everybody back then had models, airplane models. I never was a big car model—I had some, but more airplane models. I got into rockets. I kind of knew what was going on in satellites. I knew who Warner von Braun was; he was one of my heroes. I followed that kind of stuff. And one of the things Brenda will tell you is that I don't do anything halfway: I'm impulsive. It just takes me over. So if I get into a hobby, it's all the time. And I was that way with stamps, I was that way with rocks, rockets; whatever I got into, it wasn't just one hour a week I might do that; I would really get into it. I was in Cub Scouts. We'd play cowboys and Indians. I always wanted to be the Indian.

DePue: Why?

Edgar: I just felt like they were the good folks. I thought they had been mistreated. Geronimo was one of my early heroes. That's why I called my dog Geronimo, known as Mo. He lived to be seventeen years old, and he was a Chihuahua.

DePue: Was that your dog when you were growing up?

Edgar: Yeah. Not the dog I would have picked; I always wanted a dog like Tony. This was Fred's dog, this collie here, semi-collie. I wanted a big dog, but—

DePue: We're looking at one of the pictures that Fred had given us.

Edgar: Yeah, and that's a semi-collie; but that was Tony, a stray dog he'd picked up in Vinita, Oklahoma. I always wanted a big dog, but Mom didn't—we didn't have room. And my cousins, when I was about seven, sent me a Chihuahua, and Mom couldn't turn it down; they sent it to us. Or we were down and they gave it to us, and we brought it back. It got killed about six months later. I watched it get killed—that was traumatic—get run over by a car. Then she knew I needed to get another Chihuahua, so they sent this other Chihuahua by mail, in a box, and that dog lived to be seventeen years old. He stayed with Mom after I left and became Mom's dog. She never thought to want a dog in the house, but she said when she'd come home from work, it was the only one in the family that was just glad to see her, that didn't ask when dinner would be ready, or would you iron a shirt, or can you loan me some money; that dog was just glad to see her. The fact that dog was hungry, I didn't want to... But anyway, what was...?

DePue: We were talking about what you were doing with your free time, and the stamp collecting and rocks and everything else. But the question that always comes up, or the question I have for you now, I guess: you obviously got interested in history and politics at a pretty young age.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: And I would suspect that your fascination with politics kind of set you apart from a lot of your buddies as well.

Edgar: A little bit. There wasn't a whole lot to show that. I got fascinated with politics in first grade. This is a story that people have heard me tell for years, so we need to get it down officially here. In first grade, it was 1952, Eisenhower was running against Stevenson for president of the United States, and we had a mock election at Franklin elementary school. And during noon hour, I remember the upperclassmen, the third-graders and the fourth-graders, came to me and said, "Help us get votes for Eisenhower."

I had a picture on my wall at home of [General] Douglas MacArthur. We made soldiers out of clay and things like that. We played army all the time. We were the after part of World War II. We were all military-conscious. And I was going to be for any army general, that was sure. Eisenhower's a general. I had no idea what a governor was. (DePue laughs) I'm sure I didn't know that Adlai Stevenson was the Illinois governor; it wouldn't have meant anything to me. So I went around to the first-graders and said, "When you get asked, say Eisenhower." Eisenhower won the election. I went home all excited. I said, "Mom, Dad, I helped Eisenhower win the election at school." And they were both kind of surprised because they were both nominal Democrats. But as a result, I got known as the Republican in the family. And, of course, then Eisenhower won the election. I remember Mom said, "Eisenhower won the election," so I felt a tie to that.

And then in second grade, I got elected to my first office. Back then you had Red Cross packages. Kids would bring stuff to school, and you'd make a package and send it off to the needy kids around the world through the Red Cross. And in second grade, a teacher had elected a boy and a girl to be the Red Cross representatives. I didn't get elected the first time. I was gone. I think it was when my dad was killed, because I remember the day they turned in the package, I wasn't there; I had to bring it in later. Dad's funeral was that day, so I wasn't at school. But my girlfriend—I had a girlfriend in first and second grade. We were very advanced in Charleston.

DePue: Can I ask her name?

Edgar: Her name was Mary Casey. And Mary, who was a very vivacious young girl, got elected Red Cross representative in second grade, and some other boy got elected Red Cross representative boy. He moved out of town about two, three months later, and they had to fill that vacancy, so everybody said, "Jim's Mary's boyfriend, so we'll elect Jim." And that's how I got my first political election; off the coattails of a young lady. So we get elected, and the teacher—the only thing we did—took us downtown. They had some money, and she wanted to buy some things to supplement what we were going to send to the Red Cross. So she took us downtown and we bought these things, and then after we got done, she bought us both an ice cream cone; and right then, I knew politics was a good deal.

DePue: This was your teacher that got you the cone?

Edgar: Yeah, bought me the ice cream cone. Mrs. Bouldrey was her name. We both got ice cream cones, and I thought, Politics is all right. So from then on, every time we had an election, I got elected class president. I said, I don't know if the kids like me, they just got used to voting for me. But I liked it; I liked being involved in elected office. I wanted to be the kid up front that got his name in the school newspaper or got to make decisions or whatever—they weren't real major decisions. But also, at the same time, I followed politics because I'd helped Eisenhower in '52.

DePue: Did that mean you were reading the newspaper and watching the TV?

Edgar: No, no, no, we didn't have TV. See, I didn't have TV till I was in probably second or third grade. You didn't have TVs back then.

DePue: But that's about the time we were talking about here, I thought.

Edgar: Fifty-two was first grade, when Eisenhower won. But we didn't get a TV till—it was about the end of second grade or start of third grade, we got a used TV. No, I didn't watch the news then. I'd watch *Captain Video* and things like that, but I didn't watch the news.[7] But in 1956, I remember I was out in Oklahoma. I would go out to Oklahoma in the summer and spend a lot of time out there. And I was with somebody who married one of my cousin's sister—he was older—and we watched the Democratic Convention when Stevenson threw the convention open for VP and let the convention pick who would be the vice presidential candidate. It was the fight between Kefauver and Kennedy, and that went three ballots; and that was the most—last exciting...[8] And I was fascinated watching that. It was in an afternoon, and we watched that, and that hooked me.

Then in 1956—later that year—that's when I got hooked on watching the news. You had the Hungarian Revolution, and from then on, I was a news junkie. Because I thought, The Hungarians are going to get their freedom. They're going to throw the communists out, and we're going to go in and help them, and the world's going to be great. And that's because we knew that's what we'd been waiting for, and here it is. I ran home every day to watch the CBS evening news—Douglas Edwards did it; it was before Walter Cronkite—it was on for fifteen minutes—and watched the Hungarian Revolution. I was so mad about the Suez Canal because it interfered with the Hungarian Revolution. And it did—it took them off the front page, and Russians were able to send the tanks back in and wipe them all out. But that hooked me on international affairs, the Hungarian Revolution. And the rest of my life, I would stop eating—I'd cut doing what I'd—I'd go home and watch the evening news; I wanted to see what was going on. So that, probably more than any

[7] *Captain Video*, a popular half-hour science fiction show aimed at kids, ran weeknights at 7 o'clock from 1949 to 1955. David Weinstein, "Captain Video: Protector of the Free World and the DuMont Network," *The Forgotten Network: DuMont and the Birth of American Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 69. See http://www.archive.org/details/captainvideo for a 1949 episode of the series.
[8] Senators Estes Kefauver (D-TN) and John F. Kennedy (D-MA).

event in my youth, got me hooked on current events and got me hooked on being a news junkie.

I kept running for class office. But that made me different, there's no doubt. I was a little different because I was the politician of the crew. I cared about politics; I cared about current events. And most kids didn't watch the CBS evening news. I was probably the only one (laughs) in grade school who did. Or I was in middle school by then. This was fifth grade, I think, when the Hungarian Revolution happened.

DePue: Clearly, back in the fifties, Americans had a different view of politicians than they certainly do today, but I would still think that you might get a little bit of razzing from your buddies who thought you wanted to be in politics.

Edgar: They didn't pay much attention. My parents were worried. My mother to the day she died, I think, thought she had dropped me as a baby on my head; there was something wrong with me, because politics was not a profession that they thought that high up. She told me later on, she always wanted me to be a doctor or a lawyer; but after I got elected governor, she told me, "Yeah." She never told me that till after I was elected governor. She never told me she thought politics wasn't that worthy. But she said, "Maybe you've done all right." (DePue laughs) My family was not political, even though they were nominal Democrats. It wasn't something they sat around and talked about. Now, my relatives in Oklahoma would sit around and talk about politics. A lot of people sit around and talk about politics, but it never was something we talked around our family table, and that's why I was a little strange. I'd go out to my cousins in the country; they didn't talk politics. If they did, it was very derogatory; but it wasn't a major interest. Sports was more of a thing we'd talk about than politics. But because of that Eisenhower thing in '52, I kind of started having an early interest; then the '56 election; and then in seventh grade, there was the '58 election. I remember we had a sample ballot, and I stayed up watching the election and writing down who won, even the county offices. Who cared, when you were in seventh grade, who was county clerk? I did because that was on the sample ballot. But by that time, I had already run for class office several times, and... I think in fifth grade, I told a student teacher at Eastern I wanted to be president; that's what my goal was. And there aren't many kids running around in grade school that wanted to be president or be in politics, but I kind of knew that's what I wanted to do; after I realized I probably didn't want to be a train engineer any longer, or those things you go through as a young person.

DePue: Was your group that you hung with, was it the kind of group that would do the pickup game of basketball and football and baseball?

Edgar: Yeah. That's what we would do, particularly fifth grade on. In the summer and the free time you had, you'd jump on a bike and you'd go play baseball someplace. Tony wasn't much of an athlete, but they had a lot next to their house where we always played baseball, and they owned it. Tony didn't play much—I don't think he ever played—but we used to always play baseball over in that lot.

DePue: Was he there watching you when you were playing?

Edgar: I don't remember Tony until about sixth grade. Because when I went to the lab school—and the other thing that was kind of different with me: I went to public school the first four years, then at Eastern they had what they called the lab school, and they were going to expand it; they were going to add an extra grade. They only had one grade of each, but they were going to double it because they were building a new building. And so they came to the public schools, and if you lived in the south end of Charleston, you were offered a chance to maybe get to come to the lab school. Originally, you had to be registered when you were born to get into the lab school because everybody wanted their kids going to lab school. If you were a university professor, you could get your kids in, but if you weren't university connected, you probably had to register your child at birth, and there wasn't a guarantee you'd get in; but you might.

DePue: That's some forethought to be able to do that.

Edgar: The South Enders, the people that had the money, knew that; they did that. The lab school; we knew they were a little richer and a little smarter and a little uppitier than us public school kids. So we made the decision, my mom—I wanted to go to the school because they had an indoor swimming pool, this new school that—

DePue: The lab school did?

Edgar: The new lab school was going to be in a building that had an indoor swimming pool, because they had it for the college swimming team, but they put it in this building. So I wanted to go there because they had this swimming pool. And so I went to the lab school in fifth grade, but they didn't mix us. The first two years, they kept us separate. The public school kids that came in, we were in our own grade, and then those snooty (DePue laughs) lab school kids, of which Tony was the ultimate, was in the other class.

DePue: Meanwhile, Fred's moving along through the public school system.

Edgar: He didn't get a chance to do that. He was old enough that he didn't get that. He went right in... So now in junior high, seventh grade, they mixed us up, and that's when I really got to know Tony. We were in the same class. Before that, I knew him, but he wasn't somebody I wanted to hang around with because we just didn't deal with those... In sixth grade, we had a big dance at the end of sixth grade, so we asked girls and we'd dance with those girls.

DePue: You had a new girlfriend by that time, did you?

Edgar: Oh, yeah, yeah. See, what happened at the end of second grade: Mary got into the lab school, and her mother wanted here to go to lab school. She went off to lab school, so she was gone, and so I didn't have a girlfriend from then on until I got to junior high. It wasn't Mary. But Mary; her family and our family were very close,

and Mary was a friend up until she died. She helped me in all my campaigns, but… (laughs) never was a girlfriend again.

DePue: Do you remember going to see William Stratton when he came to town? Because Tony does.

Edgar: Yeah. We rode our bikes. Was Tony with us that day?

DePue: Yeah, he sure was.

Edgar: Because it was going to be the hundredth anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas debate in Charleston, and this is before, but they were having a parade to get ready to commemorate... This was in 1958. I can remember that because it was a hundred years for the debate. And Governor Stratton had come to town to be in the parade. And we were riding our bikes, a bunch of us, that day, so we started riding, and we got by the governor's car. Back then you had one state trooper driving. And we just rode behind the governor's car all the way, and waved at everybody in the parade. (laughter) That was my first parade, probably.

We rode all the way until the parade got over, and then he went to—there was a lady in town called Hazel Watson, who was somebody I dealt with later on in politics, who was Miss Republican in Coles County, and she was hosting a reception for Governor Stratton at her house. We rode over there, and we saw that—because we knew the governor's car—so we stayed over on the other side by the car, or we were someplace; the state trooper knew. We'd followed them and everything. So when the governor was coming out of the reception—it was outside; it was in springtime—the trooper said, "Governor, we've got some young men that would like to meet you." And I remember I got to shake Governor Stratton's hand.[9] What was interesting: Mother, at that point, was coming home from work, and Mother said, "Oh, all these people at Hazel's house. Must have the governor. I wonder who all the dignitaries are." And she says, "There's Hazel; that must be the governor...and that's Jim!" (laughter) But, you know, I met Governor Stratton then, and that was my first politician I think I ever met.

DePue: Twelve years old, I would think.

Edgar: Yeah, I'd have been twelve years old. Yeah. And later, I told Governor Stratton—we got to be good friends, and I told him that story. Of course, he didn't remember meeting me, but I always said, "You're the first politician I ever met."

[9] Following stints as a congressman and state treasurer, Republican William G. Stratton (February 26, 1914-March 2, 2001) served as a governor from 1953 to 1961. He lost his bid for a third term in 1960, losing to Otto Kerner. *Chicago Tribune*, March 7, 2001. Hazel Dooley Watson (May 20, 1906-March 18, 2001), who lived on Edgar's block, was a Republican Party activist from Charleston. At the time of her death, the Illinois House passed a resolution of condolence that called her the Coles County "matriarch of the Republican Party." In a 1995 interview with WILL-TV, Watson talked about her acquaintance with a young Jim Edgar. Hazel Watson, interview by Alison Davis, *Prairie Fire*, PBS, October 12, 1995. http://will.illinois.edu/prairiefire/segment/pf1995-10-12-d/. For the House resolution, see http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/legisnet92/hrgroups/hr/920HR0170LV.html.

DePue: Did you have a good enough feel for politics at that time to really understand the difference between Republicans and Democrats?

Edgar: No. In junior high, in grade school, no. In high school, maybe I began to think, Ah, Democrats are a little weak on defense. Republicans were stronger on defense. I knew Democrats were pro-labor and things like that, but not early on. I was for Eisenhower only because he was an Army general. I knew no ideology. I was for Eisenhower all the time, and Stevenson was kind of a dull guy to me. I was for Nixon against Kennedy. I never was taken up with the Kennedy thing.

DePue: I was going to ask you, since we were heading that direction anyway, about that 1960 election. You're fourteen by this time, so had that much more studying behind you and maturity under your belt. How closely did you follow that election?

Edgar: Oh, very closely. I stayed up most the night watching that. It wasn't really decided till the next morning, for sure.

DePue: Did you watch the debates?

Edgar: Yeah. I know I watched the first debate. I'm pretty sure I watched the second debate. Did they have three debates that time? I didn't watch them all.

DePue: I think they had two.[10]

Edgar: They had at least two, yeah. I watched the first one.

DePue: One of them was up in Chicago, wasn't it?

Edgar: The first one was in Chicago, yeah. That was in '60, and I went in 1985 to the twenty-fifth reunion they had of that up at—WBBM is where they held that. I went up there. Of course, Kennedy and Nixon weren't there, but they had the *60 Minutes* guy that had put that on. He was there, Hewitt, and I think somebody from Nixon's group and the Kennedy group was there.[11] But yeah, I watched the debate; followed that election very closely; was very disappointed when Nixon lost.

DePue: Who were your influences when you were in junior high and high school as far as teachers were concerned?

Edgar: I had a fifth-grade teacher that I think was important. Her name was Miss Friedenberger, and she was one who really encouraged kids to get involved in hobbies and things like that, I remember. She liked politics. We watched the inauguration of Eisenhower, his second inauguration. She had a TV in the

[10] Kennedy and Nixon squared off in four televised debates during the 1960 campaign: September 26, October 7, October 13, and October 21. http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=kennedy-nixon. The first debate is available at http://www.archive.org/details/1960_kennedy-nixon_1.

[11] Don Hewitt (December 14, 1922-August 19, 2009) produced and directed the Kennedy-Nixon debates, which were the first presidential debates to be televised. He created *60 Minutes* in 1968. *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2009, 3.

classroom so we could watch that and talk about that. I thought she was very good at current events, as most my teachers were—well, some of them were—they were old maids, and so their teaching was their whole thing there. She later got married. Years later in my legislative district, she was over in Edgar County near Paris, and I ran into her a lot. And she was no longer Miss Friedenberger—I never get used to her new name, Adams—but she just passed away about two years ago. But she was always a big supporter of mine. We were new at the lab school, and she was very good, I thought, at kind of getting us involved and getting us out. She would take us to college events. I thought she went all-out to get students involved, other than just the classroom stuff.

In junior high, I didn't have him as a teacher, but he was a student council advisor, a gentleman named Joe Connelly, who was the Democratic county chairman; he later was the state representative at the at-large election and was the guy that I picked to be student government advisor when I was student body president in—

DePue: Yeah, he's going to factor in importantly later on in your story.

Edgar: Yeah, he got me into the internship program. But he was a guy that was involved in politics, and I was in student council in junior high, and he did the advising there, so I liked him; but I didn't have him as a teacher, *per se*.

I don't know if there's—Miss Friedenberger, probably, just because she went all out, and I remember doing a lot of things with her and other kids. We'd go and do things with her that were out of the ordinary, and I think got me interested and got me to really enjoy Eastern's campus. Even as a fifth-grader, I'd go to ballgames; I'd go to lectures and do things like that.

DePue: Being interested in things like history, geography, current events, and politics, was your nose in a book more than some of your buddies'?

Edgar: I read a lot, but no, sports; still, that was the number-one thing because my brother had been good in sports, and I had to be good in sports because that was how you move up—

DePue: That was quite a legacy, to meet what Fred was doing.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. But that's just what you did. You played ball. That was our entertainment. We'd watch TV and play ball. I wanted to play baseball. I was on a Little League team that was the only undefeated Little League team in the history of Charleston. Fred's Little League team didn't do that. (DePue laughs) Fred had more to do with his team. They won, but they weren't undefeated. But sports was really the thing in the summer, particularly baseball. I didn't necessarily like baseball, but all you had to do was baseball, and then later on, football and basketball. But sports was what I spent a lot of my time... And particularly when you had free time, you would go play baseball. Later on, when we got in junior high, we'd go play basketball. We played football some.

DePue: Were you on the varsity team in high school in anything?

Edgar: Football. Charleston wasn't that big. (laughs) They needed eleven guys on both teams. Coach always said, "Edgar's not great on ability, but he's great on desire." Basketball, I always had a great seat at the game: I was sitting right next to Coach on the bench most of the time. (laughter) I didn't—

DePue: But you actually got on the field in football?

Edgar: Oh, no, football, because I knew the plays. As a freshman, I started fresh-soph because I knew the plays but a sophomore kid couldn't remember the plays. So intelligence did help a little bit in football. Then I lettered my junior year, but I got hurt, my back, and so I couldn't play any more football; and it really limited my basketball, though my basketball was probably more limited by my ability than my back. At Charleston, we had about 800 kids, so if you had desire, you could play football, and I had desire. And I had a little ability—not much. I wasn't fast enough to be a halfback and I wasn't big enough to be a lineman, so they made me an end. They did say they noticed, though, that I did run a lot faster after I caught the ball and somebody was about ready to tackle me. (DePue laughs) But I enjoyed football. Basketball I liked, I just wasn't that good at. I didn't play baseball in high school. I went out for track and became a high jumper, because you didn't have to run if you high jumped, (laughs) and I didn't like to run.

DePue: I would assume you have to do a lot of running in practice, though.

Edgar: Oh, you did, but that was penalty. In football, if you screwed up, you ran a lap, so I never did like running.

DePue: So it was too much like punishment, was it?

Edgar: Yeah, that's right. Running was punishment, yeah. But fifth grade, sixth grade, and junior high, we were on our bikes and we were usually riding to go play a game someplace. And then, of course, girls took over in seventh grade. We were very social in Charleston. To this day, there are probably still some grudges over who dated who back then.

DePue: Dare I ask who you were dating in seventh grade?

Edgar: I dated a girl who was born on the same day I was, named Susan Sutliff. She moved to Florida later and...

DePue: Susan Sutland?

Edgar: Sutliff. Don't ask me to spell that. But we dated; probably had a lot to do because we were born on the same day. We just thought that was kind of unique. When we became teenagers, we had a birthday party, joint birthday party. And back then, what you got at birthday parties were record certificates. We had 45s back then, and they cost a dollar, so everybody would give somebody a gift certificate, and you'd

pick your own. I had more 45s from 1959 because of that party. Still, to me, the highlight of music is 1959.

But the lab school—Eastern—in some ways, it definitely gave you more opportunity. You were tied with the university, so you got to do some things there. Kids were pretty competitive. They were, for the most part, pretty bright kids, and they had parents who were encouraging them, so it was very competitive, very social. As I said, even in sixth grade, but by seventh grade, boy, we had girlfriends, we had dances. The social structure was in place. We had sports. We played tackle football in junior high, just among ourselves because nobody else did that. We played basketball. But it was, I always thought, very competitive. I always felt like I had to prove myself and achieve, and I'm sure other kids did, too—and not that I resented that; I wanted to date the prettiest girl and do good in sports and be the class president and all that kind of stuff.

DePue: The question that I want to ask you here, and maybe this will help sort things out for me: a lot of people describe you as shy, especially at that age, but you're running for all of these offices and class president, and it sounds like you typically had a girlfriend—

Edgar: Yep.

DePue: —and you were doing all the sports things that make somebody popular, at least gets your name out there. How do we reconcile all of that?

Edgar: I think I was shy. I think it had a lot to do with that speech impediment; I think that always made me a little shyer. I wasn't a glad-hander, but once I got to know people, I was fine.

DePue: Were you better one-on-one than you were in groups, you think?

Edgar: Oh, probably. I think everybody was at that age. I don't think there were too many polished speakers at that age. I'll tell you a story about eighth grade that maybe Tony told you about. I think that I was quiet. I wasn't the boisterous—I was well behaved. I was not a troublemaker in school. I did what the teacher said. I wouldn't say I was always the teacher's pet, but I'm sure the teacher was happy to have me in class than most the kids they had, just because I behaved. My mother was very supportive, and so I...

And that really didn't go away. I remember when I was secretary of state—I don't think you'll talk to this guy, Ken Zehnder, who was my traveling aide, but he went to secretary of state events with me. He's now a lobbyist in Springfield for Northern Illinois University. I had been the secretary of state for about nine years, and I was getting ready to run for governor. I'd risen to be head of the secretary of state's group, too. But there are a lot of women secretaries of state, and he'd go out and eat with some of them. He said something about the secretary's getting ready to run for governor. They said, "Governor? I can't believe he'd run for governor. He seems too quiet and shy to be governor." (DePue laughs) So I still had that image

then. But I probably was; I was pretty reserved. Unless I get to where I feel very comfortable, I know people, I'm not going to let my hair down too much.

DePue: Not too many years ago, I encountered a definition of an introvert and an extrovert, and it described an introvert as somebody who enjoys being by himself, enjoys that kind of experience, and feels energized by doing that; an extrovert is somebody who gets energized whenever they're around crowds. And if an introvert's in a crowd, you feel like you're sapping your energy after a while. How would you describe yourself in that equation?

Edgar: No, I think I like both. I like being with a group and I like to... But at the same time, if it was a group I didn't know, if it was a new environment... I'm sure when I went to fifth grade and when I went to seventh grade—we mixed the classes together—I was a little, "Wait a minute, let's see." I know when I went off to college, I was that way. When I went to Springfield, I was that way. It's just kind of my nature that I'm going to wait and realize that I may not be up to par with some of these people yet.

Definitely that way when I went to the governor's meetings. I was pretty quiet at the governor's meeting. Very seldom ever publicly talked; sometimes [I did] privately. One-on-one, I was—but I wasn't one who was going to get up and say much at those meetings; there wasn't any need to. I liked going to them, and I got tired of listening to everybody else talk, but it wasn't something I feel like I had to always put my two cents in on. So that's something that probably stuck with me throughout my career; and I'm sure even to this day, for a politician, people always viewed me as a little different because I wasn't your typical politician in character and all. I'm probably a lot more boisterous now that I'm out and feel pretty secure (laughs) than I was back then.

DePue: I think we're a few sessions away from this, but you inevitably were being compared to your predecessor in the governor's office.

Edgar: Oh, yeah, he was so flamboyant. And there was a difference there. I don't know about Thompson when he was a kid. He was always pretty flamboyant, but I'm not sure; maybe that might be a reaction to something; he felt like he had to be. But no, I don't think—outside of the fact I always ran for office—most kids would say, "He's going to end up being governor." I think most of those kids, if you ask them, they might say, "Yeah, because he was always running for office." But I think in some ways, they probably would have been surprised that I would always run for office, based off my personality.

I do enjoy being by myself, but I don't mind being with folks, too. I don't like to eat by myself, but I don't want to spend all day with folks. I want to go for a hike; I want to go for a hike usually with my dog. I'll take my dog, but I'd just as soon not have anybody else with me. But if I'm going to go sit down and eat a meal, I want people there and talk to them about things. I don't want to go eat by myself. If I go to events, I'd just as soon have somebody with me. If it's a horse

race when one of my horses is racing, I'll probably want to be by myself because I get very uptight.

DePue: This is a good time to bring it up. When did you develop your fascination with horse racing? Was that in high school?

Edgar: No, it was long before that. Probably when I was—Oklahoma. Oklahoma, it was Indians and horses, cowboys.

DePue: You were just—

Edgar: But we'd go back and visit. They had horses, and I'd get so I wanted to ride horses. Mom had a good friend out in the country whose father had horses. Had a horse called Pancho, and I used to be fascinated with that. I was just fascinated with horses, so I always wanted to ride them. And then as far as horse racing; sometime in the mid-fifties you had a match race between Nashua and Swaps. Those are two great horses. Nashua is one of the great thoroughbreds of all time. And I remember watching it on TV. It was up in Chicago, at the old Washington Park.[12] I was for Nashua, and Nashua won. And really, that fascinated me, that horse race. That's the first horse race I remember. And the county fairs—they'd have horses out there, and most of the horses were racing in those races. That fascinated me. I just loved to be around horses. Never had one. I had some cousins that had them, and usually they were ponies that I'd get on, and they wouldn't move. They'd just sit there; I'd never get them to move. But I just was fascinated with horses. And I was fascinated with that horse race.

Then, a lot later on, when Secretariat ran, I was married, and I remember I had Brad on my knee when Secretariat won the Belmont, when he won it just by a hundred lengths. It was the greatest horse race performance of all time, and I remember I almost threw Brad up to the ceiling. (DePue laughs) Brenda said, "Be careful, you got..."— because I was so excited about that race. But I think it goes back to—part of it was Oklahoma, and they had horses, and Mom had a friend who had horses out there, and I just liked horses early on. And whenever I got a chance to be around horses or ride one, I'd want to do that. That's how Mom always got me to go to Oklahoma. That's a miserable drive: twelve hours on two-lane, old 66, with not a clean restroom between here and Vinita, Oklahoma. How she got me to go every year was I got to go down and maybe ride a horse.

DePue: Let's go back to your junior high, high school years. Junior high was in the lab school. Did you stay in the lab school in high school?

Edgar: No. There was a big decision to make. They had done away with the high school at the lab school by the time Fred was getting ready to go to high school. Tom had gone to the lab school high school, but they decided they were going to build a new school in Charleston; they were going to consolidate some things, and the lab

[12] The legendary race happened in August 31, 1955. The race itself, with voice-over by winner Eddie Arcaro, is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePbBleObAuM.

school for high school was going to be done away with; which was great because it's better to just have one school in a town that size than have the rich kids here and everybody else here. And that's probably where I developed a great feel for public education, because of that experience. I was fortunate to get to go to lab school, but I always thought I was a little better than the kids that stayed and went to the public schools, or the regular public schools, because I thought we were smarter.

The high school, they had put together; but when they built this new school at the lab school, they decided to put a ninth grade in, and so they wanted kids to stay for ninth grade. The first two years, when I was in seventh and eighth grade, not many stayed; but my year, everybody was going to stay except five of us who wanted to play sports. We knew if we stayed at the lab school, we probably couldn't play sports because you had to be there your freshman year in high school. So purely for the desire to play sports in high school, I went to the high school my freshman year while Tony and all the rest of them stayed at the lab school. Only five of us went, and I'd say a couple of them probably went because they would have trouble passing even ninth grade; and three of us went because we wanted to play sports. That clock's off. (DePue laughs) I got that at the last secretary of state meeting I went to. I don't know what the problem is; we've got to figure that out.

So for freshman year, I was one of five that went back to high school, the public school. And again, I went in, and they thought I was kind of shy because these are all new—I hadn't been around—some of these kids I had been around in first through fourth grade, but most of them, I hadn't. And also, this had been our arch-enemy, Jefferson Junior High, who we used to play. And here I kind of leave my—and it was hard in some ways to do that, but I wanted to play ball, and I just made that decision. But that was hard to do because that meant I was leaving the lab school, and that I was going to the enemy, in a way. But I also knew those kids were pretty good in sports. They may not be as smart as we were, but they were probably better at sports. But I pretty quickly got in. I didn't run for any class office freshman year except student council. They tried to nominate me for class vice president that first year, and I said, no. I was shy. And all the girls said, Ooh, and I wish I had done it. But I did get on student council; then the next year, I got elected class president, and I was class president those next two years; and then I was student council president. I couldn't be class president and student council president my senior year.

DePue: So sophomore year and junior year, you're class president.

Edgar: Class president.

DePue: Senior year, you're student council.

Edgar: Student council president, which I considered a better job, and we put somebody else in as class president.

DePue: Governor, how big a job was it to be class president and student council president when you're in high school?

Edgar: It wasn't very big at all, but it was prestige. Class president in my sophomore year was you raise money, because the big thing you do is your prom, your junior year. So I raised a lot of money. We got the candy machines one of those years. We were selling candy bars for a nickel and making a penny. But we had the only candy bar machines in the school, so I figured if we sold them for ten cents, we'd make six cents, and the kids didn't have a choice. (DePue laughs) So I raised them to ten cents.

DePue: You raised their taxes.

Edgar: I did. And they just got—I didn't care, but we raised a fortune. And we also sold some things our sophomore year. They never did anything their sophomore year. I decided my sophomore year—we sold fruitcakes or some terrible thing like that. You foist it off on your relatives, and nobody liked fruitcakes. People still send me fruitcakes and I keep trying to find—there's nobody alive any longer that still likes fruitcakes. But anyway, we made a lot of money, so we had a lot of money. But that's basically what I did sophomore and junior year, is raise money for the prom, which we put on our junior year and I controlled. Even though I had a committee, I pretty well picked the theme; I was pretty much in charge.

DePue: What was the theme?

Edgar: *Three Coins in a Fountain*. And we had a fountain.

DePue: A nice romantic theme.

Edgar: Yeah, I wanted to do *Summer Place*. That was my girlfriend—the one I really liked but we never could get together—we didn't get together for that dance, so we didn't do *Summer Place*; we made it *Three Coins in a Fountain*. And we had a fountain, and we had it at the University Union. I took that very seriously, being class president. And then student council president, yeah, you could do some things. First of all, I did announcements, so I was on the PA system every week. Everybody knew who I was—not that they didn't in that size school. But the election, I won pretty handily. I went all out on campaigning. I'm surprised Fred didn't tell you this story. The family loves to tell the story about when I got elected class president.

DePue: The bubblegum story.

Edgar: Yeah, and they always tell it wrong, and I want to make sure it's done right. It wasn't bubblegum; it was just gum. But it was in—

DePue: Fred was the one, I think, who told me the story.

Edgar: Oh, yeah, I'm sure, because Tony wasn't around for that. But it was in fifth or sixth grade, I can't remember now—I think it was really sixth grade. The teacher set

up—we're going to elect class offices, but we're going to have petitions; you got to get a petition signed by ten students, and you can only sign one petition. There's twenty-five kids in the class. I figured if I got sixteen kids to sign my petition, nobody else could get a petition to run against me. One day at noon, I went and got some sticks of gum and said, "Sign my petition, and I'll give you a stick of gum," and I got twenty signatures like that. (snaps) The teacher threw them out. (laughter) I still ran and won. So they always said I bought votes. I said, "That's not true. I didn't buy votes; I just encouraged people to sign my petition." That's a different thing than buying votes, I always thought. That was the story they always—but that story was true. And it was within the system—there was no rules you couldn't give them something like that—but the teacher just said, "I can't believe you did this!"

DePue: It wasn't like you were the first guy to invent this concept.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. So he changed the rules, and I think he finally allowed that you could sign anybody's petition, or you could only get ten signatures on a petition; I think that was what he finally did.

DePue: Did you stay involved with church activities in high school?

Edgar: Went to church. I went to church camp in junior high, and again, that was a big deal for me to go away for a week at a church camp. Didn't know anybody because there wasn't anybody from our church; we weren't that big. And I'd go into Springfield, Lake Springfield, and I'd stay—

DePue: Oh, wow.

Edgar: I ended up living about two miles from there. Two times, we lived within about two miles of that church camp. I thought that was in the middle of nowhere. You're out there in the lake in the woods; you didn't realize—

DePue: At that time, it probably was.

Edgar: There were some homes there, but you never knew it. BYF, Baptist Youth Fellowship, I don't think I went to in high school, but I went to church every Sunday. When away in college, I went to church every Sunday. It's engrained in me. I feel guilty if I'm not in church. And I don't always make church every Sunday if we're traveling or something, but I always feel guilty. Particularly if I'm home, I've got to go to church, and even when I'm away, growing up, I used to always try to go to church.

I remember in junior high, I was on a baseball team, and we went down to St. Louis to see a baseball game. We were down there over Saturday night, and let me tell you, there was nobody—especially the guys that took us down there, they weren't interested in church. So, I got to go to church. I'm walking up and down Kingshighway in St. Louis. This was not, I found out, a white area of town; this is a black area of town. (laughs) And I go in a couple churches, but it just seemed—I wanted to go to Sunday school, but the Sunday schools were already over; there

were just church services. But they were pretty lively church services, so I actually didn't go into any of them in the end; but they still gave me credit back at church in junior high because I tried. So I could get my pin. You get a pin. (DePue laughs) I had the pin, but I wanted to get—you get something for ten years or something like that.

DePue: You're driven by these achievements.

Edgar: That's right. Yeah, it wasn't all ideology. But to this day, I'll go to church. Especially if Brenda's there, we'll go. I don't always like going by myself, but we always pretty much go every Sunday.

DePue: One other question I want to ask about your high school: were there many blacks going to school with you?

Edgar: No, no. The only black guy in Charleston was the shoe shine guy, named Cracker Norton. Charleston was one of these towns years ago that had no blacks stay in after sundown. Mattoon had some blacks because they had the railroad over there, but we didn't have any blacks in Charleston. I don't think there were any black kids that I went to school with till high school, and maybe one or two then.

DePue: And you've talked about this quite a bit as well. Did you have a steady girlfriend when you got to high school?

Edgar: No, they'd change periodically. Most of the time, I had a girlfriend, but not all the time. This one girl I mentioned that—I don't want to get into this because Brenda will see this, and this is still a sore point with Brenda, so I won't touch this. But I was socially active and having a girlfriend, or date, most of the time. I'd hang out with the guys, but I did not enjoy hanging out with the guys; I'd much rather have a date. I'd much rather hang out with a pretty girl than I would a bunch of guys. I've always been that way. (laughs) And I'd rather go talk to a girl. I've always rather been with a girl when I was growing up. I don't know if it's because I was raised by my mother, but I'd much rather be on a date than I would—hanging out with the guys meant you didn't have a date (DePue laughs) to me. Some guys liked to hang out. You know, they'd drop their date and go out and hang out with the guys. I'd get done with the date, and I'd go home and go to bed. Even in college; I knew guys, they'd get done with dates—because we had hours at Eastern for women when I went—and they'd take the girls back at midnight, and they'd go out and drink. I'd go home and go to bed.

DePue: What was the typical date? Dinner, a movie, or something?

Edgar: In college or high school?

DePue: High school.

Edgar: High school, go to a movie and go get a pizza at Little Venice. That was a place downtown. That was the ultimate. But go to a movie or go to a ballgame if there was some event at school.

DePue: Let's get you back to politics a little bit. You graduated from high school in 1964?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: That means you were in high school when—Cuban missile crisis? Follow that pretty closely?

Edgar: Yep. I well remember when Adlai Stevenson said, "I'm willing to wait till hell freezes over."[13] I had been downtown—

DePue: When he was in the UN.

Edgar: UN, yeah. I don't know if we didn't have practice that night. For some reason, I was downtown with a friend of mine named John Adams, and his mother worked at a drugstore. We were there, and his dad had picked her up, and we were getting a ride back down; he lived near my neighborhood. So we were riding back, and they had the radio on—this is about 5:30 at night—and they had the UN session on. And I remember Adlai Stevenson saying that, and I remember Mrs. Adams said, "Well, good for you, Mr. Stevenson." She says, "I never really liked him, but I'm sure glad he said that." And yeah, I remember watching Kennedy's speech. Was it a Sunday night? Whenever he gave that speech, when he first announced the problem. I never appreciated we were close to the end, but I remember we kidded about it at school because I think they'd just done a cranberry recall.

DePue: Cranberry recall?

Edgar: Yeah, there was a recall on cranberries, something wrong with cranberries.[14] We were saying, "Yeah, we can eat cranberries and be ready for the bombs," or something like that. We all knew it at school. I was a junior in high school. But no, I followed it. I can't say that I remember it exactly. I remember hearing when they turned the ships around. But I do remember President Kennedy's speech, and I especially remember listening to Adlai Stevenson on that car radio when he said, "I'm willing to wait till hell freezes over for your answer."

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[13] During his debate with Valerian A. Zorin, the Soviet Union's UN delegate, before the Security Council on October 25, Stevenson asked Zorin to answer "yes or no" whether the Soviet Union had based missiles in Cuba. When Zorin replied, "You'll get your answer in due course," Stevenson said, "I'm prepared to wait for my answer till hell freezes over" and revealed intelligence photos of the installations in Cuba. *Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 1962. Cranberry recall was 1959.

[14] On November 9, 1959, HEW Sec. Arthur Flemming warned that the FDA had found that the weed killer aminotriazole, a cancer causing agent, had been used on cranberry crops in the Pacific Northwest. After tests revealed aminotriazole had also been used on some of the Wisconsin crop, Stillman Stanard, director of agriculture in Illinois, banned all cranberry sales in the state on November 16. The ban was lifted on November 20. *Chicago Tribune*, November 9, 20, and 21, 1959.

DePue: Did you consider yourself a Republican at that time or still kind of...?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. Yeah. No, I was Republican.

DePue: And did you have a better understanding of what that meant?

Edgar: No, I don't think so. It just meant I wasn't for Kennedy.

DePue: Let's jump ahead one year then, because it was roughly one year later, 1963, November, when Kennedy's assassinated.

Edgar: Yeah, I remember it well. I had a typing class, and I got done with typing—I don't know if I had got done with typing—and went to homeroom. It happened on a Friday. The next day was a regional student council meeting and we were going off to that, and I needed to go down—because I never went to homeroom; I was always down doing student council business. I was always roaming around school on my own. And I said to my homeroom teacher, "I need to go down to the office and do some..." She said, "No, no, you need to stay here." I said, "Why?" She said, "You haven't heard? Something's happened to the president." So we all sit down in homeroom. And the principal comes on and switches it on to CBS news, so we listen to Walter Cronkite over the PA system start talking about what's happened. We didn't have a TV screen there, but we had the voice coming over the p.a., and then we were listening to it when they said he was dead.

I think eventually we got a television or something, because I remember going home and watching it on television. The thing that impressed me: when they switched anchors—because after a while, they finally switched anchors. Harry Reasoner—that made Harry Reasoner. Harry Reasoner was just kind of another CBS guy, but he came on about third, and he was very candid. "Well, it's obvious," said; "apparently, President Kennedy was killed by some pro-communist guy." Nobody would ever say Lee Harvey Oswald was pro-communist, but he did.

I have to say that I wasn't grief-stricken. Again, I didn't have a strong feeling toward Kennedy. I just knew this was pretty dramatic, shooting the president. And my initial reaction—I'm sitting there in class, and they're talking, they're speculating, and the word was that Lyndon Johnson had a heart attack. I think I was the only one there who realized who the next in line was. It was Carl Albert; at that point, it was Speaker of the House.

DePue: Oh, you mean next in line after Johnson.

Edgar: I thought, Jiminy Christmas! Carl Albert president? (DePue laughs) That's the worst thing I can imagine! No, McCormack might have been still—John McCormack. He was even more senile—he was just an old—and I remember

saying, "Good heavens! McCormack's next in line to be president." I said, "That'd be terrible to have that old man be president!"[15]

DePue: And everybody's saying, Who?

Edgar: "Who? What are you talking about?" I said, "Succession line." I said, "If Johnson's dead, it's going to be this guy in the House." The Speaker of the House, was still John McCormack, and (laughs) jiminy, he had to be 120, in my mind, as a high-schooler, and I thought, Good heavens, he's going to be president. Then they finally came across and Johnson hadn't had a heart attack, and he was sworn in. And, of course, watched it all.

I was at church and did not see Oswald get shot by Ruby. I'm pretty sure I was at church, unless we got home in time. We had an early church service, and I've seen it so often I can't remember if I actually saw it or saw the replay. I was thinking I was at church when that happened, because that happened Sunday morning. The assassination was on Friday, and then Sunday morning is when the Ruby thing happened. And I think the funeral was, what, Monday or Tuesday?[16]

DePue: I don't recall, but I was pretty darn young at that time.

Edgar: Yeah, and we watched the funeral—

DePue: Did you watch it in school?

Edgar: I'm trying to think: did we have school that day? I guess we did. I watched the funeral. I can't—

DePue: It was certainly a traumatic experience for the country, and I would think as fascinated as you were with politics—

Edgar: What fascinated me was how everybody stopped. It was around-the-clock news. That's all there was on television. I remember going to the movie that night. I wanted to do something else. I went to the movie theatre, and there weren't many people, and we went to this movie because that's what you did; everything else was cancelled. They didn't cancel the student council convention. There was some controversy, but they didn't cancel that, and we went down to Robinson, Illinois, the next day for that convention. Of course, that's what we talked about. But the thing that impacted me: this is really serious, because that's all anybody's concentrating on all weekend. I knew politics was important and all, but we've never had a media event like that. That was the first of the super media event, and

[15] John W. McCormack (D-MA) was 72 years old at the time of Kennedy's assassination. He served as Speaker of the House from 1962 until January 1971. Carl Albert (D-OK), who was 55 years old at the time, served as the majority leader. He became the next person in the presidential succession line after Spiro Agnew resigned as vice president in October 1973.

[16] Kennedy was killed Friday, November 22, 1963. Jack Ruby killed Oswald, Sunday, November 24, while JFK's body lay in state at the Capitol. JFK's funeral was held Monday, November 25.

that's all you had on TV. That's all that happened for those three, four days, and I think that just made an impression on me.

DePue: That this is serious stuff.

Edgar: It's serious stuff; it's serious enough that, jiminy, you've got this much television coverage? And it impacted the way it did. Everything stopped. Everything we were doing kind of stopped, to a great extent, and it amazed me that something like that happened. But I think it was the television, particularly, because that's all television showed. Back then, you only had three networks, and everybody watched television. So, that, I think, had a huge impact on the American people. That made people realize—we had presidents die before, but we never had that kind of communication, where everybody could share in it.

DePue: Was the normal evening news still fifteen minutes at that time?

Edgar: No. In, what was it, 1960, Walter Cronkite had taken it over, and they changed it to half an hour.[17] And I think for the first half-an-hour program, he flew on a jet plane—they just were bringing out commercial jets, and he'd flown on one. I can't remember. But I remember watching the first half an hour because he talked about going to half an hour and how much news we had. But I think it was 1960 when that happened, 1960 or '61. It was before this [Kennedy's assassination].

DePue: Again, I would think that you're somewhat unusual if you're the kid who has to get home at 5:30 to watch the evening news.

Edgar: I couldn't always get home at 5:30 because I had sports. I had a job late in college, and they sent me out to Washington, DC, to do something. I was staying at the Mayflower Hotel, and I was eating—they told me, "Eat in the Mayflower. Just charge everything in the Mayflower."

DePue: That's right downtown, isn't it?

Edgar: Yeah. In 1968, this was a plush hotel; and I'm eating there, and I'm halfway through my meal; but it's 5:30, it's time, and I start to leave. The waiter said, "Wait a minute." I said, "I can't. I got the news. It's 5:30; I got to go watch the news." (laughter) I was still... I think I had lobster or something, because I was going down the menu—I was staying there every night, and that was the only thing I hadn't had, and I didn't know how you crack open those things anyway; I'd never had lobster before.

DePue: That's not what a kid from Charleston would grow up with.

[17] Walter Cronkite replaced Douglas Edwards as CBS Evening News anchor in April 1963, and the program expanded to thirty minutes in September.

Edgar: No, not in my side of town. And I could tell that that waiter was just horrified I was leaving all that, and I was like, "It's all right; I'm going to watch the news. If you want to save it for me...but I'm going."

DePue: We need to finish up your high school years.

Edgar: Okay.

DePue: Anything else significant about the last few months in high school?

Edgar: One thing we didn't talk—we got to go back to junior high—that has, I think, a huge impact on me: in eighth grade, I'm running for vice president of the student council. I couldn't run for president because I hadn't been on in it seventh grade. For some reason I didn't get on it in seventh grade, and you had to have a year's experience to be president, so I could only run for vice president. I ran for vice president, and I pretty well thought I was going to win; and other people had said, "You're going to win that."

I was running against a guy who was a ninth-grader, who was a geek. This guy had fuzzy hair, an IQ probably 180. He had the pens in the shirt. Harvey Baker. Nice guy, but he was one of these guys bordered on genius, but wasn't what I'd call one of the more socially active guys, and he ran for vice president. And I thought, There's no way this guy... I can beat him. There was another guy running that we'd been competitive with, but Harvey Baker, I just didn't think he was a serious candidate. And in particular, all the girls said, "Oh, you're going to win. Don't worry. Don't worry." And I thought, Yeah, I can count on their votes. You never know about the guys, but the girls, you know...

So they decide we're going to have a convention: we're going to have you all get up and make speeches and have signs out there and rallies and all that. So, okay. Well, I'd never given a speech up to that point. I'd talked to kids, but I'd never given a speech, and I didn't know what to say. And I didn't want to write something. I hate writing speeches; I just hate writing things out. So I didn't know what I was going to do. I had somebody to nominate me; then I'd get up to make the speech. I didn't have anything prepared. Harvey gets up first, gives a speech, and he promises after every basketball game, there'll be a sock hop; and the girls go wild. They love to dance. I'm looking at all my voters, and (DePue laughs) they're just going nuts over Harvey. So Harvey gives this speech, and the girls are all excited, and I get up, and I just mumble. I don't have a word to say. I'm just incoherent. I lose that election.

And that always made me extremely conscious to be prepared if you're going to get up and make a speech; don't leave anything to chance. And you better be good, because you could blow it; I blew that election on that speech. From that day forward, I don't think there's any time I ever got up to give a speech that I wasn't prepared. I may not have done very well, but I knew what I was going to say, and

I had my notes—I didn't ever give written [speeches], because I'm not good at reading something; but I'd have my four points and know what I was going to say.

DePue: Was part of your reluctance at that time just thinking back to grade school days, when you were doing the speech therapy thing?

Edgar: I was always nervous getting up. I was nervous through governor about making a speech, particularly if I was before a crowd that I wasn't sure how they were going to react. And after Harvey promised sock hops and the girls went nuts, (DePue laughs) I'm just beside myself. When I know I've got to get up and make a speech, I get very nervous and think about, You got to know what you're going to say. You just can't take a chance. You got to be prepared. And for many years, I was very nervous that you just can't wing it.

Later, I got so where I could wing it, but I always had three points in my mind. I'd always walk around with a little note card, and I'd always—I had speechwriters; they were useless—they knew they didn't (unintelligible) as speechwriters. I never read a speech, except the budget address and maybe the State of the State address. I don't think I ever read more than two other speeches my whole governorship; the rest were always three points and kind of go from there. And after a while, you got confidence, particularly in a campaign or as governor, that you could get up and do that. But boy, that was one of the most traumatic experiences I ever had in politics. That's in eighth grade. I always say you learn so much more when you lose an election than you do winning an election; and that, next to losing for state rep, was probably the most traumatic political experience I had.

DePue: I certainly intend to spend a little bit of time talking about that race with Max Coffey, so we'll get that.

Edgar: Yeah, but that eighth grade thing, that was one of those things that has always stuck in my mind, because that's one I thought I had won, and it slipped away, and I blew it. From then on, I'd be nervous, but at least I'd be prepared.

DePue: When you're in that last year, what did you think you're going to do with your life?

Edgar: In high school?

DePue: Mm-hmm. You were just about ready to graduate.

Edgar: I always figured I'd go to Eastern. That's why we lived in Charleston, and everybody went from Charleston High to Eastern. A few went to U of I, but I didn't have any desire to go to U of I. I didn't follow U of I. I watched basketball, but I didn't have this—I'd grown up around Eastern's campus and always figured I'd go to Eastern.

My best friend in high school was an all-state football player, and he also graduated first in our class. Name is John Best, who's now a minister in Charleston.

He'd grown up in the south of Charleston, in the poor farmland. They'd raised pigs, among other things. We had been close friends, and because he was all-state and very smart, he was recruited; Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, an all-boys school, had wanted him to come there. They knew that it helps to bring somebody with you, so they said, "We'd like you to come over for a weekend, see the campus, and bring a friend." So he said, "Why don't you come with me?" I didn't have anything else to do, so I go over to Wabash College with John.

And they treat us like royalty. Nobody at Eastern could care if we came or not. (DePue laughs) It was during the boom, and public schools didn't care. But Wabash was private, and they wanted John, so we got the royal treatment. I'd never—small college, had tradition, had ivy on the walls; this was neat.

DePue: You didn't notice that there weren't any girls around?

Edgar: No, I didn't notice that (laughs) in time. That's why I only went one year. And Wabash doesn't have hardly any dorms; everybody lives in a fraternity, so it's all through the fraternities. Both my brothers were active in the fraternities at Eastern, and so I'm going to be in a fraternity anyway; you just took it for granted. When you come over there, they farm you out to some guys who will take you to their fraternity house, and they'll kind of wine and dine you for the day. They took us to this fraternity house, and everybody, oh, they were glad to see us. Of course, we were—especially John, he was all-stater, and I was student council president—that helped a little bit, but it was more him. But here's two guys, and they're always in the rush business, those fraternities, trying to find prospective members. So I remember we were going to play basketball. I said, "I can't. I don't have any tennis shoes." "What size do you wear?" They went and bought me tennis shoes. (DePue laughs) They just went all out.

So we had a great time, and at the college, they said, "We'd like you to come back. We have these tests. If you take these tests, it will help on scholarships and also waiving out of classes. Come back for this weekend, when we do that." My grade point average was just barely into where they would have me come to take the test, but John, of course; his was up there. So we went back about two weeks later, and we got assigned to another fraternity house. This was a really neat house, and we were there for two nights and took the test. This college was really out to get me. These fraternities were sending me letters. Nobody from Eastern cared about me at all. Well, it cost a fortune. We didn't have any money, and Mom just kind of gulped when I said, "I think maybe I want to go to Wabash."

Long story short, that's what I thought a lot about my senior year: Where am I going to go to college? Before, I'd always taken it for granted I'd go to Eastern, but all of a sudden here, I had a chance to go someplace else, and they wanted me. And the question was, could we afford it, which we couldn't, but I still went anyway. I didn't win any scholarships, but because of my test scores, I didn't have to take the social science requirement—they call it civilization clues, kind of a broad history class—and that made me look like I was smart. So all of a sudden,

I go on all the lists. Here's a guy that waives out of CC; he must be smart. All the fraternities were worried about their grade point average because they had to keep their grade point average up. And the jock house, the Phi Delts—and I always thought I ought to be in a jock house; that's what my brothers were in—wanted me because their grade point was terrible; they needed to recruit some smart guys, and they thought I was smart.

So anyway, that whole end of my senior year was taken up with trying to decide: Am I going to go to Wabash? If I go, what fraternity? and then trying to figure out how we could afford it. The other thing was politics. I was watching the presidential election. And—

DePue: '64.

Edgar: Oh, that was the election of my growing up, and I sure didn't want Barry Goldwater—he was some right-wing conservative. I wanted a moderate Republican. Rockefeller kept screwing around—that's who I had been for, but he wasn't going to run. Bill Scranton was who I was really for, the governor of Pennsylvania. First he said he wasn't going to run, and finally in June, he announced he was going to run. Barry Goldwater pretty well had it sewed up. He'd beat Nelson Rockefeller in the California primary. If Rockefeller had won the California primary, they'd have probably stopped Goldwater, and Rockefeller might have been the nominee, but he lost it by 2 percent. Happy, his second wife, had just had a baby and reminded everybody of the divorce, and this is a Republican primary.

So he dropped out, and Scranton comes in at the last minute. Scranton asked, "If anybody can help me, please write." I write him a letter. I've probably written ten letters in my life of my own, so any of these letters you see, I didn't write them; somebody else did. I might have signed them. I wrote a letter about how, being from Illinois, being the land of Lincoln and the Republican Party the party of Lincoln, I just thought it would be terrible to have somebody who voted against the Civil Rights bill be our nominee—Goldwater voted against the Civil Rights bill—and how much I would like to see Governor Scranton be president; and if I could help... Lo and behold, a week later, I get a phone call from Scranton, Pennsylvania. Illinois is one of the few states where you have a pretty large block of uncommitted delegates.

DePue: Going into the Republican convention.

Edgar: Going into the Republican convention, including in our area. So they're going to take a train trip through central Illinois, and one of the stops is going to be Mattoon. They wondered if I could help put together the rally. And so one of their advance guys comes out from Pennsylvania and calls me, and I meet with him. They need to get a pep band, they need to get a crowd, they need signs up around. I get the Charleston pep band; I get kids to show up; I get signs. We plaster the county with signs about this rally. I think this was short notice. We get about three thousand

people out at the railroad station in Mattoon; the Goldwater guys from Eastern also come, and we get in a brawl with them. I've got the Charleston pep band there, and here's these Goldwater guys. All of a sudden, we start swinging; and the guy with the tuba, he's (unintelligible). (laughter) I'd never been in a brawl before, but we have a brawl.[18]

Finally get that over with, and Scranton comes through, and they have a great crowd and everything. The advance guy just says, "Oh, this is great. You get to San Francisco, and we'll have a job for you at the convention." I'm not eighteen yet; I think I'm still seventeen, because my birthday is in July, and this is before that. I'm excited. I go home and tell Mom "Mom, I'm going to San Francisco for the convention." She looked and me and said, "You're not going to San Francisco; you're staying here." (laughs) So I watch that on TV. That was a mean convention. They unplugged Rockefeller while he was speaking at that convention. Ugh, that was a nasty convention.

DePue: That's August '64?

Edgar: Yeah. At the Cow Palace in San Francisco. So I watched it on television. But that all was the end of my senior year, and that was a big deal. I get a personal letter from Bill Scranton, thanking me. I'm sure it was probably some autopen, (laughs) but I thought it was personal. So that was my first involvement in non-school politics. But that was all that senior year in high school. I couldn't play sports that year because my back was hurt. We had the Kennedy assassination. Bigger thing: the Beatles. That was the big thing.

DePue: Spring of '64 is when they came on the *Sullivan Show*?

Edgar: It was about February, I think, of '64 when they were on the *Sullivan Show*. That changed the music landscape. That's what I remember. I remember Kennedy got shot, but then I remember the Beatles came. It was kind of like you had a death, and you had this huge awakening, had the Beatles. And a lot of that stuff I didn't like. I liked the Beatles. A lot of those groups—Rolling Stones and all those groups—but the Beatles, I liked from the word go. Because I remember going over to Wabash, and they had some Beatle records, and I thought that was neat. But again, I'd always just taken for granted I was going to Eastern, so there never was much anxiety on my part about college; I just figured I'd go to Eastern.

DePue: But did you know what you were going to be doing after college?

[18] Scranton announced his candidacy in a speech at Baltimore on June 12, 1964. Desperate to make inroads on Goldwater's strong support in Illinois, where a June 30 meeting of the Illinois convention delegation at the O'Hare Inn in Rosemont had committed forty-eight of the state's fifty-eight delegates; Scranton planned a whistle-stop tour from Springfield to Chicago, ending with an evening rally in Evanston's Fountain Square. Scranton scheduled a ten-minute stop in Mattoon, arriving at 2:45 PM, for July 7. The *Tribune* reported "1,200 turn out at Mattoon" but "only a few hundred stayed to hear him" after a rain shower passed through before his talk. *Chicago Tribune*, July 1, 6, and 8, 1964.

Edgar: Oh, yeah, politics. I was going to be in government. That's all I wanted to do. International affairs; I didn't know what, but I wanted something in that vein.

DePue: Was that what you were telling people when they'd ask you?

Edgar: Yeah. People who knew me just figured I was going to be in politics. And really, at that point, I wanted to be in international affairs. You had the Peace Corps established. I thought that's an option; I would try to do something like that. But I was really into international affairs—knowing what was going on in the world. While I wasn't a big Kennedy fan—I wasn't like a lot of kids—the Peace Corps, I really liked that idea.

DePue: What were your personal private ambitions?

Edgar: To be president.

DePue: To be president. Were you telling people that?

Edgar: I said I wanted to be a politician. I think be a U.S. senator. I'd read *Advise and Consent* (1959), by Allen Drury, and I loved that book. Back then, being a U.S. senator was a good job. You had the club. And I probably knew every U.S. senator there was in the country at that point.

DePue: Most elite club in the world.

Edgar: Yeah. I thought, Yeah, that's what I want to go do. Again, state government wasn't on my radar screen. You never talked about state government. Governor Scranton from Pennsylvania had come from Pennsylvania, but that wasn't because he was a governor; it's just he was a moderate Republican that *Newsweek* wrote this article I thought was pretty good about him. So, no, I knew I wanted to be in government of some kind. It wasn't business or anything like that. I wanted to go be in politics, be an officeholder.

DePue: We're getting towards the end for today's session, but I want to ask you about this story that Tony told me about.

Edgar: Oh, in high school?

DePue: At the end of your high school career.

Edgar: Yeah. I was student council president. We're getting ready for the next year election, and, of course, I had a candidate. We pretty well always had a machine I put together of people; I tried to move the right people.

DePue: A machine politician in Charleston High School, huh?

Edgar: Yeah, I guess. I always wanted to pick my successor. I put a guy in for class president, and I wanted to have a guy—and a good friend of mine's a junior. He's

named Frosty Heath. Frosty wasn't real interested, but I thought he'd be a good guy to be student council president. So I wanted Frosty to run. There had been another guy on the student council named Jerry Ambrose, who had been good to me, but I just thought Frosty was more of a leader. People looked up to him more. So I got Frosty to run for student council president. Jerry Ambrose wanted to run, so he ran, too, and he got Tony to give his speech.

I had to be neutral, but I was running the program that day. So Tony gets up there and Tony is great. Tony was funny, but he was a good talker. He gives this talk about how he's "watched the school government flounder and everything"—basically attacking me in this speech. I'm just sitting there—everybody said I was squirming—I wasn't. I was just sitting there: Tony, you phony no-good... Because Tony and I were friends, but he was just giving a speech. He was going to be a lawyer, and he could be on either side.

DePue: Just for the fun of it?

Edgar: Yeah, he could be on either side. I knew he had no real, true beliefs. The crowd's laughing because he's just ripping into the way things are going. Well, that's me. (DePue laughs) Then Jerry wins the election. I always felt—because Jerry really had been a good student council member and probably was the right guy. Frosty just wasn't into it, but I thought everybody liked Frosty. They looked up to him as a leader.

DePue: He's got a good nickname.

Edgar: Yeah. And Jerry, he's smart, but Tony's speech, and Jerry won. Jerry went off and became a very successful lawyer at Sidley and Austin in Chicago, and Frosty ended up working at a lumber company down in Effingham, last time I checked. He's happy—probably happier than Jerry was. But Tony—he just loved lambasting me at that speech. He didn't say my name, just said, "The current administration..." and going on. And "flounder"—I remember he used the word "flounder" about eighteen times. I just said, "Tony, you..." And as I said, we were good friends. We're good friends. "You phony no-good." But Jerry had asked him to give a speech, and he did. So he loved that because he knew I squirmed; and then Jerry won, so he really loved that too, because he beat me. (laughs)

DePue: That's probably a good note to finish on for today. We've spent quite a bit of time, and it's been great listening to these stories and getting some insights into what it was like growing up in Charleston in those years.

Edgar: Charleston: again, let me just say about growing up there. It was particularly great to grow up in Charleston because it was a small town but there was a university, and that combination, to me, is the best combination you could have. Small enough that with limited ability you could do what you wanted to do. With the university, you were exposed to things you wouldn't be exposed to otherwise. You could be isolated in downstate Illinois in many towns—not have the opportunity to have

some of the cultural and intellectual things that you do at a university community. Because I grew up around the campus, I took advantage. I think that helped maybe broaden me more than I would have been if I had been in another town of ten thousand people, without a university, in downstate Illinois.

While we didn't have a whole lot of money, I don't think I ever felt like I was poor. I don't think I ever felt like I did without. We didn't talk about this, but I always had jobs. I mowed yards, passed papers, worked in a jewelry store a summer, worked at a Dairy Queen in high school—unfortunately developed a taste for chocolate milkshakes that has probably put twenty pounds on me that I didn't need. I always felt like I was very fortunate, even though looking back, I think it was unfortunate I didn't have a father when I was growing up. I think that's something that would have been good to have. But I never felt like, growing up, I lacked any opportunity, never thought I couldn't do something. I thought about going to law school, and I thought maybe I can't afford some of the law schools. It was the first time in my life I ever thought, Gee, I can't do what I want to do. Because I got to go to Wabash when I really shouldn't have gone to Wabash; we couldn't afford it. But I always had clothes I needed. I always got to do things I wanted to do, maybe not the degree other kids—I didn't get to go to Florida and things like that—but that wasn't a big thing.

So I feel that I had a pretty normal childhood with the exception of maybe being a political junkie, which wasn't normal. I was raised by a single parent, which was kind of unusual back then. You didn't have that many women raising their children after the war as much. But again, I felt very fortunate. I am convinced—I may be wrong—if I'd have grown up in a big city, I would have never been governor; if I had grown up in a small town without a university, I'd have never been governor. I just think that all kind of helped get me prepared or interested in whatever came along later. Of course, anything can change. You could have missed one of your steps and not gone where you ended up going, but I feel very good about the opportunities I had growing up.

DePue: How about growing up with a father and a mother? Would you have been as focused and ambitious?

Edgar: No. I'm sure that in some ways my mother probably would have allowed me to think I could do whatever I wanted to do and encouraged me. Even though she didn't like politics, as I found out later, she never discouraged me from doing those things. So, yeah, it's possible I could have had a father, and I might have gotten in his business. I don't know, I'd have been trying to sell you a typewriter right now, or something like that. Because I think if Dad had kept that business, I'm sure Fred would have gone into it.

DePue: Yeah, that's certainly the impression he gave me.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: That Tom wasn't interested.

Edgar: Tom wouldn't have been. I might have, but it might have given me a whole different perspective. I kind of developed my own thing that I watched growing up, and that was politics; that was government, international affairs, and all these things. Because I was kind of left on my own to that degree, I could do that. And again, Mom—I don't know if the story's in here, because Dan always liked to talk about it—but they started the Coles County Historical Society, I think when I was in high school. It cost twenty-five dollars to be a charter member. That's pretty expensive. Mom thought I ought to be a charter member.

DePue: That you ought to be?

Edgar: Yeah, not her, but she knew I loved history, she thought that'd be good for me, and so she got me to do it. She gave me the check and had me go give them. So I'm a charter member, even though I was a high school student, of the Coles County Historical Society. But again, that was Mom just thinking about what I wanted to do and liked to do.

DePue: Cultivating your interests.

Edgar: Yeah. It's like going to college. There's no way we could afford me going to Wabash. She had to take out a loan and do all kinds of things, but that's what I wanted to do, and she was going to make sure I got a chance to do what I wanted to do. So again, I look back on my years growing up. I'm sure there are some things I didn't—I didn't have a great appreciation for large cities. I didn't know minorities, but I didn't dislike minorities. I hadn't grown up around an environment where you thought ill of them. I was a big proponent of civil rights. Martin Luther King, I thought, was one of the great men of our time—Martin Luther King, Jr. While I think I lacked some of that knowledge, in some ways, that naiveté might have been good for me, because I was a little more open-minded than I might have been otherwise.

Again, I look back—I felt fortunate to get a chance to grow up in a town that was small but also had a university. I had a mother who was both father and mother and did whatever she could to help me along the route I wanted to go. I was fortunate my two older brothers didn't kill me at some point, (DePue laughs) because they would have liked to. Fred was kind of my—I always tried to reach his level at sports and things, but it also helped me—for all my shyness and everything, everybody said, "That's Fred Edgar's little brother." That probably opened a few doors for me, particularly when I went off to high school. Fred was pretty well thought of. I feel very fortunate in that I think I had a lot of drive, but I don't think I had any huge mountains to overcome, as maybe some people would have.

DePue: Excellent. Thank you very much, Governor.

(end of interview 1)

Interview with Jim Edgar

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Interview # 2: May 22, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Friday, May 22, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is my second session with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good morning, Governor.

Edgar: Good morning.

DePue: This is the Friday before Memorial Day, just to kind of put a marker on the wall for that. We had an excellent discussion yesterday about growing up in Charleston, Illinois, in what I believe you would agree was an idyllic kind of a setting and a great place to grow up.

Edgar: That it was.

DePue: And we got you to the point where you're just about ready to head over to Wabash College, so let's pick it up from there.

Edgar: In the fall of '64, I left home, which was a pretty big deal because, as we talked yesterday, I was pretty well spoiled by my mother. And I went from all the luxuries of a mother who would do anything for me, to living in a fraternity house where I was not only living in the house and going through pledgeship—which is a lot tougher than living in a dorm and going through pledgeship—but also had to clean pots and pans and work in the kitchen so I could try to earn some keep to afford going to Wabash. So it was a (laughs) very traumatic experience. They had all been so nice and wanted me to come; and, of course, the fraternities, they all rush you, and you go through that, and you begin to think you're pretty hot stuff. And then, second day after we got there, they woke us up at three o'clock in the morning, and we had our first lineup. It was pretty tough from a personal point of view. I never was in the armed service, but I always felt like my year at Wabash, particularly my pledgeship, was my boot camp in some ways in life. It was just so different because there was nobody there taking care of you; you better take care of yourself. And as a pledge, you had to clean the house and be attentive to any of the actives. They

played us pretty—they didn't touch you, they didn't hit you; but boy, other than that, it was psychological abuse. (laughs) I thought that—

DePue: Did they have their own hazing traditions?

Edgar: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Any in particular that stick with you?

Edgar: Raw eggs you'd have to take once in a while. I had a bad back from football in high school and I had to quit football, so I wouldn't have to do all the exercise, the pushups and all that; but somebody else would have to do it for me in my pledge class. (DePue laughs) So this poor guy had to do twice.

DePue: Made you very popular.

Edgar: Oh yeah, yeah. I was the pledge class president, and my major goal in life was to figure out how we could survive. That was one of the transitions.

The other thing is, of course, I had grown up in Illinois. Even though I was from Oklahoma, I'd spent most my life in Illinois. This was Indiana; this was like another world. And so you had a completely different environment. I didn't know anybody there. There wasn't anybody from my hometown. They were all from Indiana, and they all talked about the Indianapolis 500, which I didn't care about, and they talked about Rick Mount, who was a basketball player in one of the towns. It was all Indiana. So it was just like being dropped in a foreign country. Now, they did speak English, (DePue laughs) but other than that it was pretty foreign to me.

Plus, Wabash was a tough school. It was, academically, a very tough school. And I'd been all right in school; I wasn't any Einstein—at least my grades weren't. I usually did pretty well on my test scores, when you do aptitude tests; but I didn't do that well, necessarily, in schoolwork because I had other things on my mind. As I think I alluded to yesterday, one of the reasons they wanted me is I had taken tests, and I had been able to exempt out of their introductory history course; so everybody thought I was smart. Well, I'm smart in history, but other than that I'm not very smart. So the struggle that first semester over there was you wanted to make grades, because if you didn't make grades, you didn't go active. That was part of the incentive.

DePue: You didn't go active in the...?

Edgar: In the fraternity.

DePue: Wow.

Edgar: And again, we lived in a fraternity house. (laughs) And I say that—somebody listening to this tape: "What's the big deal about that?" You were a pledge twenty-four hours a day, and there was no escape. They did require study hours, so we had

our regimented—when we had to be at our desks studying. We all lived upstairs in this dorm area that kept the window open all night, in which you froze. That was the coldest winter I've ever experienced in my life. So there were a lot of personal things that were a complete, 180-degrees difference than what I had experienced. Besides, I didn't have any money, and a lot of these kids had money, and I didn't have any money to buy clothes or do hardly anything. So where I never had any money in Charleston to speak of, I had enough; but here, I just remember feeling very poor and very homesick. And I go into all this detail because it really made an impact on me. That was a very traumatic experience.

But the night before our first classes—I was in the Phi Delta Theta fraternity, and the Phi Delts had a tradition: the pledges would all go around and steal all the trophies of all the other fraternities. Apparently we did this every year, and you'd think they'd be waiting for us. But we went around to every other fraternity that night and stole all their trophies and brought them back to the Phi Delt house. So we were up all night. We got to bed about six o'clock, and I had an eight o'clock math course. And math—I had always done well in high school, but then they came in with new math, and I never did understand new math. I slept through my first class in college, and I don't think—I never did catch up in that math class. (DePue laughs) I think I got a D out of that. It was not a good—never did understand what we were talking about. So anyway, going to Wabash was quite like throwing cold water in my face. Just all of a sudden, life was a lot different.

DePue: Based on our discussion yesterday, I've got to ask you: how was the cooking? Did it compare to mom's cooking?

Edgar: Oh, no. We had a cook there—nice old lady—but she couldn't cook. Of course, she was cooking for about sixty-five people and had a budget, and I think they bought the cheapest food they could find; so, no, it didn't compare at all. I had plenty of food, but one thing good about working in the kitchen, you kind of could—what was left over. The few times I got to go home—that first semester, I think I only went home at Thanksgiving—I was so glad to go get a good meal (DePue laughs) and not have to wash the pots and pans afterwards, and didn't have to clean up the house.

DePue: Have you ever been accused of being a fussy eater?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. If you talked to my mother or you'd talk to my wife, they would tell you, very much a fussy eater. Very fussy about a lot of that kind of stuff. So anyway, going off to Wabash was a great, new experience, but I have to say, right away, I thought, Boy, what have I done?

Then the other thing: there were no girls. That's a terrible way to get an education. We would go down—the first weekend I was there, one of the actives took me, and he got me a blind date down at DePauw. And a blind date is always dangerous, I found. I had several blind dates from DePauw. Now, they may have thought they didn't get a very good deal. I have to say that that wasn't my favorite

way of socializing. So again, school was tough. You never knew in the middle of the night when they were going to get you up for a lineup. You just slept in fear. (laughs) And it didn't take me long to have friends in the pledge class, but they all were Indiana, Pennsylvania—nobody from Illinois. There was a kid from Peoria. We weren't that close. Anyway, it was a traumatic experience in a lot of ways.

DePue: How far into it did you decide, I think I want to go someplace else next year?

Edgar: You always thought about that. After you got through pledgeship the first semester—and hell week was unbelievable. For four days, we had burlap bags we wore, and we had to carry an onion around. It was just an experience, and you go through this whole pulling together as a pledge class. And being president of the pledge class, I felt like I had to kind of hold everybody together and help the guys that really were suffering. But after you got through that first semester and made grade—so you go in active, you were no longer in pledgeship—it was a lot better; you weren't worried that at about three o'clock in the morning, they were going to get you up for a lineup or harass you in some ways.

But socially, as I said yesterday, I'd just as soon hang out with a girl than I would a bunch of guys. Basically, Monday morning, guys would start off not too bad because maybe they'd had a date that weekend at DePauw. But by the time they got to Friday, they hadn't bathed, they hadn't done—and they were a pretty cruddy-looking group of guys. Some guys drank. We weren't supposed to, officially, have alcohol in the fraternity house, but some guys did have it. And so we'd have keggers or we'd have parties, and everybody would just get blitzed. I didn't drink, so that was kind of a bore. And a lot of these guys, they'd have their dates, and they'd all get drunk. I'm sober with my blind date, and it just wasn't (DePue laughs) something that I thought was all that great.

A lot of tradition at Wabash, which I enjoyed, probably because I like history. Their—

DePue: Did it have a religious affiliation?

Edgar: Initially it was Presbyterian, but outside—they did have a department that taught religion. I don't know if anybody that taught religion was religious, but you would not have noticed. I'd go to church every Sunday, and I think outside the Catholics who would go to Mass, I went to the Baptist church, and I know I was about the only guy that went every Sunday. And actually, they had me over for church things, and so that was kind of an escape from the—(laughs) especially that pledgeship semester, when you were just looking for any way to get out and find somebody that would be nice to you and fix your meals.

DePue: So essentially, you're paying an awful lot of money to get harassed like this.

Edgar: Paying a lot of money to be miserable. Toward the end of the second semester, it was spring, and it was the end of the thing, and it was okay. But I knew my grades weren't spectacular—I did okay in history and that area, but English was a struggle

a little bit. I took French—I did all right in French because I'd had French in high school. I just thought, I'm not really—and most people who went to Wabash were going to go on to graduate school. A lot of doctors come out of there. In fact, I would say there were about eighteen in our pledge class, and I imagine eight of them are doctors now. So kids were pretty smart there, and you knew you had to have pretty good grades because you were going to go to law school, you were going to go to medical school, you were going to go someplace. So I was a little concerned my grades weren't going to be good enough to go on and get a graduate degree in something, which I figured I was probably going to have to do.

The other thing I always worried about, too, is I don't want to live in Indiana. (DePue laughs) If you're going to live in Indiana, Wabash is a great place to be. Produce a lot of governors and very influential people in Indiana, but I want to go back to Illinois. I just learned, about a week ago, that Governor Green, who was governor in the forties, had gone one year to Wabash, went off to World War I, and didn't go back to Wabash.[19] I guess I'm the second Illinois governor that went (DePue laughs) to Wabash.

But I began to think, Maybe I ought to think about it—plus, I can't afford it. If they don't give me a scholarship or give me some money to come back, there's no way I can do it.

DePue: I take it your grades weren't looking that great to be eligible for a scholarship?

Edgar: My grades weren't that great, but they give it if you make grades. If you've got about a C average, they'll consider it, particularly if you've been there and it looks like you're involved. I was active in my fraternity and I knew people around campus and stuff, so I was involved. One of the guys in the fraternity—an upperclassman's father was the general counsel to the university, and I think he pulled some strings. So if I'd have come back, they were going to pay half my way.

DePue: Tuition or...?

Edgar: Tuition, yeah, which is the big deal there. Room and board was minor compared to tuition. And they're going to pay half that and whatever. But I decided I ought to take some classes in the summer, and so I went back to Eastern that summer. But that year at Wabash, again, I always look back on it kind of like my year in service (DePue laughs) because it sure wasn't how I wanted to do things. I think it was good for me because it got me away and kind of made me realize there's a lot bigger world out there than just something around Charleston, or even Eastern.

But I have to say that when I went to Eastern for summer school, I knew I wasn't going back to Wabash. First of all, there were girls, (DePue laughs) and it was just a lot more laid-back. So I didn't really tell them until the last I wasn't coming back, because I just kept waiting and trying to decide, Do I want to...? But after I went to summer school at Eastern, I thought, No, I want to stay there. But

[19] Dwight H. Green (Republican) was governor from 1941-1949.

Wabash, I always viewed as a great experience. And sometimes I used to regret—maybe it would have been good to go through an institution like that and be involved in all the tradition. If it had been coed, I probably wouldn't have left; if it had been in Illinois, I probably wouldn't have left; but it wasn't either (laughs) one of those, and it was very expensive.

DePue: Why was being in Illinois such an important thing for you at that time?

Edgar: I thought I wanted to be in politics, and I also thought maybe I wanted to do international affairs. Those are the two things. But I thought if I wanted to be in politics, I'd start in Illinois. I knew I didn't want to start in Indiana. Indiana, in my impression, was the Mississippi of the north. I just wasn't that enamored with that. The reason I went to Wabash is my best friend, who was this all-stater. He didn't go to Wabash. He ended up going to Dartmouth.

DePue: (laughs) He didn't even start by going to Wabash?

Edgar: No. He went to Dartmouth, and they got me, but they didn't get him. And we both quit after one year and went back to Eastern. He played football but got hurt, and he was really homesick, too. So that year at Wabash was a good experience for me. I'm not sorry I did it. In a lot of ways, it helped me when I came back to Eastern. I think if I'd have gone to Eastern my freshman year, I'm not sure what would have happened to me. I think I'd have just been one of the townies and maybe in a fraternity, but coming back that sophomore year gave me a lot better perspective. And the important thing when I came—do you want to talk any more about Wabash? I'm trying to think; I don't think there's much more.

DePue: No, I think I was about ready to move on.

Edgar: When I came back to Eastern, one of the deals was a friend of my brother's was partners in this new clothing store, and he said they'd give me a job.

DePue: Did you start this the summer that you were taking classes?

Edgar: No, I didn't start the summer. They weren't opened yet; they were just getting it ready. It was a store, but they built a new store. He was the junior partner, but he was able to get them to take me on. Working at that clothing store was the key to my time at Eastern. That's what made me at Eastern.

DePue: The clothing store's name?

Edgar: Cavins & Bayles. On campus. And you have to understand, in the 1960s, Eastern was a very well-dressed college campus. Lot of kids wore coat and tie to class. All the fraternities would have their day, and they'd all wear their blazers. So it wasn't just sweatshirts and blue jeans. In fact, we'd have clothing salesmen come through and say Eastern's one of the best-dressed campuses they go to when they sell products. So working at this clothing store, which was right across from Old Main and Pem Hall [Pemberton Hall]. Pem Hall is the oldest women's dorm in the state.

My mother lived in Pem Hall, my wife lived in Pem Hall, and my wife's grandmother lived in Pem Hall; and if we could have got our daughter to go to Eastern and live in Pem Hall, she would have been the first-ever fourth-generation Pem Hall girl, because Brenda's grandmother lived in Pem Hall right after they built it.

DePue: Was Pem Hall a sorority?

Edgar: No, it was a dorm, but it was the first women's dorm at any state university in Illinois, and it had a lot of tradition. It was the old building. The clothing store was right across from that. And that's important later; that's how I meet Brenda, too. But that clothing store, when I went to work in the fall—summer school's pretty laid-back and everything, but fall, things get going pretty full speed. In the summer at Eastern, you didn't pay attention to who belonged to what fraternities; all the Greeks got together. You all hung out together. And even though I wasn't a Greek at Eastern, I had been a Greek at Wabash. They didn't have a Phi Delt at Eastern, which meant I couldn't join any fraternities, which was a good thing because that kept me from being—I became a social member of the Sig Taus, which my brothers had belonged to. That was the drinking fraternity; I had absolutely nothing in common with those guys. And at the clothing store I worked at, we had somebody from about every fraternity working there to help get business in. And one of my best friends in college was a Sig Pi. That was the real preppy fraternity and the well-dressed fraternity. So I—

DePue: Wait a minute, the preppy, well-dressed is also the drinking fraternity?

Edgar: No, that was the Sig Taus. That's the Animal—

DePue: Sig Tau.

Edgar: They're the Animal House. They even put "animal" on their sweatshirts. "Animal House," they put on their sweatshirts. They thought that was a plus. So while I was a social member of that fraternity, I never socialized with them. I couldn't be in a fraternity because I had been a Phi Delt. It's secret stuff and all that; you can't... Later, they got to have Phi Delts at Eastern, but not when I was there.

But as I said, at the clothing store, this meant I didn't just hang out with one fraternity; I hung out with guys from different fraternities. And this would be important later when I ran for student body president, because I was the Greek candidate but I wasn't just from one house; they all accepted me. The Sig Pis; Sig Taus liked me. I knew guys in all—but they didn't view me as [any] one of them; I was just a Greek. But I worked at Cavins & Bayles. A huge number of people at Eastern came through Cavins & Bayles to buy clothes, and everybody knew me because I worked at Cavins & Bayles. I think somebody told you I used to have a—pretty well dressed. That was because I had to. We were required to have a dress shirt and a tie when we worked, and we got clothes at cost, so all my money went for clothes. And up to that point in my life, I'd probably had one sport coat. By the

time I graduated from college, I had probably ten sport coats, six suits—they were all tailored-made—and thirty dress shirts. I was never that well-dressed since. (DePue laughs) But going to Eastern and working at Cavins & Bayles was really the key. And I think the key was I didn't start out my freshman year and kind of get pigeonholed into one group; I came in and worked at Cavins & Bayles, where I was exposed to everybody. And—

DePue: In essence, that's your fraternity experience at Eastern.

Edgar: Yeah, for all practi—it gave me the ability to know people in a variety of fraternities and a variety of capacities because I wasn't tied to one fraternity. I lived at home; I worked a lot, but by working, I was socializing with folks. Because you'd come in, you'd talk to them and you'd get to know them, and—

DePue: Was this a conscious thing on your part, Hey, all these guys are in different fraternities, or just...

Edgar: No, just the way it was, but I realized a couple years later that when I got ready to run for student body president, this was a good deal. I was a little worried because back then at Eastern, the politics was you would have somebody from a fraternity, but usually the Greeks would go together on one candidate to keep the independents from running things.

DePue: So it wasn't liberal, conservative—

Edgar: No.

DePue: —it was Greek or non-Greek, huh?

Edgar: Yeah, non-Greek. Then it got to be Greek and dorms. The dorms got to be a power. But that was all later. My first year at Eastern, I basically was just working at the clothing store, kind of getting to know people, socializing. I had a—

DePue: Your major?

Edgar: I had started out as political science, but I switched to history pretty quick, and I can't remember if it was right then. And the reason was pretty simple: I got A's in history, and I got B's in political science. Plus, I liked history. Political science was okay. It wasn't completely irrelevant like it became later, but it was history I just enjoyed more; and I thought, I ought to major in what I'm getting my A's out of, because political science, I could work my tail off, but I'd always get a B.

DePue: Any part of history that especially fascinated you?

Edgar: American history, international relations—anything to do, mainly in the twentieth century. Because that's where I learned a lot of politics. I always said I learned more politics in history than in political science. And the history professors I had were pretty good. Political science professors I had, except for Joe Connelly, the

guy who'd been the advisor at student council in junior high, had now moved over to the political science department—

DePue: The lab school guy.

Edgar: Yeah, and he had served in the state legislature. His classes, now, were real. I loved taking them. We'd argue, though, because he was a Democrat and I was a Republican. I remember when I first took the class, Lyndon Johnson was president, and he would be always defending the Vietnam War; and later on when Nixon got to be president, he started attacking the war. I just used to say, "You're like a member of the Communist Party. (DePue laughs) You just take whatever the party line is."

DePue: But he is the kind of guy who would foster discussions?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. Yeah, and he encouraged you to be involved. And later on, we'll talk, he's the guy that got me into the intern program. Here I was, a big Republican—and I was active in the Young Republicans at Eastern. When I first got there, the one club I got involved in was the Young Republicans. I couldn't get elected to the student senate, which I wanted to get on. I got on representing the Young Republicans, because back then the clubs as well as the dorms and the fraternities had representation. If you were a recognized club on campus, you got a member of the senate, which was kind of nuts because you... But I worked to become the senator from the Young Republicans so I could be on the student senate. That happened at the end of my first year, my sophomore year.

DePue: That would have been '66?

Edgar: Yeah, '66. And that's all important. Student government, a lot of people think it's rinky-dink. It might be, but it was important to me for my political career.

DePue: The reason I ask for the specific year is this isn't a normal time to be on an American college campus by any means, either. This is the beginning of—

Edgar: But Eastern's a little different. Eastern, I'll just tell you, was different. And I'll tell you some stories that... This is later; this is toward my senior year—we had a group of conservative Young Republicans that was trying to take over the club. Most of us who ran the clubs were political science, history majors—we were more moderate. All you had to do is just enroll somebody, get them to show up, and they could vote at the election. So to hold off the crazy right-wingers, we brought in the members of the SDS on Eastern's campus, (DePue laughs) who were pretty moderate for SDS types. They were just the intellectual guys that smoked pipes and never had dates. But we brought them in, put them together with the old-line members of the club, and we outvoted what we called the crazies; and that was my first battle, probably, with the right. But the SDS at Eastern was pretty conservative (laughs) compared to most.

DePue: They weren't ready to burn down any of the buildings?

Edgar: No, they weren't. In fact, in 1968, when you had all this unrest about Vietnam on college campuses, we had a demonstration at Eastern. I wasn't part of it—I wasn't there quite yet on that—but we had about fifteen people that protested, and they protested in front of Old Main. That's the main administrative building at Eastern. It's like a castle. And when they were lowering the flag, when it was sundown, they all stopped and stood at attention to the flag. Only at Eastern would that happen. They didn't burn the flag; they showed respect. In fact, at Eastern in 1968, when a lot of blacks wanted their own fraternity and to be separate, we had the blacks at Eastern petitioning to get into the white fraternities because they were excluded. Eastern was a very conservative school for that time in a lot of ways.

We had turnout in student elections: we had 50 percent turnout. U of I [University of Illinois] at that time was having about 5 percent. Kids really got into this. I have to tell you, student body election wasn't the most important; the most important was electing a homecoming queen. That really drove them out. (laughter) But that was all part of the politics. So my first year at Eastern, I'm pretty much involved at Cavins & Bayles and socializing. And I dated a couple of girls from two different sororities and things like that, so I got to know all that. Then I was involved in the Young Republicans; that was kind of my political outlet at that point.

DePue: I want to ask you to tell us a little bit about Jerry.

Edgar: Jerry Bennett?

DePue: Yeah, of Cavins & Bayles.

Edgar: Jerry Bennett, who ran Cavins & Bayles, was probably, what, nine years older? He hadn't gotten his college degree. He'd gone to Eastern, been a Sig Pi, but never did graduate, I don't think. But he worked at the Cavins & Bayles uptown, and he started their store on the campus. And he was quite a character. He got married right after I started to work for him, but he was quite the ladies' man. A very personable guy, and students liked him, and he did very well in that business. Again, it made that store just a fun place to work. He was good to the help. We got our clothes at cost, and things like that.

And he was very good to me. He told me later, he really didn't want to hire me; he didn't think I'd work out at the clothing store. He'd waited on me before, uptown, but I was pretty quiet and didn't have much clothes, and he just didn't think I would do much. But he later gave me the sweatshirts concession, which was a huge deal, because I went around to all the fraternities, and if they'd buy their sweatshirts off me, I got a percent. And they went through me. They had always come to us because we were the only place in town at that point to get sweatshirts. And so that supplemented my income there, and that was a... And this Sig Pi friend of mine, we became partners on that, and he later was my best man, and I was his best man when we got married.

The guys at Cavins & Bayles—Tony worked there, too. He was the other non-Greek that worked there, and he was definitely—all Tony did was study. But Tony was a very bright guy. He'd spend a lot of time in the back room working on the books more than he did out selling. But...

DePue: Did you have a good eye for clothes at that time, or did somebody—

Edgar: No.

DePue: —help you out in choosing stuff?

Edgar: You just learned. I'm pretty traditional, and that was a traditional clothing store. It had a lot of herringbones and things like that. But it seemed like I spent a lot of my college time at the store looking at ties because you started having plaid sport coats; you just don't wear any striped tie with that. (DePue laughs) And I would spend all my free time at the store, when somebody wasn't in there— we'd be over looking at ties, trying to figure out what goes with what suit. People would come in and buy things, and you had to pick out a tie for it and get their confidence.

But Cavins & Bayles was probably, along with student government, the two most important things about my time at Eastern impacting my future. And also, maybe the most important thing; the second summer—I'd go to summer school because I still had to make up, because everything didn't transfer from Wabash—I'm working at Cavins & Bayles, and it's right before Father's Day. Summer school had just started, and this very attractive young lady walked in front of the store, and I remember looking at her and thinking, She looks like she's too old for me. I was probably nineteen or twenty. And I thought she has to be twenty-one, twenty-two. I grew up where you did not date older girls. There were a lot of older girls, a year older, that I really liked, but I would never think of dating them. It's more like they were a big sister. You only dated girls younger than you. I looked at her, and I remembered thinking, She's older than I am.

Then later, she came in to get a gift for her father, and I waited on her. And that was Brenda. I can remember the dress, I remember the day, and I waited on her, and never did find out she was (laughs) just a freshman. I guess maybe I did find out she had just enrolled in summer school. She had just graduated from high school, so she'd have been seventeen at the time. So that was another thing: that's how I met Brenda. We didn't hook up from there, but that's when we first met and I knew she existed, and—

DePue: Tony told me that as well. He seems to remember that he was there the first time you spotted her.

Edgar: I think he was. I think we were both working. It was a slow summer day, and we were sitting there looking out the window, and I'm pretty sure at some point in that day "Strangers in the Night" was on our—Frank Sinatra—that became our song, "Strangers in the Night," because I said, "When I first saw you, that song was number one."

DePue: What was it about Brenda, when you first saw her out in the street, that attracted you?

Edgar: Oh, she was just beautiful. First of all, Brenda, as I said, looked like she was twenty-two—had to be in her twenties. And she looked very sophisticated. You would have never guessed she's from Anna, Illinois. She wore makeup, and she was well dressed because she'd worked in a clothing store (laughs) in high school and had some nice clothes. And she had a smile. Brenda has a smile that—she still has that smile that's just—that's the thing about—people say, "What about...?" I say, "Her smile." She has a smile that just lights up.

But anyway, I don't think I looked at her and said, "Gee, I'm going to marry her"; I just thought, Boy, what an attractive young lady. And of course, she was more shy than I was. She came in—a very soft voice. And when I waited on her, I remember I said, "Where are you from?" and she said—because that was one of the great things, working at a store; you'd always get a chance to talk to the girls who'd come in. She said, "Anna, Jonesboro." I said, "I've heard of Jonesboro; I don't think I've ever heard of Anna." She's from Anna, and that's the big town. Jonesboro's the smaller town of those two, (DePue laughs) so she was rather taken aback by that. I said, "Is that anyplace by Cobden?" because of the Appleknockers. I don't know if you even know what that means.

DePue: No, I'm afraid I don't.

Edgar: If you'd grown up in Illinois... A couple years before, Cobden had almost played a state championship, from back when we only had one division, and they were a school of about 300, 200 people.[20] It's a little town just north—between Carbondale and Anna. And everybody in the state knew the Appleknockers from Cobden. Still to this day, anybody my age bracket, if you say "Cobden," they'll say, "the Appleknockers" because we all watched the state tournament. But she kind of resented (laughs) that too because that's that little podunk town just north of there. Then, on Brenda—I never asked her out because I was a little too bashful to do that, I guess. I didn't know her that well.

DePue: Wait a minute. You're the guy who always had a date in high school; you had a girlfriend in grade school—

Edgar: I had a date, but sometimes they had to ask me. I never wanted to get turned down. I'd been turned down a few times, and I never wanted to do that. So the dates I had in college, somebody initially arranged those, and I'd decide—I'd say okay. But the guy who was later my best man, his girlfriend, who he married, fixed me up with one of her pledges, and we dated for a long time. I had pretty good taste, but I let them do the tough work.

[20] The Cobden Appleknockers reached the finals of the 1964 state basketball tournament before losing to Pekin, 50-45. http://www.amazingappleknockers.com/

The story about Brenda was that, then, in summer school, we would pass each other. There was a point where we would pass each other, and that's where I first remember seeing her when she walked by. I remember seeing her—we'd pass by and we'd just kind of make eyes, and we'd never say a thing. And that fall, the following fall, the Sig Pi, Jerry Gilbert—his girlfriend Linda said to me, "I know a girl that would like to date you. Her name's Brenda Smith." And I knew Brenda's name. I said, "How do you know her?" Says, "She's good friends to my best friend." Her best friend was a girl who Brenda was real good friends with because their parents had been close. So I said, "Oh, okay"; then I called Brenda up because I figured, She wouldn't tell me no. And we started dating. We dated for a few months, and then we got married.

DePue: It's just like in politics: you're doing your advance work on this, huh?

Edgar: Yeah. But Cavins & Bayles was how I met Brenda. It's how most people knew me at Eastern. So later when I wanted to run for student body president, all the fraternities kind of said, We know who Jim Edgar is. Yeah, because they'd dealt with me at the store. At the end of my sophomore year, I got on student senate, and I got a—life's made up of breaks. I always say, "If you don't get breaks, you're not going to get where you want to go." Now, you've got to take advantage of the breaks; you've got to be prepared. And one of my big breaks was that when I got on student senate, the outgoing student body president had been a good friend of my brother's. In fact—

DePue: Fred?

Edgar: Fred. And he had been a neighbor of ours in Charleston, and we'd gone to the same church. There weren't many of us who went to that church, so—his name was Bob Luther, who later became president of Lakeland Community College. He had gone off to service, he came back, and so he was a lot older; but he got elected student body president, and he had been student body president for two years, which was unusual. And he also had fought with the president—they just hated each other—at the university. They'd gone 'round and 'round. He had just stepped down as student body president; his term was up, but he still was very influential. And I was a member of the student senate. The treasurer had been impeached or had been removed from office because there had been some question about vote fraud. He was part of the Greek slate, there was some question about some of the things they did, and he was kind of the fall guy.

DePue: This is a good education of politics, too, isn't it?

Edgar: Yeah. He had to resign, so there was a vacancy for treasurer. Luther—of course, I'm Fred's little brother, and he knew me all my life—got them to appoint me to fill that vacancy. So here I'm just fresh on the student senate, and all of the sudden I get to be a student body officer. And at the same time, they were concerned about representation to the student senate—like I said, every club; so you could have a club made up of ten people, and you'd have the same vote as Taylor Hall, which

has 800 students. The feeling was that wasn't right, and there were too many senators, so they needed to do a redistricting. I got to be the chairman. As treasurer, I worked it so I became the chairman of the redistricting committee. Where are we going to come up with a new plan? I spent all summer working on a new plan, and basically it came back to we're going to have an at-large election. The Greeks were going to have ten seats, the dorms—but it was going to—

DePue: It's just that dry, boring stuff where the real power is, right?

Edgar: Yeah, that's right. That's right. Because the other officers didn't really care about that stuff; they were all Greeks, and they had other things to do in life. And I pretty well as treasurer, then—that was the big issue, and we ended up compromising, but we put through a new redistricting plan. That put me in front of the senate most of the time and in the papers a lot, because that was *Eastern News*—

DePue: Even in the local papers?

Edgar: Eastern's, the student newspaper. The student newspaper came out—it wasn't a daily then. I think it came out at least once a week. I don't think it came out twice a week. But I learned pretty quickly you needed to use the paper. That was an issue they were interested in, so I got to be covered a lot even though I wasn't the student body president. I probably was in the paper more than the student body president was. So that year as treasurer, I was kind of the mover and shaker of the officers. And besides that, other things I would always be in. And I would always go line up votes and make sure that nothing got left to chance. I'd learned in junior high, you don't leave anything to chance.

And so when it came time, who's going to run for student body president, everybody around the senate figured I was going to run. But the question was, I'm not in a fraternity. I am a Greek, but I'm not in one of the fraternities. So I put together a coalition, which they had usually had done, of Greek representation; but we also put a dorm person in there. We put a girl in for secretary who was from the dorms, because we were worried about the dorms having their own thing. We didn't want a dorm slate, because they got a lot more votes (laughs) than the Greeks did. And so I put together—we had two—let me think.

We had another guy who was in another fraternity, and myself; and we had a girl who was in a sorority, then a girl who was in a dorm association. The Greeks all bought off on that because they figured I was Greek. Even though I wasn't active in one fraternity, they viewed me as a Greek, and I was acceptable because they all knew me. And I don't think I would have been able to put that together—of course, your life would have been different if you'd have done something different your freshman year, but I think if I'd have come in as a freshman and become a Sig Tau—what Edgars always became at Eastern were Sig Taus, even though that became the animal house—I don't think I would have ever been in this position.

But the key was Luther got me appointed student body treasurer. The other key was getting that job at Cavins & Bayles. That put me in a position to get elected student body president. And again, a lot of campuses, big deal, you're student body president. At Eastern, it was a big deal because when I ran, I think we got about a 30 to 40 percent turnout in that election. My successor, when I left, I think had a 50 percent turnout in that election.

DePue: At least when you're discussing it here, you're very deliberate and structured and disciplined in how you put together this coalition—

Edgar: Uh-huh.

DePue: —as you talked about. My sense, though, is that at the college level, most of the other people aren't even thinking about approaching a candidacy that way.

Edgar: There are a couple that did, but they weren't ones who could put it together, and they didn't have a broad enough base to do it. But the fact that I was in the news all the time. Eastern was a small campus, but still, a lot of what you know is what you read in the newspaper, as Will Rogers said; and the *Eastern News*, everybody read. Everybody read that paper; the students did, and they knew what was in there. I think the fact that I kind of realized early on that the media's very important, and make sure you're in there, and hopefully it's good media; it's not bad media coverage. But that helped; and then the other thing is, name recognition is so important in any election. The fact that I was in Cavins & Bayles, everybody kind of—they may not even be sure of my name; they just knew, That's that guy at Cavins & Bayles.

DePue: At least in your own mind, did you consider this process— running for office at the student senate, and running for class president and those kinds of positions—as something of an apprenticeship for your future career?

Edgar: Oh, I thought it might help, but I also—at the time, I just wanted to be the top guy. (DePue laughs) I wanted to be the guy who was in the newspaper and the guy that was kind of in charge. That gave me an ego satisfaction, and nobody in politics doesn't have a large ego.

DePue: So for Fred it was success in athletics, and for you it was success in politics.

Edgar: I'd have liked to have success in athletics, too, I just didn't have that much; I got my success in government. One of the great days in my life was when I was a state rep and somebody came up—Fred and I were standing there—and said to Fred, "Oh, you're Jim Edgar's brother." All my life, I'd been Fred Edgar's brother, and I just laughed. I said, "That's good. I finally made it." But I think also, I liked it. I like sports, but I really liked politics; I liked governing and all that. That, to me, was important. And I knew I wanted to do something like that—but I got an ego satisfaction, there's no doubt, about being the president or being the main guy.

DePue: Let me ask you another question that you might not want to answer here. Did others consider you to be a ladies' man? Did you consider yourself as that?

Edgar: Oh, no, I don't—no, no. I don't think I was a ladies' man, I just think I—

DePue: But did others consider you that?

Edgar: Oh, I don't think so.

DePue: But apparently you were popular with girls.

Edgar: I always got along with—I mean, you know. There were guys who I think would be viewed more as ladies' men than me, and there were a lot of guys who never had dates. I always had dates—not always, but most the time, I had dates. There would be sometimes, maybe, when I would be in between, or whoever I wanted to date didn't necessarily want to date me. For the most part, I always had a girlfriend when I was in college, and in high school—but there would be times I wouldn't. During summer school sometimes, you wouldn't.

DePue: The relationship with Brenda, though, took off pretty quickly after you started, I would assume.

Edgar: Yeah. We dated steadily from then on and got married the following spring.

DePue: Tell me about her personality.

Edgar: The smile, and she's extremely sweet; was just the sweetest person I'd ever been around. Kind of like, you always think you're going to marry somebody like your mother, and there's a lot of characteristics of her like my mother. Some of the girls I had dated had a lot of attributes that I wouldn't compare to my mother. Brenda was more comparable to my mother.

DePue: Did you guys share any interests? Was she into the...?

Edgar: Not really. That's probably (laughs) to this day a little bit of a problem. Politics, she didn't care about. But when I ran for student body president, she went door-to-door in Pem Hall.

DePue: She cared about you, then.

Edgar: Yeah, and she went door-to-door in Pem Hall to ask the girls to vote for me. She tells this story: the night I got elected, we had gone down to the library to hear the results, and we went back—of course, women had hours then, and she had to be back at a certain time. And she goes in, and she has a sign on her door: "Brenda: First Lady of Eastern"; they had that. (DePue laughs) So she got a kick out of that.

The other kind of neat thing at Eastern was I'd go on spring break, I'd go to Florida, and that was the first time I'd ever been to Florida. And it was like *Where*

the Boys Are (1960), the movie. It wasn't quite the same because Eastern had quarters then, and we went in the end of February; nobody was hardly down in Florida, and it wasn't all that hot; but still, we went to Florida. And that was a big deal to me. I went twice, my sophomore and junior year. Brenda wouldn't let me go (laughs) after we got married. But that was a fun experience, and again, that was a new experience because I'd never been in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, or Florida before, and I went with a bunch of guys. And that was a fun thing. It was just something you got to do that was different, which you weren't probably going to do later in life, either—go with the guys to Florida. But there were all the girls from Eastern, and so we had a good time down there, the two years.

DePue: I asked you about Brenda's personality; tell me about her character that you discovered after you got to know her better.

Edgar: Oh, her character's as sterling as she is sweet. She's a very real person. She's very loyal. As I said, throughout my political career, I had no better campaign supporter or helper than Brenda. She'd go out—and she didn't like it. Particularly when I got to run for governor, she was scared to death because she really had to play a lot more of a role in that campaign. She was afraid to get up and speak even though she had been Miss Union County and Miss—what was it?—Peach Blossom or something, down there. (laughs) She was a beauty queen from southern Illinois. And she spoke at those things, which surprised her parents. Her dad, I remember, telling me he was just flabbergasted when she got up and spoke at one of these contests. He just never thought she would do that.

But she still was pretty shy, and she was really conscious, always conscious, of the fact she was from deep southern Illinois, and here she now was involved in politics and had to deal with folks in Chicago. She always felt, I think, somewhat insecure. I think she got over that, finally, my second term as governor; but the first time I ran for governor and she really played a real active role in going out and speaking and stuff, it was quite a challenge. But she did it because she knew that was needed. And when I was running for office, particularly that first time, which was terrible—

DePue: The '74 election?

Edgar: Yeah, when I lost, and we moved to back to Charleston. She was pregnant with Elizabeth. It was terrible, what she had to go through, but she did it, and she put up with—we'll probably talk about later. Later on, she always said, "I don't like this," or "We should..." I said, "Now Brenda, the first date we ever had, I remember we saw the movie *Torn Curtain* (1966) with—

DePue: Hitchcock.

Edgar: —Paul Newman and Julie Andrews. Yeah. It was during the week, and we went to Little Venice—you always go to Little Venice—and I explained to her I was going to run for office and all these things. So I said, "I told you at the first date I was

going to do all these things." She says, "Yeah, but I thought you were a little windy, (DePue laughs) and I didn't pay much attention to that." And I said, "Well, that's your error." (laughter)

DePue: What point in the relationship, then, or maybe this is a gradual thing, did it occur to you, This is the woman I want to marry?

Edgar: Probably not till the first of the next year.

DePue: That would have been '67?

Edgar: Sixty-seven, yeah.

DePue: Then things progressed pretty quickly after that.

Edgar: Yeah, yeah. We got married on a weekend in April, and we didn't have any money, so we went to Effingham, the Ramada Inn, for our first night. And then we were going to go to St. Louis; I said, "No, that's too far. Let's go to Springfield," because I was intrigued to go to Springfield. So we went to Springfield. And I had been driven through Springfield when I'd gone to church camp, but I'd never been in Springfield, *per se*. She had been there for the Miss County Fair Queen contest a couple years before. So we went to Springfield, and the highlight of our honeymoon was we went to Lincoln's home.

DePue: I think I know the answer to this, but I'll ask anyway. Why were you intrigued with going to Springfield?

Edgar: The state capitol—all those politicians. We got married on a Friday night and spent Friday night in Effingham. Then we went to Springfield; we got there; and I remember we stayed at what was the Ramada Inn down by what was the Heritage House, if you remember any of that. But this was a big buffet thing out near—

DePue: Near the interstate, now.

Edgar: Near the interstate, yeah.

DePue: It's not there anymore.

Edgar: Yeah. So we stayed at the Ramada Inn—which is not a Ramada Inn anymore—and we went over to this Heritage House. I want to go there. And all these people, and all this food. I've never seen a buffet like this. This was great. I think, I bet all the big politicians are out here because this is where they got to be. No politician ever went to the Heritage House. But I just envisioned these people I was looking at—I don't even think the legislature was in town that weekend—but I just envisioned there had to be some real heavyweight politicians here. I thought, Boy, this is great. Eating at the Heritage House, this is... And for many Sundays, after we lived in Springfield and we lived out there, we'd eat at the Heritage House after church.

Then we went to see the movie—I always get it mixed up. I'm pretty sure it was *Man for All Seasons* (1966) we went to see. The guy that—Henry VIII.

DePue: Paul Scofield, I think.

Edgar: Yeah. And that was a pretty depressing movie, you think? (laughs) Pretty heavy, too.

DePue: Yeah, he dies at the end.

Edgar: Yeah, and then the next morning, we get up and we go to Lincoln's home, and we ate at the Golden Bear—was a restaurant over on the south side of Springfield.

DePue: What did your mother think about this lightning romance and marriage?

Edgar: She was a little taken back. She was a little taken back. She liked Brenda, though. Some of the girls I'd dated, she hadn't been that excited about, but she liked Brenda, so there was no problem with Brenda. She thought that was fine. But I think she'd have probably just as soon I'd waited until I was out of college, but she... Brenda and her always got along fine, and then she'd babysit later on when we were in Charleston. They got along fine; she was a little surprised when we got married, but Mom could pretty well roll with the punches.

DePue: She'd had to deal with some pretty serious punches in her life.

Edgar: Yeah. She probably always felt very comfortable with Brenda, and they always got along very well. But that happened, and that changed lifestyles a lot. (laughs) I had to move out of the house, and Brenda, I found out, didn't cook. (laughter) I thought all women—it was in their genes. And early on, I remember, we lived in the married apartments. Our apartment was smaller than this room, and we used to have to take the pots and pans off the bed and put them back in the kitchen. There was no place to put them in the kitchen, but when you were using the kitchen, you had to put them in on the bed. And there was one window. Just—anyway, it was quite an experience.

But my favorite story about Brenda was, it was about the second or third week we were married, and she was going to fix me breakfast on a Sunday morning. I said, "Well, fix me some eggs." And I just figured eggs over easy; that's the way I always had them at home. I get this kind of scrambled-up part—I said, "No, no, I want them over easy." She tried about four, and they kept breaking. I said, "No, no, I don't want them that way." (DePue laughs) And they had two left, and she took the two, put them in the skillet, stirred them up, and says, "You eat them this way or you don't eat them." (DePue laughs) And it was, I bet, twenty years before I ever asked Brenda to fix me another egg. (laughter)

DePue: I assume that your mom had never taught you how to cook?

Edgar: No, no, no, no. I knew how to fix popcorn; that was it.

DePue: It wasn't too much later that your life changed again, then, with Brad coming along.

Edgar: Yeah. I'll talk a little bit about that year, because I was student body president then, too. I had just gotten elected about two months before. And the big issue the next fall was doing away with women hours. I was looking for an issue that we could rally the students behind and make them aware of student government, and so this got to be a big deal. It started in the newspaper as someplace where people were complaining about: here we are in 1968, and even twenty-one-year-old women have to be in at a certain time, whereas nineteen-year-old, eighteen-year-old males don't. So I made this the cause of student government, and we really got going on it, and I was out to a lot of meetings.

Brenda had a little trouble understanding why I was out at meetings at night, and she was back at the apartment, and I was worried about women hours. She just didn't see (DePue laughs) that should be a concern of mine anymore. I was trying to explain to her, "It's an issue of the students." And I remember talking to the college president who—it started out we were a little hostile, but we became kind of allied because we'd had a run-in with the *Eastern News* editor, who was no longer the *Eastern News* editor because he had lied to some people. He had taken shots at me and taken shots at the president a lot. It's the only thing we had in common: we didn't like the editor of the newspaper; but the editorial board removed him, for good reason. His name was Doudna, the president.[21] We got to be where we—and again, he had a point of view that I didn't agree with, but I realized he was the power.

DePue: What was his first name?

Edgar: Quincy Doudna. I knew I had to deal with him. And the other thing I realized, too; students didn't control much, their own money or anything. They had what they call student-faculty boards, but they were controlled by the faculty. I got involved in those boards, and I told them I wanted to change that. I thought they ought to at least be equal. And really, they ought to be students, because of the student money—like how we're going to spend money on band uniforms and stuff like that—and also the academic. I got involved with the student-faculty board on academics because I wanted to change some of the criteria. At Eastern, to get a BA, you had to have three years of foreign language. No university required that. To get a BS, you had to have two years. No university required that. And as a result, everybody was being education majors because they didn't want to deal with the language requirement. And so I worked with the vice president, but again, it was the first time the students really had a lot of input.

I spent a lot of time doing that and getting other students involved and trying to get it changed to where the students had more say. Doudna initially resisted this, but gradually, he began to accept it because we got along. But he got so where he knew that I wasn't going to go say something. He said a former student body

[21] Quincy Doudna was president of Eastern from 1956 to 1971. *New York Times*, April 23, 1987.

president had lied. I don't know about that, but he got so where there was a mutual respect we had.

And I remember going on the women hours, and he said, "Jim, I just think the university—we have a responsibility for the weaker sex." And I'm sitting there thinking, This is 1968, and he just told me the women (laughs) are the weaker sex. This is... But we got to be where we worked pretty well together. In fact, when the internship program came up, he wrote a recommendation for me. And I remember Sam Gove said in 1968, "You're probably the only student body president in the United States that has the university president writing a recommendation for you." (DePue laughs)

That was a good experience for me, realizing you have to work with other people you may not agree with and you may not like, but they have power, and this is all compromise and coming to a consensus. And you have to work with the media. So I always felt the student government, for me, was a good practical experience on governing—not just running for office and putting together a coalition, but how you try to get something done once you're in office. Too often, I think people figure out how to get elected, but they forget they got to govern afterwards, or they're good at governing but they can't get elected. And I thought the student government gave me an opportunity to do both, and probably more in governing, actually, than in running for office. And in 1968, that's when college campuses were up for grabs.

DePue: That's what I was going to say. This is only the most tumultuous year in American history of the last fifty years, probably.

Edgar: Yeah. And at Eastern, it wasn't up for grabs. There was change that was occurring, but it was in a much more orderly manner, and I think a lot of that had a lot to do with Doudna. I gave him a lot of credit, understood he had to make some changes; and I think the fact that we were able to work together in a constructive manner—we brought about change, but it wasn't revolution, it wasn't student riots or anything like that, and—

DePue: So the change you got through—you got to change the women's hours, I take it?

Edgar: Yeah, did away with women hours. Over twenty-one, they did away with, and—I can't remember—we eventually just did away with them completely, but I can't remember if we did something on freshman. Of course, I always would have not argued if they'd have said, We'll have hours for freshman boys, because probably they needed hours more than girls. (DePue laughs) That's why everybody flunked out; they didn't have hours. But we got that changed. We got input on academic procedures. In fact, what we recommended in this board—that students play a major role—the university adopted eventually.

DePue: The language requirements changed?

Edgar: Yeah. So I could graduate, is what I was really worried about, (DePue laughs) because I had a BS, and I didn't have an education degree. So it really was killing the liberal arts program at Eastern because nobody would go into it. And the vice president who was new, he knew that, too; but it was good to have the students pushing it.

The one thing I didn't get—we got a lot of changes done, and I was able to get it through the student government and get the president to go along; and I compromised on some things. Students got a lot more say on how their fees were being spent. But the one thing that the president agreed with: I said, "I think the students ought to evaluate the professors." There ought to be some way that's taken into consideration. And he said, "I like that idea," and it was interesting. He said, "I would take into consideration on tenure"—because he personally did all that himself. He had an iron control on that campus; nobody got hired or promoted without him saying so. And he was a dictator, but I was trying to make him a little more benevolent dictator. He said, "I like that idea." He says, "I'll use that. You pass it from the student senate; I'll enact it."

So I go to the student senate, and I have my votes, I thought, all lined up. Students, every teacher is going to be evaluated, and that's going to go to the head of the department and to the president's office, and they'll have that if they want to look at it when they determined tenure. The faculty always liked me because I was always kind of working against the administration on some of the things. They turned on me so quick. (DePue laughs) I thought I had these votes all lined up. Students just fell off like... Their teachers had got a hold of them; professors who were close to them said, "No, this is a bad thing. It's going to be demagoguery, and these good teachers are going to get ridiculed," and all this and that, and I lost the vote. It was the only time I ever lost. And we came back and compromised: we made it voluntary. I said, "The trouble with voluntary—the ones who will volunteer are the ones who probably don't need evaluation." Eventually, years later, they got it, but that was the... And I learned a lesson on that. You think they're on your side, until you do something that's going to threaten them, and then all the sudden... That's where you learn you have allies, and they're shifty. They're maybe not friends. (laughs) They're going to stick—

DePue: But the way it worked out, the students even bailed because of what they're getting from the—

Edgar: The faculty had talked to them. Teachers had talked to them. They were all close to certain teachers, and they all got... And you had some that didn't like it just in general, because, I don't know, I was proposing it or whatever. But I remember I'd walk down—because as student body president, you'd run the student senate meeting. It was more of a parliamentary system than a bicameral—I mean, two divisions. And even though I was elected student body–wise, I ran the senate meetings. But I remember going down and turning it over to the vice president, who I almost lost on it, too. Those guys were really in tight with it, and I went down and was working the floor and realized that I had been had. (laughter)

DePue: I want to get you from EIU politics and take you all the way up to national-level politics because we're talking about 1968, and from what everything you've told me before, you're a news junkie; you thrive on what's going on in the news all the time. So January, February timeframe, the Tet Offensive comes; and we haven't talked about your position on the Vietnam War, so this is probably the time to delve into that.

Edgar: Initially I was supportive, I think like most people were in the United States, that we were stopping communism, and we didn't want the domino effect to occur. You hoped after the coup, when they ended up killing the president—I can't remember his name now, the Catholic guy that had been there for several years.

DePue: The dowdy-looking character.

Edgar: Diem? Was it Diem?

DePue: Diem. I think it was Diem.[22]

Edgar: Yeah. His brother had been the head of the secret police. You'd hope, The generals come in; they'll bring stability, and things like... Then after a while, you just begin to realize this isn't working, and then you start hearing stories and things. And, of course, on the campuses, the professors are pretty much against it at that point, and so I gradually moved away, thinking, This isn't working; we probably ought to get out. You read a little bit on Ho Chi Minh and all. We probably made a mistake; after World War II, we could have probably had pretty good relations there, but we sided with the French, and we're not going to win this war. So I would say I gradually moved to where it probably wasn't a good thing to do.

I did not like Lyndon Johnson. I thought, Oh, what a windbag. I remember the Tet Offensive, but more importantly, I remember the night he gave his speech. In fact, Tony and I—I was married, we were living at the trailer—I remember calling Tony, and we got together and drove around, just so happy that Lyndon Johnson was going to be gone.[23] But also that year, to me, the most shocking of all was the assassination of Martin Luther King.

DePue: Was that April? April or May?

Edgar: No, it would have been earlier than that. It's whenever the Indiana primary was, because Kennedy gave the speech in Indianapolis after that. It would have to be early April, because I remember I was home at the trailer.[24] We lived in a mobile

[22] President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother were assassinated on November 2, 1963, following the previous day's coup by Army of the Republic of Vietnam generals. The coup plotters initially reported their deaths as suicides. *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 1963.

[23] In a surprise announcement at the end of his March 31, 1968, primetime address about the Vietnam War, Johnson announced he would not run for reelection.
http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/media/oak/website/vr_march31.html

[24] Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis on the evening of April 4, 1968. James Earl Ray was later convicted of the killing.

home. After we moved out of married apartments, we moved into a trailer, which we thought was luxurious. It was only about two years old, and it was twelve feet wide and about fifty feet long, but it was new.

DePue: And you're a brand-new dad at that time, too.

Edgar: Yeah, Brad had just come along. I always kind of plan ahead, and most times things maybe aren't quite as exciting as you thought they were going to be. Probably one of the times I was the most stunned is when I looked at Brad for the first time after Brenda delivered him. Looking at him, you're just thinking, This is your son. I don't know many other moments like that. Maybe when you get married, a little bit; when you actually know you just got married, (laughter) and you kiss the bride. But that was one of those moments in life, just unbelievable. We had Brad, and it seemed like a cold winter, too. I remember we brought him home, and it was really cold. I remember Tom was in town. He walked over that night. We couldn't figure out how he could walk over. It was like ten below or something.

Watched that speech on the Johnson thing, and I was in the mobile home. But I remember particularly, we had just watched *Star Trek*, and they broke in and said that Martin Luther King had been shot. And we'd watched the news earlier, and that news earlier had shown Martin Luther King's speech the night before when he kind of prophesized, "I've seen the..."[25] And I remember thinking, That's kind of a strange speech, listening to it. I thought it was really good, but kind of morbid. And then thirty minutes later, we get a call from — we get the thing.

And I'd talked to my mother. My uncle, this Uncle Everett, who was kind of conservative in his own way, said something about, "That Martin Luther King is going to get shot the way he talks." And I said to Mom, "Well, you tell him he ought to be happy, then; he just got..." Because I really was upset. And I remember going to school the next day. They had a church memorial, and I didn't, a lot of times, go to those kind of things, but I went to that one at the Presbyterian church. Martin Luther King. Then when Bobby Kennedy was shot, it was like nobody reacted. It was like this just keeps happening.

DePue: Numb?

Edgar: Yeah. I remember I had finals. This was probably in June. It was during the California primary, which I think used to be in early June.[26]

DePue: Yeah, that was the latest one.

[25] Governor Edgar is referencing the passage in King's "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, in which he said "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life…But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you." http://www.afscme.org/about/1549.cfm.

[26] Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated on June 5, 1968.

Edgar: Yeah. And I remember I went to take a final, and nobody said a word about it. It's one of those things nobody wanted to talk about. I'd stayed up that night and watched the election results, and I don't know if I was still watching when he got shot or not. Because I was up late that night, and maybe I was when he got shot. But I just remember it was so strange because with Martin Luther King, everybody was talking about it; everybody was... Bobby Kennedy, it was like people just put it out of their mind. It was just like we were numb; we'd just (laughs) had so much of this. That was a strange feeling. So yeah, '68, to me, is the year of—and then later you had the Democratic convention. But—

DePue: Do you recall the rioting up in Chicago after King was shot?

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: And the reaction that the people had to that?

Edgar: I think people were mad about that. I didn't think so much just about Chicago; it was all over the country.

DePue: Oh yeah, all over the country.

Edgar: I'm getting national news, so I'm seeing it all over, so I didn't... People just unhappy. We'd already been used to riots. We had the Detroit, and we had Watts, so the riots didn't seem actually as bad after King was killed as those initial riots with Detroit and Watts.[27] We knew those things happened, and while they hadn't happened in Chicago before, when I looked at them, it didn't seem the riots were as bad. Maybe because there were so many of them going on, they couldn't concentrate on one.

DePue: Let's get back to the Vietnam War. Most young men your age, one of the reasons that they're focusing on the Vietnam War is, Okay, I graduate from college—what's going to happen to me? So let's talk about your relationship with the draft board.

Edgar: I never worried about it because my doctor always told me, "You'll never get drafted because of your back. Your back got hurt." I don't think I told you this story—I think maybe I told it the other day when you had the tape recorder. When I was in high school my junior year, they had me fill out some form, do you have any disabilities? I'd just had my back hurt in football, so I put down "bad back." And then my senior year, I'm in class, and they call me out of class. This guy's there, he wants to talk to me, and he says, "I'm from the vocational rehab department of the state of Illinois. You filled out this form saying you had a bad back, and we want to talk to you about maybe providing some assistance." And I said, "I don't want any public aid—I don't want any handouts here." He says, "No, no." He says, "Our

[27] Watts, a neighborhood in Los Angeles, was the site of a major riot in August 1965. Two years later, in July 1967, Detroit and Newark experienced widespread violence, separated by a single week. http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/index.htm.

concern is that you have a bad back; if you go to school and you try to work, and you hurt your back and you have to drop out of school, and your back's messed up; we'll have to support you the rest of your life. It's a lot cheaper to help you through..." I said, "You've convinced me." (laughter) It didn't take me real long to say, "I'm convinced." Because I was already thinking about maybe going to Wabash, and I didn't know how I was going to afford that. So I said, "But I'm thinking about going to school in Indiana." And they said, "That's all right. We'll pay the tuition for the highest-in-the-state school in Illinois." So I would get the equivalent of the tuition at the University of Illinois, which wasn't huge, but it was something.

DePue: Who was this that was talking to you?

Edgar: Vocational rehabilitation.

DePue: For the state of Illinois?

Edgar: State of Illinois, yeah. They had some program, and I think they probably had to have a quota, and they'd sent these forms out. So anyway, he does that. I get it at Wabash, get a little bit. Then I come back to Eastern; they keep doing it. Then they also pay for all my books and fees. So I feel kind of bad; as student body president, I was proposing some fee increases to do some things for athletics and things. I'm not paying it. (laughter) The state's paying my fees, so I was glad the students never found out about that; I'd have probably been in trouble. And it was interesting; when I graduated, they sent me a nice letter and had me come over to the office, and they had kept a scrapbook of my career in college. And, of course, I had a lot of stuff from the student papers and the town papers, being student body president. They all had it in the file. I don't know how I got on that. What were we talking about?

DePue: The draft.

Edgar: Oh, the draft. So I was pretty well conditioned—and in a fraternity, like I said, they didn't have me do—I didn't have to take PE in college because of my back. So I guess I always thought I probably wouldn't get drafted. I'm sure thinking you're going to get drafted; you probably had a different point of view of the Vietnam War because it affects you, and that probably didn't factor to me because I just didn't think I'd get drafted.

Then later, when I got married; by that time they'd done away with the married exempt. It used to be if you were married, you didn't get drafted. My brother got caught. They did away with that, and he got drafted. I think he was about a month before he'd be too old, and he got drafted.[28] But then when we found out Brenda was pregnant—she was only about three months pregnant, just found out she was pregnant—I got one of these, it seemed like quarterly, notices from the

[28] See Fred Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 22, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 34-35.

draft board, is there anything changed?. I remember I just put down "Wife's pregnant.". I originally thought, "I won't mess with that till the baby comes," and a month later, they did away with that exemption. So I don't know if my back would have kept me out. We never tested it, because I made it by a month; having the parental deferment or whatever they call that.

But even up to that point, I'd never really thought I would get drafted; and I never though about going in because it just wasn't—nobody was joining. Everybody was getting drafted. If you couldn't get in the guard or the reserve, you got drafted, and that was just part of it. I don't think I knew anybody that was just joining the army to go into the army at that point. This wasn't viewed like World War II.

DePue: If they're joining, they're joining the air force or the navy, perhaps.

Edgar: Maybe. But kids I grew up with, I don't know anybody that joined. It just wasn't something you viewed as an option; that wasn't an avenue to take, necessarily. I knew some kids that went off to the military academy, and that was a little different, but to go join as a rank and file—and we didn't have ROTC at Eastern—you didn't come in contact, so it just wasn't something you thought about doing.

DePue: Was that another reason that maybe Eastern could be a little bit more conservative; you didn't have that flash point of the ROTC program on campus?

Edgar: Maybe. I'm not sure we'd have had that flash point in 1968 if it had been there, because, I tell you, the students that protested, they stood at attention to the flag. They caught up, maybe, later, but Eastern was much more traditional, much more conservative than most of the other schools.

DePue: You had identified yourself—you're a Young Republican, you're representing them in the senate; you're now the student body president; you already expressed your views on the Vietnam War turning; but otherwise, how would you describe your politics at the time?

Edgar: Oh, I was probably a Republican. I was for Rockefeller, who again was talking about maybe running for president but didn't get anyplace. Looked like it was going to be Nixon, which I was not excited about. I probably paid more attention to the Democratic side because you had Gene McCarthy, who knocked Johnson out. People forget: it wasn't Bobby Kennedy, it was Gene McCarthy, the guy that knocked—I wasn't a big Bobby Kennedy... I thought he was kind of an opportunist coming in, because McCarthy had done all the tough work, and Bobby Kennedy kind of jumped in after it looked like they could knock Johnson out.

DePue: Was McCarthy the one who cried up in the...?

Edgar: No, that was Muskie.[29]

DePue: Muskie, okay.

Edgar: That was four years later.

DePue: Wrong election.

Edgar: Yeah. And so I watched the convention, especially the Democratic convention, and the riots and all that; but as far as an interest, I wasn't too excited when Humphrey got the nomination. Nixon—that didn't excite me either way. In fact, I probably would have voted for Humphrey if I had been able to vote, but I was working for Arrington, and he wouldn't let us off (DePue laughs) to go vote on election day. I just wasn't sure about Nixon.

And at the Democratic convention, I was very unhappy with the way the police reacted. And, of course, Daley—I'd grown up—Daley was the enemy. There's the Chicago Democratic machine. It wasn't so much liberal-conservative; it was just you were a downstater, and you're a Republican, and what we always worried about was that Chicago machine. And there it was, being brutal to students. And the media definitely played it towards the demonstrators' point of view. You didn't necessarily like what was happening at the convention, so...

I was in Oklahoma, actually, with my cousins, watching that, and I was very upset. My cousin, who I'd just gone to visit here a few days ago, was like an aunt to me, she never ever said any harsh thing to me, but she says, "Those people shouldn't—we've got soldiers over in..." Her son was in Vietnam, so she had a whole different point of view on this than those demonstrators did. She felt like that was undercutting the soldiers. That was an interesting thing because I just—Brenda kind of kicked me, because we married, to kind of stop talking so much. (laughs)

DePue: Before you expressed your own personal views on the war?

Edgar: No, I didn't, but we were just talking about the demonstrators, and you could tell that she was very concerned about her son and all.

DePue: This is quite the year. You're finishing up your college year; you're a new husband; you're a new father; you're fascinated by what's going on in American politics at the time; you're student body president; and, oh, by the way, you also have to figure out what you're going to do with your life after you graduate.

Edgar: I had no idea. In college, I always thought, I'll go to the Peace Corps or something like that. I might have been able to go to the Peace Corps, but they probably weren't going to take Brenda and Brad (DePue laughs)—take Brad particularly, and I don't

[29] During the campaign for the 1972 presidential primary in New Hampshire, Edmund Muskie (D-ME), allegedly cried while making an emotional defense of his wife and staff from attacks in the conservative *Manchester Union Leader*. *Chicago Tribune*, February 27, 1972, 12.

think Brenda was going to go. So yeah, that spring of '68, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out, What am I going to do?

DePue: Were you still working in the clothing store?

Edgar: Yeah, I was working at the clothing store, but I knew that wasn't going to—I was kind of phasing down on that, and I had to get a real job or do something. And of course, everybody said, "You want to be in politics; you ought to go to law school." I didn't want to be a lawyer. I didn't really want to do that. I thought I didn't want to handle divorces. I want to be in politics, but I don't want to have to necessarily be a lawyer.

So I remember going to a career conference in Chicago. A friend of mine, we drove up there—in fact, this is the first time I was ever on the Tollway. During rush hour, we're going to the Tollway, and we don't have any change, and we've got cars lined up—that's back when there was all—we just ran it. (laughter) We figured we were probably going to be in jail, but we didn't know what—because we had cars backed all the way up to Barrington on it.

And an MBA was a new thing. Get an MBA. I wasn't sure what it was, but it sounded like maybe that's what you ought to do. At the same time, the First National Bank in Chicago had built a new bank, and I thought, Boy, that's a neat looking building. And I had picked up this career pamphlet, and on the back, they had, "Be part of the First National Bank MBA program." And I thought, That's good. You work at a bank, and you get your MBA; they'll pay you, and you'll go to school and get the M—That's a neat bank. That's what I think maybe I want to do. So I filled out the form and sent it in to them. I didn't hear from them for a while, so I keep trying to decide what am I going to do. A few weeks later, I get a letter back, and it says, "Dear Mr. Edgar: We do not interview at Eastern Illinois University. We wish you the best in your career." (DePue laughs) It was the first time I've ever thought, Wait a minute, I've got some limits. Up to that point, I knew I had to compete, but I thought at least I had a chance to compete. Here, just, We don't interview at Eastern.

DePue: What was Brenda suggesting you should do?

Edgar: I don't remember her having strong—I think she probably just hoped I'd get paid something and we'd have a decent place to live. She knew I liked politics, but she pretty much—whatever you want to do, whether it's law school or whatever. About that time—

DePue: Was she still going to school at the time?

Edgar: She was trying to take some classes, yeah. She'd maybe take one class or something. I can't remember that semester, but she did—

DePue: I interrupted.

Edgar: Yeah. She was trying to take some, but... Everybody said, "You ought to go to law school." So Tony and I went up and took the law boards, because he always wanted to be a lawyer; that's all Tony wanted to do. He'd been studying for it for years, taking courses that would help him on those tests..

DePue: He had the genes, too.

Edgar: Yeah, his dad had been a judge. So I remember we went up, and we took the law boards; and I do pretty well on those tests. Tony doesn't do as well on those tests. He does well in school because he'll study, but he gets nervous. And I had the highest law board score of anybody from Eastern, and the law advisor said, "You can probably go anyplace you want to go to law school," because that year, there were so few going to law school because everybody was going off to Vietnam, and I had a deferment. And I think Tony had got in or was getting into the reserve, that's how—

DePue: He got into the National Guard.

Edgar: The National Guard, yeah.

DePue: In Mattoon.

Edgar: Yeah. But he says, "With that score, you can probably go anyplace you want to go. You can go out east to Harvard or Yale." And I thought, Oh, that sounds good. Then I thought, Wait a minute, I can't afford that. But I had some other people tell me, "If you want to be in politics, you ought to go to the law school in your state, because you'll make contacts. You go out east, that's fine, but probably that's not going to help you back here politically; if you want to go be in international affairs or whatever, that might help you." I thought, Oh, okay. So I applied to U of I. I decided just to apply to U of I. I thought I could get in.

DePue: Not to Chicago?

Edgar: The University of Chicago? No, no. That's kind of irrelevant. (DePue laughs) Northwestern, I thought about, but then everybody said, "U of I is just as good as Northwestern. Northwestern maybe has a better reputation, but for what you might want to do, and it's [U of I] not as expensive." Because I was worried about the money part. University of Chicago, I thought about, but I don't think I thought too long. I think Northwestern, I did think about more. So I sent my application in.

Then, about that time, Joe Connelly came to me, and he said, "Jim, there's a program over at Springfield, and I think you'd really be good if you'd be interested. It's a legislative internship program." And I said, "What's that?" And he said, "You go work with the legislature. It's like a graduate thing, but they give you a stipend; you get paid a little money." And he said, "When I was over there, those young people really were of help, and they really were in the middle of things." He said, "If you're interested, I'd be happy to write a letter of recommendation. This is the first year they're taking people just from undergraduates." Up till then you had to

have a graduate degree or be pretty far along in a graduate degree. I said, "Yeah, that sounds like that's going to be tough, though, if there's just sixteen and they usually take people with graduate degrees. My grade point average..." He says, "I think you might want to see if you can get the president to write you a letter of recommendation, and you're close with the dean of students, so that might help."

So I said, "Fine. We'll try it." I never thought I'd get it. I thought my grades weren't... Since, "We don't interview at Eastern Illinois University," I thought maybe I wouldn't have much of a chance, but I went, and President Doudna agreed to—which is pretty unusual for him to do that. He did it, the dean of students did it, and then Joe Connelly did it. And at that point, the internship program was pretty much all ruled by the academics. It's not like it is now, where the caucus staff leaders pick out who they want, kind of, from the whole pool. How they did it when I was there, they picked sixteen, and then the four leaders could pick from those sixteen. But they picked them academically. And you had to go be interviewed by an academic person and also by Sam Gove, who's down the hall here. Here's my telegram.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Edgar: So I go talk to Alice Eble from Illinois State. She's a very proper lady. I drive up to Bloomington—never been there before—and do my interview. I'm worried because my academic record, it's maybe a B-minus average, and I figure I'm—

DePue: You've been a busy guy on campus.

Edgar: Yeah. That was what I was hoping would help, but I wasn't sure with these academics that that meant much. But she commented, "You've got impressive recommendations here from the president." And then I come down and I meet with Sam. And Sam, it was a great—I remember that. I never have asked him about it, but it was just a great interview.

DePue: What was his position at the time, Sam Gove?

Edgar: He was head of the institute here.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: The institute. And the institute created the internship program. Ab Mikva and Russ Arrington were the people that originally pushed it, and Sam did it through here.

DePue: The institute here is—go ahead and say what it is.

Edgar: Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

DePue: At the University of Illinois.

Edgar: At the University of Illinois. The Ford Foundation started it, and they were called Ford interns originally, but by that time, the state was paying for it. They'd convinced the legislature to put the money in for it. So I came and talked to Sam, and I just remember Sam talking about it. He said, "This is amazing. You've got the university president and the dean of students recommending you." He said, "It's got to be the only place in the country that happens. What happened?" I went through and told him a little bit about what we did and everything. And I remember I brought Brenda up. We came up, and we went to see *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) that night. I think it was over at this theater that's no longer—it's this artsy-crafty place now. I felt good, at least, about the interview. I still didn't think I was going to get it, but I—

DePue: But the interview was here in Champaign and not over in Springfield?

Edgar: No. It was all run through here. As I said, the academics picked the sixteen, and then the sixteen were divided up by them [the legislators] over there, but they didn't get to pick who was going to be—whereas today, it's all different.

DePue: Explain the dynamics of the sixteen as well, and how many people would have been applying for these positions?

Edgar: I don't know how many applied. I would guess they probably had fifty. I could be wrong on that, maybe not that many. My sense is they probably had some apply that maybe didn't get interviewed, and then many that got interviewed, and some that didn't get picked.

DePue: Why sixteen, though?

Edgar: Four for each caucus. That's what they decided on.

DePue: And when you say, "each caucus," are you talking primarily about the four key leaders in the legislature?

Edgar: Yeah. You would work for the Senate Republicans or the Senate Democrats or the House Republicans or the House Democrats. Everything in Springfield, you always think in four: it's the four caucuses. Arrington, to his credit, early on insisted that if any money was made available to the majority, an equal amount was made available to the minority, even though he was in the majority, because he really believed that all the caucuses ought to have the same opportunity. And it paid off, because when we went in the minority, it was the first time we'd gone into minority, after he'd put this in, that we kept the same amount. Nobody lost their jobs or anything. He thought that was important. But the four caucuses is how they divided these—none of them went to what was called the Legislative Council; I don't know what they call it today—they went to the four caucuses. Because back then, you didn't have any staff to speak of. You had sixteen interns, and you probably had a total in all four caucuses of maybe twenty staff people. So interns, you really got to do important things.

Again, I thought, I probably won't get this, because I can tell that most of them they're interviewing are law students or PhD students. In fact, in my sixteen, there were only two of us that came straight out of undergraduate; the rest were all ones that had come out of law school or had their PhDs or were about ready to get them. I didn't think I'd get it, but I enjoyed the talk with Sam. And sometime in—is there a date on it?

DePue: Pull that down.

Edgar: Yep. (sound of removing something from the wall)

DePue: Because we can read that into the record here.

Edgar: I was trying to see if it has a date on it. I think maybe it's May fifth? Do you think that might—

DePue: We're looking at the Western Union telegram.

Edgar: Western Union telegram. I wonder if that's May—Friday the fifth. It was a Friday.[30] Brenda is going to school now—now I remember. That morning in the mail, I got accepted to U of I law school, and I thought, Good, I got accepted to U of I law school, but that's not really what I want to do. I'd really like to do that internship, but I won't get to do that. But I got accepted; that's good. Brenda had a class she took late in the afternoon, and I would pass her, usually, coming from a class.

DePue: Was your mom babysitting by chance?

Edgar: No, Mom was working. We had a babysitter. Yeah, we had somebody who came and watched Brad while she went to class. I remember Brenda came walking up to me, because we'd pass, as I said. And I might have been going to get the car, because maybe we switched car. But I remember passing, and I came up, and she just had a smile on her face that was as big as all outdoors. She says, "You got it." I said, "I got what?" "You got the internship."—and I don't know if she had the telegram in her hand or whatever. Or they'd called. They'd called from the telegram office and read it.

DePue: Wow.

Edgar: And then I went and picked it up. But they called, and she says, "You got it." And I just remember... That was the afternoon. And it took me about one-tenth of a second to know, between law school and the internship, what I was going to do. I was supposed to send a telegram back to Gove saying whether I'd accept or not. So I jumped in the car and rushed up to the telegram office and said, "Yes," and then I got—but this is the telegram.

[30] In 1968, May 3 was Friday. April 5 and July 5 both fell on Friday.

DePue: I'm reading the date here. At the first line on the right-hand side. Illinois, twenty-nine, ten forty-eight A—which is 10:48 a.m.—Central Standard Time—

Edgar: Okay.

DePue: Twenty-nine April? Twenty-nine May?

Edgar: Maybe it's April. Yes.

(pause in recording)

DePue: We're back from a very quick break, and we're ready to read the Western Union telegram.

Edgar: Which we don't know if it's May twenty-ninth or April twenty-ninth. It could be April 29, 1968.[31] Anyway, it's "James R. Edgar, 1400 Eighteenth Street, Charleston, Illinois. We are pleased to inform you that the sponsoring committee of the Legislative Staff Internship Program has appointed you as an intern for the academic year 1968-69. I would appreciate acknowledgement of your acceptance immediately by collect telegram. Thank you. Samuel K. Gove, program coordinator." So that came in the morning—or at least we got the call about noon. I was at school. Brenda got the call from the Western Union people and told me that afternoon, and I quickly got up to the Western Union station and sent them a—to say I accept.

I always viewed this—and that's why I saved the telegram—as just one of those great breaks in life. This, probably along with Thompson appointing me secretary of state, are those points in life where I think that was a key factor.

DePue: It changes the entire trajectory of your life after that.

Edgar: Yeah. And the time I went over as an intern—because there wasn't much staffing at that point in Springfield, and they were just beginning to tool up—it was a great time to go to Springfield. Ogilvie was going to come in as governor; Arrington was at his peak. So I got in on kind of the ground floor as the state legislature began to tool up for the twentieth century—rather late, but finally. But it was the internship program. And if I hadn't have got that, I might have gone and tried to get a master's and teach history someplace, maybe go to law school—which I couldn't afford and probably would have been bored to death those three years. And if I'd become a lawyer someplace, I may or may not have got in politics. So getting accepted in the internship program was huge. And again, it was the first year they took people straight out of undergraduate. Fortunately, Joe Connelly, who was the Democratic county chairman—I always laughed later and kidded him about, "Yeah, you made me." (laughter)

DePue: So what was the difference? Why did they select you?

[31] April 29 fell on a Monday; May 29 was a Wednesday.

Edgar: I think, in the end, based off talking with Sam when he interviewed me, it was my extracurricular activity. That's what made me stick out. It wasn't my grade point average, that's for sure. It was the fact that here's somebody who had some practical experience, demonstrated an appreciation and understanding, and had pretty good reviews from the people he had to work with. I think it probably helped having the president of the university, especially in 1968, say nice things about you, (DePue laughs) and have someone who had been in the legislature—Joe Connelly had been in the legislature but was academia, so I think the academic guys respected him, but they also appreciated the fact he'd been in the legislature. So I think those recommendations were very, very important, as well as my extra-curricular activity.

And I know throughout my career, and I've hired a lot of people; I always look at that as much as a grade point average because I knew what my grade point average was, and I know there's a lot of people who have good grade point averages, but they don't do well in government, they don't do well in politics. So I'm sure that was the factor in it. Again, I never have asked Sam just how many people that year applied, but it seemed like I heard at one point early on it was twice, at least, if not more, than what got accepted. And as I said, in the class that got accepted, there were only two of us who were coming from undergraduate. The other one and I worked together, and I was his best man at his wedding.

DePue: His name?

Edgar: Tim Campbell. He was from MacMurray College in Jacksonville. And we were the two downstaters, too. We were the only two downstaters on the internship class.

DePue: When did you start?

Edgar: We started in September of 1968. I can remember what I wore. I wore a dark olive green suit with a paisley tie, and I was scared to death. I thought, Boy, this is it. This is for real. I'm going to Springfield, and how this all works out is going to determine whether I make it or not. This is not school; this is the real game.

DePue: What kept you busy during the summer?

Edgar: I had a job working with some—really interesting job. Worked with a bunch of kids from Carver—what's the name of the project in Chicago? Altgeld Gardens. It was the far south side of Chicago, all African-American kids.

DePue: What's the name, again?

Edgar: Altgeld Gardens, named after Governor Altgeld; the gardens, it's on the south side near the Pullman area. It's where Carver High School is; and Cazzie Russell came out of. That was what everybody knew about Carver. But these kids were from that area, and they were all kids from the projects that had been picked to come down and spend the summer at Eastern, and help these kids develop some skills; but also bring in some white kids and have them deal with white kids. And we had high

school counselors—we picked some high school kids that would be working with them, which was an interesting—we had a lot of parents who wouldn't let their kids be part of the program.

DePue: Really?

Edgar: Because they didn't want them—they just thought they were too much trouble. And I remember taking them to the Charleston public swimming pool, and as I told you earlier, Charleston didn't have any—by that time, we might have had a few black people, but not many. But here were these twelve live-wire grade-school kids hitting the Charleston public swimming pool. (DePue laughs) It was a—but I did that that summer.

DePue: I did want to ask you before you get too far away from the EIU experience, how many blacks were going to the campus, to the college?

Edgar: I'm not sure. It was a few. It was more than a dozen, but I doubt if it was more than two hundred out of ten thousand—it wasn't ten thousand. Eastern probably was about seven thousand at that point.

DePue: A very small minority at that point.

Edgar: Yeah, it was a small minority.

DePue: Let's get back to the internship then.

Edgar: So we go over, we get an apartment in Springfield. Brenda doesn't think she can live in Springfield. She doesn't think she could ever drive in Springfield; it would be too much traffic.

DePue: How about the stipend? What did that amount to?

Edgar: The stipend was the best deal. It was five hundred and—maybe it was six hundred dollars. Maybe they raised it from five-fifty to six hundred. It was tax-free.

DePue: Wow.

Edgar: Which they changed the next year.

DePue: Federal tax as well?

Edgar: Yeah. They changed that the next year, but it was at that point tax-free. In fact, that paid more than what they started me out when I went the next year to start working for Arrington, which is another story I will get into; when I confronted Arrington about that. And so we got an apartment in Springfield. Brenda, of course, didn't know anybody, and here she had this little baby. I go to the internship program and meet the other kids. And as I said, Tim Campbell and I were the only two right out of undergraduate, and they were all from Chicago. I think one was actually from

Colorado, but most of them were from Chicago. Maybe three or four had just got their law degree, and the rest of them had got their master's and were working on their PhDs. There was one African-American, John Stokes, and there were two women, if I remember right.

So we started out. They have these kind of orientation seminars—bring people in, talk about what to expect, what Springfield's like, the legislature, blah, blah, blah. We do that for about a week, and then we go to Chicago. The Legislative Council, which was the organization in the legislature that Sam kind of dealt with in this; and a guy named Bill Day headed up the Legislative Council. They were kind of our home away from home; that was our place over there we'd go. And they had a Legislative Council meeting, which was run by a committee of legislators from both the House and the Senate, that was going to be in Chicago, so we were to go to Chicago.

Tim Campbell and I, being the only two downstaters—the rest of them went home for the weekend, up to Chicago—if I remember right, we took the bus to Chicago, because it was right across from the hotel. The old Sherman House is where they were going to have that meeting. We took the bus up there. And Tim and I got to know each other on that bus ride. But we're sitting at that meeting, and this guy walks in who is long sideburns, real nice suit, short—walks in like he owns the place. And everybody knows him. And he comes to our table. We didn't have a clue who he was. Turned out it was Arrington. (DePue laughs) And the reason we didn't know who he was is he uses a picture in the Blue Book that's twenty years old, which I called him on about two years later.

DePue: But you had done some homework on him before (unintelligible).

Edgar: Oh, everybody knew Arrington. I knew him from college. He was the one guy I heard about in college. I heard about him more than Kerner in my state and local government class, because he was running the place. We didn't think we wanted to work for him. (DePue laughs) In fact, if they'd have asked me, even though I'd been a Young Republican, I'd have probably said, "I want to work for the House Democrats," because Clyde Choate was from Anna, and that's where my in-laws lived. My dad and Clyde at that time were friends and were doing some business deals.

DePue: He's the Medal of Honor winner?[32]

Edgar: Yeah. He was the Democratic leader. Later, my father and him had a falling-out over their business, (DePue laughs) and I think it became a problem a little bit. And at that point, I was kind of mad at the Republicans. I wasn't happy about Nixon, and so I thought the Democrats may be a little more progressive. But nobody asked me. They looked at my resume and my activities and just figured I'm a Republican, though I think one of the other kids that got assigned to the Senate Republicans

[32] See http://www.history.army.mil/html/moh/wwII-a-f.html for Choate's citation.

actually had been a Democrat. But they had to look at the sixteen, and maybe more than half the sixteen were Democrats. Nobody ever asked me; they just took it for granted I was a Republican. But I did think, Ooh, I don't know if I want to want for Arrington, because he's arrogant, he's tough.

He came in, and you just knew when he walked in this room, whoever this guy is, he's somebody. Then we found out who it was. He wasn't chairman of that commission; somebody else was. It didn't matter; he ran the meeting. Everybody deferred to Arrington. If he had something he wanted to say, everybody stopped. If they're all going left and he says, "I think we ought to go right," they all said, "We're going right." (DePue laughs) And that was true even in national meetings I'd go to with him. He had a presence about himself. He was short, and I don't know, maybe he was being tough. But again, it was amazing how you just knew, This is the guy. This guy is the power. You could just sense it. And I don't know if I ever had run into anybody—had that feeling when you met somebody for the first time.

DePue: I want to have you take some time here, because somebody might be listening to this fifty years from now, and this is the first time they've heard this guy's name. Tell us a little bit about his background and what he's doing when you got there.

Edgar: W. Russell Arrington was the Senate president pro tem. At that point in Illinois government, the lieutenant governor was the president of the Senate. He had no power, but he presided over the... The pro tem was what you would say is equivalent to, like, the majority leader: he was the power, and he ran the Senate. And the Republicans at that time had about a fifteen-vote margin over the Democrats. I mean, they had a huge majority. Arrington had been the leader for four years. He had become the leader in 1965. He was kind of the maverick; the Young Turks had put him in over the Old Guard, and he completely changed the legislative process.

The legislative process in Illinois was pretty antiquated. They only came six months every two years. There wasn't a whole lot of programmatic thinking going on; they kind of reacted to whatever the governor or the lobbyists said, and had no staff to speak of. Arrington brought in staff; he challenged the governor; became Otto Kerner's, who was the governor, major antagonist.

DePue: Democratic governor.

Edgar: Democratic governor. Mayor Daley called him "Arrogant Arrington."

DePue: Kerner was Daley's guy?

Edgar: Yeah. Kerner was a nice guy, but not a strong guy. Daley ran the Democrat—Daley was the power, and Arrington didn't respond to that. I've heard stories about those two. They'd go at it. And—

DePue: Daley and Arrington?

Edgar: And Arrington, yeah. But Daley referred to him as Arrogant Arrington, and that's how I first heard of him. I thought that was his first name. (DePue laughs) But he was the power. And he'd also created the internship program, along with Abner Mikva, who later became a Democratic congressman, federal judge, and was legal counsel to Bill Clinton. He had been a state representative from the South Side of Chicago at that point, Hyde Park. Arrington and him created this internship program. And Arrington did a lot of things with the liberal Democrats on reforming the legislature. So Arrington was by far the most powerful person in the Illinois general assembly. I think the only person who compares to him is Mike Madigan today. Madigan's been in longer, but Arrington was such a change. Anybody who was around that time, after that would always say, "When Arrington was there, things got done, and he ran it." And for a staff person it was ideal because he loved to have staff. He gave you opportunities. I got to spend a lot of time with him. He listened to what we had to say, maybe sometimes too much, and made some of the members mad: they thought the staff was running the show.

But we didn't know that day who we were going to get assigned to; we learned later that week, and I was assigned to Arrington. We went to his office, and it was, again, an interesting experience, because he wasn't there—he was in Chicago—but his secretary was there, and we got assigned. And all of the sudden, this other lady walked in and came around and said, "Who are you? Who are you?" And we didn't know who she was. Well, we later found out she was a close lady friend (DePue laughs) of Senator Arrington, which he—which again was a whole kind of new experience for me. You kind of had to—

DePue: Find out that's not all that unusual in (both talking) ___ (??) politics.

Edgar: No, that's right, but in this case you needed to be aware of who's who. But then we started out working, and we got moved out of the main office upstairs where they had some cubicles put in, and that was our cubicle. And I was assigned law enforcement. I didn't know anything about law enforcement. But Arrington had put in a bill that he was going to require all policemen to have so much training. There was no grandfather clause to that. Needless to say, the policemen in the state were a little nervous because none of them had had training to speak of.

DePue: Are you talking about the state police, or even local?

Edgar: All police. All local police.

DePue: To include Chicago police?

Edgar: Yeah. Chicago police might have had training at that point, at least what they called it, but most downstate policemen did not have training. Deputy sheriffs did not have training; they just had to have the right politics. So I remember the whole contingent of the police groups, and there were all these different police groups—about thirty people came down to the office to see Arrington about this bill. Whoever the head staff guy was says, "Senator Arrington's not here, but I'm going

to have you talk with the staff person who's going to be working on that," and that was me. (DePue laughs) All of the sudden, he says, "Jim, would you take these gentlemen to...?" And here I take these angry thirty people (DePue laughs) off to some room, and I sit there and listen to them, and they're telling me their problems. I said, "I appreciate—"

DePue: And you're how old at this time?

Edgar: Yeah, I'm twenty-one years old and fresh out of college, and I don't even know what they're talking about. So I listen, and I said, "I appreciate it." I said, "It's just a proposal. I don't even think it's in bill form. I'm sure your input will be very important, and I'll get back to the senator and then I'll get back to you." And I said, "If you've got any more suggestions..." Long story short, we did alter the bill, and they were happy with it; and from then on, I had the policeman groups. They always thought I was their buddy. (laughs) But I realized, Boy, what you do around here, this impacts people. You better be careful. You might have some great ideal, but it's probably going to step on some people's toes.

DePue: This must have been pretty heady stuff for you at that time.

Edgar: I was really scared more than heady. I got to tell you, I was scared.

DePue: Tell me about the first time that you and the other interns actually had that sit-down with Arrington himself.

Edgar: He welcomed us and we talked to him. The thing I remember first, though, really the first time I had a one-on-one with him: it was early in the session. Ogilvie had been elected in the '68 election, and—

DePue: So this would have been early '69.

Edgar: Yeah, and Ogilvie put a bill in to create the Illinois Bureau of Investigation (IBI); and in that he was consolidating all state police forces, including the secretary of state police— taking it away from the secretary of state and taking it in the governor's. Paul Powell, who was secretary of state, was not real excited about this. Powell wanted to come and meet Arrington, who was handling the bill for the Governor, and Powell and Arrington were old buddies back from their legislative days. And so I was told to prepare a memo for Arrington justifying Ogilvie taking the secretary of state police away from Paul Powell.

I didn't know anything about any of this stuff, so I spent all weekend doing research. The secretary of state police a few years before had had a raid over here at Kam's, the big bar at U of I campus. I remember it because I had been at Eastern at the time, and they were checking for illegal driver's license—underage kids. They threw all these kids in Kam's; held them there for hours; broke all kinds of civil rights. Turned out the head of the secretary of state police, a guy named Porky

Porcaro, had an arrest warrant out for him in Chicago for bigamy. [33] But this was the kind of people in the secretary of state police. They were described like it was a Keystone Cop operation over here—just all kinds of problems.

So I write up this report and talk about how it [the secretary of state unit] had been created and didn't make sense, and I'm to take this in to give to Arrington before he meets—and this is Monday morning, and I'd been given this, I think, Friday. Monday morning, I take this in. And Arrington's one of these guys, he'll catch misspelled words and things like that all the time. And I'd never dealt with him. I'd seen him, talked to him, but I hadn't really had any one-on-one and any real personal stuff with him. And he reads through the memo, looks at me, and says, "That's a good memo." (DePue laughs) He said, "You can sit in here in this meeting." Powell didn't come. He ended up sending his chief of staff down, they talked about it, and Arrington just said "Hey, I'm just doing it for the governor," and all these things.

Long story short, eventually the bill got over to the house. Arrington passed it out of the Senate with the secretary of state police taken away from the secretary of state. They go over the House, and later on, they need votes to get the IBI passed. Clyde Choate was holding it up in the House, because he was Powell's guy in the House, until they took the secretary of state police out, and then they passed the IBI. And it's ironic, because when I became secretary of state, I had the secretary of state police. (DePue laughs) And we professionalized them. We sent them off to the academy, and they were very professionalized after we... But I never forgot my experience. That was my first dealing with Arrington, and the thing with Arrington was: you didn't BS it, and you didn't—

DePue: I heard he did not suffer fools.

Edgar: No, no. You did not give him false information. You told him your opinion, stood your ground, and he'd bark at you; but that's just his way; it wasn't personal. I'll tell you a better story, though. This was at the end of our internship with Arrington. Three of us were asked to stay on, and he offered us nine thousand dollars a year. Nine thousand dollars, after you pay taxes, is less than what we were making as interns. And he wanted two of us—one already lived in Chicago; he was from there—he wanted me to move to Chicago, as I was going to be on his personal staff. The other two were going to do committee stuff. I was going to be on his personal staff because I had ended up getting assigned to be the person who kept the book during the legislative session; so I sat next to Arrington on the floor, which was a great place to be in 1969 when everything happened in the legislature that year.

[33] 70 students were arrested in the raid, which the secretary of state's investigators carried out February 25, 1966. The outcry over this raid, along with others around the state, increased pressure on Frank "Porky" Porcaro. He resigned March 7, after newspapers reported both his 1958 conviction for job selling and more recent allegations of expense padding. The Better Government Association's George Mahin called for the transfer of the secretary of state's police powers to the state police. Sangamon County State's Atty. Raymond Terrell filed the arrest warrant on a bigamy charge against Porcaro two weeks later. *Chicago Tribune*, March 8 and 23, 1966.

So I think, I can't live on this. I can barely get by in Springfield on what I'm making. I'm not going to make a pay cut and move to Chicago—there's no way. And the other guys, they weren't married, but yeah, they agreed that wasn't good. And I said, "I think we just need to go talk to him about this and just tell him.

So bright one morning, (laughs) we kind of stick our head in, and he says, "What do you three want?" And I said, "Well, Senator, we'd like to talk to you a minute." "Come on in. I'm in a hurry." But I said, "Oh, it won't take long." I came in, and I said, "We very much appreciate your offer—we really want to work for you—but the nine thousand dollars you've offered, that's less than what we're getting paid now, and I'm moving my family to Chicago. I just don't see how I can afford it." And we knew the others in the other staffs were getting offered twelve thousand dollars. And Arrington's sitting there, chewing on his cigar, looking over his glasses. He says, "You know how much I started out working for (DePue laughs) when I got out of law school?" I wanted to say, "That was in the Depression!" but I didn't. (DePue laughs) He said, "I made nine hundred dollars" and something like that, just going on and on. He sat there, and he said, "Let me think about it." We walked out. (laughs) Those guys were sweating. I said, "We tried, you know."

He ended up giving us ninety-five hundred dollars, but I found out later he was ready to fire all three of us. He said, "I don't believe that. They came in and..." But I think, in a way, Arrington always respected somebody who'd stand up to him and not just cave. I'd watched him—other people... But six months later, he raised my salary to twelve thousand dollars. A year later, he raised it to sixteen thousand dollars.

DePue: Now you can afford to live up there, huh?

Edgar: Yeah, and I moved back to Springfield then. But Arrington, he'd get something in his mind, boy, you'd just... After I went on his staff, a lot of times I would drive him. He always drove his Cadillac, but he had the staff drive him down; he'd drive back. And one time I was driving—sometimes he'd drive—but you'd get a chance to talk to him. I can't say I ever felt close to him. I was always scared of him. To the day he died, I think I was a little scared of him because this is Arrington.

But now, my internship—and I know we need to move on—as I said, I got assigned to keep the book of all the bills and sit next to him on the floor so he always knew what the staff recommendation was. I remember one time something moved real fast. I said, "Senator, the recommendation was this bill shouldn't pass." He looked at it, and he says, "Oh, okay." He says, "I move to reconsider that bill." It was one of his members' bills, and they'd just pulled it back (DePue laughs) because the staff had said so. But sitting there that year—that was the year the income tax was created; created the Department of Transportation and Corrections, which I worked on. You had a public safety—you created the Department of Law Enforcement and the Department of Corrections—you split that into two departments. And I was, again, a staffer—because law enforcement was my

expertise I had been given, and police training is what I knew about, and since this was going to be the Department of Law Enforcement...

So there was some bright young aide out at the governor's staff who was handling this bill, and I said, "All right, you're going to have these two departments. You got the salary for the two directors is thirty-five thousand dollars?" At that point, I think the most any director probably made was maybe twenty thousand dollars. I said, "Thirty-five thousand dollars? I know in a caucus they're going to say that's an awful lot." He said, "We're going to find the best people in the country, the best experts, to head up these two, particularly corrections." Because everybody figured the current director of public safety, who was the former sheriff of Winnebago County, would become the director of law enforcement, but corrections would be somebody new. But he said, "We're going to do a nation-wide search." I said, "Okay." So I go back and I get quizzed by some of the senators. I said, "They're going to do a nation-wide search, and it's going to cost money, but they're going to get the best person out there." The bill passes and it's thirty-five. You know who ends up getting the job? That staffer. (laughter) His name's Pete Bensinger. You read about him now on this ethics stuff. Good guy. He went on and headed up the DEA in Washington and stuff like that, but it's just so funny.[34]

DePue: What's the last name again?

Edgar: Bensinger. Pete Bensinger. But it was so funny he ends up... "We're going to do a nation-wide search," (laughter) and they did it, and they found him. And he did a great job, but it was just...

DePue: Can I go back a little bit on Arrington, because I want you to respond to a couple things here. As I understand, how he so significantly transformed how the legislative process worked—did he establish the veto session?

Edgar: Yeah. The legislature used to very seldom ever come back in after they adjourned, so a governor would veto a bill—

DePue: Adjourn at the end of May?

Edgar: Yeah, and they wouldn't come in the next year. If the governor vetoed the bill, that was it; there was no chance to override. Until the new constitution, I think the governor had only been overridden, for almost a hundred years, maybe eight times. The first thing I ever saw the legislature do was override the governor on a pay raise.

DePue: A brand-new governor.

Edgar: No, they overrode Shapiro's veto, though he got defeated for reelection, and so—

[34] Peter Bensinger served as administrator of the Drug Enforcement Agency from 1976 to 1981. See Kanter interview.

DePue: So that would have been in the veto session for that year.

Edgar: That actually was in before the new legislature came in. The old legislature came in. Arrington—even after the veto session—would bring the legislature in a few hours before it went out of existence, just in case there was anything that needed to be done. And they came in an hour before the new legislature came in and overrode the old governor's veto on the pay raise. So the first legislative action I ever saw was an override of a governor's veto of a legislative pay raise, and it brought legislators' salary up to twelve thousand dollars. And Arrington did that because he wanted the members to get paid more. The Democrats went along, and the only reason they went along was because Shapiro had been defeated. If he'd have won, they probably wouldn't have overridden his veto. You had those veto sessions, but as I said, I don't know, outside of that one, if they ever—even during that period when he brought them in before the new constitution—overrode the governor's veto, because it was just unheard of for members of the governor's party to vote to override the governor's veto.

DePue: And as I understand, he was also instrumental from going from one session every two years to annual sessions?

Edgar: He started that, yeah, and then they put it in the constitution that they could have them. They used to only meet six months every two years, and then he brought them in the second year. And it was to be mainly just a budgetary session, because they also went to an annual budget eventually; they had had a biannual budget. It was to deal with emergency matters, but he wanted them there just so if something did come up, a legislature would be able to react and be involved.

DePue: The reason I'm asking is because I think that's a huge change. That changes the dynamics of the people who are there and the way that governance is done.

Edgar: It's was still—they were there briefly. They weren't there as long... When we went to an annual budget, which occurred with Ogilvie—He put an annual budget in, in '69—that's when they really needed to come in every year, because before that, they had a biannual budget.

DePue: What I always heard is that prior to all those changes, you had part-time legislators who were earning their pay—they had a job or a profession that they made most their money out of.

Edgar: Yeah. And you still had part-times initially, but it became obvious this was not going to be a part-time job anymore. And that wasn't so much because you had the ethics issues you hear about today; it was just these people, it was hard to them to justify to their folks back home. They're gone all the time. You had lawyers who used to come down when it was part time because it was good for the law firm to have somebody in Springfield. Today it's a problem because they get a conflict of interest, they can't get the business, and the guy's never there, so you don't see as many lawyers as you used to in the legislature.

You had a lot of Chicago Democrats who were double dippers. They'd be in Springfield for six months, and the rest of the time they'd be at the parks or the sanitary district or wherever their—of course, that also gave the mayor a lot of leverage on making sure they voted right, since the majority of their job was working under the city or under the county, which he controlled. They were called double dippers, and that was always a bone of contention with the Republicans toward the Democrats. That even began to be cut down because they just weren't around enough at their regular jobs. So it took a while—it took probably four or five years to begin to really see a shift in the membership, but it definitely changed the nature of the legislature.

DePue: Another thing that I've seen attributed to him and want your reaction to, is that what he was really trying to do was to establish the legislature as a co-equal branch of government.

Edgar: Yeah. He was a strong believer that it was a co-equal branch, and when Kerner was governor—

DePue: What did that mean, though, as far as he was concerned?

Edgar: They have just as much right to develop policy as the governor; that they don't just automatically do what the governor wants them to do. They are co-partners; you've got to kind of reach an agreement. And he would always submit his own legislative proposals—kind of like his State of the State, like the governor has—this is the governor's legislative program. He would always have the Senate Republicans' proposals for what they were going to do and what they needed to do to make the state a better place. That was a complete change because before, no caucus ever submitted—maybe some members might have bills they would put in, but the caucus didn't do it, and it wasn't a comprehensive program that was to kind of counter whatever the governor's legislative program would be. Usually the legislature reacted to whatever the governor submitted or to what lobbyists maybe submitted. But in this case, the legislature initiated it, and it was a broad spectrum; it just wasn't... The budget, the legislature used to dominate on, and that kind of shifted to the governor with the Bureau of the Budget, but still, the legislature had the last say.

When I was working for Arrington and Ogilvie got elected, the big question was how are Arrington and Ogilvie going to get along, because Arrington has been challenging Kerner every step of the way. Now you've got a Republican governor, but there's no indication that Arrington's going to back down for a Republican governor. It was very interesting to watch how that worked out, and Ogilvie did a good job of kind of stroking Arrington. (DePue laughs) The other thing: Ogilvie had on his staff a guy he had hired from Arrington named John Dailey, who was Arrington's fair-haired boy. I was new, but I knew who John was, and I had watched—John spent a lot of time down talking to Arrington and helping smooth over that relationship. And Ogilvie was good—had Arrington over at the mansion.

DePue: Probably worth mentioning: this is no relation to the other Daleys.

Edgar: No. It's spelled differently, even. Yeah. Ogilvie made a concerted effort to win Arrington over. And Arrington—because back from his days when Stratton was governor and things, he always felt like he still had some responsibility to the governor of his party—was, in the end, very supportive of most of what Ogilvie wanted to do. But Ogilvie couldn't just automatically say, "Here, Russ, do this"; it had to be in more concert. The classic story is the income tax.

DePue: I definitely want to hear that, but I think if we spent a lot of time developing who Russell Arrington is, I think we also need to spend a little bit of time of talking about who Richard Ogilvie is as well.

Edgar: Richard Ogilvie originally got elected sheriff of Cook County in 1962. Unusual—Republicans won sometimes, but not often, for county offices up there. In '66, he ran for president of the county board in Cook County, which he won, and then ran for governor in 1968. There was some opposition in the party for him running for governor because that means they'd lose the president of the Cook County board. It'd go to the Democrats because they controlled the county board, and they'd pick the successor. He was viewed as a moderate Republican. He was an urban Republican because he had been involved in county issues. He ran against John Henry Altorfer, who had been Chuck Percy's lieutenant governor candidate in 1964. He was from a family in Peoria—a very wealthy family in manufacturing.

DePue: This would have been in the primary.

Edgar: In the primary. It was a very tough primary. It was downstate against Cook County, in some ways. And Ogilvie won—didn't win by a huge margin, but won the primary, then ran in the election against Sam Shapiro, who had been Otto Kerner's lieutenant governor and assumed the governorship when Kerner went off to the federal bench. Wasn't viewed as the strongest candidate the Democrats had had for a while. A nice guy, but—

DePue: What did he have going in his favor? I'm asking because I think I know what he had in his favor.

Edgar: I don't know if he had anything really in his favor outside he was the governor, he was the incumbent.

DePue: Did he not have the blessing of the slatemakers of the Daley machine?

Edgar: Yeah, but the key to the slate for him was back in 1960. In 1960, he had been slated for lieutenant governor instead of Alan Dixon, who wanted it, because Alan Dixon had supported Paul Powell for speaker when Daley wanted a guy named DeLaCour [Joseph L. DeLaCour], who most people thought was really weak. Shapiro stuck with Daley for DeLaCour; Dixon had voted for Paul Powell. A year later, when they slated, Daley paid Dixon back by not slating him for lieutenant governor; instead, they slated Sam Shapiro, who was one of the few downstate representatives

who stuck with Daley's guy. So that's where the slatemaker mattered. When the 1968 election came up, he was the incumbent governor. And again, Shapiro was a guy that got along with everybody, so I'm sure Daley felt comfortable with Shapiro. But the key for the slatemaking for Shapiro is how he got to be lieutenant governor, and that was because he voted for DeLaCour for speaker instead of Paul Powell.

DePue: How much did Ogilvie's victory have to do with a Republican on the national ticket winning?

Edgar: I think it helped. Ogilvie didn't win by that much. Considering he was running against Sam Shapiro, I would have thought he would have won by more, but—

DePue: Because Shapiro wasn't all that great of a candidate?

Edgar: I didn't think he was that strong a candidate, no. And I can't remember how much Nixon carried Illinois by, but he did much better in Illinois than he did in 1960 (DePue laughs)—we know that. And he worried about Illinois because of 1960.[35]

DePue: All of that gets us up to the classic income tax fight, so pick it up from there.

Edgar: Everybody knew that you were going to need an income tax because the state, as it usually is, is chronically broke, and Illinois was one of the last major industrial states that didn't have an income tax. There had been groups looking at it. In fact, as an intern, they had us go into this big powwow of all the financial people and experts and had a commission set up. It was at Allerton in, I think, December of 1968.[36] I remember going over there, and they were talking about the income tax and what to do. I had written a paper my senior year in college talking about why Illinois needed an income tax, and so, of course, I was an expert. (DePue laughs) I remember I was talking to one of these older gentlemen, who was viewed as one of the tax lawyer experts in the state, and telling him why the income tax was so good. He listened to me for a while, and he looked up at me and says, "Listen, sonny. There's only one good tax, and that's the tax on the other guy." (laughter) And I thought he was like, who's this kid?

So everybody knew an income tax probably was needed, and Ogilvie and Shapiro had both been very careful in the campaign not to completely rule out an income tax. Neither one called the other one on that issue. It was like this truce out there: whoever's going to get elected is going to have to do this, so let's don't poison the water. They came in with a little flexibility. They never campaigned for it, but they didn't come out adamantly, like we've seen Blagojevich do in the last few years, against it.

Now Arrington, before he became Senate leader, was the chairman of the Senate Revenue Committee, and he'd always said there would be an income tax over his dead body. So they go down—I don't know when it was, probably in

[35] Richard Nixon won Illinois by 134,960 votes in 1968, a gain of 143,818 votes over his performance in 1960.
[36] A park and conference center in Monticello, Illinois.

February [1969] sometime. Again, I wasn't enough in the inner circle—I was just an intern—but I remember roughly when it happened. Arrington and the Republican leadership go down to meet with Ogilvie to talk about the budget and what are they going to do. It might have been March. because the budget came out on April Fools' Day, which was not a... (DePue laughs) They always talked about. "He proposed the income tax on April Fools' Day." But the story they told me was that Arrington goes down there, and they got the charts and they're showing how the state has to do the income tax, and Ogilvie says "We got to do it." Arrington says, "What poor—"

DePue: Fool.

Edgar: I think he used the word "SOB." "—is going to have to sponsor this bill?" (DePue laughs) And Ogilvie looked at Arrington and says, "You, Russ." That's how I've heard it. I don't know if it was that direct, but he says, "It's going to be you, Russ." Arrington agreed to do it, but he was physically sick for the next three or four days, just at the thought that he's going to sponsor the income tax. But he did. And later on, he looked back: that was one of his most important accomplishments. He always viewed that as a major accomplishment.

DePue: He was sick because of the politics of the thing or because of the—

Edgar: The fact he was going to have to actually sponsor the income tax. (laughs) And after these years he had been opposed to it.

DePue: He objected to the concept at first?

Edgar: He'd always been opposed to the income tax before. I think he knew it probably had to be done. They had to come up with revenue some way. Also, the governor was asking him to do it, and that's kind of his...

DePue: A lot of the revenue was coming from sales tax, and I believe he [Arrington] had pushed an increase in the sales tax in previous years.

Edgar: He supported it. I think Kerner had pushed it, but yeah.

DePue: So he ended up supporting that. This whole notion of personal property tax, too—can you explain that?

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Because that always is a mystery to me.

Edgar: I don't know if I can explain it. You had something in the state called personal property tax, so you'd be taxed on your personal property. Downstaters paid it, but nobody in Cook County paid it, was always our feeling.

DePue: That was the rumor, or that was the fact of it?

Edgar: I think that was pretty much the fact. See, they do everything different up there. Their property taxes are a lot less, the ratio—they have the differential between corporate—we don't have that downstate. The feeling was that nobody ever paid it up there, but they paid it downstate. So that was a sweetener added after the initial—they didn't have that in the original proposal.

DePue: How did they determine your personal property in the first place? They have assessors come around?

Edgar: Yeah, you'd fill out something, and they'd figure it out. People would cheat all the time on it. I think that's why Cook County... But people paid it downstate, and they didn't like it.

DePue: Do you recall a dialogue between a flat tax or a progressive tax?

Edgar: It wasn't much of a dialogue because everybody agreed. These commissions looked, and everybody agreed that you would run a big constitutional risk to try a graduated, because they'd tried one in the thirties and it had been thrown out by the courts.[37]

DePue: The state courts?

Edgar: Yeah. They were looking for something, and nobody had ever tried a flat rate, but the thought always was a flat rate maybe would get by the constitutional question. So there really wasn't a whole lot of serious talk about a graduated.

DePue: How about the talk about personal versus business?

Edgar: Couldn't do that. That'd be unconstitutional. Run a constitutional challenge—that was what the initial reaction was. As the final compromise, that was something the Democrats pushed, and a lot of Republicans wanted it, too. They finally had to agree to and take the risk that it could get thrown out. It wasn't so much they were philosophically opposed; there was a real fear that this would create a condition where the courts might throw it out as unconstitutional.

DePue: You lost me, though. What caused the courts to throw it out as...?

Edgar: It was a graduated. Originally it was a graduated income tax.

DePue: No, between personal tax and the corporate income tax.

Edgar: They never threw it out. That was the fear. See, we had the same constitution in 1969 that we had in 1933 or whenever they passed the income tax. The courts had ruled that under the 1870 constitution, you could not have an income tax. It happened to be a graduated income tax, and their argument was around the

[37] In *Bachrach v. Nelson*, 349 Ill. 579 (1932), the Illinois Supreme Court struck down a graduated income tax law the legislature had passed in 1932. John N. Hughes, "The Constitutionality of the Illinois Income Tax Law of 1932," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 1 (May 1933): 124-128.

graduated income tax. The thought was that a flat-rate tax might be able to get by. For one thing, it was surely different, so you didn't have that precedence, but the feeling was a flat rate might get by. The concern was if you separated, though, between corporate and individual, a different tax rate, that that could trigger the courts to throw it out along the lines they threw it out on a graduated. I'm not sure of the exact legal—but that was the concern, that that would make it more like a graduated tax, different rates, and it could result in the—it wasn't uniform, I think might be what they were arguing, and that might have that income tax thrown out. So initially, Ogilvie had the same rate on corporations as individuals.

DePue: Was there any push from the business community saying, "If you impose a tax on corporations, that just means you're driving corporations out of the state?"

Edgar: Oh, they weren't excited about this at all, but they didn't have that much clout when it came. You even had the *Chicago Tribune*, which had always been opposed, end up writing an editorial on the front page saying they needed to pass the income tax. You'd had a change; people knew the state had to do something. Financially, we just had to do it. When they did finally work this compromise with the Democrats at the end, they were very much upset with the differential.

DePue: "They" being...?

Edgar: Corporations. But the thing that was in there is there's a differential, but it has to stay the same percentage. You can't just raise the corporate. The corporate is different than the individual, but there's a ratio that you have to maintain; so if you raise the corporate 1 percent, you have to raise the individual 1 percent. You've got to keep that eight-to-five—I forget, is it eight-to-five? It's been so long since I've dealt with it. There's a certain ratio between corporate and individual, and if you raise the income tax, you cannot have the corporate ratio higher. You could have it lower—they're not going to do that—but you can't have it higher; you have to raise them both in concert.

DePue: Do you recall the rates that Ogilvie initially recommended?

Edgar: It was higher. I can't remember. It was a little higher because you didn't have the differential. I think it—what was—the initial was two and a half?

DePue: Two and a half, and four, I think?

Edgar: Yeah, it might have been three. It might have been across the board three.

DePue: It came up to three and 4.8.

Edgar: Yeah, but initially it might have been three across. I can't remember. Because you only had one rate initially; he just asked for one rate.

DePue: Oh, for both corporations and individuals?

Edgar: Yeah. You didn't do the differential because they were worried about the constitutionality. What happened then—Arrington put in the repeal of the—somebody had come to him and said, "This might help," so he put the constitutional amendment in, during this process, to repeal the personal property tax; and then later in the process, when they finally worked out their deal, it was Mayor Daley and Ogilvie, Arrington was down there, and of course you had the Democratic leaders—they worked out you'd do the corporate differential from the individual, and that was kind of the big compromise. And then also, part of that income tax would go to local government. Always, Daley got more than his fair share.

DePue: So that was definitely a Chicago thing, for the local government, getting a...? How about education? Did that factor into it at all?

Edgar: They just knew the money, a lot of it was going to go to education, but there wasn't anything specific for education. Education got a big boost in the budget, but... And I just remember the day the caucus—I didn't get to go into caucus; I was just an intern then—finally worked out this compromise and called the Senate Republicans in to get who was going to vote for it. We had Chicago Republicans then. We didn't after that election, (laughter) but we did then; we had six. I remember one of them walked out and said, "Folks are still getting screwed, but they're not getting screwed as bad as it was," (laughs) and he voted for it. They had a structured roll call—so many Democrats, so many Republicans—in the Senate. Arrington insisted on that. The House didn't do that. The House—Ralph Smith, who was the Speaker, said, "Oh, I can put on seventy-five votes." He didn't need to put seventy-five votes on.

DePue: Ralph Smith is also Republican.

Edgar: Yeah, he was the Speaker. I forget the number, but he said, "I got so many I can put on," instead of saying to Jack Touhy, who was the Democratic leader, "We'll do it even; whatever my percent of my members to your percent, since we're in this together." But Smith put all these Republicans on, and the Democrats just put on enough more to pass it; whereas Arrington said, "No, we're going to have it proportioned to our membership." And there always was the feeling that Smith cost a lot of Republicans their seat. Now, nobody I know of in 1970, in the House, lost their seats over the income tax, but people still think that to this day.

DePue: So if I get what you're saying here, in the House, Democrats could see, Okay, they got the votes they need to pass this income tax, so I can vote against it and then have a better shot of getting reelected?

Edgar: Not as many Democrats voted for it proportionately to their membership in the House as did in the Senate. But I remember the roll call in the Senate. There are three Senate Democrats who we're not sure spoke English. They never said a word. (DePue laughs) They just sat there, and up or down; they'd just do whatever the Democratic leader Tom McGloon told them to do. The vote came, and they were, of course, supposed to be on the roll call. Arrington thought he heard them vote no

instead of yes, and he just blew up and said, "The deal's off." And (laughs) we're all looking around, because things were moving fast. This was late at night, and we've got the highway tax to do and all kinds of stuff, and Arrington just said, "The deal's off." And McGloon, looking, "What's wrong, Russ?" And he says, "Thaddeus didn't vote." He says, "Oh, yeah, I voted yes." And the clerk says, "I got you down as no." "No, no, it's supposed to be yes." (DePue laughs) I think it was an honest mistake, but I just remember, I thought, Oh, no, all this work—

DePue: I bet you Arrington thought he'd called them on it.

Edgar: Yeah, thought they'd been... Arrington, boy, he'd watch them. But in the House—it passed the Senate, then the House—they always thought there were more Republicans on there than there should have been.

DePue: What did Arrington have to do to convince—or maybe he didn't—the fiscal conservative side of the Republican Party, the right wing of the Republican Party?

Edgar: They didn't vote for it.

DePue: Did they typically support Arrington in what he wanted to do?

Edgar: Sometimes. He tried to sneak open housing through on them. He was not your typical right wing—he was conservative, but not a right-winger. On social issues, he was almost liberal, and on fiscal issues, he—but again, he was a team player, which surprised a lot of people. I'm sure there were some of those guys who voted against the income tax who had been for Arrington and were unhappy, but most of the guys that were with him voted with the income tax.

DePue: How much political capital, then, did Arrington expend getting that through?

Edgar: He used up some because guys felt like, particularly after they lost control of the senate, they felt like that's what did it. I think it was other things, but...

DePue: What would you say about Ogilvie and his political capital that he expended on it?

Edgar: He used a lot. It was more the governor. Governor still had a lot of clout with jobs and things like that, and he used a lot to get the votes. Oh, I don't think—a lot of people think that beat him. It probably didn't help him in some ways; in some ways it did, though. I think the EPA probably cost him as many votes.[38] You look where Ogilvie lost in '72 versus where he won in '68. The vote fall-off, a lot of it was downstate in rural areas, and I think EPA had as much to do with that as income tax.

DePue: We've been at it for close to two and half hours, which is kind of my limit on these things. I figured I'd finish with reading three quotes that I've got on Arrington—one of them is yours—and just get your response to those. Here's Daley's quote,

[38] The federal Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois EPA had both been created in 1970.

and this probably (laughs) won't surprise you from what you said. Daley said, about Arrington in the mid-sixties, "The people of Illinois have been dealt a dastardly blow in representative government by the arrogant Mr. Arrington and his cronies." Pretty typical response from the mayor?

Edgar: Yeah, because Arrington was the only guy between the Democrats and Daley getting what they wanted. And Arrington could be arrogant. He could be pretty arrogant. I watched him, and Gee, man, why do you do that? Just kind of be rude. And he spent his whole career fighting the Chicago machine. And Daley had been down in Springfield; he knew Daley when he was director of revenue and stuff, so Arrington didn't back away. I watched him do it in national meetings; I'd go with him. There's no doubt that Daley probably had a point, but part of it was driven by the fact, this was the guy who said no. And I can attest: the Daleys don't like to be told no.

DePue: (laughs) Yeah. And those are the two powerhouses in the state of Illinois. Here's your quote on Arrington, and this is from the book on Arrington that Taylor Pensoneau wrote: "Senator Arrington was not possessed by a need to be liked, which gave him an advantage over his colleagues. He was smarter, better informed, more intense, more resolute, more aggressive, more abrasive, and brassier than any of them." Any reason to change any of that today?

Edgar: No.

DePue: And the final quote: Joseph Harris, who wrote for the *Illinois State Journal* from that timeframe: "More adjectives"—and some of the adjectives you just listed—"More adjectives have been used to describe Republican Senate majority leader than have been spent on any other state official of this era, but only one fits him adequately: remarkable." Would you agree with that assessment?

Edgar: Yeah. In some ways, I probably didn't appreciate him as much as some did because I hadn't been there before; and I think those who were there before, then saw what Arrington brought to the process; I think they're the ones who particularly held him in awe. A lot of old-timers, hard-bitten guys, pretty cynical guys, when you'd talk about Arrington, they just said, "There's nobody like Arrington. He was head and shoulders above everybody else and drug this place into the twentieth century."

DePue: What would you say, this many years removed, about Richard Ogilvie?

Edgar: Oh, I think Richard Ogilvie was a very good governor. He was always kind of the model I looked at. He wasn't charismatic, but he governed. He really wanted, I think, to do the right things. And he'd play politics some, but I think he thought, and I subscribed to it, that the best politics is good government. One of the reasons they wanted to move early on that income tax is give people time to digest it and realize it wasn't that bad; it had to be done. I think of all the governors, at least from my perspective, who I kind of looked at, I would say him, because I watched him.

Now, I was a kid when Stratton was governor, so I think Stratton was a very effective governor—a lot of important things happened during the Stratton years that people don't, I think, appreciate. But Ogilvie—I'm not sure if some other governor would have got the income tax through. It wasn't just the income tax; they completely overhauled state government. For good or better, state government is much different today because of what Dick Ogilvie did in those four years.

DePue: We're going to spend some time next time we meet talking more about that, and the timeframe that you're a staffer, now, and not an intern there.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: So that's probably a pretty good place for us to stop today.

Edgar: Okay.

DePue: Any final comments for today, then?

Edgar: No. Again, the internship program, to me, was just one of those fortunate things I got to do, or I wouldn't have gotten to be governor. And it was the right time. It's said about me that I was the right governor at the right time. There's no doubt I was an intern at the right time, at the right place. It couldn't have worked out any better. Also, to understand state government during the time I was in it, I needed to be there in 1969. That was the creation, I think, of the state government that we know, or at least we knew up to the time I left the governorship.

DePue: More about '69 when we meet again.

Edgar: Okay.

(end of interview 2)

Interview with Jim Edgar

ISG-A-L-2009-019.03

Interview # 3: May 28, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Thursday, May 28, 2009. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is my third session with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good afternoon, Governor.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: Thank you for being patient with me today as I struggle through these things. We left off last time, Governor, talking about W. Russell Arrington, and you spent quite a bit of time talking about that; and we finished with the subject of the income tax and the timeframe that you were an intern. And I don't think we have talked very much about that transition from intern to being a staffer, although I think you did talk about the monetary side of it a little bit.

Edgar: Yeah. Well, once the legislative session was over July 1, 1969—and it was a monumental legislative session; not only the income tax, [but] a whole host of other things happened—I went on to become a regular staff person on Arrington's staff, and one of the things I had to do was move to Cook County. Now, this was a major point in my life because I had grown up in downstate Illinois, my wife was from deep southern Illinois, and we had thought we had made a big move moving from Charleston to Springfield; but now we were to move to Cook County. And about, oh, three days after the session was over, we borrowed a truck and made about three trips up to Park Forest, Illinois, where we had a town house, taking our furniture. But more importantly, it was just a whole new adventure for us, to live in the metropolitan area after being in more small-town Illinois.

And my job with Senator Arrington had me working out of the Loop. The office—the old State of Illinois Building was on LaSalle Street and Randolph, and then Arrington's law office was at the other end of LaSalle Street, down near the Board of Trade, the financial part of Chicago. So I went from being a kid who grew up in a small town to all of a sudden working in downtown Chicago and commuting every day by the Illinois Central Railroad train. It was a commuter train. And it was an interesting experience for me because I used to listen to WLS radio as a kid, and in between songs, they'd tell about the "Commuter trains are running thirty minutes late here," and I said, "Who cares?" Well, all of a sudden I started caring because I was one of the tens of thousands of Illinoisans that had to commute downtown to Chicago every day.

So not only was it a new job, it was a whole new way of life for us, all of a sudden being in a metropolitan area and not knowing anybody. For Brenda, I think it was especially hard. She had Brad, who was not two yet, and here she was living in this town house in the suburbs, scared to death to drive a car anyplace. She spent a lot of time with the stroller, strolling Brad down to the Park Forest shopping center. And then, of course, I'd start off early in the morning, catch a bus to get to the train, take the train to get downtown, then walk to my work. That was probably as new an experience as the job itself.

I was considered on Arrington's personal staff. He had two other senior staffers, and they were at the law office. I was over at the State of Illinois Building, so I kind of wasn't where the real action was. And the old State of Illinois Building wasn't a place you wanted to spend a lot of time. We were on the sixteenth floor. Well, there's no bathrooms on certain floors. You had to go to other floors to get to a bathroom. The elevator system... It was kind of a primitive building in a lot of ways. So I used to try to, as much as I could, justify going down to the law office, because that's where Arrington was, that's where the two senior staffers were, and even more importantly, that's where they had a kitchen stocked with food; and if I'd be down there at noon, they'd feed me. I was barely getting by on the meager salary (laughs) Arrington paid us, and so any way I could cut costs, I wanted to cut costs. But hanging out down there, then I was more where the action was.

My assignments were kind of miscellaneous for Arrington and also dealt with some of the correspondence. But the two senior staff guys, there were two things they didn't want to deal with. They didn't want to deal with, one, the political part, the campaigns, and because we had the Senate elections coming up in 1970, I got to be the political guy on staff. We had a political guy that worked at Illinois Tools [Illinois Toll Works]. His name was Jim Mack. He had been the campaign manager for Dick Ogilvie in his election in '68, and he'd done the Senate races before. He was really the political guy that ran everything, but I was kind of the liaison on the staff, and that was fine with me because I loved politics and I wanted to run someday.

And the other thing: Arrington was very much involved in the national legislative organizations. There were three. Only state legislatures would have three different national organizations. He was a big player in all three of them. One was the Leaders' Group, one was the [National] Legislative Conference that was part of the Council of State Governments, and then the third was a National Society of State Legislatures [NCSL]—it was mainly rank-and-file legislators. But Arrington was on the executive committee of all three groups, and he went to these meetings. They [staff] thought somebody needed to go with him, but they didn't want to go, so I went, which was great, because I got to travel some. They have meetings in nice places. And I got to spend some time with Arrington because I was the only guy he could talk to from Illinois. And I got to know a lot of other people around the country, and that would lead to a job. Later on we'll talk about the National Conference of State Legislatures. But it gave me a chance to get to know legislators and state government people from around the country, and as I said, it gave me a chance to do a little traveling around the country.

The first conference I went to was in Salt Lake City, and I remember I broke a chair, which a couple of the legislators would never let me forget. But I remember we went up to Park City for one of the outings, and I'd never been in the mountains, and we were out there eating shrimp in this beautiful green pasture. I told Brenda when I got home, I said, "I thought I was like the Kennedys. You know, all this wealthy looking place and all this outdoors." Then I think we stopped off in Denver, on the way back, for a meeting. I'd never been to Colorado before. Little

did I know I was going to live out there in a few years and my kids would end up living there for a long time. So that was an interesting part of the job because, as I said, for the next two years when I was working for Senator Arrington, I traveled around to these national groups. And there was an effort to merge all three together, and Arrington was the key because he was the only guy who was a member of all three executive committees.

DePue: Were these for both parties or...?

Edgar: Yeah, it was bipartisan. In fact, Arrington as a leader had always insisted that the minority should get the same amount of funds as the majority, and it worked out good a year later when we went in the minority. So you'd go to these meetings, and you wouldn't know who the Republicans and the Democrats were, because they were talking state issues, they were talking structural issues, and... In fact, Arrington was considered, next to Jesse Unruh, who was the Speaker of the California House—those were the two big movers and shakers in state legislatures at that time and considered the big reformers. Unruh had kind of moved out by the time I started going to these things with Arrington, but Arrington was considered the ultimate, at that point, state legislative leader around the country. Even California, Florida—all the rest of them kind of looked at Arrington, knowing that he had done it. Of course, Arrington, it didn't matter if he'd have been from Rhode Island; he'd have let on like he was the most powerful. It amazed me. We'd go to these meetings, and Arrington would come in and just take the meetings over, like that Legislative Council meeting I talked about in Illinois, and everybody respected him.

I'll never forget this one meeting we were at. It was in Denver, and it was about [whether] we ought to merge these groups together. And Arrington started the meeting out saying, "No, it'll just never work. We'll never get the leaders and the rank and—it just won't work." Everybody says, "Yeah, it won't work." We went to lunch, and I don't know what happened to Arrington over lunch. He came back from lunch and says, "We've got to get this done." Everybody says, "We got to get this done." (DePue laughs) About two years later, they got it done. Arrington had already had his stroke by then, but it was from that meeting, when Arrington came back from lunch and said, "We got to get this done. We got to just have one group."

DePue: With that much time with Arrington, did you have opportunities to talk about your personal future?

Edgar: No, never did. I got time with him, but it wasn't—I didn't fly with him. He flew first class; I flew coach. I'd ride in from the airport with him and make sure that everything was—hotel and all that. I didn't have to carry his luggage or anything. But at least he got to know who I was, because we never were sure on the staff, especially us new staffers, if he really knew who we were; if he could keep us straight, the names. But that did give me some time with him.

But sometimes he wouldn't go, and I'd go in his place. So I'd go and represent him. There was a group of young turk leaders around the country who all moved up later. I got to know them all because I wasn't a whole lot younger than they were, and they were a lot younger than Arrington, so I think they'd just as soon hang out with me than they would have Arrington, because he scared them, too. (DePue laughs)

But those were two of my responsibilities in those days; and the political thing, particularly as the 1970 election approached, I spent a lot of time meeting with prospective candidates and traveling around with Senator Arrington when he'd go to a district to make a speech for a candidate and—

DePue: How involved was Arrington in selecting candidates for the legislature?

Edgar: He wasn't that much at all. He understood politics, he knew it was important, but he was into government. Politics was a necessarily evil to be able to govern. He wasn't one that got hung up too much on the political stuff. He was just as good a friend with Democratic legislators in Springfield as Republican. In fact, he wasn't close to many; he was kind of a loner in some ways. But in Chicago, there were a lot of Democrats there and people he dealt with. So he never was one of these—he knew you had to win control so he could be the leader. If you didn't have control, then he wouldn't be the majority leader and he wouldn't have all that power. But he wasn't one that fought politics night and day, like Bob Blair, who I worked with later as Speaker. Most of the leaders were very political. Arrington just wasn't quite as much in that. He was important, and he'd go out and get the money and help them. But he himself was a terrible campaigner. He didn't campaign.

They tell the story—this was right before I came on the staff—that they were driving back one day, and one of the staffers was driving him, and he was rooting through his glove box and found a map. He was looking at the map, and he said, "Hmm." He said… something about Glenview Naval airbase, and he says, "Is that in my district?" And they said, "Yeah." And he said, "How long has that been in my district?" And they said, "Oh, for twenty years." He didn't know he had a milit—and he used to refer—he said, "I'll be the last Senate Republican leader from Chicago." He lived in Evanston. His district hadn't had any—at one time, he had a little of Chicago—Chicago for years, but he didn't think that. He didn't go campaign like most normal... (laughs) There'd be a party meeting in his district he might once a year attend, maybe. He was above that. He was too busy. Of course, his district was so secure in the general election, and nobody would think to challenge him in the primary. But he just wasn't focused on the politics that much.

But he would always meet with the candidates, particularly when we were going to decide how much money to give them. And one of the candidates was a young guy named Bruce DuMont, who later became involved in radio and in broadcasting and things. He was running as a Republican candidate in the city of Chicago, in the near north side, which was considered kind of a moderate to liberal district Republicans had a chance back then of winning, because they were running

against the Democratic machine in Chicago, which the liberals didn't like. You had the Independent Voters of Illinois, which were supporting Bruce in this race. We had six Senators from Chicago then, Republican Senators, and they were all up for reelection. Anyway, that election proved to be a disaster for Republicans. We got swept from the top of the ticket. Ralph Tyler Smith had been appointed by Dick Ogilvie to be the replacement to Everett Dirksen when he died. (watch beeps) Ralph Tyler Smith had been Speaker of the House when Arrington was Senate leader, and he was the Speaker when they passed the income tax. He then went to the U.S. Senate, and he ran against Adlai Stevenson III in 1970. It was not a good Republican year nationwide, and it particularly wasn't a good year in Illinois.

DePue: You had mentioned before that—when we talked about the impact of the income tax—you thought that most of these legislators didn't really pay a direct price for that.

Edgar: I don't think so, and I don't think that's what—some people think that's why the '70 elec—but you look nationwide; the Republicans did lousy. And also, Ralph Tyler Smith wasn't a very good candidate against Adlai Stevenson III. That name, at that point, still had some magic. We had a candidate for superintendent of education and for state treasurer, and we lost them all. But in the legislative race, we lost: all the Chicago Republicans got beat, and Bruce DuMont got beat, too; and we lost downstate. And ended up; we had a tie. It was twenty-nine, twenty-nine. Only had fifty-eight Senators back then. In 1870, they hadn't thought about you could have a tie, because you had the lieutenant governor always presiding. So because they had a tie, that gave the presiding officer the ability to break a tie. Only time the lieutenant governor could ever vote if there was a tie. He could vote on who would be the majority leader. Of course, he voted for the Democrat.

An interesting story on that: After the election, we knew it was a tie, so if we could just get one Democrat to stay home or vote present, we could keep control of the Senate; Arrington would still be the Senate majority leader. And there was one African-American Senator from the South Side—the Hyde Park, University of Chicago district, very independent—named Dick Newhouse. And Arrington had always had good rapport with the black legislators. He'd tried to sneak open housing through. They liked him; they viewed him as a good Republican. And so we started working on Newhouse to see if we could get him to switch over and vote for Arrington. And we had meetings, and—oh, I sat in the meetings. That's one of the things interesting about this, that Arrington would let me sit in the office in some of these meetings. He always had a staffer. So I got to... And I remember when we had Newhouse in, trying to get him to come over and to vote.

He didn't come over; he never would come over and vote for Arrington, but the night before, we convened a session; the Democrats caucused. And Mayor Daley and they decided there was going to be a Senator named—what was Cherry's first name? He was from Chicago, Jewish Senator—Bob Cherry, that was his name. And that's who they had picked—Daley had picked to be the Senate leader—

because the old Senate leader was leaving to become a judge, Art McGloon.[39] And so Bob Cherry was Daley's pick. They go into caucus, and Newhouse says, "I'm not going to vote for any Democrat that's not an African-American." There were four African-Americans: himself; a guy named Charlie Chew, who was a character, who will come up later in my story; and there was an older one, Fred Smith; and then there was Cecil Partee. It was obvious, Cecil Partee was the only guy there that really could be leader.

And so late that night, they had to change directions, and they nominated Partee to be the Senate majority leader. That's the only way they could get Newhouse to vote. So that was the first black to ever head up one of the chambers in the Illinois legislature, and it happened because Newhouse was holding out. And part of the reason he was holding out—he was getting offers from the Republican side if he would at least not vote. So while we didn't get Arrington back in, I think we did have an impact on getting Partee—who was really a nice guy, good guy—to be the first black leader in one of the caucuses, or presiding officer, basically, in one of the two chambers.

Well, back up a little bit on the politics. Arrington, when we lost control of the Senate—when you lost that many seats, there was a lot of unhappiness among Senate Republicans, and Bill Harris, who had been his main assistant, challenged him for leader.

DePue: Challenged Arrington?

Edgar: Arrington for leader. And Bill Harris was from Pontiac, Illinois. A very able legislator, very well-liked, close with the Ogilvie people. But he hung out with some guys, and they just grumbled about how Arrington let the staff run everything, and they hadn't paid attention. So Harris thought he could beat Arrington—and I thought he could, too. I just thought, Oh, shoot, I'm going to be out of a job. My good friend Tim Campbell was working with Harris. He'd been assigned to Harris, so he was working for Harris, and I'm working for Arrington. So I remember this was about two weeks after the election, 1970.

We had moved back to Springfield. I had talked Arrington into letting me move back, because we wanted to go back to Springfield. That was a hard life (laughs) up there, we thought. I talked him into letting me move back to Springfield, so we had moved back to Springfield about a week before the 1970 election. After going through blizzards and all kinds of things in Chicago and Park Forest—had an interesting experience, but it was time to get back to... And I wanted to get back downstate because I wanted to run someday. So we moved back in October.

So right after the election—it was about two weeks after; it was a Sunday—Arrington calls me, and he says, "Come into the office," because I'm the only guy

[39] Thomas A. McGloon was elected to the Illinois Senate in 1958, serving as the Democratic leader from 1965 until his departure for the Illinois Appellate Court in 1971.

down there. I'm his guy down there; his senior staff guys are up north. And so Arrington comes down to the office and he says, "We're just going to see where we stand." He says, "Harris called me and said he's running; I'm just going to find out." And Arrington called every one of the Senate Republicans that afternoon, and he had me on the other line—they didn't know it—but I'm on the other line. He calls them up, and he says, "I'm just calling to see if you're going to be with me for leader." And (snaps) in three hours he'd called —he had more votes than he needed to be the leader. Listening to those conversations, I am convinced half of them didn't want to vote for him, but they weren't going to tell Russ Arrington no. (DePue laughs) He just kind of—he didn't cherry-coat, either. He just said, "Bill, I'm just calling you up." He says, "I guess Harris is going to challenge me, so I just want to know, are you going to be with me? Okay." They'd say, "Yes, Russ; yes, Russ." A couple guys said, "Oh, I don't know. I'm just not sure." "Okay." But the majority of them said yes, so...

DePue: Any flat-out no's?

Edgar: No, no. No flat-out no's. He didn't get a hold of everybody—I don't know if he called—I said he called everybody. He may not have called some that he knew were questionable to be close to Harris, or he couldn't find him; they didn't return his—but he did have enough yes votes by the end (laughs) of that afternoon to have it. And I was amazed, because I had followed this stuff pretty closely, and we had all talked about it; and none of us thought he could beat Harris, because he hadn't spent time with the troops. He was Russell Arrington: he was above everybody, and he was rough. He was. These guys would come in wanting something, and he'd say no, or he'd make them kill their bills and things. But he helped them in their campaigns and whatever. It was an amazing—and then I went through some other leadership fights. I never saw anything like it.

DePue: I did want to ask you a couple other questions about Arrington.

Edgar: Mm-hmm.

DePue: The breakfast meetings were legendary.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Could you tell us about that?

Edgar: Now I'm on his personal staff, so I've got to go to breakfast every morning, and he'd have seven o'clock breakfasts. I hate getting up in the morning. We had them at the old State House Inn, and we had them in the same corner. I had the same meal every morning. And there we are, seven o'clock in the morning—

DePue: What was the meal?

Edgar: You'd order, but I usually had bacon and eggs. Back then, it's all I ate. That's probably why I had quadruple bypass later.[40] But anyway, we'd sit there, and we'd go over what was going to come up today. It'd be myself, maybe two other staffers from his leadership staff, the two leaders—at that point, Bill Harris and Bob Coulson. Bill Harris kind of liked to party, and there were a few times he came in from partying, to the seven o'clock breakfast. He didn't even go home and change, (laughs) I don't think, but he ate at those breakfasts, too. And then Bob Coulson, who was a nice guy from Waukegan; but he was kind of out of it—I mean, he was a freethinker—libertarian. But he wasn't close to anybody; he was just out there. So Harris was the guy who really talked to the members of the leadership, and that's why we thought when he challenged him [Arrington], he would be tough to beat.

You'd go over the agenda for the day: what issues are coming up, what… If there was some issue, like transportation or an appropriation, you'd have maybe the staffer who was working on that; he'd come to that breakfast, too. But they'd last for about an hour. Many a time, Arrington opened up the State House Inn. He'd get there and turn the lights on. They wouldn't have the restaurant open yet, and he'd be in there.

And what I used to get the kick—we had the same waitress. This lady seemed ancient to me—she was probably only in her fifties at that time—because I was in my twenties. But he would get that bill, and here's this guy who was a multi-millionaire; in that time, that was real money. (laughs) He spent fifteen minutes checking her addition and making sure the right thing had got charged. He'd look around. Then he'd do the tip. He'd figure the tip and give it to her. And every morning, he'd do that. Nobody else; he always did that.

DePue: Was he paying the whole bill?

Edgar: Yeah, he paid the bill. He'd pay for breakfast. I don't think he ever got reimbursed for breakfast. Another story about Arrington, though: later on, he had his stroke and he was out. He was still a member, but he never came to session because he was up in the rehab institute, and he was indignant because he didn't get his expense money. (laughs) They used to always get that expense money first thing in the session; that was kind of like part of their salary. He just thought he ought to have it. And they said, "Senator, we'll give it to you, but you weren't here, and we'd have to put you down as here, and everybody knows you weren't here." And I think it was a matter of five thousand dollars, but Arrington—that's part of his salary. We were just sitting there shaking our heads. Here is this guy worth twenty million dollars at that time—probably not going to live a whole lot longer, just gone through this stroke, worried about all this other stuff—and by gosh, he wanted his five thousand dollars expense money. (laughter) But finally we convinced him, No, you don't really need that. You don't want that. That would look bad.

[40] On July 7-8, 1994, Governor Edgar, then 47, had emergency quadruple-bypass surgery at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Illinois. *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1994, 1. See Edgar interview number 17.

DePue: One other quick question on Arrington. How did you know when you'd gotten on the wrong side with him and he was upset?

Edgar: Arrington was good: if he got mad at you, he'd let you know right away; but after he did that, he kind of got over it. Now, if you were constantly on the wrong side, I think he'd just ignore you. You were irrelevant, and he wasn't going to use you.

DePue: So he wasn't a screamer?

Edgar: Oh, he would explode. It was not a soft discussion, but you knew once he got done, if you didn't screw up next time, he was going to move on. Arrington didn't hold grudges.

DePue: Were you ever on the receiving end?

Edgar: The only time really was kind of that time on the salary. He came back at us pretty good—not as loud as maybe I heard him sometimes get mad at somebody. But I remember one time we were sitting—Arrington really got into worrying about staff and all that stuff. It was the year after I was an intern; we were picking new interns. And by that time, the leadership staff got to pick interns, but we got to interview them, too. I had not done the interviewing, but somebody on our staff had done the interviewing, and they had picked this guy. We didn't want him, but this guy from our staff had said, "He's okay"; but when we all sat down, he agreed, "No, we probably don't really want him."

Nobody else wanted him, but he was the guy—so we were kind of stuck with him, and that was pointed out when I sat down with the staff and we were trying to—who's going to get what. They said, "Your guy"—it wasn't me; it was somebody else— "he's the one that picked this guy. We don't want him." It was kind of hard to argue, because I knew what had happened. So we went back to Arrington, and we said, "We got these four. We're not crazy about this one. "We won't take him, then." I said, "Well, we've got a little bit of a dilemma. The guy we had sitting in those meetings is the one that kind of got him in the final sixteen, and if it hadn't been for him—and so the other guys said, 'We're not responsible for him being in the final...'" And it was pretty clear we were stuck with him.

Arrington went into the meeting with staffers. You got to appreciate this: (DePue laughs) here, Russell Arrington goes in with these staffers. They're just kind of my level. They aren't even the head staff guys; the second-run handled the intern thing. And (laughs) he starts arguing with this one guy from the House—his name was Bob Outist, who was on the House Democrat staff, and who had been student body president at U of I when I was student body president at Eastern. Arrington just thinks he can roll over him, and Outist, to his credit, just said, "Senator, I'm sorry, but we're not taking this guy. Your guy picked him, and we're not taking him." And Arrington just went at him. I thought, Ah, shoot, I'd hate to be—poor Bob; because Arrington was just—and here, these are all staffers and

Russ Arrington. (laughs) It was only Arrington because he took this really serious. Outist wouldn't budge. He said, "Nope, not taking him."

So later, Arrington is sitting there with me, and he said, "Who is that guy?" I said, "His name is Bob Outist." He said, "He's all right. By gosh, he didn't back down. I like that." And so you kind of knew with Arrington: if you thought you were right, you just stand up to him, and he'd respect that; but if you were wrong, (laughs) you'd better just admit you were wrong and just hope, after he'd got done blasting you, you could move on; you'd get a chance to prove that you're right. I had him question me a couple times, and I quickly answered him, but I never had him do like he did to poor Bob Outist that day in that meeting.

DePue: But it is indicative that if you hold your position...

Edgar: No, he respected that. Part of that was that legal training, I always thought; that he's a negotiator and he's going to get the best deal he can get, but he knows it's a negotiation; it's not life and death, in some ways. And he would respect somebody who would stand up to him.

DePue: Tell us about the stroke, then.

Edgar: Well, after the organizing of the Senate, when Newhouse made (laughs) Partee the Senate leader, we recessed for about two weeks, because, at that point, the legislature always had to recess to redo the voting board. You'd have to take all oral votes because you had to put the names up; and you had to do some paperwork that could have got done, but they always took at least two, three weeks off at the beginning while they did all that stuff. We adjourned for two or three weeks, so we had that time. The week afterwards, I think it's either Sunday night or Monday, we get a call that the Senator's in the hospital. He was coming back to Springfield, and a couple of the staff guys were driving him—he didn't feel good. They finally convinced him to go to the hospital and get checked out, and they determined he'd had a minor stroke. So he was in the hospital room up there, but they said it was minor; he should be okay, but we had to wait and see.

So I think it was on a Tuesday or a Wednesday, then—I remember I was in a meeting, and they called me out of the meeting and said—because I was going to go up later that week. And what had happened at that point—the two senior guys who were in front of me, they had gone on to—one become a judge and one went out to private practice.

DePue: You talking about senior staffers?

Edgar: Staffers. So I was one of the senior staffers at that point. They brought a guy back to the staff who had been an intern years before, and the two of us were considered the two senior guys. I was the political guy; worrying about who's going to vote for who in the leadership battle and stuff like that, and he was more the programmatic guy. We both were based in Springfield, and there were a couple of guys in Chicago who were committee guys, but they were up there, and they were the ones driving

with him and talked him into going to the hospital. So I was going to go up later in the week and see him. It was Tuesday or Wednesday they called and said he'd had a massive stroke, he's paralyzed, and it's not good.

So we had dumped Bill Harris from leadership. He was the natural guy. Everybody figured if anything ever happened to Arrington, Harris would take over. If Harris hadn't challenged Arrington, he'd have been the natural guy to move in and be the acting leader while Arrington was out with the stroke. But Arrington had dumped him, which was understandable, because of some of the complaints about [him from] some of the members that support Arrington. They didn't like Harris. They thought Harris thought he was too important. They could put up with Arrington, but they couldn't put up with Harris doing that. (DePue laughs)

So there was a group of about five or six who were kind of holding out. They weren't going to vote for Harris, but they weren't ready to say Arrington yet; we knew they wouldn't vote for Harris. But one of them needed to be in leadership, and it was a guy named Terrel Clarke, who was a very fine individual—a suburban Senator. Called him Tec—Tec Clarke. He had got put in the leadership along with Bob Coulson, and Clarke was to replace Harris. Ironically, Harris and Clarke had run against each other in a statewide primary about six years before and Harris had beat him, so there had always been a little tension between those two guys. Clarke was always kind of an outsider himself. He was an insurance salesman, but a very honest guy, very credible guy. I can't remember; I think he went to Harvard Business School or something, but good guy.[41]

So I'm sitting there—Arrington is not coming back for a long time if ever; Harris is out, and I don't want him kind of trying to take over—because I knew they might come in and say, "We're going to elect a new leader," and all the people who had supported Arrington would be left high and dry. I knew that's not what Arrington wanted, because he said Harris burned his bridges; he's out. So I thought, we have to move quick and take care of this vacuum. I knew Bob Coulson just wouldn't work. Nice guy, but no way he could be the leader, and the members wouldn't follow him—he'd get off on some philosophical discussion, and nobody knew what he was talking about; it just wasn't going to work. But Tec Clarke, I thought, was a very reasonable guy; a lot of the members liked him, he had put the time in, and he was a smart guy.

So I, on my own, called him in Florida and said, "Senator, you need to come back to Springfield right away. Senator Arrington's had a stroke, and we don't think he's coming back for a long time." And he said, "Okay, I'll fly into St. Louis," and I said, "We'll pick you up." So I went—we took Arrington's car—we had Arrington's Cadillac, Senate One. We drove down there, and I sat in the backseat with him coming back, kind of briefing him on all the things that needed to be done;

[41] Terrel E. Clarke (March 11, 1920-July 29, 1977) represented Western Springs in the Illinois House from 1957 to 1967, then in the state Senate from 1967 to 1977. Following his World War II army service, Clarke earned an MBA from the Harvard School of Business. *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 2, 1997, 39.

just to say that we needed somebody to act as leader and get these things done, or my fear was that we'd have chaos or a new vote for leader. And he understood. So he came on and put out a letter saying that Senator Arrington had this stroke and that Bob Coulson and him were going to step in and. Coulson was pretty agreeable, he just wasn't the guy to do it; but he deferred to let Clarke do a lot of it.

So Clarke became the de facto [leader] during those three weeks when nobody was there. It's kind of like Lincoln, when he fought the Civil War when Congress wasn't around to declare war yet. We kind of had Clarke go ahead and start doing all these things so when the members came back, they'd been used to getting memos from Clarke, and Clarke was up to speed on everything. So they quickly said, Yeah, this is fine; you two guys will step in until Russ comes back; because nobody wanted to—we didn't think Arrington was going to come back, but you just never know how quick you can come out of a stroke.

And there, I'm a twenty-four-year-old staffer; and I had basically made the call that this was what we ought to do, and we'd pulled it off. It was pretty heady stuff for a twenty-four-year-old, but I think necessary. And Tech Clarke proved to be a very competent leader in a very difficult situation, because these guys had never been in a minority. They just weren't used to that; they were used to ramming everything through. So Clarke had to kind of keep them from feeling like they were completely leaderless and nothing was happening, and be effective and deal with the Democrats. And he did a nice job. It was tough, but he did, I thought, a very nice job. It's kind of the end of the Tech Clarke story. We became very close, but at the end of the year, I ended up moving over to the House when Bob Blair offered me a deal I couldn't refuse. I think it hurt Clarke because he knew it was going to make it tougher for him to get elected then, because I was kind of the guy who knew the politics better than some of the other staffers. And he lost by one vote to Bill Harris, two years later, for the leadership post.

But Arrington; I think it was probably about a week later I went up and visited him, but he was—he could just kind of nod his head.

DePue: Couldn't talk?

Edgar: Couldn't speak. He'd lost his speech. He couldn't hardly walk. And they moved him to the Rehab Institute of Chicago. The guy there who runs that, a guy named Dr. Betts, had worked with Joe Kennedy when he'd had his stroke back in the early sixties.[42] He worked with Arrington, and six months later, Arrington was able to walk a little bit with a cane and began to get some of his speech back. He really worked—it was hard. It didn't just come back; he had to really work on it. And I'm trying to remember—the veto session, maybe, at the end of 1971—he might have returned just for a day of the veto session.

[42] Dr. Henry Brognard Betts moved from the East Coast to the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago in 1963. He was later active in lobbying for a mandatory seatbelt law in Illinois and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. http://www.lincolnparkvillage.org/AboutUs/News/tabid/77/vw/1/ItemID/5/Default.aspx.

DePue: What was your personal reaction going up to the hospital and seeing him there?

Edgar: Oh, I couldn't imagine him ever coming back. You just knew this was the end of an era. And I didn't appreciate what that meant because I'd never known a legislature without Arrington, and everybody who did was really worried. Lobbyists, people hanging on the railing, said, "Oh, Arrington's the guy that made this thing work." Now, you had Ogilvie as governor, and they were pretty hands-on. It was a lot different than Kerner who wasn't that hands-on. Ogilvie's people were hands-on, and even though we were in the minority, it helped us still because you had the governor. So there wasn't a vacuum; maybe, if it had been when Otto Kerner was governor and Arrington had had a stroke—the old, old days, nobody was in control.

But you just knew that Arrington was just—how is he ever going to come back? Arrington was already, at that point, I think, in his late sixties. He'd had a couple of heart attacks before. That's what everybody thought: he'd just fall over with a heart attack. So there was all this concern about any day, something could happen to Arrington, health-wise. I'd never been around people with strokes till then, but it's terrible, because you're just—you're alive, but you can't do things. In his case, he couldn't speak, which just frustrated him to no end. He couldn't move hardly. And even when he got better, when he was able to move a little bit, he still couldn't speak. And I think it was the next year he came down just briefly and spoke, but he'd only speak, like, a sentence because he knew he'd have trouble. He was a perfectionist, and that just really bothered him.

So my sense was, Arrington's not going to come back. Arrington is not going to be the power that—that's gone. So Tec Clarke did, I thought, a very good job in a very difficult situation, and was a really nice guy and somebody that I would have been happy to work with. But my big responsibility in 1971 was, besides just doing the politicking and trying to figure out which bills we really needed to help the governor on—and I'd go over to try to get Newhouse, and Partee would get mad. He'd yell at me, "Stay on your side," because he knew I was over there trying to talk to Newhouse. (DePue laughs) Because it only took one vote. They still couldn't pass anything if Newhouse would vote present. And I'd get him over there, and every so often I'd get him to vote present or something like that and just stir up trouble. And Partee—who I got along with, and later actually supported me for governor, quietly, when he was running for state's attorney as the Democrat—used to get so mad at me coming over there and trying to get Newhouse to do things.

Partee liked me because back in '70, the first year I was on the staff, I sat on the floor; I kept the book on the floor. And they were trying to pass a bill to create a Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in Illinois, and of course the Republicans were opposed to it. Partee was the sponsor, and there were a few Republicans, but not many. And the debate had been going on and on, and I get a call that said, "Arrington wants to see you." He was in his office meeting with some people. A lot of times he'd be back there when debate would be going. I went in there, and he says, "Tell Tec, if he needs my vote for this, I'll come out on the floor and vote for it"; because when it came to civil rights, he was as good as any Democrat on civil

rights issues. So I go over to Senator Partee, and I said, "Senator, Senator Arrington wanted me to come out and say that if you need his vote, he'll come out and vote for this bill." He said, "No. I don't have enough votes, and there's no need for Russ to catch hell from his members. Tell him I appreciate it, but just tell him don't come out and do that. I don't want him to go through what he's got to go through to do that." So I went back. I got to know Partee from doing things like that.

But that was the relationship. Arrington and Partee and members back then, they wouldn't—this was an important bill to Partee, but he knew he wasn't going to pass it, so he wasn't going to make Arrington walk the plank when it wasn't going to do any good.

DePue: There is an anecdote that you had in your introduction to the book on Arrington about an incident where—I'm getting to the point where I want to ask you about the influence that he had and how you saw governance, if you will.

Edgar: Back, again, in that 1970 session, I was still just kind of the junior personal staffer—I wasn't involved in all the heavy stuff—and that was the year we had riots on the college campuses. I'll never forget the SIU and U of I.

DePue: Southern.

Edgar: Arrington went down with the governor when they were having the head of the National Guard give a report on the war zones in Illinois, and the Senate Republican caucus got—they didn't have anybody to keep them in line. Bill Harris went with him, so there was nobody (laughs) left to keep them in line, and they demanded that the president of Illinois State come in because he'd allowed them [students] to lower the flag at half-mast. They had no riots at ISU—it was calm—but they'd lowered the flag at half-mast, one of the Senators' sons had told about that, and they were enraged this guy would let them lower the flag at half-mast. It was in honor of the students killed at Kent State. But it also kept things peaceful at Illinois State: while Southern was up for grabs, and U of I was about ready to go up for grabs, ISU was quiet. Anyway, these guys just get all worked up, and I go down to the governor's office and I say, "You've got to get Arrington out of there. We're having a revolt in our caucus." And he goes back up, but it was too late; they demanded that president come and answer why he had done that. This president came in, and they just beat him up so much he resigned the next day. He just said, "I'm not putting up with this."[43]

That was an eventful year, but it wasn't a good year for Ogilvie. And the same thing happened to me as governor: the first year, you pull everything off and it's great; the second year you have "sophomoritis" or whatever they call it, and everything seems to go wrong. Ogilvie wanted to help the CTA [Chicago Transit

[43] Following a complaint before the Senate Republican caucus by Illinois State University sophomore and Young Americans for Freedom state coordinator Randall Berning, the caucus summoned president Samuel E. Braden to a ninety-minute, closed-door hearing on May 11, 1970. Berning was the son of Sen. Karl Berning (R-Deerfield). Braden resigned a month later, on June 12. *Chicago Tribune*, May 14 and June 13, 1970.

Authority] because he was looking ahead in the next election, and CTA had, as they always did, financial problems. He wanted to help out there, so he proposed a penny increase in the gas tax statewide to go to mass transportation. That meant CTA because we didn't have much mass transportation then. And needless to say, that didn't go over big with a lot of Republicans, particularly after they'd just voted for an income tax and were scared about that. So we spent weeks trying to get that done. I remember lobbying Senators and stuff, and Arrington worked on it, and we couldn't get anyplace.

And Ogilvie called a special session while we were there, on that. It was the second session; we were done. We could have got out of there at the first of June, but he called us back in on this CTA, and we went 'round and 'round. Long story short, it's about three o'clock in the morning, and Arrington got his caucus in there, and he just can't get them to budge. And he calls Ogilvie, gets him out of bed, and says, "We're just not going to get this. We might as well just let them go home." So they adjourned and went home.[44]

The next morning, I remember walking in his office, as I said in the book, and you could tell he was very upset. And I said, "Senator, what's wrong?" Arrington kept pushing it the night before, but the troops just weren't—they were getting testy about it. He said, "I just feel bad about not getting that CTA thing done." And of course, Arrington had a view to it. He thought he was from Chicago, remember? CTA was something that needed help. I said, "Really, that's probably the best for you politically." I said, "If you'd have kept pushing that, you were going to have a revolt." I said, "Now, yeah, it's unfortunate, but they're not mad at you, and they're going home." He says, "No, no, Jim, you don't understand." He says, "We're here to solve problems, and we didn't solve a problem, so we failed. That's what this is all about: to solve problems, and we failed."

And I was just taken back, because as I said, if he'd have pushed that much longer, we might have seen him deposed as leader because they really did not want to do this. But Arrington just made it very clear: we're not here for getting elected and reelected; we're here to get something done, and we didn't get something done, so we failed. That's why he was so upset. And here's a guy who passed the income tax, did all kinds of things; but he had another responsibility and didn't get it done, and he was really upset. So that always was my view: that's what you're there for. Yeah, you want to win elections. I want to win (laughs) as much as anybody, and I have an ego that—I lost one time, and I didn't like that—but you're there to do something, and Arrington made it very clear that's why he was there. He had an ego, he'd had a lot of satisfaction for ego, but he wanted to do something.

And as I said, he didn't worry about the politics as much as he should have. He just worried there was a problem, he had a solution, and he wanted to get that solution on that problem; and he would move mountains to get that done. He would run over people (DePue laughs) to get that done, and he just felt like they'd failed.

[44] Ogilvie announced the failure of the special session on June 29, 1970. *Chicago Tribune*, June 30, 1970, 2.

So that always stuck with me; I think that's Russ Arrington in a nutshell, and that's why I think he had such a positive impact.

And I've never known anyone like him. Jim Thompson's a very competent guy, very smart guy—smartest guy I've ever been around.[45] You had the Bill Harrises, the Phil Rocks—all these guys who meant well, good guys—but there was nobody that had the drive and the ability to get things done like Arrington, and to do it for what he thought was the right thing. It wasn't politics. It wasn't so he could get so many more people elected. It was just because he was there to solve problems; and if you didn't solve it, then you failed. So that always stuck with me. And as I said, there never was anybody else like Arrington when it came to that because most everyone else, in the end, were more political than they were substance. And that's not bad, because you have to be very political to get things done, but Arrington was much more substance than he was political.

DePue: What I wanted to do next, if you're agreeable to this—those four years that Ogilvie was governor, a lot of things happened. We've already talked about the income tax, and that was probably the thing that he's most remembered for, now; but there's an awful lot of other stuff, and I'd like to go through the list and have you respond real quickly, if you could.

Edgar: Okay.

DePue: The first one is—the first one on my list, at least—the Environmental Protection Agency, established in 1970.

Edgar: Yeah, I was going to talk about that. In 1970, I'm working for Arrington. The Senate Republicans still had their huge control. It's kind of late in the session, and the House passes the EPA bill to create the EPA. I think Representative George Burditt had been the sponsor. . But it came over late in the session. Harris Fawell, a very competent Senator from Naperville, handled it. And I am sure that Harris Fawell is the only Senator—maybe one other—who read the bill, the only one who had a clue what was in it. And Harris was pretty liberal for a Republican. He later went on and became a congressman from DuPage County. But I remember him saying, "Boy, this really goes a long way." He says, "There's a lot of power in here."

Ogilvie's people—it was late in the session—say, "We got to hurry and get this passed. Let's get it out quick." And Fawell was a team player with Ogilvie. He was always one of the most reliable votes for Arrington. They had been together on open housing. And a lot of the members didn't trust him; they thought he was too liberal. And I remember Fawell saying, "I don't know, this bill..." I said, "Well, Senator, they want it passed today." He said, "It just came over here yesterday." I think in a matter of three days, we got it out of committee and passed out of the Senate. Nobody had a clue how widespread that bill was, what all it meant, I am

[45] This is a common theme in people's recollections of Thompson. See Arnie Kanter interview for his explanation of this evaluation.

convinced—except Fawell. And Fawell, of all the Republican Senators, would probably agree with a lot of that, but even he was nervous about how that was. They didn't have a clue what was in it. But it was a new thing—clean up the environment. Everybody was for that. I think maybe we'd had the first environment day, that's sometime in May or in spring. The first one, I think, had happened that year.[46]

DePue: Yeah, that was 1970, I think.

Edgar: Yeah, I think it happened.

DePue: But was that [legislation] not before the equivalent at the federal level?

Edgar: Before. Yeah. I don't know if any other state—it might have been one or two other states had had it. It was in the forefront, but it was when everybody realized—and Republicans more than Democrats—we've got to clean up the environment; we need to do something on the environment.

DePue: Why do you say Republicans more than Democrats? Because that plays against what you hear all the time.

Edgar: I know it's what you hear, but if you ever do any polling, to this day, the environmental issue is always a much more important issue to suburban Republicans than it is to city Democrats. And at that point, it wasn't viewed as business—I don't know if business was asleep or just afraid or what, or they didn't have time to read the bill, because it had got changed a lot in the House. It had been there for a long time, there'd been amendments and everything. But it was a Republican House that passed it over to a Republican Senate, and we passed it, I think, in maybe a total of three days. You can't pass anything quicker than three days in the House, and it wasn't any more than three days, and it passed out. And I always said that cost Ogilvie more votes than the income tax. And I think Ogilvie would say that.

DePue: What in particular about that cost him the votes?

Edgar: All of a sudden (laughs) you had a ban on leaf burning all over the state, everyplace.

DePue: Sounds like such a little thing that's such a huge thing.

Edgar: Oh, that's what people care about. Also, it had a huge impact on rural areas. All of a sudden these smart-aleck young kids from Springfield started coming on farms and telling farmers what their cows could and couldn't do on their property and streams. And people just said, "What is this EPA? This is communism, you know." (DePue laughs) And the leaf burning, I remember, just got everybody, because, come fall, and all of a sudden, (laughs) you couldn't burn the leaves. And if you look at where

[46] The first Earth Day was April 22, 1970.

Ogilvie dropped off in ’72 versus where he won in ’68, a lot of it was in rural areas. I don’t think it was the income tax. They don’t pay that much income tax, those farmers don’t, that much. I think it was more the leaf burning. Also, there was the argument that he closed down a lot of the slot machines in some of the American Legion halls and things like that in downstate Illinois. That might have had some impact. But I think the EPA, if there’s any one thing—and I’m sure the income tax cost him some votes, but I think the EPA—and to bright and brash young kids.

And that got to be one of Ogilvie’s problems. Ogilvie had done an excellent job of bringing in a lot of bright, young people in the state government; but they were bright, and they knew it, and they got a lot of people a little frustrated and upset. A lot of legislators didn’t like these smart-aleck whippersnappers basically telling them what to do and then threatening them if they didn’t do it. Then they’d play the patronage card and things like that. I always tried to be—well, I wasn’t that smart, so I couldn’t be too smart-aleck—deferential to those guys. They were elected. And for the most part, it worked. They liked me because I wasn’t one who came and told them they had to do this or that; I’d come and—

DePue: So these are people coming over from the executive department?

Edgar: From the governor’s office, and some of them had worked in legislature. And then the patronage guy—there was a guy name Don Udstuen who later got in trouble during the Ryan—

DePue: What was the name again?

Edgar: Don Udstuen. He was the patronage chief, and he made a lot of them mad. Made a lot of county chairmen mad. A lot of the party folks got mad at him and a lot of legislators got mad at him. And I think that hurt Ogilvie, and I think people who have talked about it will concur that probably the staff’s attitude and their arrogance hurt him with a lot of rank-and-file Republicans. But EPA, I think, was one of those things that—it was great, it was way ahead of its time, it was needed, but I think it caught people off guard; all of a sudden you went from nothing to all these rules and regulations. And they backed off a little bit, but I think the damage was done.

DePue: RTA [Regional Transportation Authority] is the next thing on my list, and I think that’s July—

Edgar: Ogilvie didn’t have anything to do with RTA. I’ll talk about RTA when I talk about working for Blair.

DePue: Okay. Maybe I have the timeline wrong.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Illinois Department of Corrections?

Edgar: It was created by Ogilvie; that first session, one of his proposals was to take the Department of Public Safety, which was both state police and corrections, and split it into two departments. And that's the story I told you about Pete Bensinger, who was Ogilvie's young, bright aide who worked in the law enforcement area, who came to me when they had this bill; and since I was the law enforcement guy, I was kind of handling this, even though I was just an intern.[47] I remember asking him—because you created these two departments and both directors had a salary of thirty-five thousand dollars, which was the most any director by far would get in Illinois—"Why are you doing this?" I said, "They're going to ask me how you justify thirty-five." He said, "We're going to have a nationwide search for the best possible person in corrections," and six months later, who they picked: Pete Bensinger (DePue laughs), the staff aide—who went on and was an excellent director and developed a national reputation, but at that time was just a young staffer with no nationwide reputation.

Really, there wasn't much talk about corrections; it was more on law enforcement because Ogilvie wanted to create the Illinois Bureau of Investigation, which made people a little nervous that here was going to be this super-police force that the governor was going to control.

DePue: The Little FBI is what it's called?

Edgar: Yeah, that's what they called it. Yeah. So there was a lot of resistance, particularly from Democrats. I told you the story, I think; he was going to take away the Secretary of State Police from Paul Powell and put all the law enforcement alone. The tradeoff was, Paul Powell kept his Secretary of State Police, and then Clyde Choate had some of the downstate Democrats throw enough votes to create the Illinois Bureau of Investigation. The Chicago Democrats never did support it.[48]

DePue: I think you mentioned this one—I could be wrong—campaign finance disclosure. Was there something that Ogilvie did on that?

Edgar: No, not Ogilvie. Again, I did that working as a staffer. I don't remember Ogilvie's people being involved, and it took a while to do that. And we really got that done when I worked for Blair. I worked for Blair one year when Ogilvie was still governor.

DePue: Well, let me hold off on that because we'll talk about Blair here in just a minute. I don't think you can talk about Ogilvie, though, without talking about the constitutional convention.

Edgar: You can't, but I can't talk about it because I had nothing to do with it. Arrington was going to run for constitutional convention, and there got to be a hullabaloo about legislators running the convention. And then some of the people in his district said, "Gee, Russ, you never come around, but you want everything." Of course,

[47] See Edgar Interview #2.
[48] See Edgar Interview #2.

he's got the kind of district where you had all these people who—do-gooders that wanted to be in the constitutional convention. So he didn't run, and as a result, even though he'd sponsored the bill to set up the constitutional convention, he kind of backed away from the convention and really didn't have anything to do with it. It kind of gave him a hard time.

DePue: He had personal reasons for backing away, or were there strategic things?

Edgar: I think he decided, one, he didn't have the time to do the convention and worry about running the Senate, too. I think he knew he was going to have to work at it, probably. And there wasn't any guarantee that he would run the convention. (DePue laughs) He might be a delegate, but he may not be able to run it. And I think of all those things, he just finally talked—and then there was a question about whether a legislator could be in the convention or not. There were some constitutional questions on that. But he finally decided it wasn't worth it and didn't run.

DePue: He had no one who was sitting in the convention that he could really get feedback from and control, if you will?

Edgar: No. Some staffer might have gone over, but it wasn't like the governor. Ogilvie had—Paula Wolff was there, full-time monitoring it, and I think also they were directing—trying to have their input. But Arrington didn't—he went over and testified and told them, "Don't screw around with the legislative article." Somebody suggested a unicameral legislature, and he told them, "This constitution will never be approved." And there are some things—but he just said, "Leave the legislative article alone," and they pretty much did.

DePue: My curiosity, though, about Arrington and the constitutional convention is that so much of his career was about building power, making the legislature a co-equal branch with the executive branch, and he'd been successful in doing that. Then one of the things that the constitutional convention takes up is, who's going to actually be doing the budget, and it gives much more power in the budgetary process to the governor. Now, did he have an opinion about that?

Edgar: The old budgetary commission, he thought, was useless.

DePue: The legislative?

Edgar: Legislative, yeah. Because he wasn't in control. (DePue laughs) The old group was; Ev [Everett] Peters and those guys were in control. He thought they were pretty useless. And the Bureau of the Budget guy—John McCarter, who was head of the Bureau of the Budget, did a nice job of always stroking Arrington. Ogilvie's people did a good job of—and I think he thought they were comp—I don't remember him ever commenting, but again, I don't remember ever talking much about Con-Con.

Now, after it passed, he felt good about it; he took credit for it. I remember they needed some additional money—they didn't have enough money appropriated. First they wanted to meet in the legislative chambers, try to do it when the

legislature wasn't going to be there, and Arrington said, "Absolutely not. You're not coming over here." So that's when they ended up going over to the Old State Capitol. And then they came in and wanted some more money, and he gave them a hard time about that. He finally gave it to them, but he gave them a hard time. Sam Witwer, who was the head of it, was from his district and thought he was close to Arrington. I think he always thought he was some do-gooder. He had run for the U.S. Senate at one time.[49] He gave Sam a hard time, I thought, when he came over; because I sat in those meetings, and he was just his usual (laughs) pretty nasty self. So he did go over, testify on the legislative article. I never remember, though. I know Ogilvie, they did monitor; they did have input on the constitutional convention and what was in there, but I wasn't privy to that. I wasn't high enough involved in things at that point to know what—I just know from hearing Paula—that's where Paula Wolff met her husband, who was a delegate, Wayne Whalen. But I don't know much about all the things that went on at the convention. You'd have to talk to somebody else on that.

DePue: I'm just going to ask you this, get your personal view on it; I think we're roughly in this timeline when Paul Powell passed away.

Edgar: Paul Powell passed away at the end of 1969.

DePue: Was it that early?

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: No, wait a minute. No, you're right—end of 1970. It was before the election of 1970, but it was in, like, September, maybe, 1970. Because I remember I was in Chicago having breakfast with Arrington and Harris, and they were talking—because Dirksen was sick, but nobody knew how sick he was; he hadn't died yet, because I just remember some—

DePue: Everett Dirksen.

Edgar: Yeah. Excuse me, I'm getting my stories mixed up. That is in '69.[50] I'd see Powell—I'd sometimes go to the St. Nick [St. Nicholas Hotel] at night because they had fried chicken, and I loved their fried chicken at St. Nick. If Brenda wasn't home, if I was going to eat out, I'd always go—and that was the Democratic hangout—over there and get their fried chicken, because they brought you this chicken gravy; I know it had to clog up at least two of my arteries they had to replace. But Powell used to always have dinner over there at night with his girlfriend. Many a night, he'd be over there, and you could tell he wasn't—wasn't sure he was awake, even. He was just sitting over there. They wouldn't necessarily

[49] Sam Witwer, with Governor Stratton's backing, was the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate in 1960.
[50] Everett Dirksen died September 7, 1969. Paul Powell died in his room at the Kahler Hotel in Rochester, Minnesota, October 10, 1970. *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1969 and October 12, 1970.

let people go over and talk to him. He'd be sitting there with her. So you knew he was getting old, and he didn't show up to a lot of things. A guy named Nick Ciaccio was his chief of staff, and that's who you always dealt with; that's who used to come and talk to Arrington, because Powell just never came around much.

So it was just a few weeks before the election in 1970, and word came out that he had died at Mayo. Of course, we didn't hear about the money until later. And then when Powell died, you had this opening for secretary of state, which was a huge opening. And hopefully you guys have tapes of this symposium on Ogilvie that we had last spring, because I moderated the panel with the staff, and they talked about the process of picking the successor to Powell.[51] And that's the first time I'd heard some of those stories. But Bill Harris wanted it. Ed Kucharski wanted it; he was the Republican county chairman of Cook County—very close to Ogilvie. A lot of people wanted it; and in the end, I think a lot of us were surprised when he picked John Lewis, who had been Speaker of the House back in the early sixties and kind of got in trouble when they purged out the West Side Bloc, because those guys had supported him. He had been one of the few prominent downstaters besides Ralph Tyler Smith, the Speaker of the House who got named to U.S. Senate, who had supported Ogilvie in the primary against John Henry Altorfer. Lewis was probably the most—at that point, even maybe as much as Ralph Smith—known, at least in my part of the state, because he was from my area of the state. But he had supported Ogilvie, and that's why, the feeling was, he got director of agriculture. He was his director of agriculture.[52]

DePue: You mentioned that a lot of Powell's money situation, or the infamous shoebox full of money in his hotel room, et cetera, came out a little bit later in this—

Edgar: Came out after the election. If it had come out before the election, the feeling was it might have altered the election, because the election was not good for Republicans.

DePue: How much was all of that common knowledge among people like staffers and the legislators?

Edgar: Oh, everybody thought Powell might be a little crooked, but nobody thought about having a bunch of cash in shoeboxes in your hotel room. I think that surprised everybody. I don't think anybody thought that Paul Powell was an angel. But he was known for being cheap as could be. They said he wouldn't get a haircut when he needed it, and he'd wait for somebody to buy him a hot dog out someplace. They said if he had money like that, he sure didn't spend any of it.

DePue: (laughs) That's why he had money.

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[51] Get citation for these transcripts.

[52] John W. Lewis (R-Marshall) served in the Illinois House from 1941 to 1959 and 1961 to 1967, the interruption coming from his one term in the state Senate. He was Republican whip for the 1955 and 1957 sessions and Speaker from 1963 to 1965. He had been appointed agriculture director in 1969. *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1977.

Edgar: I guess. Yeah, right. But no, I think everybody was shocked that it was in shoeboxes in cash. Now, if somebody had said, "Gee, he has a bank account in Switzerland," they may not have been as shocked, but I think they were shocked when they found out he had cash—or they wouldn't have been shocked to find out somebody was maybe giving him some payoff on something; but it was shocking. That much money in shoeboxes, the way it was found. And it didn't come out till after the election, and there was a lot of suspicion about that; the Democrats had stalled off till after the election.[53]

DePue: Let's get you to a new position, then, and I want you to talk about the transition from the Senate to the House, particularly going over to work for W. Robert Blair.

Edgar: The main thing I did in '71, besides work with Tec Clarke, because he kind of assumed acting leader, was redistricting. That was the redistricting year. Because I was the political guy, I spent a lot of time on that; and at that point, the House Republicans and the Senate Republicans were getting along. We were trying to work together on that.

DePue: You're talking about the redistricting of the Illinois legislative districts.

Edgar: Both. Both the legislative districts and congressional districts.

DePue: Oh, congressional as well?

Edgar: Yeah, the state legislature does that, too. And that's how I got to know Bob Blair. Blair, originally, when he had got elected Speaker—after the election in 1970 but before Arrington had his stroke—he had come over to meet with Arrington because they wanted to do another after-the-election pay raise, (laughs) and I was the staffer on that. And I said, "Guys, we're going to have to stop doing this. One of these years, we're going to get in trouble on this." But he came over and talked with Arrington after he'd been picked as the Speaker-to-be in the House, and they talked about that. Blair is a very smart guy, and he was very deferential to Arrington. And after he got done, he says, "Senator, I want to build a staff, and I want to do just like you've done here, and I wonder if there's some of your staff that I'd be able to hire." And Arrington just says, "You don't touch any of my staff." (DePue laughs) He says, "You don't," and just kind of... And Blair said, "Okay, okay."

So Blair fired everybody from Smith's staff, which was a mistake; but he did that, (laughs) and he tried to fire the interns; he couldn't fire them. One was Wayne Andersen, who's now a federal judge, and we got to be good friends—who became Henry Hyde's guy. But he brought in some new guys. And he designated Ed

[53] On December 30, 1970, over two months after Powell's death, John S. Rendleman, executor of Powell's estate, revealed his discovery of eight hundred thousand dollars in Powell's rooms at the St. Nicholas Hotel in Springfield. Rendleman said he found the money October 11 and had delayed his announcement while he attempted to track the sources of the money. The money was "mostly in $100 bills" and had been stored in "a shoe box, two leather brief cases and three steel strong boxes which were hidden behind old whisky cases." *Chicago Tribune*, December 31, 1970, 1.

Madigan, who was a state rep, who later became Congressman Ed Madigan, and who the Ag building's named after—became Secretary of Agriculture for George Bush the elder. That's who he put in charge of redistricting. I was the guy—they didn't put a Senator; they put me in charge from the Senate Republicans to work on it, so Ed Madigan and I got to be good friends. That's how we got to know each other. And people used to see us, and they actually thought I was his younger brother because I looked more like him (laughs) than his younger brother did.

But we would constantly be meeting, and Blair would come in, and he'd have us into meetings. I'd explain to him why districts—and I knew as much about the House districts because we were putting them together then. Before that time, they had been separate districts; they didn't overlap then. The new constitution said you had three reps and one Senator, so they had to be coterminous—they had to be the same, so that's why we're working closely together. And I knew what the districts and the change, what it meant, as much as Madigan did; so a lot of times, Blair, if he couldn't find Madigan, he'd call me up and ask me about things. So we worked on it, and during the session, we agreed on a map among the Republicans, House and Senate.

And one day, we needed a congressional thing to put on there, too. We knew we weren't going to pass it, because even though the Republicans controlled the House, they didn't really control the House. You had what you call the West Side Bloc, who were Republicans in name only; when push came to shove, Chicago, the mayor, could always get them. We knew we couldn't pass re-map because we didn't have enough votes in the House. So they made an agreement that they were going to pass a vehicle bill, a map bill, out of the House to the Senate, and the agreement was we Republicans, Senate Republicans, would not call the bill if there wasn't agreement among the four caucuses. But for timing, they still had time to get a map passed before the clocks said we had to create a commission. We had an agreement: we would pass this bill out of the House and go to the Senate and hold it, and use that as a vehicle. If there was no agreement, we wouldn't try to move it; the Republicans wouldn't move it. Everybody agreed. We needed not only to have the legislative map there; we needed a congressional map there to have this part of the bill, so we—

DePue: Had Illinois lost a congressional seat from that census?

Edgar: I can't remember. I don't think so.

DePue: Because that certainly complicates things.

Edgar: No, it doesn't. I'll tell you why it didn't matter.

DePue: (laughs) Okay.

Edgar: We hadn't even talked too much about the congressional map because nobody cared—legislators cared about their own map. The congressmen had sent home a sweetheart map. I don't think we lost [a seat], because it was twenty-four

congressmen; it was going to be twelve-twelve. It's what we call a sweetheart—they were going to keep everybody in place. Blair, who was a different animal than many guys said, "Screw them." He says, "Why do I care about what they want?" He says, "We got the power. They got to come to me. I'm not just taking their map; we'll draw the map the way we want it." Madigan and I, we're saying, "We got to draw a map," and Blair said, "Draw a map so we can stick on this bill, and let's make it as Republican as possible." Well, as Republican as possible wasn't twelve-twelve. We were able to draw a map that was fifteen-nine, because you didn't have to compromise. You can move those lines around and things.

So Ed Madigan and I sat in an office room one afternoon and drew the congressional map. We're sitting there saying, "All right, this map isn't going anyplace; this will be only a starting point for a compromise with the Democrats. So who are we going to leave out?" There's certain congressmen that Mayor Daley really cares about, and there's no need to screw around with their districts because he doesn't—we're going to put them back in, and it's a lot of work, so let's... There was a guy named Morgan Murphy—he was a South Side congressman. A couple others—[Daniel David "Dan"] Rostenkowski—we didn't mess with their districts. We drew their districts, and we had a guy named Pete Peters in with us who was a Chicago Republican who knew all this stuff. So Peters talked to us some on reapportionment, but we knew enough not to screw around with it. That meant—he didn't care about the blacks. We knew Daley didn't really care about the blacks, (DePue laughs) so we could play around with those districts. We knew there were some others we could play around with, and we knew he didn't really care about the downstate congressmen, so we could just—and that's where you had the potential of picking up a lot of Republican—more seats.

Pete Peters sat in, I think, while we did the Chicago part, then he left and Madigan and I stayed—just the two of us—and drew the rest of the state. Just happened to be a congressional district that was very good to a guy named Ed Madigan, and it messed up Bill Springer, who was the incumbent congressman from Champaign—no, Les Arends. Excuse me—Les Arends. Les Arends was the minority whip in the U.S. Congress. And I have to say, there was a district down in my area (watch beeps) that I knew (DePue laughs) you could elect a Republican, though we probably wouldn't, and we didn't do a whole lot, but he let me move a couple counties around. It was more Republican than it had been. George Shipley and Bill Springer were in it. And what happened was some congressmen got put together. And you had Les Arends, who was just furious with the map, I know. But we thought, This is the starting point; then we'll negotiate later with the Democrats. So we put that on the bill. That bill passed the House, and it was just a vehicle bill, so everybody voted for it—Democrats as well as Republicans. It goes over to the Senate. We can't come to any agreement on redistricting, so the bill dies in the Senate. We then go to the Reapportionment Commission, which had never been used—it was from the new constitution.

DePue: A result, I would think, from the fiasco of the last redistricting with the Bedsheet Ballot and all?[54]

Edgar: Yeah. And the idea of the tiebreaker was a reform. Most things that people complain about today, thirty years ago, they were reforms—like political PACs were a reform. And the thought was, neither one of the parties would ever take the chance on losing the draw, that they'd always be willing to compromise before you got to the draw. So we go into overtime, and Blair was nervous about overtime. I said, "Why are you nervous about that?" And he said, "What happens? Who's going to control it?" I said, "You control it." I said, "You name yourself and your staffer." He says, "That's a good idea," so that's what he did. I went to the Senate leaders, and I said, "Do what Blair did. You know what you have to do: name yourself and name a staffer." Well, the Senate Republican caucus didn't want to do that. They said, "We'll put Tec Clarke, but we don't want to put a staffer on there." It was going to be me. So they said, "We need to have, maybe, somebody", so they got Bill Stratton, who was the former governor—that's how I got to know Stratton. But I still was there, and I was advising on everything.

The Democrats were willing to compromise, and Blair was willing to compromise. And Clarke was, but Clarke wasn't willing to compromise with the compromise that the House Republicans were willing to deal with on the Senate Democrats and the House Democrats. So in the end, the Senate Republicans got shut out. Blair got real mad at Clarke and wouldn't talk to him, wouldn't meet with him, but he'd call me up all the time; and Madigan would call me. He'd say, "Blair doesn't want me talking to any Senate guys, but I can talk to you. What do you think if we change this district here?" And I said, "I think you got a problem." So throughout all that, I would always be talking to Madigan, and even Blair would talk to me sometimes. I was the only guy from the Senate Republicans he'd talk to. Just wouldn't talk to anybody, wouldn't have anything to do with them; but he trusted me because Madigan said I was all right.

So we go through all this and finally they agree. The two Democrat caucuses and the House Republican caucus agree—or their representatives agree—on a compromise map of state legislative districts. Senate Republicans do not agree. I remember (laughs) Bill Harris—his district is all screwed up in this compromise map. I called him, and I said, "Senator Harris"— I still talked to him—"It's not a very good map for you." He says, "I know. I'm going down to talk to Blair." He went down and cut his own deal with Blair, and a couple of Republicans in the Senate who didn't get along with Clarke went over and cut their own deal with Blair and got their districts taken care of; because it was mainly Republican to Republican, so Democrats didn't care. So they don't go to the draw because Blair

[54] November 3, 1964, saw Illinois hold "the nation's first at-large election of the entire membership of a legislative chamber." The candidates for 177 state representative positions were listed on a thirty-three-inch orange-colored ballot. Democrats picked up 118 seats to the Republicans' 59, while the Republicans held the Senate 33-25. Thirty-seven incumbent Republicans lost their seats, and the count was not announced until December 3. James L. McDowell, *The Politics of Reapportionment in Illinois* (Carbondale: Public Affairs Research Bureau, Southern Illinois University, 1967), 54-58.

didn't want to take a chance on the draw. It worked. The only time it's ever worked, (DePue laughs) because you had [James] "Pate" Philip from then on, and he was suicidal and just insisted that we get our way or no way, and we won one draw and lost two draws. And that's a story I'll tell about in the secretary of state.

But what happened was now we have a legislative map; there's still no congressional map. What the law says is if the legislature doesn't solve it, it goes to federal court. A three-judge federal panel is assigned redistricting for the Illinois congressional issue. Everybody goes in with all these maps. The Democrats had a map; everybody had a map. We had a map; we had this map that Madigan and I had drawn up, (laughs) and we submit it. John Mitchell is the attorney general of the United States at that time. Bob Blair had a conversation with John Mitchell about talking to some of those judges about how important it was to get a Republican map. That's what Blair told me. And I never quite understood, John Mitchell, how he talked to federal judges. I don't know if he ever did (laughs) or not, but that's what Blair implied. It didn't surprise me he talked to John Mitchell, and John Mitchell might have tried because that's a sure easy way to pick up some congressional seats.

So it's a three-judge panel—two Republicans and one Democrat. Everybody takes all these maps to court and makes their arguments and everything like that, and so we're figuring the judges are probably going to split the baby in half or something, as they'd done before; they'll come up with some compromise map. Lo and behold, they approved the map Ed Madigan and I had drawn up one afternoon, (laughter) much to all our glee. And you know why, what their argument was? This is the only map that has received bipartisan support. Look at the roll call from the Illinois House: just as many Democrats voted for this map as Republicans. No other map before us has that bipartisan support; every other map is very partisan but this is bipartisan because of that House vote. That was the only reason they voted for it. Nobody was paying attention to the congressional side of it; it was just to send a vehicle over to the Senate so we had something to work with.

DePue: Just to make sure I understand what you're talking about here, when you're saying a "vehicle," it was attached to another bill and it was just—

Edgar: A vehicle is a bill. A vehicle is a bill that gives you something to work with in the second house because you don't have to go through both houses. If it's already in the second house, then you could quickly amend something, and in three hours, you could pass it; but you had to have a bill with the right title, something that dealt with that issue. You just couldn't make up a bill. You just couldn't take any bill and amend it. You had to have a bill that dealt with House and congressional redistricting, and this bill did. This bill had the Republicans' plan, but it wasn't going to pass because we had disagreement.

I have to tell you, nobody (laughs) had thought about this when we passed it; it was just an afterthought. It was just something those judges used to hang their hat on. But when that decision came out, I remember I ran into Cec Partee, and he was

just livid. (laughter) And he said, "This isn't going to stand." He says, "Daley is just beside himself." And I said, "Senator, it is bipartisan," and I just couldn't believe it. And that's how that congressional map... If we'd have known, if Ed Madigan and I had known the map was going to be approved and we weren't going to have to negotiate with the Chicago Democrats, the Chicago guys would have been a whole lot different. We would have created more black districts, just to cause havoc. (DePue laughs) And poor Dan Rostenkowski, who became a good friend of mine, and some of these others who were close to the mayor; their district would have gone to Wisconsin or Iowa. (laughs) But we just never dreamed that thing would be approved. And it just caused—I don't know how many guys retired after that—didn't run next time.

Ed Madigan, of course, ran for congress. He didn't run—which surprised people—well, is this the legislative? [rattling paper in the background] This is the legislative. You don't have the old congressional?

DePue: No.

Edgar: But he ended up—Bill Springer announced he wasn't going to run again because his district had just completely been changed, and Madigan ran for that district. And then George Shipley, who was the congressman down in my area, all of the sudden got Vermilion County, [which] made it more Republican. He was running, and I threw my hat in the ring just to get started so people would know who I was and almost—came pretty close. If Ogilvie hadn't left it up to John Lewis, since that was his area—John Lewis had this dairy farmer, multi-millionaire friend—made a lot of money in electronics and came back and was a gentleman farmer. He wanted to run for congress, or I would have probably ended up being the nominee for congress at the age of twenty-six, because I started putting together a group of people. I had Ogilvie's people—if it hadn't been for Lewis wanting his guy, I would have had Ogilvie's support, and that's about all you needed. Plus, there wasn't anybody else really that strong, and they liked the idea about a young person and running against Shipley and all that. But anyway, that's how that map...

But what happened—I know I'm getting off here—was that Blair got to know me, and he liked me. So Blair was getting ready to—the guy he had to come be his kind of chief staff was on loan from a law firm, and he wanted to go back and practice law. So he was going to create this super chief of staff position with a salary of twenty-five thousand dollars. He'd had some management firm come in and make up this plan, and it was twenty-five thousand. Twenty-five thousand dollars was a huge salary. I was getting paid seventeen in the Senate Republicans, and I was one of the best-paid guys in the legislative staffs. So Blair came to me, called me over, and he says, "I want to offer you the job. You'll have your own new office here in the building, and you'll be my chief of staff, you'll be my guy. You'll get this salary, you'll have all this power," and ba-ba-ba.

And it's obvious Arrington's not coming back. The power had shifted—you could tell it had shifted from the Senate to the House as far as the Republicans. The

Republicans were in the majority in the House; they weren't in the Senate. I knew that in the Senate, we were going to go through a bloodbath of a leadership battle—you could tell it was building—and I wasn't sure we'd get control. And also, I wasn't sure if Arrington was ever going to let go. He wasn't there, but he wouldn't let go, and it made it difficult for Clarke. It was just a lot messier, there were some staff issues with people there, and I thought, I can go over and put my own staff together in the House, and Blair's the power. And I got along with Blair and got along with everybody over there. Ed [Madigan] was really trying to talk me into doing it. So I accepted, finally; at the end of the year, I went over. I had to go tell Arrington—that was tough—but I just said… At that point, it was kind of like I'd let the air out of his balloon. I really felt bad.

DePue: Where was he at the time?

Edgar: He was in Chicago. He'd been down, but he hadn't been back, and he hadn't announced yet what he was going to do. And when I told him that, he just said, "Well, that's it." And I said, "Senator, I just think this is a great opportunity for me to be the chief staff guy," because I was co-, "and just to go do this." And I said, "I enjoy what I've had an opportunity to have, but I thought this was a great opportunity." It was a tough conversation, and I really felt bad because I could tell it affected Arrington. I don't think it was so much me; it was just a staffer was leaving to go work for the House bothered him. Also, I think, kind of, like, "They're leaving the ship." And a week later he announced he wasn't going to run again—because there was still some question that he might run again. He was getting a little better—not great, but he was a little better.

DePue: But not good enough to really be in the sessions and be involved in the trenches like he was before?

Edgar: No. He came back a little bit that second year, after I'd gone over to the House; he came back a little bit, but he still was very limited—didn't talk much at all, just sat there, was only there for a little bit of time. So it was the right—he shouldn't have run again—but he hadn't decided that when I went and told him I was going to leave; then a week later he announced that. And I really felt bad for Senator Clarke because he was counting on me; because he knew he was going to have a tough year to kind of get through that leadership battle, too.

DePue: How was the House different than the Senate?

Edgar: Oh, night and day. The House was 177 members. No party discipline because you had cumulative voting. And if you're a member, there's only one guy you really disliked, and that was the other guy from your party from your district, because you knew one of you was always going to win.

DePue: I don't know that we've talked enough about cumulative voting, so if you can explain how that works—because it is different.

Edgar: Cumulative voting was something that supposedly the publisher of the *Chicago Tribune* had thought up in the 1870 constitution as a compromise between Republicans and Democrats. Every district, you'd elect three people, and every voter would have three votes.

DePue: So every Senatorial district?

Edgar: No, every rep district. They weren't coterminous.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: So every representative district would have three representatives from that district, and every voter would have three votes. They could give one candidate all three votes; they could give three candidates a vote each; or they could give two candidates a vote and a half; or they could even split their votes, I think, two for one and one for one. But the most common was three—they called that a bullet—or give two guys a vote and a half. Very rarely did you ever see three votes given. Because Republicans would always have to decide, am I going to give my two Republican candidates a vote and a half each, or do I give the guy I really want all three votes? If you're the candidate, you want them to give you all three votes, because you don't want to take a chance that the other guy's getting all three votes.

Now, you never said that publicly. Publicly, it was always, we're in this together, but privately you always knew your close guys were bulleting for you and their close guys were bulleting for them. So as a result, it didn't do a lot for harmony within the caucus because you'd be sitting in there with the guy from your district. You didn't mind the Democrat from your district because you got to have one Democrat, and the stronger he ran, the less there was for the other Democrat; but that other Republican in your caucus, you didn't want him to be too strong because he'd be taking votes from you.

DePue: Were there four votes on each one of the ballots then?

Edgar: There were four candidates.

DePue: Four candidates, yeah. Two Democrats, two Republicans, so you're going to get one person from the opposite party.

Edgar: Yeah. And see, the West Side Bloc—the Democrats could go in and put enough people in a Republican primary to nominate their guy and then make sure he gets elected in the fall. In the West Side Bloc, there weren't probably ten Republicans in some of those districts, but they all had a Republican legislator, and the fact he happened to be Italian and it was primarily a black district—he was also probably Sicilian and tied to a fraternal group—that was what the West Side Bloc was all about. They were mainly old Italians. That [area] had been Italian years ago, but it had changed and become much more black. Democrats controlled it 95 percent, probably, so those Republicans in there were probably always suspected—and I

think for good reason—had tied to the mob, would always respond to what city hall wanted.

DePue: But they'd sit in the Republican congress.

Edgar: Yeah, caucus. And we kind of wanted them because they would vote on [House] organization usually—not all the time. You need to read "Bipartisan Coalition," a little pamphlet by Tom Littlewood sometime.[55] They would play games at times, but for the most part, they'd leave them alone on that vote, but on issue votes... Statewide grand jury was a big issue when I worked for Blair. The West Side Bloc wouldn't vote for any statewide grand jury, (laughs) even though there was a Republican pushing it.

DePue: How does all of that affect the way politics is played in the House, then?

Edgar: Again, it was a much looser place. It was chaotic. It was 177 members. It was the old chambers, and one of the things I had to do working for Blair was shepherd through the remodeling, which became a huge controversy. It was going to cost over a million dollars, and it was a huge controversy. Madigan redid the House for sixteen million dollars and you didn't hear boo about it, but—

DePue: You're talking about Mike Madigan now.

Edgar: Yeah, this time. But back in 1973, we're doing remodeling—or '72, '73, we're doing remodeling. It's a million dollars. Then, the House chamber was smaller, you had more members, you had terrible ventilation. You always had to budget for flowers for members who would die during the session because, always, members would die during the session. Part of it was because of the smoke inhalation. There was so foul air because there wasn't very good air conditioning and everybody would be smoking on the floor—small chambers. There'd be a haze (coughs) hanging over the House chamber every night. I'll never forget. I had been working in the House for about six months, and they were in the middle of some normal proceeding; just chaos. I leave the House, I walk over to the Senate—I hadn't been back in a long time—I go over in the Senate; I think they're adjourned. They're in the middle of a heated debate, but it was so calm. The House, there was always this roar. And that's kind of how the House was; it was always chaotic.

And (coughs) Blair really was the first of the strong leaders. He was the prototype for Mike Madigan in many ways. Arrington had been the first in the Senate, but Blair was really the first in modern time in the House. He controlled things pretty closely. So working for him was a position of power if you had his trust. When I got that job, I would worry about the political things. I kind of kept that in my portfolio. And Blair thought politics all the time; whereas Arrington thought very little about partisan politics or election politics, Blair thought it twenty-six hours a day.

[55] Thomas B. Littlewood, *Bipartisan Coalition in Illinois* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

But the House was much more relaxed in some ways. Staff, they'd listen to you, because there were 177 of them; where in the Senate, there was only fifty-eight when I was there, fifty-nine then, and they were much more, I'm a Senator. In the House, you were one of many, so staff people, particularly for the speaker, had a lot more clout; and they were always nice to me because they needed my help.

But it was a very unusual collection of people because you had Democrats in the suburbs; you had so-called Republicans from the city; you had a lot more women; you had a lot more different type folks there because you could get a bullet and get elected, and so you weren't necessarily your typical person in that district. And I think it was probably a much better cross-section of the state than in either the House or the Senate today, because there are minority points of view in every district. It never got heard in the Senate, and I'm not sure it gets heard that much today in the legislature, but it did in that old House.

But if you were the speaker's guy trying to line up votes, it's like herding cats. They didn't always care that much what the leader thought or the caucus thought because they just had to get themselves enough bullets to get reelected. (laughter) And as I said, the speaker might be really close with the other guy from that district, and that caused a lot of resentment; so as a staffer, you had to be careful and work around that as much as you could.

And then that first year I'm there, the politics of it—Henry Hyde, who's the majority leader, loses his primary, and Blair was kind of, like, That teaches him. Those guys thought they—there was a group there, that was close to Henry, that kind of gave Blair a hard time. And Henry didn't. Any time I'd ever go ask Henry Hyde to do something because Blair wanted it done, he'd always do it. He was just—

DePue: But he lost the primary because of the redistricting, or...?

Edgar: Maybe a little bit. It changed a little bit, yeah. Henry wasn't the hardest campaigner in the world, either. A guy named Roger McAuliffe got nominated, he was just a hustler—and somebody else, somebody who'd already been there, got renominated. So there was another state rep from a next district named Pete Miller, who Blair didn't get along with.

But Blair for some reason, after Henry got beat, was kind of jealous of Henry. The members liked Henry. Henry was a likeable guy. Henry Hyde was a very likeable guy. And Blair—I don't know why, because Henry was always very cooperative with Blair. Sometimes he thought it was foolish what they were doing, but he always went along. Henry was never a guy that wanted to be the leader; he just wanted to be one of the guys. He had certain things, like abortion and things like that, that he felt strong on, but most of the issues in Springfield, he didn't feel that strong on. He would be a team player. He actually was originally a Democrat. He had originally run as a Democrat before he became a Republican. But Blair, for some reason, just wouldn't talk to Hyde after he lost; just kind of shut him off,

which made no sense to me. Pete Miller offered Henry that he'd get off the ticket and let him run in his seat, because it overlapped his [Hyde's] old district, and the constitution said that after redistricting, you could run in any part of your old district.

DePue: Without having to actually relocate your residence?

Edgar: You would eventually have to relocate, but you didn't have to live there then. Let's say your new district is here, but your old district used to be here: you could go back over in this old district, even though you didn't live there, and run in it because that had been part of your old district. Pete Miller had a little bit of Henry's old district, so he could get off the ballot, and they could put Henry on the ballot for the fall, and he could be elected. So that's what Pete Miller—and then Blair tried to stop that from happening. He went to the powers that be in Chicago, and it's all done through—

DePue: This sounds personal now.

Edgar: Yeah, it made no sense, but it got to be personal, and he was going to keep Henry from getting in there. I just said, "This is nuts." But Henry got in there, and Henry became the focal point for all the anti-Blair people in the House. So Henry got elected, Blair got elected, and Henry challenged him for Speaker. That is the thing I most—we had an all-out Speaker battle that was of all times between Hyde and Blair, and to this day there is still bitterness over that battle. And I'm Blair's political guy, so I spend a lot of time working on that. In fact, I'm the guy that goes to deliver the deal to Bill Walsh. The Walsh brothers were from the west suburban Republicans and had always been with Henry and that group. If he would support Blair, he'd be in leadership. And he was kind of into it. He always wanted to be, I think, leader, and he didn't get it. He switched over and supported Blair, and we were pulling guys (laughs) right—it was an all-out battle. Ended up, Blair beat Hyde by—out of ninety-one votes—I think he won by two votes in the caucus.

DePue: You've talked an awful lot about Blair. I wonder if you could flesh out his personality a little bit more for us.

Edgar: Blair was a realtor in the south suburbs. He lived in Park Forest, actually, in the Will County part of Park Forest. I think he'd first got elected in '66—I don't think he was in the Bedsheet—I think he got elected in '66 with the new districts; rose very quickly. He was a very smart guy, very smart. Probably, along with Thompson and Mike Madigan, the smartest guy I ever dealt with in Springfield. Understood politics as well as anybody. Unfortunately he was paranoid, and that ruined him. Very paranoid, very vindictive. Had trouble with the truth sometimes. He'd make a commitment, then rationalize he didn't have to keep it. And we'll talk about with Hyde; that was what really was the problem. But brilliant guy. Just too bad he didn't have—if his moral compass had been on a little better, he could have been governor. That's what he wanted to be: governor. That's really what he was

building up, to run for governor after Ogilvie. But he had a lot of loyal followers in the House.

But Blair, when he got into the House, got named chairman of the Transportation Study Commission, and he parleyed that into coming up with the highway program that Ogilvie adopted when Ogilvie got to be governor. And—

DePue: And that was an ambitious building program.

Edgar: It was—yeah, because they did pass through a lot of tax increases in '69 on gasoline, and license fees on trucks that really made the truckers mad, to finance that. So Blair was kind of the father of that, and that gave him a lot of quick prominence in the legislature. He was very smart, and he was very good at getting guys that support him in things. So in 1971, Ralph Smith had gone to the [U.S.] Senate. You'd had a caretaker Speaker named Jack Walker who ran for the state Senate. That created an opening for Speaker in the House, and Blair surprised a lot of people and put together the votes to get elected speaker and became a very forceful speaker. By 1972, when Ogilvie lost, Blair became probably the most powerful Republican in Springfield by far—and controversial—and he had this battle with Hyde. But he was a very bright guy, and unfortunately, he just—like the thing with Hyde. That should have never been. There wasn't any need for that. He didn't have to have that problem. But he would get paranoid about guys, thinking there was always some—and he was so smart he'd get way ahead of himself. He'd outthink himself, and—

DePue: Where was he politically?

Edgar: Moderate. He didn't have too much ideology. But he was a suburban Republican. He was what I would view as a moderate Republican. Today if he was there, he might be more conservative because that's what it took to maybe get elected and pull people together, but he was pro-ERA [Equal Rights Amendment], which wasn't a huge litmus test back then. I think he was pro-choice on abortion. I can't remember that issue coming up much.

We actually went to the same church in Park Forest—not that he went very often. But I remember we went—in Park Forest, which was an interesting town to live in because it was a planned community, built after World War II. So you move in there, and boy, they're used to people coming and going. And they didn't have Protestant churches; they had started United Protestant churches because they didn't think they had room for all the different Protestant churches. And the United Protestant church we went to was the one that Blair went to. And I just remember one Sunday, Blair and his family came in. I was still working in the Senate, but I knew who that was. But I don't think I saw him too often at church. He was a very driven guy, a very bright guy. Again, it was a shame that a lot of that went to waste.

DePue: Was he a good boss?

Edgar: He was until he got paranoid, and his secretary, who was a close friend of his, got jealous of me because she thought I had too much sway, and she wanted to have all the sway. We started out good friends, and then she kind of turned on me. He didn't turn. But Clyde Choate, was the Democratic leader, who, I think I told you, maybe earlier, had had business dealings with my father-in-law, and they had gone amiss, and my father-in-law was suing him because he hadn't paid him. I don't think he liked me because he suspected—also, my job was to try to keep Blair out of trouble. Clyde Choate and some of the West Side Bloc guys always wanted to get Blair to go do things, and I'd always be against it, so I think Choate resented me a little bit on that, too; plus he wasn't happy with my father-in-law at that point. Even though he was the Democratic leader, Blair and him would spend a lot of time together.

But Blair was—the first year, he was a good boss. He was good. He would work hard; he would understand you had to do things; he was pragmatic; but that Hyde thing just ruined him in a lot of ways. And the second year I worked for him was extremely difficult because he was always getting in fights with the Republicans that we didn't need to have, like with the attorney general, Bill Scott.

DePue: Wasn't that second year also—Walker was now governor?

Edgar: That was the interesting—that was the fun part. Yeah, Walker was governor and Blair was the leading Republican to challenge him, and also the Democrats didn't want to help him, so...

DePue: How did Blair get along with Ogilvie, then?

Edgar: He got along okay. Ogilvie was his senior, and Blair also knew he couldn't beat Ogilvie, probably. He got along with him. Ogilvie's people sometimes had trouble with Blair, but Ogilvie himself could usually call Blair and get Blair in line if he had to. But some of Ogilvie's staff people had a hard time with Blair because Blair wasn't going to let a staff guy tell him what to do. But once Ogilvie was gone, Blair figured that he was the heir apparent; and I think a lot of people thought he was. I thought he was. And I think he was the hardest-working, smartest guy down there. You had the attorney general, Bill Scott, but a lot of us just never trusted Scott, and Blair viewed him as his arch-rival, so he got into it.

But that first year, even though the Republicans still controlled the House, and Bill Harris had become the Senate leader—the Republicans got control again of the Senate—the Democrats didn't like Walker, so a lot of times, the Democrats and the Republicans in the legislature would go together, and they'd even override him on vetoes occasionally.

DePue: I don't want to get too much into Walker yet because I want to have your reflections on that 1972 gubernatorial election, because that's another classic.

Edgar: Yeah. Again, it was a classic from the point of view that we all thought it was going to be Dick Ogilvie and Paul Simon, and Paul Simon would win it—because Ogilvie had fallen way behind in the polls. Then, Paul Simon gets upset in the primary by

Dan Walker, who walked the state and ran against the machine; he was going to get rid of machine politics. And Paul Simon, who was the least machine guy there was, had got the support from Daley and some of those guys because they thought, We're going to support this do-gooder because we probably can't get our guy in. (laughs) Simon had been lieutenant governor and was very well known around the state, very well liked by a lot of non-political people, but he had paid his respect to Mayor Daley and stuff, and so Daley supported him in the primary. But to the surprise of everybody, Walker wins the primary. One of the reasons he wins the primary: a lot of Republicans crossed over in that primary and voted for him—a lot of them. If ever there was a time when a—but they did it on their own; it wasn't like Republicans sent them over to—

DePue: But there was a court case right before the actual primary election that—

Edgar: Saying that they could. Yeah. But that's where all the action was. There wasn't any action, really, on the Republican side. Everybody's watching, and Walker's running against the Chicago machine. He really ran against Daley more than he ran against Paul Simon. A lot of Republicans, they wanted to stick it to Mayor Daley. We've always wanted to stick it to Mayor Daley—that's how we grew up—and so they crossed over to vote for Walker. Now, I think four years later, a lot of them crossed over and voted for [Michael] Howlett. (DePue laughs) But they crossed over and voted for Walker because they liked what he had to say.[56]

And so Walker starts out against Ogilvie with a big lead. But it didn't take too long to figure out that Walker is just phony as a three-dollar bill on a lot of this stuff. Ogilvie had the guts to do the income tax, everybody said. And surprisingly, all the student newspapers in the state endorsed Ogilvie for reelection, which was amazing. They wouldn't have if it had been Paul Simon; they'd have supported Paul Simon. But I think about most all the newspapers, except the old *Springfield Register*, which was the Democratic paper, endorsed Ogilvie for reelection. I don't think that would have been true if Paul Simon had been the candidate; I think it would have probably been a split. But Ogilvie became the responsible candidate and Walker was not the responsible candidate. So Ogilvie started coming up in the polls, but he didn't come up quite enough; he just fell a little short. It was a very close election, but it wasn't...

DePue: Otherwise a good Republican year, I would think, for the—

Edgar: Yeah, because you had Nixon getting reelected president against George McGovern. But Nixon's people wouldn't do anything for Ogilvie because they thought he was a drag on the ticket, and they didn't help any. And we elected a Republican House and a Republican Senate, but Ogilvie got beaten by— what

[56] The case was decided by the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois on March 9, 1972, but ultimately ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld the district court decision. *Kusper v. Pontikes*, 414 U.S. 51 (1973).

was it?—I don't know—fifty thousand votes, sixty thousand votes? I think he lost by less than I won against Hartigan.[57]

DePue: Yeah, it was a close vote.

Edgar: Yeah. And [Michael "Mike"] Royko wrote a column about Ogilvie, and if he'd just written it three days earlier—not the day after the election, but the day before the election—it very well could have turned the tide, because Royko was very well read then.

But Walker, we all thought he demagogued it. And Ogilvie, of course—one of the great posters Ogilvie had: "Charisma isn't everything"—because Ogilvie had no charisma. He was pretty bland and never smiled because of that war wound and things, so a lot of people just didn't take to him. A lot of people thought his staff was arrogant. And downstaters, even Republicans, thought he's too much a Chicagoan, whereas Walker's this independent kind of guy. So that played pretty well the first time.

Yeah, there are two elections that I really feel sick about: that was 1972 and 1976. I guess I should have felt sick when I got beat in '74, but I really felt sick when Ogilvie lost and when Gerald Ford lost in '76, because I thought two good people got beat by—and it shouldn't have happened. They got both beat by guys who I thought were phony, and they graduated from the naval academy. (DePue laughs) I think they were in the same class, by the way.

DePue: I don't know—

Edgar: They were there at the same time, Walker and Carter, but Carter really wasn't as phony as Walker was. But then at the end, a lot of the Daley Democrats were helping Ogilvie, too. Vito Marzullo, a legendary Democrat ward committeeman, was openly marking for Ogilvie and had his people out voting for Ogilvie, but it just wasn't enough.

DePue: So how did things go between Blair and Walker, now that Walker's governor?

Edgar: I remember Walker calls up, tries to be nice to Blair, and Blair figures this is—he ends up siding with the Democrats. And also, I think he saw that was his opponent; he's got to demonstrate that he's better than Walker to Republicans. Right away, there was a transportation bill. There had been some emergency transportation bill, and Daley needed help on something. The legislature passed it, Walker vetoed it, and Daley wanted an override. And Walker called Blair to try to get him to help hold the override; in the end, he went with the Democrats, and the Democrats and Republicans in both chambers went together and overrode Walker overwhelmingly.

[57] Ogilvie and James D. Nowlan lost to Walker and Neil F. Hartigan by 77,494 votes. In 1990, Edgar defeated Hartigan by 83,909 votes. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election* for November 7, 1972 and November 6, 1990.

DePue: I was going to say—Clyde Choate is the minority leader at that time? And he was certainly no great backer of Walker either, was he?

Edgar: No, but he'd go back and forth because he also knew he couldn't be sure of what the Daley people were going to do. But his assistant leader was Jerry Shea, who was really the mayor's guy, and Shea and Choate often were on different sides. Blair sometimes would be with Shea; sometimes he'd be with Choate. But Choate—and I can't remember—on this particular override, he may not have gone along with them. He might have been still with Walker at that point. But more times than not, he would side with Walker against Daley. Then, two years later, they both—then Walker turned on Choate. Choate and him didn't get along, and then he wanted somebody else as Speaker.

DePue: That was the '74 fight.

Edgar: Right. I was gone that year. That's the year I was gone to NCSL [National Conference of State Legislatures]. Daley was supporting Choate but then kind of dumped him after so many ballots. That was a Speaker battle that happened on the floor. The Blair-Hyde thing was a Speaker battle that happened for six months prior to the floor; and then on the night of the Speaker vote itself, Blair and Hyde went about six ballots, nobody getting the eighty-nine votes needed. And then Blair and Hyde worked a deal that they would split up the committee chairman, Hyde would get to be majority leader again—but Blair still had the key things. And that was the agreement. The Hyde people then voted for Blair, and we talked about the new Speaker, and the next day, Blair said he wasn't going to deliver on all those committee chairmen. Henry could be majority leader, but he wasn't going to do all the committee chairmen.(coughs) And I came in that morning after we'd gone through this—it had been like two o'clock before we got home after this deal had been worked out. And Pate Philip, to his credit, had kind of brokered that deal for Hyde and gone over and worked with Blair's people to get that worked out.

DePue: He was in the Senate at that time?

Edgar: No, he was a House member. Nobody was in the Senate at that time who was in the Senate, probably, in your time. It was House members then. So the next morning I go into the office and it's locked, and I can't get in. Margaret, his secretary, wouldn't let me in. And Art Telcser, who was one of his leaders, says, "Jim, you got to go and talk to the speaker. He's going to break his word with Hyde." I said, "What?" (laughs) I said, "You got to be kidding me." He says, "No. He's not going to make those committee chairmen. He's now said he doesn't have to do that; that was forced under duress and he doesn't have to keep it." He said, "He's nuts. You got to go in and convince him." I said, "Art, I can't get in there. They won't let me in." In there were Bingo Bill Murphy—who was one of the West Siders, though he actually was from Lake County—and Clyde Choate. (DePue laughs) And they're in there saying, "You don't have to do that. You don't let those guys force you to do that." They're in there, and they're convincing him that he doesn't have to do this.

I can't get in. And Telcser calls Ogilvie and tries to get Ogilvie to call him, and he says, "I don't think I can do anything."

So finally I see Blair. Up to that point, I was in on everything. I sat and went through all that stuff. And I was [now] out because they knew what I was going to say. I said, "You can't do this. You're dead if you break your word on—this is the most visible thing there is. You just can't break your word. I mean, you're politically dead."

DePue: Everybody who had voted for Hyde up to that point would have been on the other side of the fence, then.

Edgar: Well—

DePue: They would have been political opponents, certainly.

Edgar: Oh, yeah. Plus, everybody knew there was a deal. There is no more sacred thing in Springfield than you keep your word, and here he wasn't going to—for whatever, he was going to knock out—not all of them, but he was going to knock out some of them.

DePue: Governor, this sounds like a very dysfunctional family you're talking about.

Edgar: I cannot believe it. I leave that night thinking we're on top of the world. We've put this back together; we got a majority; we got Hyde back; his people aren't going to be... We had all the key spots. It wasn't like we gave up anything. And I knew how Henry would be as majority leader. He'd do whatever Blair—there's only one leader that matters, and that's *the speaker*. And the committee chairmen—we had the important committees. But some of the rank-and-file guys who had been with Blair said, "I supported you, and I'm not going to get a committee chairman because you're giving it to these guys," and Blair finally said, "Yeah, that's right. I don't have to do this."

Hyde got wind of it, and Blair says, "You're still majority leader, but there's about four or five of these committee chairmen I can't do." Henry says, "That's not the deal." He says, "I won't be majority leader, then." Then he looked at Art Telcser, says, "You be majority..." And Art says, "I don't want to be majority leader." So Bill Walsh, the guy we'd brought over to—he got to be majority leader. And ugh, I remember that day on the floor—that was the longest day. I'm figuring Blair's dead. His political... So we're sitting around. I remember even the most cynical political guys we had on the staff just shaking their head and saying, "He's dead. Find him something else to do. He doesn't understand. He just ruined his political career."

How we got out of it a little bit were two things. One: we needed to do the rules in the House, and I started working on some rules that were extremely democratic. But one of the things was—it used to be the Speaker who could determine whenever a bill was called. We were going to change that. We were

going to make it automatic, and if you had a bill, no matter what, it got called. And we were going to have deadlines so we didn't have this logjam at the end of the session. We put through a set of reform rules that were amazing. And they actually worked till the end of the session, and they suspended them. But that was one of the answers to try to wallpaper over this breaking of the word.

The other thing was, the papers were the ones you worried about because they wrote the stories. What do the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times* care about the most? The CTA. Why? One: they own a lot of the bonds. (DePue laughs) Two: you can't read a newspaper driving your car downtown. Where do they sell most of their papers? At train stations. Huge importance to the newspapers that the mass transportation system operates in Illinois. Everybody knew—Ogilvie had talked about there was need for this RTA, but nobody had really done anything about it; nothing had happened. We said, "You need to become the champion of the RTA. The newspapers won't care about what you said to Henry Hyde. This is important to them. This is their number-one issue." That had a lot to do with why Ogilvie was trying to get aid for the CTA two years before.

So we got him on both those, and surprisingly, the papers didn't beat him up. I thought they'd just crucify him; they didn't. Nobody (laughs) trusted him in Springfield. The Hyde people were a problem the whole session from then on because they felt, rightfully so, they'd been betrayed. So we said black; they said white; the budget, everything about the House. That's when we were going to do the remodeling, and they attacked that as corrupt and all that. So everything we wanted to do, they were opposed to, which was a problem. But publicity-wise, statewide, that kind of got swept under the floor a lot more than I thought it would. Blair got good editorials on the rules, and he got even better editorials on his support for RTA.

Then we worked on the RTA. We got the rules done, and then we started working on the RTA. The RTA was Blair's proposal, and the big problem was—now, we were talking with the Chicago Democrats. There was a guy named Pikarsky. He was the head of the CTA for Mayor Daley. He was an engineer. Milt Pikarsky, I think his name was. And he was the guy that Blair used to talk to a lot about that.

Daley was just as suspicious of the suburbanites as the suburbanites were suspicious about Daley. They didn't necessarily want their trains to be controlled by Chicago, and Daley didn't necessarily want the suburbanites to control his CTA, so there was a lot of paranoia going both ways. So the question is, how do you put these groups together and assure both sides they're not going to get snookered? That was a hard thing. The key was, how do you get things done at the RTA board; and the thing was the supermajority.

Blair says, "We've got to figure out some way or another..." So I sit in my office one day, and I figure out—it takes three-fifths; it's going to take some suburbanites along with the city or some city guys along with suburbanites to get

anything done on the RTA; that's the safety valve. And the key is in the suburbanites; they name the suburban members. So suburban Cook members were named by the suburban county board members from Cook County. The Collar County members were named by the county board chairmen of those counties, working together. The city members were named by the mayor. But neither had enough to have the three-fifths vote. You had to have suburbanites and you had to have city guys, and that was the safeguard.

And then we had to figure out, how do you pay for it? We ended up on the sales tax in the Chicago region area, the RTA area. Part of their sales tax would go to pay for mass transportation, because this was going to cost money.

DePue: Would that be an increase in the sales tax, then?

Edgar: No, we were going to take it from the sales tax. It was going to be diverted. How do you make that up? We passed the lottery. The lottery never got passed for education. They tried for years to pass it for education. Why it finally passed was it was part of the RTA deal. Mayor Daley put enough Chicago Democrats who had not voted for the lottery in the past, particularly in the Senate, on the lottery bill that it passed. It didn't happen in the regular session of '73; it carried over to the veto session in '73.

And by that time, the House was not meeting in the House chambers because they were being remodeled. We were meeting over in the Howlett Building, the auditorium. Talking about chaos! (laughter) Have you ever been in it? It's just an auditorium. There's two little dressing rooms in the back about the size of where we're sitting, and that was the leadership office for both leaders. And all of the members are just sitting in those things, and it was impossible as a staffer to try to work it, because at least in the House chamber, you had a little room to move around.

DePue: Why not the Old State Capitol? Just not large enough for the...?

Edgar: It wasn't large enough.

DePue: Really?

Edgar: We looked at that, and it wasn't large enough; and I think they were concerned about the cost; and it had just been beat up by the constitutional convention. But I think they decided they wanted to keep it close and keep it in the Howlett—it wasn't the Howlett Building, Centennial Building then. But that last six months I worked for the House, that's where we met, and that was just chaos then.

But I remember when the RTA passed, and the lottery bill was part of that. That created a lot of discourse among Republicans, because a lot of Republicans didn't want the RTA. So finally, one of the compromises, we put in the referendum. Originally the referendum wasn't in there; we were just going to create the RTA. But finally, as one of the compromises to get enough votes, we had a referendum

where the people in that area would vote on whether they're going to have an RTA or not. But the suburbanites couldn't vote out; it was just the suburbanites and the city votes combined, and if a majority voted for it, then it'd be approved.

DePue: I'm not sure I understand. The referendum dealt with Cook and the Collar Counties?

Edgar: All those counties that were going to be in the RTA could vote on it, but it was a winner-take-all. It wasn't like if Will County voted against it, Will County didn't have to go in. And it wasn't all of Will County; if I remember right, it cut into some of those counties and didn't take the entire county. So that was going to go on the ballot in—it might have been the'74 primary. I can't remember. Blair lost in the '74 election. He didn't lose in the primary, but he lost in the general election, so it might have been in the primary that that was voted on.[58]

One of the other things that happened in that '73 session: Bill Scott was attorney general, and he had always wanted to get a statewide grand jury bill. That would give the attorney general a lot of power, particularly to go after criminal things, because really, the attorney general couldn't do a lot of that. State's attorneys had power to convene a grand jury and to bring indictments against people; attorney general couldn't do that. In some states, the attorney general has that power. And in Illinois, there's always been a resistance because Chicago never wanted some attorney general to have that power. They had enough concern when they had a Republican state's attorney in Cook County. They sure didn't want a Republican attorney general in Springfield coming in and holding grand juries, looking at corruption in government, or whatever.

But also, attorneys general always thought that's a great PR issue, to have the ability to do that. So Scott had pushed that before, and it hadn't gotten any place. He pushed it again this year, with a Republican legislature. We were pretty well convinced Walker was going to veto it because Scott was the other potential opponent for him for reelection; he wasn't going to give him that. Scott came to Blair and asked him to support the statewide grand jury bill. And there was a guy in Blair's leadership named Bernie Epton, who later ran for mayor of Chicago against Harold Washington in the general election. He was a little bit of a gadfly, but a very smart, successful insurance lawyer. Jewish, from Hyde Park, very liberal for a Republican—a little bit of a character, but good guy, smart guy. And he was in there when I was in there after Scott, and we said, "You've got to be for the grand jury bill. It won't pass, and if it passes, it will be vetoed, but you've got to be for it. We can find some other Republicans to get off, but Republicans are going to view this as a huge disloyalty to Bill Scott; it's going to look like it's purely selfish on your part; and there's no reason to oppose it. It won't pass, and even if it passes, it'll be vetoed, so why go out and pick a fight with Bill Scott on this issue and have a lot of Republicans who are a little concerned about you anyway really question

[58] The RTA referendum was part of the March 19, 1974 primary. *Chicago Tribune*, March 7, 1974, 3.

you?" Because the Hyde people were going to make this a big issue. He [Blair] said, "You're right. You're right." He says, "Okay, okay."

So we thought, All right, he's going to be for it. At least he'll vote for it—he's not going to be for it, but he'll vote for it. But we had the West Side Bloc guys, and we knew they'd never vote for it, and there were other guys who could disappear—which often happened in the House. You couldn't find them; they'd gone someplace. And even if it passed, we knew Walker was going to veto it, and there weren't enough votes to override it because it barely passed the Senate with all Republican votes. If it passed the House, it would almost be all Republicans and maybe two or three Democrats, but Chicago Democrats weren't going to be for this. He couldn't be against it. But Blair could be very stubborn and paranoid and just, By gosh, I'm going to show who the king of the hill is; and he didn't like Bill Scott—a lot of us didn't like Bill Scott. He could be a little arrogant, too, and he wasn't half as smart as Blair, and Blair knew it.

So the bill gets out of the Senate; comes over to the House; gets out of committee. Last night of the session. We have a thousand bills yet to be heard, we're now in the last five hours of the legislative session, and it's just chaos. The House is just chaos. You've got the Hyde people—they're mad—and just all kinds of things are going on.

DePue: They still working on a budget bill?

Edgar: Yeah, but the budget had been pretty well resolved. But we didn't have the budget for the general assembly, which I was very worried about, because I got paid out of that. (DePue laughs) They didn't want to pass it—they Hyde people were against that because there was money in there for the House remodeling, and they wanted to cut money for the Speaker. They were just going to play against that. I'm figuring, How do we get that passed?

So about four hours before adjournment they called the grand jury bill. Everybody has to talk—and in the House, everybody could talk on the bill and talk on the vote. It took forever to get a roll call on those kind of bills. And Bill Scott's on the floor working the bill, and you could have cut the tension with a knife. It was just incredible that night. I'm standing up there on the podium, and I'm with Art Telcser—Blair very seldom presided over the House; usually he stayed in the back making deals and things. I often would be out on the floor with Telcser or Bill Walsh determining—and he didn't care what got called. I pretty well had the power to tell them what bills to call and what bills not to call. They'd suspended the rules because we got late on the orderly procedure, and now just the Speaker had all that power; and it was basically whoever was presiding, and I would be standing there with whoever was presiding, determining what bills would—but we still thought we had enough time to get everything done.

But the grand jury bill comes up, and it takes forever to get through the debate and then the vote. And the vote comes down: there's eighty-eight votes for the

grand jury bill. And this is after you verify everybody off; (laughs) you've got to verify because guys would be throwing guys' switch, and guys would vote, then they'd disappear. That's how you'd verify them, because they were off; they weren't there, because they'd taken a walk, as they called it. This had gone on for hours. And we're down to every possible vote has been voted, except one: (DePue laughs) the Speaker of the House.

DePue: Oh, God.

Edgar: As Pete Peters always said, we could have got somebody to talk a walk, who had voted for it of that eighty-eight, if we'd have had to, and Blair is now out presiding. He came out to preside over this bill. And Bill Scott's there, working it... Blair had also been in a wrestling match with his son—or a brawl, nobody's sure—about a month before and had dislocated his neck and put him in the hospital; and he was working out of a hospital bed in his office. He had this neck brace on—it was just unbelievable at the end of that session—and popping pain pills; a lot of pain pills. For a while, he was running it from his hospital room, and he was calling in to the committee—we were arguing over RTA, and I remember he was calling in; they had him on a speakerphone. It was just one of these—but he had the (laughs) hospital bed back in his office, the Speaker's office. And it was just one of these bizarre—most bizarre thing I'd ever been around. Here we are, and it's like 11:30—

DePue: Before you go on, just one quick thing to clarify in my own mind: for the people who are opposed to this, what's their objections? What's their argument?

Edgar: Too much power; it'd be used for a political tool; we have state's attorneys, you don't need to give this to—there's some good arguments against it. I never thought it was needed because I thought it'd just be used as a political tool. The argument was that maybe Cook County didn't clean themselves up with—why would an attorney general necessarily always...

DePue: So that's why the Chicago Dems would be against it, because it's a tool to use against—

Edgar: Yeah, they didn't want to give anybody the power. In 1960, they didn't steal the election for Kennedy—that's a misnomer. They stole it for the state's attorney, (DePue laughs) because Ben Adamowski, who had been Daley's arch-rival in the Democratic Party, had changed and became a Republican and got elected state's attorney in 1956. They wanted him out of state's attorney in 1960. That's what they were stealing the election for; just Kennedy got to go along, because you can't explain to people, "Go down and vote for state's attorney..." Vote the straight Democratic ticket, and put the extra straight Democratic votes in. That's why Kennedy won Illinois: they were making sure they won the state's attorney race.

And Daley was just paranoid about this kind of bill because he didn't want any Republican attorney general mucking around in his... (DePue laughs) I was trying to think, at that point—yeah, they'd knocked Bernie Carey out—was Bernie

Carey state's attorney then? Let me think a minute. He might have still been state's attorney, because we did have a Republican state's attorney for four years. State's attorney in Cook County—we had a Republican there for four years, who they went after tooth and nail.

So everybody's just sitting there. There must have been ten thousand people on the House floor. I don't know how many people could have been on the House floor, but it was just packed; and everybody's looking, and Bill Scott comes up and says to Blair, "Mr. Speaker, could I have your vote?" And Blair just stares at him, and we're sitting there thinking, Oh, no. You can just tell, the way he's staring at him, "I'm going to show you." And (watch beeps) he said to the clerk, "Call the absentees." There was only one absentee at this point. "Mr. Speaker." And Blair looks at the attorney general, turns around, and says, "Mr. Speaker votes no." (laughter) The bill goes down one vote. The whole place just goes up for grab. The Hyde people rushed the podium. People are just screaming, yelling; and I'm just saying, "Oh, the whole thing is going to fall apart." And it did.

"The voting machine broke," they said. (DePue laughs) And from that point forward—it was midnight—we then had a thousand bills left, including the legislative budget, a lot of other things that had to happen; and we had to take oral roll calls unless we had consent of unanimous roll call. Well, you had the Hyde people who just were ready now to tie everything up. And Blair went back in his office and locked his door, (laughs) and I'm left out there with Art Telcser and Bill Walsh. Blair just says, "You guys take care of it from here." So for the next two days, I'm out there trying to figure out what bills get called. I remembered Clyde Choate wanted some bill, and I said, "Clyde, it's not on the list," and he got mad. That's when he really got mad at me, wanted me fired, because I wouldn't call his bills. (laughs) And I'm just trying to get the bills we have to get.

Finally, about four o'clock that night—I'm watching the Hyde people, because they're waiting for the general assembly appropriation bill. I'm convinced I'm going to get that bill out of here so at least I get paid, because there's no money for any of us. Everybody else is pretty well... So four or five o'clock, I'm looking out, and the guy—it was Gene Schlickman, the guy that coauthored the book on Kerner. He was one of Hyde's guys, and he's the guy kind of in charge; and any time we'd try to call this bill, he'd start to raise objection or something. So I'm looking, and it looks like he's about asleep, because a lot of these guys are falling asleep. And if I can call it and get a last unanimous roll call, I can just zip it—and that's what we're getting on some. So I said, "Call the House"—I called the general assembly appropriation bill. Schlickman—I was watching him—gets up and just falls back in chair. He's asleep. And we quickly call for unanimous roll call and pass it, so (DePue laughs) by five o'clock, I knew I was going to get paid.

It took us two days to get out of that mess, and a lot of things didn't get called, but that was, of all the moments, the most bizarre thing I'd ever gone through in Springfield; and it was that grand jury bill. And it was one of those things—like Hyde—it's one of those fights Blair got into he didn't need to get into. He could

have stuck it to Scott without leaving his fingerprints on it, but he just wanted to show everybody, by gosh, he could do those things. It was just a mess. And the air conditioning didn't work very well. This was like the end of June. I think it was ninety-five in Springfield those days. I just remember how hot it was outside, how hot it was inside. Ugh, it was just—

DePue: And smoking, I assume?

Edgar: Yeah. You could all smoke. As I said, we didn't have the new ventilation system. We had 177 members as opposed to 118. (coughs) And we lost a couple guys that session, dying. In fact, in the ERA debate, we lost a guy. That was a little earlier in that session. But that was 1973 in the House—the regular session. Then we adjourned. I was pretty much in the doghouse from then on with Blair. His secretary had turned, and Clyde wanted me fired. And he knew I was getting ready to think about running back home, and he was a little worried about getting middled(??) on that. So the veto session, I was there—I still had some influence, but not a whole lot. I worked on the RTA and did that, but...

They wanted to do a resolution to investigate Jim Thompson, because Thompson was U.S. attorney, and he had sent Otto Kerner—and there were rumors he was ready to indict Clyde Choate and some people like that. And so Choate and some of the West Side Bloc guys convinced Blair they ought to put a resolution that the House ought to investigate the U.S. attorney in Chicago. (laughter) Some of the guys came to me and said, "Is he nuts?" (laughter) "You don't mess with the U.S...." And finally we convinced him (coughs) not to put that in, but he was ready to—he'd get off on those tangents, and it was just too bad, because the guy was very bright, and it was just a wasted talent. But some things got done in '73. With all that chaos, you still got some things done; the RTA being probably the biggest.

DePue: I know there are a couple others. Both you and I want to talk about the Equal Rights Amendment fight, and I think you mentioned a couple others in there. Do we want to pick that up tomorrow morning or continue on?

Edgar: I could go here for a little longer if you can.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: Let's talk about ERA a little bit, because you historians care about that. I'm not sure I—I got so sick of that issue in a way because it just went on and on, and I'm not real sure—I think it was more symbolic, myself. But ERA had been approved by Congress; it was now to be ratified by the states. And this is 1972.

DePue: It was May and June of '72 when it was an issue in the Illinois state legislature, at least that first time around.

Edgar: Yeah. And I can't remember if it had already passed the Senate or what, but it was up in the House. Maybe it passed the Senate, because there's no question about the Senate either. Because it had not become the big, divisive issue it had in later years.

And Republicans were as supportive as Democrats at that point. The lead in the House was a woman from the suburbs, Genie Chapman. And the Republican counterpart was Giddy Dyer.[59] They were the co-sponsors of this bill, both from the suburbs, Republican and Democrat, very strong on women issues—as most of the Republican women legislators at that point were, probably more so than the Democratic women. Some of the Democratic women were from the city, and they didn't care too much. The suburban women, who were mainly Republican and some Democrats—this was very important to them.

The issue got called; everybody figured it was going to pass. At that point in Illinois politics, Genie Chapman, who was a delegate to the national convention, had joined up with Adlai Stevenson III and Jesse Jackson in blocking Daley and some of his people. You had all these reform rules they had passed after the '68 convention, for the next convention, to give the outsiders more say; and they excluded Daley from being chairman of the delegation, and I think excluded Daley and some of his people from even being delegates. I know that some of his people—I can't remember if they excluded him, but I know they—

DePue: They had a completely different slate of candidates that went to the '72 convention.

Edgar: Yeah. The rules were such—and they'd had their state convention or something—that this is the way it was going, and Daley was, needless to say, not happy. And Genie Chapman was an ally with Stevenson and Jackson, and so word came to teach her a lesson on ERA—nobody thinking it would kill it; just they weren't going to pass it then. Make her think about it. So the debate came on, and it was a little bit of a heated debate, but the votes, we were pretty convinced, were there. I think this is when Mike McClain—who was later a legislator, close to Mike Madigan, now lobbies—his father Elmo, I think, in that debate, had a heart attack and died later from that. And it seemed like it was in an afternoon, and it was before adjournment. There wasn't a lot going on that day, just ERA. The vote came up, and it didn't pass. And everybody was kind of surprised, but that was the reason given: Daley had sent word down, We're going to teach Chapman a lesson. But nobody thought that would kill the ERA; it just wasn't going to pass this session.

So they go home—no ERA. Well, they come back, and it's become a huge political issue; lines are drawn, and people who voted against it that first time weren't about to back off; and people who voted for it, there weren't enough. So from then on, it became almost imp—then the interpretation was made under the Illinois Constitution; it says it takes a three-fifths vote to ratify a constitutional amendment. It doesn't say anything in the United States Constitution about that, but in the state, it said that.

DePue: With the recently ratified 1970 constitution.

[59] Eugenia S. Chapman (D-Arlington Heights) served in the Illinois House from 1965 to 1982, becoming the first female Democratic leadership appointee when she became House Minority Whip. *Illinois Issues* (November 1994), 33. Goudyloch Dyer (R-Hinsdale) served in the Illinois House from 1969 to 1981.

Edgar: Yeah. So that three-fifths vote—if it had just been a constitutional majority of the members elected, like in most states, we would have ratified ERA any number of times; but that three-fifths, which was ruled that first time it took in '72—from then on, it never passed, and it became an issue where you just couldn't change minds. And this just continued going on and on. When I'm Thompson's legislative liaison in 1979 and '80, I'm working on this thing. And I remember we have the guy who created *All in the Family*.

DePue: Lear.

Edgar: Yeah, Lear.

DePue: Norman Lear.

Edgar: And we had—I can't remember—Smell, Snell, or whatever? She was head of one of the women's group. I think she just died. I remember sitting over in Thompson's study, or in the private quarters in the—where you watch TV downstairs—and they're trying to get Thompson; and they're offering to provide money, if it takes that, to get votes and things. And I'm sitting there, Ah, these people. It's just typical; people hear about government, and they think you can just go in there, and that's how things are done. And we're trying to explain to them, "You don't understand. This vote, these people have taken time and time again. It's the most visible—it's probably the only visible vote they have in their district that they've taken—and so nobody wants to change either way. They've been elected on how they've done it. They don't want to take a chance. This is the one issue that might actually beat a guy. You're just not going to change." And you can't go in there—those guys, who you could do that with, are probably already voting for it, to be very truthful, or they won't vote for it anyway. Some of the West Side Bloc guys were just adamantly against it, but this was just their deep Italian heritage. (DePue laughs) Sometimes you couldn't budge these guys for anything, and ERA was one of those issues.

DePue: They had already taken the political risk on it.

Edgar: Yeah, and everybody knew what they had done, and they'd survived. They weren't going to take a chance, because they knew how explosive this issue was. So really from '72 on, it just wasn't going to pass with three-fifths votes. And then as secretary of state, in 1981-'82—it was going to be about the last year this could be done, because you were going to run out of time. And every day, we had huge groups of women, on both sides, in the rotunda; and as secretary of state, I was in charge of the capitol complex, worrying about keeping them from coming to blows. We had Phyllis Schlafly and her group, and we had the women's groups there. Then we had a group of women out of Champaign who came over and locked—Chain Gang, they called them—they chained themselves to the Senate chambers, trying to get into it. They were right there, chained to—

DePue: The railings getting into the building or...?

Edgar: No, to the door into the Senate.

DePue: Oh.

Edgar: They were blocking it, and here at the end of the session, the Senators wanted them moved out. We had some women who fasted in the rotunda, and we did finally get them out, because we were worried about them dying. It didn't matter so much in the rotunda as long as we could keep it open and people could go up and down, but this was blocking off the Senate entrance. It was the closing days of the Senate, and from my legislative experience, I knew how chaotic things were and how that was just going to play havoc. And we got an injunction. They wouldn't leave. We got the injunction, and they wanted us to move them out and give them the TV. And I didn't want to give them the TV. I would get stubborn, too.

I had gone over to Charleston to speak to Boys State. And I remember I told my staff—we talked about it, and they said, "We ought to move them out. I said, "We move them out in the middle of the night. TV won't see it." I said, "Maybe we'll do that." I said, "I'm going over to Charleston Boys State. I'll come back, and I'll tell you my decision." This was a Sunday. I went to Boys State. A bunch of the Boys State kids kept saying, "When are you going to get rid of that chain gang? When are you going to get them out of there?" Because this had really got to be a focal point, and as secretary of state, you don't usually become the focal point of the major—and I was becoming the focal point. And I was mad about where they—if they were just in the rotunda someplace, I wouldn't have—but I didn't like them where they were. That was causing a real problem.

DePue: And you got an election coming up, too.

Edgar: I had my first election as secretary of state coming up, yeah. And I'm pro-ERA. Phyllis Schlafly and her group, they don't trust me anyway, but at the same time, I was trying to be fair. But this group—I think it was from Parkland. They were really bad. And so I say, "Okay, three o'clock in the morning, move them out. We'll move them over to the Centennial Building and tell them it's the same kind of marble over there if they want to sit over there and protest, but they're not staying where they are." We decide we're going to lock the doors of the capitol building when we do this because we don't want a bunch of people coming in. So we locked the capitol building. At three o'clock, we move them out; and the press gets wind of it, they come in, and they can't get in. Ah, they're furious. Ben Kinningham, who was a radio guy, who I always got along—he was furious. (laughs) Because I didn't want to let them have the TV thing. Even at three o'clock, I didn't want to take a chance. And so we got them moved over, and we told the press, "You can go over and talk to them there." And oh, he was mad about we'd locked the doors.

The group didn't stay there, and they left. And the next thing we knew, they came back and threw blood—they said it was blood; I think it was goat blood. I think they did get animal blood and threw it on the Senate chambers. Threw it in the House, too, I think. Or I don't think in the House; they threw it in the Senate. They

threw it all around. I had them arrested at that point. We didn't want to arrest them, either, because you do have a right to demonstrate at the capitol. It's a real fine line. You couldn't throw people out of the rotunda. But at that point, I said, "I don't care if I'm going to lose the ERA vote, I'm going to..." (laughs) I said, "We're arresting them." And we arrested them and hauled them off to jail. The judge left them in for a while, and the issue went away. I don't know how long they stayed in jail, but...

The only repercussion was poor Brenda had to come over to Champaign for a Fourth of July parade that year, and she took a lot of flak. Brad said, "There are a lot of words, Dad, I don't think I've heard you ever use, (DePue laughs) that they were saying to us as we were walking in that parade." And then to make matters worse for Brenda that day: it was a hot, steamy day, and I'm up in the suburbs getting cheers and things; and she's in Champaign, and she's got the kids. My mom lives in Charleston—we had moved to Springfield—and she [Brenda] was going to take the kids and go down to Charleston. So she takes our car—we had an old Maverick that was painted up, "Edgar for Secretary of State"—she takes the car after sitting through this hot parade, getting profanities and abuse from these women; and she's driving, and halfway down there, the car conks out.

DePue: Oh, God.

Edgar: And she has to walk to a farmer's house, get somebody to come and get her, and it's 110 degrees. I'm up in Chicago, in the suburbs. I call that night. "Oh, it was a great day. How was your day?" (DePue laughs) She says, "All right, you're going to hear about it." (laughter) The kids never liked parades after that. But that was ERA. Again, ERA would have passed in Illinois—I don't know if it would have been enough to ratify it nationwide—if it hadn't got caught up in Illinois internal politics over the convention, and also the ruling of three-fifths. But even if the ruling of three-fifths, it would have passed in 1972.

DePue: See, the irony I see in this whole thing is '72, it looks like it's going to be inevitable.

Edgar: Oh, yeah.

DePue: It's rolling through the states, and then suddenly it gets to Illinois. Illinois's going to ratify it. Of course they're going to ratify it. And then—

Edgar: Yeah, it gets caught up in something that has nothing to do with the ERA; as a lot of times happened in Springfield. But I remember that afternoon. It was just kind of a quiet afternoon, when that all came up; but you're sitting there, and it's kind of surreal because it doesn't pass. This thing's got to pass. And there's Democrats who are laying off. You had some Republicans who were laying off, but you just had a lot of Democrats you knew who ought to vote for ERA, and they didn't. And they had the three-fifths ruling, which nobody worried too much about when it was made because it's going to pass with three-fifths; there's no problem. And it didn't, and then it became a huge issue that just hung over Illinois for years.

Poor Thompson (laughs) used to get blamed by the women groups, that he really wasn't trying. Every time it'd come up, he knew he couldn't do anything, and his back would go out on him. I think it was psychological, but he used to always be in the—the reason we were meeting with him over at the mansion—he was in bed—he'd been in bed because of his back. It used to always go out with ERA because I think he knew he couldn't do anything about it, and he was getting all this pressure, and I think it's just... And I remember shuttling some members up to his bedroom, which was—you just never took anybody in the private room. I mean, I never let—Thompson [had me] taking members up to his bedroom, trying to talk, and they just wouldn't budge. He didn't budge a vote.

Then there was a story about somebody offering a bribe on the floor. It was the ERA people trying things, and the anti-ERA people got wind of it—and I believe it, after dealing with these guys. It was one of those issues—we had enough problems in Illinois; we didn't have to deal with that. (DePue laughs) And it just went on—it went on for ten years. I was dealing with it in '82, and it had started in '72. And it could have all got resolved in '72 if Genie Chapman just hadn't have sided with Adlai Stevenson and Jesse Jackson against Mayor Daley.

DePue: This might have been a different country if an Equal Rights Amendment had passed.

Edgar: I don't know in the end if it would have. That's the other thing. And I always supported it, but I never was convinced it was—in the end, I thought it was a lot more symbolism than it was—

DePue: That was Schlafly's argument in the first place, wasn't it, that it wasn't really necessary?

Edgar: Yeah, but she—

DePue: There was a lot more to her argument than that.

Edgar: Yeah. She worried, I think, maybe that it actually would do something, and she didn't like what it did.

DePue: Like the draft.

Edgar: Yeah. And I never saw—the arguments against it, I thought were bogus; but the ones for it, I thought a lot of things were probably going to happen—could happen anyway. But I just thought there were other issues probably more important to women that we didn't get to, because, boy, that just took a huge amount of time.

DePue: You've got a little bit more time here. Are there some other issues while you were working with Blair...?

Edgar: When I was working for Blair—as a staffer—I always said I had a lot more influence as a staffer, as kind of his chief staff guy; like what bills got called. And a

lot of that stuff put you in a position of power, and probably a lot more power than I should have had. Somewhat of the same happened in the Senate, but you had a lot of influence. Again, when I went over there, I was twenty-five years old and I was getting paid twenty-five thousand dollars, which just kind of blew the roof off the capitol—the thought of somebody getting paid that much, that young at that time. And probably all of it went to my head, too. Brenda always said it was probably good I did lose that first election because I was pretty cocky.

But a couple other issues that I was involved in that I thought turned out to be significant: one was campaign disclosure. I thought we needed to do something in that line and argued—politically, I thought it was a good move and thought that we should do disclosure. I never was a big limit person, and never have been a big one on limits because at the federal level, I don't think it works. But I think disclosure gives the public the right to know, and I think is a reasonable—and I started working on that, and got Blair to sponsor it. We didn't completely get it done, but got it pretty far along, so that what finally passed was pretty much what I had worked on and got him to sign on.

The other one was something actually I started with Arrington. They had proposed putting the student body presidents on the governing boards of the universities. This was 1968.

DePue: I wonder where that one came from.

Edgar: It didn't come from me. They [who made the suggestion? The Senate leadership? Other staffers working for Arrington?] had actually suggested students involved in that—they put together this list—and I said, "This is great." They weren't really that excited about it, but I get them to follow it up and had them put it in a bill and they got it introduced, got it in a committee. Came out of committee—I have to say there was some resistance from some Republicans on this—and it was going to be that the student body president would have a nonvoting membership on the board of trustees.

DePue: And to put this into context here—

Edgar: This was 1969. (DePue laughs) Campuses have blown up. But this is part of the argument of helping bring students in—and that was my argument— I said, "Meet them at the table." "Yeah, okay, okay." So it's out of committee, it's on the floor of the Senate, and students take over Columbia University. And after so many days, they show them walking out—they're holding guns in their hands. Arrington walks in—(laughs) I remember he walks in that morning—and I'm just an intern then—and he looks at the newspaper, and he looks out, just looks at nobody, and says, "Put that bill back in committee." (laughter) So that bill never came out.

Then I worked for Blair, and I talked Blair into it. I said, "It'd be good for you to get your image on the student campuses; to get students to…" And there began to be a student association, so I was working with them. And Hirschfeld [John C.

Hirschfeld (R-Champaign)], who was a legislator from here, didn't like that idea about student body presidents. So finally the compromise was you'd have an election on the student campuses, which I thought—I thought it ought to be student body president because they're in a position that they know what's going on, it gives them some extra clout, and they go in there and deal with the trustees. But the compromise was you have an election, but no vote. I was not for a vote; I just—give them their voice. I didn't have a vote on ours when I was at Eastern, and you can usually talk if you got a good point. You just want to make sure before they go do something that they're aware of the students' point of view. (coughs) Then arguments were made: "We ought to have faculty." I said, "No, faculty have a conflict of interest. Universities are not for the faculty; they're for students." That's my misnomer coming from a liberal arts environment, thinking that's why you have universities and all this research stuff. But I said, "They're not there for the janitors; they're not there for the faculty; they're for the students, so students ought to have some input."

So we finally got that passed, and then a few years later Winkel here gets buffaloed by the students and puts in a bill to give them the vote, and I veto it.[60] Then later, we did work out a compromise that—I forget what the compromise was. He went south on me. Oh, I think I vetoed—he wasn't going to call it, and he did call it, and we finally did some kind of modified… They only get one vote, and the governor picks the one who will have the vote. I'm not sure any governor except myself ever took the time to do that. But I always thought the trouble was if you gave each one of the students—like in U of I, you had three students, on it, and that'd be too many votes—then you ran a little bit of a conflict. If students have a vote, are they voting on tenure for a professor that they have in class? There is always that possibility. But I just didn't think you needed a vote; I thought you just needed to be at the table. But Arrington—

DePue: With a voice at the table.

Edgar: With a voice at the table—that was the key, because I thought the trustees just needed to make sure they had some student talking to them about things before they took action. But I thought I had it passed that first year, and Arrington (DePue laughs)—those guys get out of Columbia with the guns in their hand, and the bill went back in.

But as a staffer, I was fortunate. I was very fortunate. I think in a ten-year period I went from being a second-level staffer to secretary of state. It was a pretty good ten years, particularly those early years as the legislative aide, moving up in the Senate to move over to Blair. Pretty heady stuff, because you didn't have a whole lot of staff then, and staff was assuming a lot more responsibility than probably we should have had in a lot of ways. The legislature was still more part-time, and staff was full-time, and that, I think, created a situation where staff made

[60] Edgar issued an amendatory veto on Rep. Rick Winkel's (R-Champaign) measure in 1997. *Chicago Tribune*, March 10, 1998, 6.

more decisions. But it was an interesting time, too, because you had the new constitution, and a lot of changes were going on in the state. And there's no doubt my assignments doing the political stuff helped me later on when I wanted to go home.

During this whole period—and this probably plays more when I run for the legislature—I'm continuing to keep contacts back in Charleston, particularly through Jerry Bennett. Jerry was very important in here. He had moved from the clothing store to the chamber of commerce executive director, and that was kind of the group that moved things in Charleston. They were trying to get a Lincoln Lake, a reservoir much like Lake Shelbyville, and it had been approved and everything. And if Ogilvie had been reelected, it would have been built; but unfortunately, Walker ran against it and it didn't happen. So there was a lot of interest in Charleston about what was happening in Springfield besides just the fact they have a university there.

I kept in contact and kind of used my positions in the legislative staff—I was somebody when I'd go back to Charleston. They had me back—I think the year I was an intern, they created this Lincoln Park outside of Charleston. They had this ugly statue of Lincoln, fiberglass, that they put out there, and it was a big deal. And they had invited Arrington, so they sent me over to represent Arrington. That was the first time I think I—and here I am with all the bigwigs around Charleston, and I'm there. Being in the legislative staff, even though I was removed from Charleston—which hurt—I was able to use what I was in Springfield to keep me in touch with some of the movers and shakers back there, get me back there periodically, and to at least keep some ties. Because it's really difficult—when you leave home, your home base, and you go to Springfield—a lot of guys I knew came to Springfield and wanted to run for office. You're going to run in Springfield. Everybody wants to run for office in Springfield. And they'd cut off their ties back home. And fortunately during this period, I had kept those ties. When Ogilvie ran for governor, I went back and tried to help organize that area for him. I particularly worried about those legislative races early on, got to know the legislators pretty well, so I had ties.

DePue: Was it pretty much a given that the political staffers, that most of them had political ambitions of their own?

Edgar: No, most of them didn't. In fact, that was a real concern about—when Arrington was trying to sell the program, that's what the argument was: You're going to bring these guys over, and they're all going to come back and run against us. What was ironic: during the sixties, of course, you had the Vietnam War, and you had the draft. Arrington would—if you got accepted in the internship, he would go to the head of the Illinois Draft Board and get them exempt for that year. Only Arrington could get that done. But it was the intern program, and he would do it.

So the year I was an intern, the next class coming in, one of the people they picked was a law school graduate named Terry Bruce. Terry Bruce was going to be

drafted because he no longer had a deferment. And Sam Gove, who was coordinating it, came to me and said, "Can you get Arrington to write a letter for Terry Bruce?"—I think he was the only one. There might have been another one, but Terry Bruce, I remember—"Write a letter to the draft board to get him exempt this year because he's going to be an intern." And I remember one of the staffers for Arrington, who'd been in the Army—Tom Corcoran, who later became a congressman, as Terry Bruce did—didn't like that. He said, "I just think that's wrong." He said, "I don't like this exemption for the draft. I think they ought to go." I said, "I know, but I think Senator Arrington has done this in the past." He said, "He has." He said, "Write the letter, and we'll give it to him." So I wrote the letter from Senator Arrington to ask that Terry Bruce be exempt from the draft for that year. Arrington signs it, sends it off. Terry Bruce is exempt from the draft that year.

You know what he does next year? He runs for the Illinois state Senate. You know what he does? He gets elected. He wins a seat that has been a Republican seat—he barely wins it. Late that night—we're convinced we're going to hold onto the Senate because we will think we will definitely win that Senate seat—Terry Bruce pulls that race out; he wins that Senate seat; costs Arrington his leadership position. If Arrington hadn't have written that letter, he'd have been off someplace in Asia, (laughter) and we'd have probably still had control of the state Senate. I don't know if I ever told Arrington later that he had signed that letter or not. He had the stroke right afterwards. I don't know if he ever knew that, but I always felt really bad about that. Of course, Terry Bruce went on and was a state Senator, then was a congressman for several years. He's now president of the community college down in Olney.

DePue: Let's finish up this way, if you don't mind, Governor. We started by talking about the impact that working for Arrington had—the things that you learned from him, the big-picture level. What would you say about the experience with Blair?

Edgar: I didn't want to work for another politician; I wanted to be my own boss. Blair is really smart, but I felt very uncomfortable with a person who—I thought that his ethics left something to be desired. But I also realized, in the end, you're working for somebody; either you quit or you put up with it. In fact, Zale Glauberman, who worked with me with Blair, later worked for Thompson as legislative liaison; and when he wanted to leave that post and do something else, Thompson wanted me to take that spot, and I really didn't want to. Zale couldn't leave until he got a replacement, and that's who Thompson wanted. So I remember, when I'm walking over to talk to Thompson, I said, "I don't know if I want to do this, Zale." He said, "Jim, don't worry. He doesn't lie. He's not like Blair; he keeps his word." (laughter)

And he hit it pretty much, because that just bothered me; the thing with Hyde and some of the other things that he did. And I thought, What a waste, too. Here was a guy that had a real ability. He wasn't just some hack. And there were guys in Springfield you wonder how they ever got here. You know that voters aren't paying a lot of attention if this is who they're sending. But Blair wasn't. Blair, as far as IQ

and ability, was up there with Arrington and Madigan and Ogilvie, but unfortunately, there was something there he just—sometimes he would deviate from doing the right thing. Not dishonest, legally, but ethically, I think, wrong, and that bothered me. Also, his moods. I'd never had anybody treat me that way. To start out, he was very good, but then he'd get paranoid; or you had the intrigue going on in the office and somebody trying to cut your legs out from under you, and he wouldn't talk to you for weeks. So I just thought, I don't want to go through this again.

I have to say—and we'll talk later—my experience working with Thompson was the exact opposite. I don't think I ever worked with anybody that was easier to work with. I didn't always agree, and sometimes I thought he antiqued too much, and sometimes he got a little carried away with—he never lied to anyone. Sometimes maybe he would kind of tell them what they wanted to hear, and he shouldn't have said it because he wasn't going to be able to deliver. But if you'd sit him down and say, "You can't do this," or you explained to him—and he was just 180-degrees difference than working for Blair. Boy, if I wasn't so set on I wanted to be in politics, I might, (laughs) after that experience, just say, "I want out of here."

But it was too bad—you see, that wasted talent always bothered me, because we needed another Arrington. The legislature doesn't have enough of those, and Blair looked like, maybe to start with, he might be that way; but he wasn't, and then he, I think, caused some damage and some splits that weren't necessary. Now, in the long run, maybe, for the country, I think Henry Hyde wouldn't have gone off to Congress, because he was in a dead end in Springfield while Blair was there. And ironically, he got elected to Congress the night Blair got defeated in that '74 election.

DePue: It says something just right there. Blair got defeated for reelection in his own district.

Edgar: Yeah, and it was mainly RTA. I don't think it was because he was unethical; it was RTA. People didn't like RTA, and they blamed him for it. But they tell the story—and I never asked Henry—because Henry and I got—Henry was always cordial to me. I think he was a little taken—we weren't real close, but later we got to be good friends. There was a story I heard that night that—Henry had kind of a close race, too, that first time. He ran against the former state's attorney from Cook County that had led the raid on the Black Panthers. And it wasn't an automatic win—it was a tough race. But they said Henry was sitting there after he had heard he had won. He was sitting there and drinking and feeling pretty good, and they came in and said, "We got something else to tell you: Bob Blair's been defeated." (DePue laughs) And they said Henry just looked off and said, "My cup overrunneth." (laughter)

I can see him saying—because he had gotten mistreated by Blair, there's no doubt about it. And it was so unnecessary. But then Henry went on, and I don't agree with his position on abortion, but I think Henry is chairman of Senate Foreign

Relations Committee—or House—International Affairs or whatever they call it. Did an excellent job. Colin Powell and him were very close. I think he is chairman of Judiciary Committee. The impeachment thing; I'm not sure if that was all wrong. I think he was just a very, very talented person that maybe never would have made it to Congress and would have just been wasted as majority leader in Springfield. But it was so unnecessary.

DePue: That's probably a great place to finish for today.

Edgar: Okay.

DePue: More for tomorrow.

(end of interview 3)

Interview with Jim Edgar

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Interview # 4: May 29, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is May 29, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is session four with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good morning, Governor.

Edgar: Good morning.

DePue: We again are in his office in Champaign. When we left yesterday, we had talked a lot about your experiences working with Representative Blair and working in the legislature. We got to the point of getting ready to move on to your election campaign in 1974, but before we totally left the legislature—this is Illinois, and so I wanted to get your reflections on the nature of how business was conducted in Springfield and in the legislature, both the House and the Senate. Your reflections on all of the rumors and allegations and dirt, if you will, that sometimes got into the press about some of the corruption that went on in the legislature?

Edgar: For the most part, I didn't detect it. I might have been a little naïve. Most legislators had other jobs. I think there was probably a lot of conflict of interest, but that was inherent when you had people who were bankers and served on the banking committee. In the case of Senator Arrington, he made a lot of his money in the insurance industry, and he was very much involved in the insurance committee and insurance legislation. Officially, he was chief counsel to Combined Insurance, which is now Aon Insurance, but he really didn't spend much time there—he had been involved with Clem [W. Clement] Stone when they had started Combined Insurance, and it had grown to be one of the major companies in Illinois. Clem Stone was a multi-millionaire, and Arrington had made a lot of money off that, too, so he had a vested interest in Combined Insurance.

But I can remember one occasion where Combined Insurance had a position on a piece of legislation; their lobbyist was very much—I can't remember if he was opposed or for it, but he had a very strong position. And Arrington used to listen to another person from the insurance industry, Dave Brown, who was also the Republican committeeman in New Trier township—Kemper Insurance is who he represented—and had a different point of view on that piece of legislation. Arrington sided with the Kemper person as opposed to with the Combined person. So he had a strong interest in insurance, but even though his company had one position, he sided with the other insurance company's position. I don't think he had any interests in it, because Kemper was a mutual company, which means he didn't have stock in it. But Arrington was very pro-insurance because he was from the business.

And we had people from banks who were very pro-banks. They usually were opposed to branch banking because they represented small banks. Many of the Democrats, particularly from Chicago, had a second job with city hall or the county, and they always did what the mayor told them because they didn't want to lose their job back home. So you had those types of conflicts, which today, I think, would be viewed in a very negative way; much more than back then. It was just kind of taken for granted: people had jobs, and they probably had conflicts, and you hope you had a balance in the legislature between bankers and maybe consumers or labor un—labor unions had people, too. There were several legislators who were officials in labor unions. So everybody represented some industry or interest, as well as some geographic [area].

But actually taking money and putting it in their pocket for things they did, I didn't see all that much of. It did happen, there's no doubt about it, and I know of some cases. But what always amazed me, from the cases I heard: it was a small amount of money that they took to vote on a bill. I'll never forget, I was working in the House, and it was late one night, and I came out of the speaker's office—we'd had a meeting. The Committee on Registration and Miscellaneous was kind of a catch-all, but it was mainly anything to do with regulating businesses like barbershops or whatever—licensing, this would catch it—and there were some questionable legislators on there. This wasn't a sought-after committee by most legislators who wanted to be involved in big policy. They were meeting on the

house floor, which is a pretty big place for a small committee to meet. And we walked out, I looked over, and they were scattered all over the House floor. They weren't sitting together; there were four here and three—several dozen feet apart.

So one of the Republican members, who I knew, was there, and I said, "You guys are meeting late." "Yeah, yeah, we're about done." I said, "Why are you guys scattered out so much? Why don't you sit...?" He says, "That's kind of how we vote. If somebody wants to get this group's vote, they'll come up with the money here." We kind of looked—there was another guy with me—we kind of looked at him, and said, "Huh? What are you talking about?" He says, "Oh, this bill. We all get a hundred dollars each for how we vote on this bill." He says, "Now, there's a couple guys down there—they don't take money." He says, "They're just by themselves. They're irrelevant on this committee. But somebody knows they've got to go to each one of these groups." And we were dumbfounded because of how candid he was. He wasn't trying to... And the other thing we were just dumbfounded—because we'd always heard about guys—but a hundred dollars? (DePue laughs) They were trading a vote for a hundred dollars.

DePue: "We" being other staffers and interns?

Edgar: There was another staffer with me, yeah. And we both had been around, but we were just kind of dumbfounded by his openness and how cheap they went for. Now, this guy later was indicted on one of the scandals, and he turned. He was wired and got all his other guys—his buddies, they all went for a longer time than he did. But I would say that was definitely the exception. You had the conflict, and that was just kind of taken—people had jobs, so they had a point of view, or if they were city hall… The Chicago Democrats, we all knew, were going to do whatever Mayor Daley told them. And I think you saw a little more of that from Chicago legislators than you did downstate legislators, probably, on the involvement. But there were still downstate Republicans as well as Chicago Democrats. Again, to me, it was the exception, not the rule. But what to me was appalling, besides the fact these guys would actually trade their votes for money, was the fact they were so cheap. On the cement truck scandal bill that sent people to jail, I think it was a thousand dollars these guys got for voting on a bill that ended up sending a lot of them off to jail.[61]

DePue: What timeframe was that?

Edgar: This was in the early seventies. I forget the actual trial—it was probably the mid-seventies. Thompson was U.S. attorney when the trial happened. But other than that, you used to hear rumors about certain leaders who maybe had Swiss bank accounts because they were—but nothing ever—and I know they got looked at. The U.S. attorney's office looked at them. Charlie Chew, who we'll talk a little bit more about when I'm secretary of state—an African-American Democratic legislator

[61] Sen. Kenneth Course (D-Chicago); Rep. Robert Craig (D-Danville); Rep. Louis Capuzi (R-Chicago); former Rep. Frank P. North (R-Rockford); former Sen. Jack E. Walker (R-Lansing); and Paul Powell's former legislative liaison, Peter V. Pappas, were convicted of conspiracy and mail fraud on June 25, 1976. Course, Craig, and Pappas were also convicted of bribery. Rep. John Wall (R-Chicago) was acquitted. *Chicago Tribune*, June 26, 1976.

from Chicago—everybody was always suspicious about him. And another legislator told me this story.

When Senator Chew first came to Springfield, he was on the Motor Vehicle Law Commission. There's always a lot of suspicion about those kinds of committees. And this one guy said, "I got a call from one of the lobbyists for the tire companies saying, 'This Charlie Chew, just how important is he?'" He said, "He's a member of the minority party, the Democrats. They don't have much clout, and he's a new legislator—why? Is he holding you up for tires?" He [the lobbyist] says, "No, he wants what the tires go on." (DePue laughs) So Chew at least had a little more expensive taste. And he got looked at, and I think he came pretty close. But those, again, I think were the exceptions. And what you hear about today; a lot of that's tied to campaign money.

DePue: I wanted to ask you about that. What was the practice of raising campaign funds, at that time?

Edgar: You didn't raise that much. Like the first time I ran for the legislature in a primary—and I spent a lot of money—I think I spent thirty thousand dollars. That same district: about six years ago, they spent over a million dollars in that race.

DePue: But the PAC—

Edgar: So back then, money wasn't—it didn't take as much; people didn't have as much in their funds.

DePue: And the law in terms of campaign finance was—any limits on individual donors?

Edgar: No.

DePue: And business donors?

Edgar: No. Still isn't today. They're going to change it, but it isn't going to have any impact.

DePue: Yeah, I just want to put that mark on the wall here.

Edgar: We didn't have disclosure, either. And also under Illinois law, until my last year as governor, I think—I signed the bill—you could take your campaign money and convert it to personal use, legally, as long as you paid taxes on it; which legislators did. It wasn't uncommon the guys would end—they might have five, ten thousand dollars in their campaign fund. They would take it for personal use; they'd pay taxes on it. But money was a factor, but it wasn't the factor it is today, or anything like it is in Congress.

DePue: Paul Simon was one of those people, as you mentioned; he had a career as well as being a legislator. He's in the legislature. He's pretty effective in the legislature.

He's also a downstate journalist, and he made a name for himself—I think it was '64, thereabouts—

Edgar: No, it was in the fifties.

DePue: —by being very critical of these kinds of things.

Edgar: It was in the fifties when he did his *Post* article. That was a long—

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: Yeah. I think it was in the fifties, because he was already—it might have been in the early sixties. It was before I got there. And yeah, it was about—particularly the House—the currency exchange. You had a certain group of legislators that you always—I don't want to say everybody was perfect. There was a segment of the legislature that you felt was probably questionable, but they were the vast minority. And the currency exchange bill—again, it was a bill that would go through one of these minor committees; and there were tapes on the currency exchange. This was sometime late fifties, early sixties. That was a big scandal. Nobody ever got indicted on it, but... Then he wrote his article for *Post Magazine*, I think it was, talking about corruption in the legislature. I love Paul Simon; he was a good friend of mine—I'm not sure how effective a legislator he was. He was very well-liked by the media, but whatever effectiveness he had; after that article, he had no effectiveness, (laughter) because even the honest ones kind of resented the story.[62]

By the time I got there, some of those guys involved, like in the currency exchange, were gone. And there were certain guys in the legislature you just knew were probably on the take. But they weren't in leadership, and they were in the minority for the most part. They were in the minority. And I say, they weren't leadership for the most part. There were a couple guys who—Clyde Choate always had a—people always wondered about him. But now, Clyde Choate wasn't an attorney. His whole income basically was off what he got out of the legislature and some investments (DePue laughs) in tire companies and... He lost some money on horses, but—and he had some racetrack stock.

But you take an Arrington. He didn't have to worry about that because he made it in the insurance side. You could say he had a conflict. He probably did, but he had actually made most of his [money] before he had gotten involved in the legislature. But you had guys who were bankers, and they were down there voting on banking legislation. So I'm sure a lot of these guys who didn't have that kind of background thought, well, these guys... So they probably rationalized to some extent. But—

DePue: How about all the rumors that we hear today about fetcher bills? And maybe we need to start by describing what a fetcher bill was.

[62] Paul Simon, "The Illinois Legislature: A Study in Corruption," *Harper's Magazine* 229 (September 1964): 74-78.

Edgar: A fetcher bill was you put a bill in, not really wanting to pass it; but you want somebody to basically buy you off to kill it.

DePue: "Somebody," as in a lobbyist?

Edgar: Yeah. And yeah, there would be occasionally. I don't think there was a huge number, but there were some of those.

DePue: So some of the bad old days were behind the legislature when you got there?

Edgar: When I got there, you began to see a new breed. You had a little more concern about those problems. Arrington had put in some ethics requirements. People had to list economic intent and things; and it wasn't real tough, but it was a start. And also, Arrington, I know, personally told some members that if they kept doing some of the things they had been doing, they're going to jail. And I think, even among the Democratic leaders from the city, they tried to police that a little more than maybe it had been policed. But Arrington was very emphatic about it to some of his members.[63]

DePue: How about Blair?

Edgar: Blair had made a little money in real estate, and I think he was careful. I don't think he so much worried about members. Probably in the back of his mind, he knew some of these guys were probably in some of these committees, trading on a little bit; that would be my guess. And a lot of those guys were supporters of his, and guys that supported you, especially when you got elected by two or three votes in a Speaker battle: you probably weren't going to go blow the whistle on them. But it didn't impact public policy to the extent I think some people thought. Yeah, there were some issues, and you'd find them—like in the cement truck bill. You'd find them maybe on some regulatory things on certain industries or how they'd be regulated, but it wasn't on what most of us were watching, the big issues. I never sensed there was anything there. And even insurance legislation and things like that; you had people who had conflicts, and you can argue that's not good, but I don't think there were as many people making money off those kind of bills as people might have thought.

DePue: Let's move on to your own personal career and that important decision, then, in '73 to run for office yourself. How did that come about?

Edgar: I always wanted to run for office. I never wanted to be a staffer; I wanted to be the guy who made the final call.

DePue: Especially after working with Blair?

[63] Ethical government was a longstanding concern for Arrington, who sponsored major ethics bills in 1965, 1967, and 1971. *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 1966; August 29, 1967; September 29, 1971.

Edgar: And even before. I always wanted to be a legislator. Once I got over there I wanted to be a—I can't say growing up, I wanted to be a state legislator. Growing up, I wanted to be a U.S. senator because I read *Advise and Consent* by Allen Drury, and that's—

DePue: But you got to start someplace.

Edgar: Yeah, and I was working in Springfield, so you want to be a legislator. So I had kept ties back home to try to—if the day came along. Then in the '72 election, I had made an attempt to get the nomination for Congress; or at least we knew the county chairmen were going to get together and kind of pick somebody, and I threw my hat in the ring for that and got some publicity and got known. I probably was more interested in getting known for running for the legislature than actually getting that congressional nomination. So when '74 was going to come around—we knew the state rep from Charleston had indicated he wasn't going to run again.

DePue: Who was that?

Edgar: His name was Bill Cox. But he also got indicted and convicted—about four legislators got convicted of—they had expense money. They had been given about, I don't know, maybe five thousand dollars a year. They could hire a secretary and do some things like that. He'd hired a secretary, but she gave him back half the money—because she didn't do much. Now, this was back in the district. You allowed for a district office and things, but some of them—in this case, she had basically given back half the money that she was getting paid as his secretary to him—a very small amount. But they caught about four or five guys who were doing that. And he already wasn't going to run. I don't know if he knew they were looking at him or what.[64]

We knew he wasn't going to run, so I started thinking about running. Back then, as we talked earlier, you had multi-member district, cumulative voting. We had about 180 thousand people. There were four counties and parts of two others in that district. I had Coles County, which is where Charleston and Mattoon are; then the big county is Vermilion, where Danville is; and you also had Edgar County, which is Paris, Illinois; and then Clark County, which is Marshall and Casey, Illinois; and you had a little bit of Crawford and a little bit of Champaign, but not enough to mean a whole lot.

So nobody really knew me. Some people knew me in Charleston—

DePue: Before we get too far beyond that; the demographics, the economy of your district?

Edgar: Basically it's a rural district with Danville, about forty thousand people; Charleston, Mattoon, at that time, probably around fifteen thousand each, maybe a little more.

[64] Rep. William Cox (R-Charleston) was the first representative caught by a federal probe of Illinois legislators' expense vouchers. On September 26, 1973, he pleaded guilty to paying Pauline Monier $17,400 between 1968 and 1972, $15,600 of which Monier kicked back to Cox. *Chicago Tribune*, September 27, 1973, 3.

Vermilion County was by far the largest county—it was twice as big as Coles County—Edgar County was half the size of Coles County, and Clark County was a little bit smaller. But agriculture was big in Coles County. Of course, you had Eastern [Illinois University]; and then in Mattoon, you had a few small plants; and in Danville, you had some industry. Much more unions in Danville.

So basically it was a Republican district. It wasn't automatic, but if you could be one of the two nominees, chances are you should be able to get elected. And I felt, in my case, that I would probably—just my position on issues—be able to appeal to a broader base. I knew the Republican primary would probably be more difficult than the general election, particularly if somebody else wanted to run.

Well, somebody else did want to run. Max Coffey was a township committeeman in Charleston and on the county board—had a business; he was a florist—who I'd got to know in this congressional thing because he was very helpful. He wanted me to go off to Congress because (DePue laughs) he wanted to be elected. He wanted to run for the legislature. And there were maybe some other people who talked about it, but I viewed him as my major concern because, one, he was an elected official. Oh, he's probably about seven, eight years older than I was, so he was not old; he was kind of viewed as younger. But he was in the party; the party knew him. And he came from a large family. They were in the implement business. His brother had a John Deere implement.

DePue: Which means they got plenty of contacts.

Edgar: A lot of contacts, and particularly in the rural community. And in my case, my family had originally come from Humboldt and Arcola. Most of them lived out of the district in Douglas County—my relatives. And also, my immediate family was just one brother, really: Fred. Tom was out in California or India, meditating or something, but he wasn't around. He did come home for a while and make me a little nervous, because Tom was not somebody that was going to probably help us with Republican primary voters. Actually, there were some people who were friends of Tom, who did help us in that election in Mattoon. But I just viewed, Max, he could be a tough candidate to run against because he's better established back in the district than I am.

DePue: Wasn't there three names on the...?

Edgar: You also had the incumbent, the other incumbent Republican, Chuck Campbell, from Vermilion County. It was a given he would run; it was a given he'd be nominated; and the fight would be between whoever the other two would be, if there were just two. I don't think there was ever a whole lot of serious thought about somebody else outside of the two of us getting into that primary. So we were out moving around, trying to get known, and Max was much better at it than I was.

I remember in Vermilion County, the county chairman had something out at his home in Bismarck—that's a small town north of Danville. And I was invited. Of

course, Max was invited. He had all the party folks there in Vermilion County. And I didn't really know many people, and I kind of stood over in the corner. There were a couple guys I knew, but, I…Max, he worked the room because he knew that's what to do. I thought I was impolite to go up to strangers and stick my hand out. (DePue laughs) I learned the hard way. And I could tell after that night—I knew the senator from there and the county chairman, and they knew my important position in Springfield. But I began to realize that the fact I was the chief aide of the Speaker of the House and I knew Springfield very well—knew everybody and was well connected in Springfield—that didn't cut a lot of—back home in the district. They all wanted to see how I dealt with people, particularly party folks, and who knew who and that kind of stuff. So—

DePue: I'd like to back you up if I could, because I want to spend a lot of time on the campaign itself and issues and things like that, but... You moved back from Springfield to Charleston?

Edgar: Personally, this was a sacrifice. I'm making pretty good money in Springfield. I have a job of influence, and then I want to just be a freshman legislator. But we had to move back to the district because we had been living in Springfield. I kept my voter registration in Charleston, and as I said, I periodically went back; but particularly in those kinds of districts, you almost have to be born in those districts for people to trust you. So we moved back; we sold our house in Chatham and moved back to Charleston. And Brenda was pregnant with our second child. In fact, when we first moved back, she had a miscarriage right after we got there. No, excuse me, that happened before. She was in Charleston, and we were up visiting my mom, I think, when she had the miscarriage. But she was pregnant with Elizabeth when we moved back. So here Brenda was, very happy in Chatham. She had neighbors, friends; just a normal life—as much as you could have a normal life with a husband who worked for the legislature—and had a good salary, too. But she was very happy, and all of a sudden, now I take her from there back to Charleston, my hometown—

DePue: Resigned your position, I assume.

Edgar: Eventually, yeah, I had to—I knew I was going to go without a paycheck for a while. So we bought a house, an older house, and it was nice. We had to get it painted, and I remember we didn't get air conditioning for a while. And we had an Irish setter, too, which drove her nuts. This dog was a huge dog, and—Irish setters, I used to say they were free-spirited; she said he was just dumb. (DePue laughs) But he would just run loose at night and howl at the moon, and when I would be gone, she couldn't corral him. Here she's pregnant, and I'm over in Springfield—because I still worked for a while in Springfield after we moved back. I hadn't left yet. But we moved back about July, I didn't officially announce until October, and I didn't actually leave my job until sometime in November. So I'd be gone to Springfield, and she'd be back home with this crazy Irish setter and a little—Brad was about five at the time, and he wasn't a whole lot of problem, but she was pregnant with

Elizabeth and in this home. And she didn't know anybody to speak of. She knew my mother, but she didn't know a lot of people in Charleston.

And then early on—the Republican Women's Club in Charleston in Coles County, which is very effective, had an event. In many places downstate, the women's clubs were stronger than the party organization, because the women actually work. There was a woman named Hazel Watson who ran the Coles County Club. They were having a meeting, and they had in a state representative named Jenny McDonald, who later became a state senator. I had known her because I was a staffer and worked with her, and we got along real well. And I knew she was coming over, and I said, "Are you coming over to my hometown? I'm wanting to run for election." She said, "Oh, I'll put a good word in for you." And I thought, that'd be nice. So I told Brenda, "You want to go, because Jenny McDonald's going to be there, and she's going to say something nice."

And I come home later, and Brenda has been crying. I said, "What happened?" She said, "I go to that event, and Jenny McDonald comes right up, and 'Oh Brenda,' she says, 'I'm so sorry. I can't say anything about Jim because Hazel Watson told me I couldn't say anything because this is a real touchy situation between Coffey and Edgar. I just can't get into it. I'm so sorry.'" And then Hazel Watson—who's very outspoken, she'd just walk in anyplace, take it over, and start talking—told Brenda, "We just can't have two guys from Charleston running. One of them is just going to have to get out. We just can't have this. We just can't have this." And here, Brenda—she comes home just upset, crying.

And there was a lady down the street who was one of the major old women in Charleston. Her husband had been bank president and everything, and Brenda had got to know her. She went down, crying; told her about how Hazel—so this woman called Hazel on the phone and said, "What are you doing? Poor Brenda Edgar is just so upset," and blah, blah, blah. Well, I don't know where Brenda went, someplace. Hazel came over to figure she could make amends. Brenda wasn't there. She just walked in the house and walked around the house and left a little note. And (DePue laughs) Brenda was even more upset about that: she'd come in her house. So it was really tough on Brenda.[65]

DePue: What was her opinion about you running for election—

Edgar: She was for Max. Oh, Brenda?

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: She knew that's what I wanted to do. It wasn't her favorite. She'd just as soon I stay and work in Springfield, and she'd as soon I have a normal job. She'd have been

[65] Hazel Dooley Watson (May 20, 1906-March 18, 2001), who lived on Edgar's block when Edgar was growing up, was a Republican Party activist from Charleston. In a 1995 interview with WILL-TV, Watson talked about her acquaintance with a young Jim Edgar. Hazel Watson, interview by Alison Davis, *Prairie Fire*, PBS, October 12, 1995. http://will.illinois.edu/prairiefire/segment/pf1995-10-12-d/.

happy if I'd have just been a schoolteacher. Politics was not something she really cared for all that much. She didn't like the hours I was gone. She didn't like that I'd get uptight. And I knew this was going to be a tough race, so I was pretty uptight.

DePue: How about her acceptance of the role as the candidate's wife?

Edgar: Back then, it varied. Candidates' wives weren't always out there. She knew she had to be out there as much as she could. But she was pregnant, too. And I can't remember if Elizabeth came two days before I announced or two days after, but about the same time I announced, Elizabeth was born. And it was Caesarean. It took Brenda a lot of time to recover from that, and here I'm gone all the time. And I knew I was going to have a hard time winning this race. I could tell that I didn't have all what I thought. The fact that I had all the knowledge of the issues and I had all the contacts in Springfield, that wasn't cutting a whole lot of water with a lot of the party folks. Now a lot of folks, it did matter, but I wasn't sure if they were going to vote in a Republican primary. It's so different when you're running in a primary than when you run in a general election. Especially the early primaries in Illinois, people just don't pay attention a whole lot.

So on the family, on her—I think she will tell you it was probably the worst part of her married life, that year and a half through me getting ready to run and everything. By just having Elizabeth and having a Caesarean birth and going through all the—that took forever to recover. I was uptight, and we didn't have any money because it didn't take us long to... We did raise money, but we spent more money than we raised, so we ended up using all our savings. Then I lost. The early part, she did not care for. But she was a good trooper. She would go to coffees and teas and do what she could do. But she didn't like speaking, and she really did not like Hazel. (laughter) She eventually got over that. My mother never did, but she kind of did. So family-wise, it was tough. And we're trying to get established as a family there and also run for office.

DePue: Did you also plug into a church community again?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. In Springfield, we were very active members of the Central Baptist Church. And I didn't tell this story. When we first went to Springfield as an intern, Brenda was a Methodist; I was a Baptist. And after we got married in Charleston, she wasn't real excited about going to my church because it was my church. So I think we might have gone to the Methodist church some, and we went to some of the Baptist church.

But when we moved to Springfield, the deal was going to be we'd try the Baptist church, and we'd try the Methodist church, and see which one we liked. The first week we were there, we went to Central Baptist, which is the church right across from the governor's mansion. We were there on a Sunday, and on Monday they came to visit us; invited us to a potluck on Wednesday night with free babysitting; and Brenda was looking for anybody to take care of Brad because she's been stuck for two weeks in this little apartment with Brad. So we went there, and

we never made it to the Methodist church. We became members of the Baptist Church, and we were always very active in that church—started a Sunday school class. Our kids were both baptized there. Brenda was actually baptized. Because she'd been a Methodist, she'd never been dunked; and to be a Baptist, you've got to be submerged, and so that was a traumatic experience for her. So we were Baptists there and very active in the church.

We moved to Charleston, and she says, "I don't want to go to your church," so we went to the Methodist church. And I used to say we'd alternate. And we started a Sunday school class in the Methodist church, too.[66]

DePue: So as busy as you were on the campaign trail, you made Sunday church?

Edgar: Oh yeah. I had grown up, that's just what—you went to church on Sunday. And also the Sunday school thing was—I don't think we started Sunday school class till after the primary, because we were there eight months probably before the primary. But I remember the minister—the Methodist church was the big church in Charleston, and it was near the campus. In fact, we'd actually been married there because Brenda was a Methodist. It was a new church—we were the first people ever married in that church, because they'd moved from downtown to on campus, and it really wasn't completed when we got married. So we went to the Methodist church there, and we were involved.

Brad was in kindergarten at that time, at the public kindergarten, and we got involved as much as we could, but I was gone all the time, campaigning. And I had a cadre of friends, and Brenda—she knew some of them—got to know those. Then Fred and his wife were in Charleston and they were involved. So she began to have some people she could count on to help. My mom was alive then, and she babysat a lot and was over all the time, and we were over there all the time, so that helped a little bit. But still, for her, it was tough.

I was just gone all the time. I was either driving to Vermilion County or over in Clark or in Edgar County. But what I found out pretty quickly was that the party regulars were pretty much for Coffey, particularly in Coles County, because he had been part of that. And they were there. And then in the other counties, they were a little leery about taking sides about two guys from Coles County, and they also wanted to know, what's the party say in Coles County?

The county chairman who had taken over after Bill Cox—who had also been county chairman and state representative—went off to jail; we thought he was on our side, but nobody paid much attention to him. He'd been the vice chairman, and he just kind of moved up, but he was a little questionable. Right before we announced, Bill Cox is found guilty, and once you're found guilty, you have to resign your seat. So that created a vacancy. Now, we all knew whoever got that vacancy had a huge leg up on winning the primary and being the person who was

[66] On the importance of Edgar's Sunday school class, see Bill Lair, interview by Mark DePue, May 5, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 8-11.

going to be the candidate. So then we changed from worrying about a primary to getting to the guys who had the votes—and there was one person in each county who had the votes to fill that vacancy.

DePue: The chairman of that county Republican party?

Edgar: Wasn't a chairman. There is a representative committeeman, and that person didn't do anything except if there was a vacancy. They also determined how many nominees you'd have—would you have one, two, or three? But it was kind of—

DePue: But it was automatic that it'd be a Republican?

Edgar: Yeah; because they filled it, and they were all Republicans, it was going to be a Republican. And these guys would make the call, these representative committeemen, I think that is what they were called. But all the guys in the other counties wanted to know what the guy from Coles County wanted to do. Since it was a Coles County seat, they were going to follow his lead. And his name was Walt Warmoth, who I knew. He had a restaurant in town, and I had known him—not well, but I knew him. But Walt was a little—as it turned out—I didn't know at the time—but there had been some promises made a couple years before, if something would ever happen on somebody else.

So I go around to all the other guys, and I think I had all the other guys. I know I had the guy from Vermilion and the guy from Clark who were definitely going to vote for me, but the guy from Vermilion said, "I'm for you, but I've got to say I'm going to follow the lead of Coles County. I mean, I don't want to..." And the guy from Edgar County, too—because in the end, when I ran later on, they all were for me. But here, where they could have settled the election right then—because whoever got this, the other guy was going to probably have to get out; because you're going to be the incumbent; you're going to have all these advantages.

But the guy from Coles County, in the end, when they met, picked the publisher of the *Paris Beacon-News*, a guy named Ed Jenison, who had been an old-time political person. He had been director of revenue for Bill Stratton back in the fifties; he had been a Con-Con delegate. Nice old gentleman who had been involved in Republican politics. But apparently Walt had made some promise that if something ever happened, this was long before this all happened, Ed would be the first guy considered. So they decided to put Ed in as the lame duck—he wasn't going to run; he would just hold the seat until the election.

So I was disappointed because I really thought I had a good chance of getting that. And at the end, all those guys who were on the committee, I know ended up voting for me on election day. If they (laughs) had just voted for me then, I would have been the nominee, but it didn't happen. So that took some time, and that was kind of a letdown when it finally got done. Then we go back, scurrying around, trying to put together an organization. So I had to put together my own group, and

my thought was I could bring a lot of new people into the party and get folks. My brother helped a lot, and he had his friends, and I had my friends, and we got to other people.[67] There were people who the fact that I had experience made sense to them. But an awful lot of that is: Who's your family? Who are your family friends? Who do you know? It wasn't like: Where do you stand on these issues or how knowledgeable are you? It was a lot more who you know. And Max was a member of Kiwanis, and I think being a member of Kiwanis was probably more important than knowing what the ten major issues were, just because that put you in contact with folks.

DePue: Beyond Charleston, it would put him in contact with folks?

Edgar: In Charleston; it helped him there. I think the county board helped him throughout the county—helped him with the party. And again, you're talking about a primary—a small number of people are going to vote, and you've got to figure out who's going to vote in a primary. And this was 1974. There was another little issue going on in Washington called Watergate.

DePue: I did want to ask you about that.

Edgar: Yeah, and a lot of people were kind of turned off on politics. But my thought was, All right, I get a good vote out of the college, because I ought to be able to get the college vote, and we got to get kids to come and vote in the Republican primary. We'd just seen people move over to the Democratic primary in '72 to vote for Dan Walker, so we know people would do that. And I had some of the young business leaders. I had the newly elected mayor of Charleston, named Bob Hickman, who later enters into my life, and when I'm secretary of state and governor. He had put together a group, a coalition, to get elected mayor of Charleston. And politics in Charleston was a big deal. You would have thought we were electing presidents when we ran mayors and things. Everybody had yard signs and... He got elected, so he kind of threw his group behind me, but he was basically a Democrat. And Charleston city elections are nonpartisan, so a lot of his support had come from some Democrats, too, so that didn't do me any good in a primary.

DePue: But I'm not hearing you talk about Danville politics.

Edgar: I'm trying to get my home base set up a little bit.

DePue: Okay, I'm sorry.

Edgar: Because I knew Coffey was—and people want to know how you're doing. And we had to get people involved. So we got a lot of people, who had not been involved in Republican politics, involved in Coles County. Mattoon, which was going to be important because we both were from Charleston and Mattoon's a little more Republican in a primary, probably, than Charleston, even. And again, the young

[67] See Fred Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 22, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 49-50.

business guys, I got those guys behind me, but the old-timers and the party folks were for Max. And you don't think about ward politics in Coles County, but in Mattoon there were areas where they'd been known to—whiskey bottles were given out for votes, and things like that. City elections really were big deals over there, too.

And I had a guy named Vernon Porter. Vernon Porter was a plumber, and all he really cared about was who was the water commissioner in Mattoon, because he gave out a lot of business to plumbers. But he had his own organization in the north end of town, which was a little more of a ward area than suburbia. It turned out his daughter married my cousin, and his daughter and my wife are now best friends. They knew each other back then, and they weren't that close; now, they're best friends. So I was told by my cousin, whose son married his [Porter's] daughter, "Go see Vernon Porter. He knows politics in Mattoon." And it was a hoot. First thing he said to me, he said, "Well, I know what I'm going to tell the grand jury. Do you know what you're going to tell the grand jury?" and all this and that. But he was pretty effective in city elections. So we kind of had him on our side. (laughs)

Eli Sidwell—who later became a partner with Jerry Bennett in real estate, and they were fraternity brothers—and Jerry were two guys very much involved in my campaign. So they go over, and they talk to some highfalutin business guy over there, and he said, "You know, there's a guy you ought to see, how to do politics in Mattoon—a guy named Vernon Porter." So they go in to see him, too, without telling me. First thing he says to them: "Well, I know what I'm going to tell the grand jury. Do you?" (DePue laughs) And these guys are business—and they just about had a heart attack. So he was a character.

But on the other end, we also had all the young business guys in town who were active in the chamber of commerce or were members in the country club—who all, years later, went on and were running things in Mattoon—but then, they were just in their late thirties, early forties. And I kind of got that group by some people I knew, and they were supportive. So you figure you're getting the business leaders in your county; and even in Charleston, which was kind of split, I did have a good number.

Then Vermilion County, because Danville, that's the big area, and I had to live up there. Again, I got the young turks. Now, it was a little tough up there because Chuck Campbell was running up there, and he didn't want all the Vermilion County votes to start going either to Edgar or Coffey.

DePue: So in our explanation yesterday, he'd get a bullet vote?

Edgar: Yeah, that's what everybody was going to do: try to get a bullet vote. So he didn't want all these—and the party was going to be for Campbell and stay out of the other one because they weren't going to take sides officially. But unofficially, everybody was kind of taking sides. So I knew some party people. I was talking to them, but you'd get double-talked a lot. Years later, Max and I sat down and found

out how many guys were telling us both that they were with us. (DePue laughs) But these young guys, there was a veterinarian, a lawyer—including the lawyer that was the rep guy that could have voted me in. There was a group of young guys that all ended up being for me in that primary, and I spent time getting them.

But the south part of Danville, south part of Vermilion County, is pretty Democratic—very labor-oriented, unions—so there aren't a whole lot of votes there. There's a street in Danville called Voorhees, and north of Voorhees is where the Republican votes are; and that's kind of some nice, big old homes—a lot of doctors, and types like that. And I had contacts. One of the things that helped me in that race; while I didn't know people back in the district, I had people in Springfield, the lobbyists who knew me, and they were going to help me. Like the head of the realtors was going to help me. The medical society, I was very close with, and their doctors are very politically oriented. And in three of the counties, in Clark, Edgar, and Vermilion, probably some of my key supporters came from the medical society, so I was using them as contacts to get to some people. And in Vermilion County, there was a lady named Pam Taylor whose husband was a doctor—but she was very much involved in the medical society's auxiliary—and she kind of put together a lot of my support among the upper crust in Vermilion, Danville. In fact, she had a coffee for us where we got to meet a lot of people who later became major supporters in this campaign and all my future campaigns.

And then we had the young turks. George Richards, who was a veterinarian over there, became my point person from then on. To this day, if I'm going to do anything in Vermilion County—anything—I check with George. He's now retired, and he was a young veterinarian then. But I got organized pretty well in Vermilion County, as it turned out. Dick McMurray, who's now an insurance guy here in Champaign, and I'd known him from Eastern—he was from Hoopeston; he was selling insurance over there. He came out of a Democratic family. He got involved in that campaign. After I lost, he moved to Champaign. I said, "You had to leave the county, huh?"

But I had some contacts from school, I had some contacts from people I knew in Springfield, then family contacts. But it's contacts; it's not like somebody sat down, looked at the two candidates, read their resumes, listened to their platforms, and said, "This is who I'm going to be for." I don't know if that ever happened in that race. And it's a pretty clear difference. You had Max Coffey, who was a very personable guy, didn't have a college degree, didn't really know—ERA was in there. He really didn't know what ERA was. He didn't know most of that stuff, but that didn't really matter; it was just that people knew him, or they knew his family; and the party folks knew him because he'd been involved. And I'd been in Springfield; they didn't know me that well.

So we were the outsiders in that campaign. How do you get your name known? You find out most people don't have a clue who you are. Then you realize name recognition is what it's all about. If you don't have name recognition, it doesn't matter how great of ideals you have; nobody can associate your knowledge

with a name. You've got to work on name recognition. So I'd go around, and I'd go see bank presidents and all these bigwigs you think you had to see. And in truth, everybody has a vote, and bank presidents don't usually influence that many votes.

There aren't many people who influence many votes. In a primary, a precinct committeeman can influence some votes—used to be. Not so much anymore. But there might be ten, twenty people in that precinct who might listen to him. If you've got two guys that nobody knows and the precinct committeeman says, "Be for Max" or "Be for Jim," that probably will have some impact. But those precinct committeemen aren't real tied to the fact that you have knowledge; it's just who gets to them first and who they know. And the precinct committeemen kind of want to know what the county chairman's going to do. So there's this herd mentality a lot among the party, and in a primary, it is a factor. In the general election, the numbers are insignificant, but in a primary, it can be a factor. Plus, I didn't know. I'd never run in a primary before, and I didn't know how you run an election. I didn't know you ran around shaking hands with folks. I thought they would look at my resume and see that I was superbly qualified and they were fortunate to have somebody with my expertise (DePue laughs) being willing to be state representative. I had to learn the hard way that that isn't what determines an election.

Fred's father-in-law had a building downtown—he had a travel agency—and upstairs he had an empty space. He let us have it. It didn't have a bathroom. It had one light (laughs) with a string coming down, and that was our light. We painted it, cleaned it up—and my mom spent a lot of time up there doing typing—and there was a telephone. We got a telephone installed. Fortunately we had a guy from the telephone company on our side, so we got telephones pretty quick. And that was our headquarters, and that's where the volunteers worked out of.[68]

Another group that was very helpful was the IEA, the Illinois Education Association. Based off my position on issues, and they knew me from Springfield, they supported me. And I have to say, of all the groups that supported me, that meant the most to people on the street. A lot of them were teachers that I'd had in high school, and they liked me, and it would have been hard for them to work against me; but the IEA was for me, so they could go keep their union happy and help somebody. So we had dozens of teachers up at the headquarters helping out from Charleston. And they were a lot of volunteers. We had people that we knew, young folks—they were in their twenties and thirties—come in and do volunteering. They would go door-to-door and make phone calls and—

DePue: You remember Carter Hendren being one of those?

Edgar: When I got Hickman on my side, there was a college professor at Eastern—he was a Democrat—who had been Democratic county chairman out east in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He came here, and he kind of got cross-ways with the Democrats here because he was used to running things. So he ended up supporting Hickman,

[68] See Fred Edgar interview, 53-54.

who was kind of viewed as a little bit—people weren't sure if he was a Republican or a Democrat, but it didn't matter in a city election. So when Hickman's for me, this professor's going to be for me, and he said, "I've got this student who's really good in politics. His dad was a Con-Con delegate and had run for the state senate—Carter Hendren." And that's how I met Carter and talked him into helping on the campaign, because he'd had some practical experience.[69] He was the only guy that really had been through a race. His senior year, he helped in the campaign, and that's how I got to know Carter and Carter got to know me; and why Carter later became my campaign manager in a lot of my big races. But he was the only guy who had actually been through a race like this; the rest of us were kind of novice. Even though I'd been in Springfield and been involved in them, I'd never been at the grass level.

Of course, we had to raise money. We knew we needed money, because I didn't have any money, and money really was—we did a pretty good job raising money.

DePue: I did want to spend some time with that, because if I understand you, you really are out of a job.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: And the money that's coming in for the campaign, I'm sure, has to stay in the campaign, so—

Edgar: Oh, yeah, yeah. I had enough money saved up; I figured we could get by for three months. And I thought after the primary, then I'd go back onto payroll. That was the deal.

DePue: So you had been stashing away money for this very purpose.

Edgar: Yeah. We had saved some money, yeah. We had some money in savings—not a whole lot. I got paid a decent salary in Springfield, and we'd bought a house, but we sold that house and were able to get enough from that house to take care of 20 percent down payment on our next house. The house payments really weren't a whole lot more than what we had, and we were able to do some remodeling. But starting December first, I didn't get a paycheck. But I had to raise the campaign money, too, and we—

DePue: Did you have any money from your own coffers to kick into the campaign?

Edgar: Personally, no. I didn't know I did. Later I did, but I didn't plan on it, because I just had enough to get by; so we had to go out and raise it. We were able to raise some money in Springfield, early on. And again, I had ties, and I knew some of the lobby

[69] For Hendren's account of how he came into Edgar's orbit, see Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 8-10.

groups that had the PACs, and they knew me. So even though I was a non-incumbent in a primary—which a lot of times, they don't get involved in—I was probably able to do as decently with these groups as anybody. I got a lot more money from these groups than Coffey did. Coffey had to raise all his money pretty much within the district.

That also came back to haunt me a little bit. One of the fundraisers I had was put on by W. Russell Arrington. Actually, one of his former staffers, John Dailey, who worked for Ogilvie, put it on, but it was under Arrington's name, and it was held in Chicago. And we probably raised three, four thousand dollars. That was a nice fundraiser. But the opposition got a hold of that invitation, and they printed it in all the rural papers; and they said, "See, Edgar is being supported by Chicagoans"—because it was going to be held in Chicago—"and you know they're all against guns." (DePue laughs) So they used that against me in the rural areas, and I got killed in the rural areas; and it was all on the gun issue, which I never took a position. I knew enough—now, I'm not a big gun person, but I just stayed away from that. But they just said, "If he's being supported by people from Chicago, you know they want to take away our guns." And that issue probably was the biggest issue in the campaign in those rural districts, where it ended up I was losing them eight to one. One of the things I've found: in a primary, two groups always vote, seniors and farmers. So I was getting wiped out in the rural areas, and of course Coffey had ties from his family and things like that. But that gun issue, I know in some of those outer counties, really hurt me. Of course, we didn't know that at the time. We were just plugging along and...

And one of the things I found out in a campaign: boy, you're out there for months, slogging through the cold weather, meeting folks, and you just think, is any of this doing any good? You just don't see anything. Then about the last two, three weeks of a campaign, everything begins to come together. But it's all that work you did three months, four months before that begins to pay off a couple weeks before the campaign; when people begin to see the advertisements and they begin to focus a little bit, Oh, there's a primary. And again, I go back to name recognition and how do you get name recognition. We had cards made up that had my name, my picture, and bullet points of my accomplishments, and you'd leave those with people, hoping they would keep them, and—

DePue: Family picture?

Edgar: We did on the campaign brochure. We put together a brochure that we sent out. But the thing that really probably had the best impact—I had very little money for television. Coffey went on television, so we put a little on television, but most of it was on radio. Radio in those legislative districts is how you did most of your advertising. But I did something nobody else did: I put billboards up, but I put billboards up with my picture. And a lot of my district runs along Route One, from Marshall, Illinois; through Paris; through towns south of Danville; Danville, all the way up to Hoopeston. That's all Route One. I would say two-thirds of my district kind of lived along Route One, so we put billboards up and down Route One. We

put them other places, but particularly on Route One. It had my picture on it—and I wouldn't ever think I'd do a billboard with just a name—I'd do bumper stickers that way—but a billboard, you put that picture. We put those up, and within a week I noticed whenever I went to Danville or wherever, people knew who I was because they saw the picture on the billboard—because there wasn't anybody else doing billboards. All of a sudden these new billboards appear with my picture, so people see them driving up Route One.

DePue: Let me ask you this question, then, because you've been described as a very handsome man. Did you understand that, and was that part of the rationale for putting the billboards up?

Edgar: We tried to find a picture—

DePue: And you've got a very attractive wife as well.

Edgar: No, we just did a picture of me, and we tried to do—yeah, you hoped that they would find the picture pleasant. But I think it was more ID, too; the ID that this is who Jim Edgar is. They might begin to hear the name, but they saw the picture—that's why television, I think, is so effective. And again, we couldn't afford television. This was the next thing, in a way, to it, because you had the picture and you had the name, so they began to put the name and the picture together, and it stuck with them more. I have a theory: a person has to hear your name twenty times before they ever begin to remember it. So once they remember your name, then they might remember something about you; but if they don't remember your name, it doesn't matter what they know about you; they're not going to remember that either. So that name recognition, I learned as I campaigned, was really crucial. I'd go places, and people still didn't have a clue who I was or what was going on; people you think ought to know that.

But Coffey was out—he is a hard campaigner. Coffey and I were campaigning very hard in that election, and he had enough money, and he had party support. But we'd run into each other. I'd be someplace, and he'd just been there. Chuck Campbell wasn't anyplace. He just stayed out of it; he just stayed home. So one of the things that I thought was going to be important was endorsements of newspapers, so I worked on newspaper endorsements. As it turned out, the Charleston paper wouldn't endorse because there were two of us in Charleston, and they didn't want to get in the middle of that.

DePue: But the Charleston and Mattoon paper were generally one and the same, were they not?

Edgar: Back then they were separate papers; they weren't owned by the same people. I'm not sure if they were owned yet, but they were run separately. Mattoon never endorsed much of anything. They just didn't endorse. Charleston always endorsed, but they didn't in this race. Paris paper didn't endorse—that was Ed Jenison's paper, who always was very nice to me and I think voted for me in the end—I really

think he did, but he never would endorse me. And I can't remember—I think the Danville paper did endorse me, and the Chicago *Tribune* endorsed me. The *Tribune* ran an editorial by itself for me, which they didn't do for any other legislative candidate. Neil Milbert was their political guy, and I knew him from Springfield, and he liked me. I went up to do the endorsement. He said, "Oh, we don't need to talk to you. Let's go have lunch." But they wrote a glowing editorial about how whatever good had happened in Springfield the last four years, Jim Edgar had been involved in it.[70] I've saved it. It's great—great editorial. But again, (laughs) they [Coffey's camp] used me against me, said, "See, the Chicago papers are for him. It just shows he's a Chicagoan."

DePue: It just occurred to me, one of the other things I would think you were using on the campaign trail: didn't you get named by some organization as one of the outstanding young men in America?

Edgar: Yeah. It was on our little card, yeah.

DePue: But what was that about?

Edgar: Oh, I think if you bought the book, they named you. (DePue laughs) No, you had to do some things, but it wasn't a huge—there were a lot of people that got that. Now, Max didn't have it, but I had it. But it's not as big. It's not like when the Jaycees would pick the ten outstanding Americans in the United—I was in the running for that and didn't get it, when I was secretary of state. I was one of the ten outstanding Illinoisans. Now, that meant a little bit; but *Who's Who*—it's a little, but it's more buy the book. And I think the *Decatur Herald* endorsed me because I knew a guy (laughs) over there.

So I got newspaper endorsements, which might have helped a little bit, but it would have helped a lot more if I could have got the Charleston paper, probably, because that was my hometown paper; or maybe the Paris. But we were able to get them because of my resume and things. Of course, I knew some people, but I think it justified them writing those glowing editorials. And that probably helped, but it didn't help enough, and in the end, it proved...

DePue: Well, if I may—

Edgar: Yeah, go ahead. I've been talking to you.

DePue: One of the things that I did want to spend some time on here, is getting back to who you are at this time. I would imagine that from your experiences in the legislature, your political views had evolved, so I wanted to kind of go down the laundry list of you telling me what your political views—(unintelligible; both talking) issues?

Edgar: It was so irrelevant in that campaign, that's why I brought it up. I was pro-ERA; I was pro-choice. I stayed away from the gun issue because it didn't really get

[70] "Jim Edgar in the 53rd," *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1974, 10.

pushed. Nobody really asked me. Assault weapon bans and things like that weren't really talked about too much. Arrington had sponsored the gun owner registration card; we were one of the few states that had that. If you were going to buy a gun, you had to be registered to be able to buy a gun. That was a huge deal, and the gun people hated that. So again, that (laughs) part of Arrington could be kind of a downside. But that really didn't come up much, except they used it against me. But I remember Max and I were at some candidates' night, and we were asked about ERA; and it was obvious Max wasn't real sure what ERA was about, but he would be willing to listen.

DePue: And the abortion issue was kind of taken off the plate here because of *Roe v. Wade*, just recently.

Edgar: Yeah. Abortion really—it was used against me in the Catholic churches. In the bulletins, they printed who was pro-choice, who was right-to-life; and I think described me as a murderer or something like that, and my name was there. So that hurt, because there were a lot of Catholics in my district.

DePue: Can I ask you, then, how you came to the position of being pro-choice?

Edgar: I just thought it was a woman's right. I just don't think government—it's part of my Baptist upbringing, too; there are certain things government shouldn't get involved in. I just think that's something that a woman's got to—that's her choice. If 50 percent of the pregnancies were men, then I'd say maybe we have a right to say that. We're not. Not to say that abortion's a good thing; it's just something that's got to be left up to the woman to decide.

Now, there are limits. After so many months of the pregnancy, I would say that you've had your opportunity, and then that's different. But initially, I think a woman has that right, and I've always felt that way. I've always said that's one of those issues that if that cost me the election, that's going to cost me the election—though I didn't perceive, in that election, that was going to cost me the election. I think it cost me more votes than I thought it might cost me, because I think, among maybe some Catholic voters and some rural voters, that probably was a factor. But I don't think it was as big a factor as the gun issue.

And on ERA, still it wasn't that organized, the opposition, to ERA. It probably cost me some votes. Mormons were very much opposed to ERA, and we had a few Mormons. In fact, a good friend of mine, a guy who had always been helpful to me when I was growing up; his wife had become a Mormon, and she was very adamant on that, but he still wrote me checks and helped me out. But he took a lot of grief from his wife.

DePue: Fiscal issues?

Edgar: I don't know if that came up. I've always said the property tax was too high, and that I thought income tax was a better way to do that; but in my district, everybody agreed with that, pretty much. I don't—

DePue: Was the issue of saying that we might want to look at local income tax to support education—

Edgar: I didn't bring that—I thought that up later. That came after—

DePue: When you were in the legislature.

Edgar: In the next campaign, we might have talked more about it. But that didn't really come up too much in this. The IEA was for me. They knew me. A lot of teachers were for me because they just thought I was probably—I remember one teacher telling me, "You actually can get through a sentence without that many grammatical errors, (DePue laughs) whereas your opponent can't." And then I just started worrying about every grammatical error that I might... I think the education background and experience background with that segment played. And we were working the campus. We had a lot of young volunteers, too, but the problems—

DePue: How about the environmental issues?

Edgar: Wasn't a big thing. Didn't come up too much.

DePue: Even with the new EPA?

Edgar: EPA? No.

DePue: And the impact on farming?

Edgar: No. It had come up some. And I can't remember. Pretty much, We've just got to be realistic, and if they went overboard… I don't remember too many farmers grabbing me on that. Issues just did not come up in this campaign. I'd get up and make a speech on issues, and you could just tell people were kind of glazed over. I usually didn't ever do a written speech, but we had some gathering I thought, Maybe I need a written speech. So Zale Glauberman, who I'd worked with on Blair's staff—I said, "I need a speech. Can you write me a speech?" "Yeah, I'll write you..." So he wrote me this speech. And I can't remember what, but there was some quote in there from some noted political scientist said, and I read the quote and ran through my speech; and Max got up and stumbled around—we both were terrible, I thought. My speech was dull, and I couldn't read a speech very well, and he didn't know what he was talking about. But later, I'm talking to Zale, a few weeks out.
I said, "Zale, who was that noted political scientist?" He said, "Joseph Stalin." (laughter) That's the last time I asked him for a speech. (laughs) Fortunately nobody questioned me on who that was.

But issues—as I said, it was more who are you, what's your background, who are you related to? I don't know how many people I ran into who said, "Now, I think I know your uncle." I knew they didn't know my uncle, and they'd know cousins that I didn't have. And I'd say, "No, no..." Finally, about halfway through the campaign, I thought, no, no, if they think they know my uncle, (laughs) even

though that's not my uncle, I'm not going to correct them, because they wanted that personal connection. And it was still a lot of one-on-one. You'd meet people, and... But I also found there were people—if you could find somebody in a community that was pretty well thought of, and if they'd take you around and introduce you to people; chances are, if your opponent didn't meet them and be introduced by somebody else that they liked, they were probably going to vote for you. It was that personal endorsement. It didn't matter. That didn't always mean precinct committeemen, and that didn't always mean county chairmen, but again, you had to figure out who the person was in that community. And often, if you found a political person, though, somebody who'd been elected for office, they probably had a cadre of people that they relied on when they ran for office. And there was this tendency, Who are we for in this election? They all kind of stick together.

There's a little town in Edgar County—Hume. I need to get a map—probably not more than three hundred, four hundred people, but the guy who was mayor there—young guy, who was also—it was in Hume, I think. We met him, and he got to be very supportive of us; he took us around, and we met some people. Again, we got killed in those rural precincts, but we didn't get beat that bad in that precinct, and I am convinced it was because he was for me and he took me around. But city elections aren't partisan, so he really wasn't that involved in Republican politics. It would have been a lot better if he'd have been a township official and been involved in Republican politics, *per se*, but he did know—and most the people in that area were Republicans. But that was an example—this guy, in this community—of where people want to know somebody. They want a connection to you, a personal connection, and that did help. And we had some of those throughout the district.

The party folks all said, "You brought in people we've never seen before," or "You brought in people who have never voted Republican before." We did bring in a lot more people. We didn't do as well with the people who were the party regulars, though, because Max had done a good job of getting out and about and getting commitments from them. And he was a very personable guy. He'd go in and talk about farming or whatever. He didn't go in and talk about, "This is my position on ERA" (DePue laughs) or things like that, or, I know this guy or that guy.

I learned later that nobody gave me a prayer in this election, the party guys, but they just didn't want to tell me that. They just said, "Nobody knows him; he's kind of an outsider. Yeah, he lived in Charleston, but he was a kid when he lived in Charleston. Coffey's got all these connections, and he's been in the party stuff. There's no way this is even going to be a race." And we worked it hard.

DePue: I want you to—if I can interject here—critique yourself and your campaign style and your speaking ability at that time.

Edgar: Campaign style was terrible because I didn't realize you had to be personable, and you had to go out and shake hands with folks.

DePue: But you learned that pretty quickly, did you not?

Edgar: I learned it. I was fine—

DePue: Just didn't feel comfortable doing that?

Edgar: Once I got in to talk with the person, one-on-one, I did fine; usually if they weren't already committed, I could get them. And even people who were for Max always said, "Edgar's a lot better qualified, but we're for Max for these family reasons," or whatever. Speaking, I wasn't any of the shakes, no, but he was terrible. Max really was bad. I was bad and he was terrible—that might be a better way. (DePue laughs) That was the only consolation. I feel sorry, looking back, for the people who had to listen to us. Because Max, he'd never been around it and he didn't know the issues. I knew a little more of the issues; but still, I don't think either one of us were spell-bounders, that was for sure.

DePue: You have the reputation of being very well-dressed. I'm wondering what you were wearing when you went out to visit with farmers.

Edgar: Oh, I was always well-dressed. Always.

DePue: Even hitting the rural committees?

Edgar: Yeah. Of course, it was winter. Later when I ran, the next time, when I got in the general election, I wore a short-sleeved shirt and a tie all the time. When I ran for secretary of state, I was wearing a knit shirt. When I'm running for governor, I wore just a polo shirt. But back then, I thought I had to look the part, because I was young—Who are you? I had to look like I was not just some kid. And again, it was winter, so you could dress with a sport coat and tie and have an overcoat on—because it was cold. It's whole different than running in the general election, which you campaign in the summertime at festivals and things like that. But even then, if it had been summer as it was two years later: short-sleeved shirt, white shirt, and a tie. You dressed up a little more then, when you were running for office, than you do today. It's much more casual today than it was then. But no, I won't say I—Max dressed up, too. I thought I was better dressed, but he had nice clothes. He worried about his dress. I don't think either one of us showed up in bib overalls or anything like that.

DePue: You emphasized that these campaigns were very much on personality and getting your name recognition out there. Did the campaigns, either one of them, get personal?

Edgar: Oh, yeah, to some extent. It was personal probably more in Charleston because people had to pick between, and so that got to be a little more personal. At the time, Max Coffey wasn't my favorite, and I'm sure I wasn't his favorite. He probably wasn't as mad at me as I was at him, since he won and I lost. It took us a while to kind of get over that, and I think our supporters, they held grudges, and everybody—because in Charleston, it was pretty… But I don't think it was as

personal as elections are today, fortunately. I'm sure they said things about me—"You know, he's tied to Chicago," and whatever, and we said, "You know, he really doesn't know what he was going to do over there; you need somebody that understands Springfield."

DePue: So that was the essence of your message?

Edgar: Yeah, that'd probably be it. Max later had some marital problems. We didn't know about it then. Some people whispered about it, but we didn't know it till after the election. His wife, who campaigned with him a lot—it was about four months after he got to Springfield that he got divorced from her. And people would tell me about him running around and stuff, but it wasn't anything we ever used or brought up or I even took serious, actually. I was surprised later, when that happened. And he had some trouble, sometimes, paying his bills, and he later went bankrupt. But again, in Charleston, some people thought that about him, but it wasn't a big—and it wasn't something we fanned around in the campaign.

DePue: Tell me about the election night, then, and what your expectations were going into that.

Edgar: I'll get to that. I want to just finish up the campaign. In the last two or three weeks, it began to feel like it was coming together. It began to feel like people were responding. We were doing polling—very unscientific—called; we were winning the election. Well, people lied. (laughs) Because I was looking—I said, "This isn't right, some of these." And they said, "Looks good." But we had enough people making—so we had a lot of folks involved. We were in small towns handing out literature and stuff, and I'd got the Vermilion County young turks. Those guys were for me, and they were really—so I thought I might do decent in Vermilion County. Clark, I just couldn't tell; Edgar, I couldn't tell; Coles, I thought I was making progress.

So we go into the election. I know it's going to be close, but I think I've got a shot; I think I might be able to beat Max. We notice Campbell's not doing anything. As it turns out, Campbell almost gets beat. Coffey and I end up doing—both of us—we were the campaign; that's why people were voting. So I go into election night. I'm hopeful, but I'm fearful, because I'm a pessimist. I've lost the election in school that time, and I didn't get the nomination when they picked the vacancy and I thought I might get it. So I just was worried, but I felt that we'd done everything we could, and I think we had. We had spent all our money. I found out we'd spent more than all our money. We ended up with about a five thousand–dollar debt. But I remember that night, I felt like we'd done as much as we could. And my mother gave me a poem, and I wish I had—I don't know if I have—I don't have it here. It was great. My mother was kind of an amateur poet, and she wrote me this poem about how proud she was no matter what happens, and all this and that. That's nice, but I think I'm going to win.

We got back to the headquarters that night, and everybody was packed in this place above (laughs) the travel agency with no bathroom—it was just packed—and we were going to go to the Holiday Inn later for our victory party. There's about three precincts in, and right away, this isn't good. I'm getting murdered in the rural areas, just murdered. I'm getting beat five-to-one to eight-to-one in these precincts. And I thought, Yeah, I might lose them, but that's—there aren't all that many voters, but when you're getting beat that bad, you got to make them up someplace else big time. I was counting on the college to help. I think in the two precincts that were dominated by the college, there were a total of thirty votes. (DePue laughs) It was spring break, nobody was there, and nobody voted absentee. We tried it. I won those precincts, but there weren't any votes there. They were the smallest precincts that turned out, and they should have been the biggest precincts in Charleston. The big precinct in the south part of Charleston where both Max and I lived, I just wiped him out. The north end of Charleston, I didn't do that well. He did a lot better, and that's where, I think, the party regulars mattered. It wasn't a big turnout. I beat him in Vermilion County.

DePue: Wow.

Edgar: Vermilion, when they saw I was beating him, they thought I'll win it; but I got just killed in Edgar and Clark County, these two small counties. They're small, but they're rural, and when you're losing five-to-one to eight-to-one, no matter how big those other counties are, you're not going to be winning big enough to make it up.

DePue: The farmers weren't in the field; they came out and voted?

Edgar: Oh, they all voted. Oh, they're not in the fields; it's March. They hadn't gone to Florida either. (DePue laughs) They were there. And in Mattoon, which we really fought over, I carried Mattoon, but it wasn't a huge majority. There wasn't a big turnout at any of the towns, and I think part of that was a feedback from Watergate; there was beginning to be this apathy among Republicans. The rural areas had a decent turnout. Danville; I did very well north of Voorhees, just not many people voted.

We were calling on election day, and there was this college professor who I knew, my family knew and everything, and he said, "No, I haven't voted." We said, "Would you go vote?" "I don't know if I want to go." Finally, my sister-in-law talked him into going to vote, and he went to vote. Here's a guy who should have been an automatic vote. He should have been there. But he just didn't want to take the time—it was a cold day—to go in and vote. We just ran into that all over, and you realize how tough it is in a primary to get people out to vote. And back then—still is—a lot of people didn't want to vote in a primary because they don't want people to know what their politics were, especially small businessmen in a small town, because everybody knows they can go look at the list and see if you voted in the Republican primary or Democrat primary. So a lot of the people who we would have got in a general election didn't vote in the primary.

And it started out; Max and I are way ahead of Campbell, but then Campbell, when more Vermilion County votes came in, he pulled... But it turned out Max beat Campbell by a thousand votes, and I think Campbell beat me by a thousand votes. That translates into 333 people, and 180 thousand people lived in that legislative district. Nothing close to that voted in the Republican primary, but you realize this was close. And afterwards, all the party folks said, "We're amazed. We thought you were going to get annihilated; we just didn't have the heart to tell you."[71]

DePue: And Campbell must have been breathing a big sigh of relief.

Edgar: Oh, he was furious with these young turks in Vermilion because it almost cost him. At the last minute, he started going around and said, "I need a bullet, or I think I might get left out," up in Vermilion. Yeah, because he just figured he's the incumbent, and he'd be all—but Vermilion, he wasn't in the picture; it was Coffey and myself, and that's what people were voting on. People were either voting for Coffey or they were voting for me. Nobody was splitting their votes, hardly.

DePue: What time of the night did you find out or did you figure it out?

Edgar: I knew pretty early. I knew when I saw there wasn't any votes in those college precincts, and I saw those rural precincts. But we went out to the Holiday Inn about nine o'clock. It was pretty gloomy. And then I went to the courthouse—that was where Max was going to be, and I thought I needed to go concede and offer him my congratulations. And Brenda went with me. Eww, that was a miserable thing to do, (laughs) because up at the courthouse, that was all the party folks, and that was all his guys. They were all up there. So I walk up and shake hands and say, "Congratulations. You've defeated me, and I wish you the best." I didn't endorse him, but I wished him the best and left; went out to the Holiday Inn. Went home, and I remember Brad had stayed home with a babysitter. Brad got up the next morning and came in and said—because he was only five at the time, but we'd used him in the campaign. He was out: "Vote for Brad's dad." (DePue laughs) We did a radio commercial, with him on, and he had a t-shirt, "Vote for Brad's dad." I wasn't sure that was ever going to work. He said, "Who won the election?" And Brenda said, "Well, your dad didn't." He said, "Oh, okay," and went back to bed. (laughter) He just kind of like...

But it was a humbling experience to lose. Very educational. I learned more about people and politics than I ever have in anything else. As it turned out, people were amazed we came as close as we did, because we really started from ground zero and were able to put together an organization that really stayed with me the rest of my political career. The people that helped me in that primary were people that were helping me through the governor's race. And to this day, I can remember those people. I have trouble remembering who all was involved in my governor's race, but I remember those people. I still sometimes have nightmares about that

[71] In the primary held March 19, 1974, Coffey defeated Campbell by 927.5 votes; Campbell defeated Edgar by 1,145.5 votes. Edgar defeated Coffey in Vermilion County, and he defeated Campbell in Clark, Coles, Crawford, and Edgar counties. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 5, 1974*.

race, because for so long, you're out there feeling like you're just by yourself; and then when you lose—because you know people were lying to you. But fortunately it was close enough that it didn't embarrass us.

DePue: Nightmares would suggest you had some regrets, that there's things you didn't do or things that you messed up.

Edgar: No, I don't—there's no doubt I should have got started earlier, and I should have realized that you don't just go talk to four or five people and think they're going to deliver the election; you got to go talk to as many people down below as you can.

I did have one experience: in Danville, you had some black precincts, and I always prided myself in trying to reach out to blacks and be open. So these three black precinct committeemen came, and he said, "We really like you. You talk our language, you're supportive. But we need some money to work the precincts with." They call it walking-around money. "We need some money. If you can give us some money, we can get some votes out of those precincts."[72] And I remember (laughs) I had a guy helping me, a young guy at one of the banks who was in politics, who was a political junkie. I had a small account—I kept some money in that bank as well as the one down in Charleston—so I went up to him and said, "I need three thousand dollars in cash, in fifties—or twenties." He said, "What for?" And I said, "I just need it for my campaign." So he said, "What's it for?" I said, "Well, these guys..." He said, "Those guys? I wouldn't trust them." I said, "They say they need this to use in their precincts," and I said, "We need to get every vote we can." So I took the money out. And he watched me, because I was meeting them out there, and I gave them the money. Election night, I just got wiped out in those precincts, (laughs) and Coffey told me he did the same thing. They came to him and he gave them some money. He got wiped out, too; Chuck Campbell won those precincts. (laughter) So anyway, that was a great lesson about the guys. "Just a little money and we can put in our precinct."

The other thing in a campaign: it just takes hundreds of folks you don't know to get involved and help you. And we had hundreds of people going door-to-door doing things; I didn't know who they were, but they did get on. They got excited about it, whatever their reason. And we had a lot of young people, as I said, young professionals who had never been involved in politics. Eli Sidwell, who I got to be my campaign chairman, was originally from Clark County, came out of a Democratic family—he had never voted in a primary until I got him to be my chairman because he was a business guy and didn't want to—first primary he ever voted in. Six years later, he was chairman of the county board in Coles County. He got into politics from that and became a major player in Coles County. A lot of guys came, and that always made me feel good.

[72] See Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, for discussion of walking-around money in the 1990 campaign in Chicago.

But I got to tell you, I felt as bad as I think I've ever felt after I lost, because initially when you count the votes and realize you're losing, you're kind of numb. Just, well, it's over. About three days later, when people stop calling you and the adrenalin's not running—you're not running here and there; you're just sitting at home, and you realize, I lost. And I also knew I didn't have a job in Springfield, because that attempt didn't go anywhere.

DePue: You didn't have a job, period, at that time.

Edgar: Right. I didn't have an income, I'd lost, and then I found out we'd overspent. I had about five thousand dollars in debt. About three days after the primary, we took the family and my mom, and we drove down to Florida. My father-in-law had interests in a motel down there, and we went and stayed in that motel; and Mom watched Elizabeth while we took Brad over to Disney World, which had just opened up. But it was a miserable trip. I was just miserable, because all my adult life, I had worked toward that election; and I knew, I'm done, because this seat's not going to open up again. There's nothing really to do in Charleston, and this is my shot, and it didn't happen. And I think that's probably what bothered me more than anything; I just thought, My political career, at twenty-eight, is over. I really was convinced—because I plan things out—and I just thought, It's over, and I'm done. I don't know what I'm going to do.

DePue: What was Brenda's reaction?

Edgar: I think she was relieved the election was over. I think she was disappointed. I think she knew, too, it was an uphill fight. She was worried—money—what are we going to do? But probably some relief, too. Maybe we're out of this. So as I said, I didn't have a job. But I thought, I'm sure glad I had the chance, though. A lot of people I knew never had the chance. This is something I wanted to do, and if I go through life and never get another shot, at least I had this shot. And there are a lot of folks who really went out for me; and people that I didn't know before the campaign started, people all over the district. And again, people were telling me, "Boy, you sure did a lot better than we thought you were going to. When you started out, we didn't think you had a prayer. It was just a waste of time."

DePue: That wasn't much consolation to you, though?

Edgar: No. It helped a little bit. I remember the day after the election, my brother and Eli and Jerry and I drove over and got this pseudo county chairman over there; then we talked to him. And he was feeling good because we'd carried Mattoon, and he was getting flak from everybody—"You're not going to carry Mattoon." So we did go over and have lunch in Mattoon. Since we carried Mattoon, we thought we could eat in Mattoon—not in Charleston, because we lost Charleston.

DePue: How long did it take you before you started to think, you know, maybe I'll try this again?

Edgar: About two years, actually—a year and a half. I thought I was done. Everybody says, "No, no, there will be another chance." I got so tired of people coming up and saying, "Jim, don't feel bad. Abraham Lincoln lost the first time he ran."

DePue: And you're how old at that time?

Edgar: Twenty-eight. And after a while I said, "Yeah, Abraham Lincoln got shot, too. (DePue laughs) There's a lot of things I don't want to duplicate that happened to President Lincoln." But no, I thought I was—because the thing was, my base was Charleston, Coles County. How do I stay there and live? I don't have a law degree; I'm not a PhD, so I can't teach at the university. How am I going to exist in Charleston? Guys came along and had me sell life insurance. Talk about losing friends—politics was minor compared to selling life insurance. So I was trying to sell life insurance.

DePue: What company was it?

Edgar: MassMutual [Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance]. It was a good company, but there was still just a... They approached me about it because they figured I had a lot of contacts. (laughs) And Tim Campbell—we had been interns together; he had been with Harris—was Harris's chief of staff then; and he got Harris to put me on contractual, and I did energy stuff for them. It was just after the oil embargo in '74, and there was a lot of thought about (unintelligible; both talking).

DePue: And Harris was where at that time?

Edgar: Bill Harris was the Senate Republican leader; then he was the Senate president because you no longer had the lieutenant governor presiding. So it wasn't a whole—but it gave me some money, and I'd stay at Tim's house when I was over in Springfield. He was so good. They were married—didn't have any children yet—and they had a cot, and I slept on the cot—army cot. (laughs) And I did that for three months. Actually, Harris kept me on until I went to the NCSL. And some of these contacts
I had with national groups, they had talked to me. There was a group called Legis/50—they were a reform legislative group. They wanted me to go in Washington and head up a law enforcement thing for them. We looked at that. I wasn't real crazy about going to Washington, DC. I couldn't afford it with what they were going to pay me. So I was selling life insurance and doing some contractual work for the Senate.

Also, I had got elected precinct committeeman that night. That's the election I won. I ran for precinct committee in my precinct, and I got elected; so I go to the party organization. It's all the old guard; it's the guys that supported Max. They knew '74 was going to be a tough year—you could tell Watergate was just not going good—so they came to me and said, "Would you serve as the party treasurer?" They said, "We need to pull this party together, and you have a lot of folks who supported you we really want to keep involved." My theory was, all

right, I lost, but I don't take the bat and ball and go home; and I said, "Yeah, okay, I'll do it."

And that was probably the best (laughs) decision I ever made, because they were all very thankful that I didn't take my bat and ball and go home. The county chairman—the new county chairman elected—had been one of Coffey's biggest supporters, and it turned out, as we worked toward the election that fall, the two of us worked real close together. I didn't do a whole lot raising money, but we worked on who to help, how to help them, and what to do to get people active. And all the party folks realized that hey, I was helping out; I was there. And election day, *Decatur Herald* had a column by a guy who's now over here in journalism, saying, "Jim Edgar won't be on the ballot, but he'll be helping others who are on the ballot." It was just a column about how even though I'd lost the primary, I didn't take my bat and ball and go home; I was helping the party; and quoted some party folks saying, "We really appreciate him doing this; this really shows what kind of guy," blah, blah, blah.

That got me the nomination the next time; doing that. I had to remember that election night, the guys coming in, and... We did all right. Coles County, we did okay. Seventy-four was a terrible year. We did okay. And a lot of people came in and said, "We did okay because you didn't leave the party; you stayed and helped and kept your people in, and we owe you." It was amazing. It wasn't my resume or anything, it was I had done my party chores; I had worked for the party. So come along in the next time, and all those folks were there. In fact, some of those people became some of my best supporters. They weren't with me that first time, but the next time, they were there. And they all said it was because, "You didn't take your bat and ball and go home; you stayed and helped the party. And it would have been real easy—most of us probably would have gone home, but you didn't…" It's your turn, kind of attitude.

I didn't know it at the time; I still like politics, and again, I wasn't embarrassed from the election. I just felt like I probably owed—and there were some people I wanted to help. I didn't necessarily want to help Max, but there were other people I wanted to help out.

DePue: But on the surface, were you supporting Max and Campbell, both of them? What were you counseling people in terms of how they should vote in the general election?

Edgar: Oh, no; I said, "Everybody just vote for the Republicans." I did not put a Coffey sign in my yard. I did have a Campbell sign in my yard. And I think probably my close supporters, none of them voted for Coffey. But he still won. I don't know if he ran ahead of Campbell or not. The second Democrat who got nominated was kind of a goofball. He later became a socialist. He wasn't real solid.

DePue: And that wasn't going to play well in the rural areas, was it?

Edgar: No, he wasn't taken too seriously. Again, staying with the party was probably as important as all the time I spent in Springfield, in some ways, because the party folks then felt like you had earned it. Because what happened later—and it had to happen real quick, me putting together to run the next time, because it was just luck—wouldn't have happened if I hadn't have stayed there. And everybody was ready the next time to say, "Yeah, Edgar's our guy this time." But that, I didn't think would happen, and I really thought my chance for elected office was over; then I have
to think what I'm going to do. I'm doing the thing with Harris, but that's just temporary.

And remember back when Arrington was trying to get these three groups together? They had finally got them together, and it was a contest between who was going to be the executive director. One was the person who was head of the Leaders Conference, and one was head of the National Legislative Conference, which was the affiliate of the Council of State Government. Both had told me, "If I get it, we'd like you to work for us, because you've been in the state legislature; you know the organizations, and we know you." But Bob Blair was on the executive council of the Leaders Conference, and he pretty well didn't want me doing anything. Coffey had won the primary, so I was out.

DePue: You were damaged goods, then.

Edgar: Yeah, I was damaged. And chances are, if the guy from the Leaders Conference got to be executive director, he wouldn't offer me a job because Blair would have said no. He didn't get it. Earl Mackey got it—the guy who had been with the Council of State Government—and he offered me a job. He offered me a job to head up state service, they called it—travel around the country and work in the—they were going to have a small office in Washington, and their headquarters was going to be in Denver, Colorado. We always thought it would be out of O'Hare Airport, near there. That made sense where you'd put a state association, so that's where I thought it would be.

DePue: Since everything goes through O'Hare.

Edgar: Yeah, and that was just what we'd talked about in these meetings; centrally located, easy to get in and out of. So I was dumbfounded. I said, "Denver, Colorado? I don't want to go to Colorado. It's cold out there." That's what I thought. I said, "It's cold. I don't want to live there," and everybody said, "Oh, that's a nice place." But Earl liked to ski, and that's why he convinced his board to move the headquarters to Denver, Colorado. So he offered me the job; and the salary's about what I used to be making in the legislature, and better than I was probably going to make, and I thought, maybe I ought to do this.

DePue: A bit more attractive than selling life insurance?

Edgar: Selling life insurance, yeah. (laughter) Though I actually liked it in a way; it was just hard to do. I'm a great believer in life insurance. My dad had had a small policy when he was killed, so I appreciated the importance of life insurance. But yeah, it was a little more steady income, and—

DePue: Was this a bipartisan group?

Edgar: Yeah. It's just like the Governors Association. They had spun this out of the Council of State Government, so it was going to be freestanding, and one of my jobs was going around the states and convincing them to give money to this new organization. I wasn't smart enough to know that was going to be a tough job. And I finally decided—I talked to enough people—Oh, Denver, Colorado, may not be so bad. It's not really where I wanted to go, but that's okay. So I worked, after the primary, through the year for Bill Harris doing the energy, and I did get involved in helping craft what created the energy commission; it created the coal plan to give money to desulfur coal, some things that are still around today. And it turned out to be a big deal.

There were some interesting politics on that. Harris, who, again, sometimes wouldn't worry about politics as much as he would governing—Blair and his people sided with Walker. The Senate Republicans; we ended up siding with Neil Hartigan, who was trying to carve out energy as one of his spheres as lieutenant governor. And Walker and him did not get along at all. There was bad blood. But the Chicago Democrats; Hartigan was their guy, so they were with him. So I spent a lot of time working with Neil Hartigan. That's when I got to know Neil Hartigan, working on this energy bill; because I was kind of the guy coming over from the Senate staff who was pushing on the Senate Republicans' side, and I was an important part of... So Neil and I got to be pretty good friends over this. And I did that.

Then the guy who was going to be chairman of the commission was the guy who I'd worked with, the Senate Republican guy; and I had the option: I could go on and probably staff that commission or, if I wanted to, do whatever. He decided he was going to challenge Bill Harris for leader. And I said, "What are you doing?" I said, "You don't have the votes." I said, "Trust me; I've been through this. You don't have the votes." I said, "Harris already has the votes." "Oh, well, you know, we just..." I said, "You're going to blow your—you're not going to be chairman of the energy committee." "They've promised." I said, "They haven't taken the vote yet. Trust me. You're not going to get that." And sure enough, they cut a new deal. They made Adeline Geo-Karis, from the House, who was a disaster, chairman of that commission, and that commission never amounted to anything after that. And poor Brad Glass, who was a nice guy, just didn't understand the politics. I think he ended up with six votes for leader. He could have been chairman of that, used that, and go on and run for office. I think he did run for comptroller—he tried to, or maybe he had—he could have used that, but too bad.

But I knew, that isn't going to happen, and I went out—I guess it was sometime in December—to Washington and met with Earl. He offered me that job, and I took it. And I figured that'll give me a new opportunity to do something, but that's just another indication I'll never run for office because I'm leaving Illinois; we're going to move out to Colorado.

DePue: But where was your voting residency?

Edgar: It still was in Charleston. The first three months of 1975, I was on the road. We didn't have the Denver office open yet. We were still working out of Washington, and Lexington, Kentucky, is where CSG is headquartered.

DePue: CSG again is...?

Edgar: Council of State Government. It is headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, because the old executive director liked horses, and he moved it from near the University of Chicago, in the early sixties, to Lexington. (laughs)

DePue: I love the reasons for these places being located.[73]

Edgar: Yeah. And Lexington—at the time, I thought it was a terrible place. Little did I know I was going to develop (DePue laughs) this great love for horseracing, and I would have loved to have been working out of Lexington, Kentucky. I worked out of there for three months, but most of the time, I was on the road. Every week, I would be in probably five or six different states' legislatures, visiting them, getting to know them, trying to get their money—because we had to get their money.

DePue: While Brenda's back home with a new baby and...

Edgar: Yeah, but she knows I got a job. (laughter) And we're going to move. So we put the house on the market, and we don't sell it. I get out to Denver, and I go around looking at houses, and finally she just says, "You pick something out. I'll trust your judgment. I just don't want to come out." So I looked at a lot of houses. There's a new house out in this new subdivision. It's a small—called a patio home. Nice home. It had a view of the mountains, a beautiful new subdivision—just perfect suburbia. I told her, and she said, "That sounds fine." So we bought that—still hadn't sold our home, back home. And from April first on, I started working out of the Denver office because we'd opened our office in Denver. I think I'd—

DePue: This is April '75?

Edgar: Seventy-five, yeah. So I missed what happened in Springfield. When Bill Redmond got elected Speaker, there had been this long Speaker battle on the floor.

DePue: That was the one that Walker had kind of orchestrated.

[73] See Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 92-94.

Edgar: Yeah. Well, Daley, really, in the end; then Daley dropped Choate and went with Redmond. And Lee Daniels came over and really provided the votes to elect Bill Redmond. There still weren't enough votes, and then Daniels got up and said—much to the chagrin of the Republican leadership, because they were supposed to stay out of it. But I wasn't around for any of that; I was running around the country going to different state legislatures. And it was interesting because every legislature's different; every state's different. But it helped that I could go in and say, yeah, I'd worked in the Illinois legislature; so I understood enough of what they were about, and I could talk their language.

I'll never forget, I went to New Jersey. Of course, '74, you'd had this big Democratic sweep around the nation, so you had a lot of new legislators, and you had the Democrats really dominating everything in New Jersey. I was there, and the guy taking me around was the state party chairman. He wasn't the Senate leader, but he was a senator. The governor wanted a gas tax, and he says, "Come on to the caucus. We're going to have a caucus on the governor's gas tax." I said, "Oh, should I go to...?" "Oh, no, come on with me." So I go in the New Jersey Senate Democratic caucus, and they're in there, and they're telling the guys, "All right, we need to know right now. The governor proposed a gas tax yesterday. We need to know right now who's going to be for it because we've got to pass it tomorrow." And these freshman senators: "Wait a minute, we just got here! We don't know if we want to vote for..." "Oh, we need you." And I'm sitting there thinking, I shouldn't be sitting in here listening to this discussion. But it was just funny to watch it.

So I was all over: Massachusetts; I went to Delaware; I got to go to states I'd never been. I've been to all fifty states, and the only reason why is because I worked for the NCSL. I went to Dover, Delaware, three times. Who's ever been to Dover, Delaware? (DePue laughs) You can't—you got to go to Philadelphia to get to—then you go to Wilmington, then you get to Dover.

DePue: A few GIs have been there now.

Edgar: Huh?

DePue: That's the stop-off point coming back from Iraq, so...

Edgar: Yeah. That's also where they bring the bodies in, unfortunately.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: Yeah. So Brenda, she's a little worried about leaving Illinois because of her family and everything, but at the same time, it's a new adventure, it's a new home. I start working out of there in April, then we move in—we close on the house in the first of July. I'd gone home for the Fourth, and I'd driven out and brought some stuff; then she came out with the kids and our little dog, Toto. And she had never seen the house, so I drove her to show her our house. And she liked it. It was a beautiful neighborhood, just great for kids, and we had a tennis court—I played tennis a lot

there—had a swimming pool. Much better than anything you have in downstate Illinois at that time. I was gone a lot, though; but again, she got to know some of the neighbors, and Brad got into school. He was in second grade that year. He got to play football. Tackle football, they started in second grade.

DePue: Wow.

Edgar: And he was the star of the team. He was fast. They'd do a fake handoff, he'd get the fake handoff, and he'd run around and score a touchdown; that was just exciting. So that was a pretty good life, but I hated always being on the go. If I'd just lived in Denver and had a job in Denver, Colorado—because Colorado, we loved it. I didn't know until I got to Colorado that you could have eighty-degree weather and not have humidity. I just thought anytime it got about seventy, you had humidity, after growing up in Illinois. We just fell in love with Colorado. And I think if I'd have had a normal job, kind of a nine-to-five, or something where I didn't have to travel all the time—and traveling back then was a lot more fun than it is now, but it still got old. I was traveling so much my barber was the barber at O'Hare Airport, (DePue laughs) which I knew was too much traveling. I don't think we'd have left, even to come back to run. But traveling around the states, as I said—I was close enough to the politics but not in it, and it bothered me. I missed it. I'd have been far better off—if I'd have had a job that had nothing to do with politics and government, I'd have probably been all right; but I was just close enough to it, but not in it, that I really missed it.

DePue: You're a very observant guy, so what were your observations about the differences in the various states from the way politics was played in Illinois?

Edgar: I thought the Illinois legislature in a lot of ways was far advanced. We had more staffing; we were a little more independent than some of them were at that point. I thought that after going to Texas and Louisiana and Massachusetts and New Jersey, Illinois wasn't all that questionable. (laughter) I'll never forget being down in Texas. The Speaker of the House, who was on NCSL [National Conference of State Legislatures]—it was the closing days of the session, and he was wheeling and dealing from that podium, making deals with guys; and he had coalition with the Republicans, and—it was just a wild scene. Then you'd go into states like Minnesota, [which] was very proper... New Jersey was pretty wild. Louisiana was just a bunch of characters.
It was just—

DePue: That was the other state I was going to ask you about.

Edgar: I only was down there once, but I knew Louisiana legislators from these legislative groups, and they were always characters. They were flamboyant and... Went to Nevada. You go up to Carson City. You got to fly into Reno, and then you drive to Carson City, and there's this sign along the way: "Don't drive during high winds." (laughter) I just remember, huh, never seen a sign... And Carson City, the legislature is just a handful of people and very, very part-time. I didn't go to the

California legislature. We divided up the states—I didn't take them all—but I got Hawaii, so I had to take South Dakota and North Dakota (laughs) to trade off. And I never got to Hawaii, though, unfortunately, to visit the legislature, because I only stayed for a year. But I'm trying to think what other interesting...

North Carolina is the only state where the governor didn't have a veto at that time. I went into North Carolina. That was the state we had the most difficulty getting funds, and so they sent me into North Carolina. I sat down with some—there were some old senators, some old good old boys who kind of controlled things there, and I said, "You ought to join this group." And they said, "Well, why?" And I said, "You get to go to meetings and get to meet some interesting people." "Where do you have these meetings?" I said, "We have them in nice places." "You do?" (laughs) Long story short, these guys came to the next meeting we had and became big supporters of NCSL; and later when I got to be governor, they felt like they had made me governor, too. And they're all Democrats, but they just—when I got to be head of the Council of State Government when I was governor of Illinois, they were my—and they were my buddies when I was secretary of state, because they remembered me from those days when I was the NCSL, and I got them on these trips. (laughs)

DePue: Maybe I just haven't been listening closely enough. What was the explicit mission of the—

Edgar: NCSL was the legislative association. It was the equivalent of the Governors Association for state legislatures, and they'd never really had one. They'd had these three groups, but... Even the Governors Association was not as developed as it is today; but the legislature, because it was part-time, staff had usually controlled the old Council of State Government organization. It had been really a staff organization, but legislators wanted now to control it; and NCSL, they controlled. You had an executive committee made up mainly of leaders from states around the country. And they had a Washington office, so they became involved more in federal legislation, but also they went around the states and helped states—I went into Nevada. I took some experts on bill drafting from other states into Nevada because they had a bill-drafting problem there, and they looked at their whole reference bureau and made some recommendations.

DePue: So would it be fair to say that this is about professionalizing the role of legis—just like—

Edgar: Yeah. It was—

DePue: —Arrington was doing?

Edgar: Yeah. That's why they kind of knew me, and I knew them, because of Arrington and their mission. And it was also to have the state legislatures be together to be able to lobby in Washington and on a national scene, and have a group that they could go and get help and advice. The Governors Association is almost purely a

lobbying group, unfortunately. They don't do a lot of—we go to meetings, and we just talk about what's going on in Washington, DC. NCSL—and purposely; Mackey was right not to put the headquarters in Washington, DC—that would have been terrible—put it far away so you're not caught up in the Potomac Fever. And actually, putting it in Denver was a smart thing because it was really easy to recruit people. I just had my bachelor's degree, and I headed up this division, and I was hiring people. I could hire PhDs. They were a dime a dozen. They wanted to come to Denver. Everybody wanted to come and live in Denver. They weren't going to get paid a huge amount of money, but they got to go live in Denver. So it was a smart move to put it—even though it was far away from Washington and it's not as centrally located, maybe, as Chicago, it's an easy place to recruit folks.

DePue: Where'd the NCSL get its money?

Edgar: From the states. One of my jobs was to convince these legislators to appropriate the dues. And as I said, North Carolina was one of the holdouts, and that's why I had to spend a little extra time in North Carolina. But at the end of the year, I think we had every state but one or two small states, for some reason. So it was amazing we really got everybody, but legislators—they recognized they wanted their own organization; they wanted to be able to be independent, and also to go to meetings.

And the meetings did—they had topics—in fact, there were things that I picked up when I was in NCSL that I used when I became a legislator. My job was to head up state services, and that was not to deal with federal issues but to deal with the states on their issues: like the reference bureau, the bill-drafting bureau needs to be improved; and what are some issues that we need to—we'd create an *ad hoc* committee on food supply that appealed to the agriculture folks; we had a committee that came up with the recommendation of a Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. JCAR, which we have in Illinois; that's where that came from, that committee made that recommendation.

But also, my job was to make sure they came across with the money from the states. I was kind of the guy—we had the Washington office and we had state services, and those are two of the big divisions in NCSL. And then I hired people, and two of the people I hired, Bill Pound and Carl Tubbesing, for the last twenty years have run NCSL. When Earl Mackey left a few years after I did, Bill Pound became the executive director, and Carl Tubbesing then became the head of the Washington office, and they're still there. And I laugh—I always say, when I meet legislators, "Yeah, I created those guys." (DePue laughs) And they were good guys. They're good friends. I was only there for a year, but Tubbesing and I played tennis together all the time; and Bill Pound and I remember we drove back from—are you from Iowa?

DePue: I'm from northeast Iowa, Waverly.

Edgar: Okay. Northwest Iowa, what's that lake up there? Lake Ochiboshee or something?

DePue: Okoboji.

Edgar: Yeah. The Midwest Council of State Governments had a meeting there in the summer of 1975. And I had not moved my Maverick from Illinois, yet, out to Colorado. I had my other car, but I didn't have that out, and so I thought, I'll go home and get the Maverick, and I'll drive it to Lake Okoboji, and then I'll drive it on back to Colorado. Which I did. It didn't have air conditioning. This was in July or early August—miserable weather. (laughs) Hot weather.

DePue: Yeah, plenty of humidity there.

Edgar: Yeah, and you have to get lost to find that lake. I thought I was going to be in Canada, not just Minnesota, by the time I got there. Bill Pound, who had just started to work for me, was there, and I said, "Bill, you can either fly back or you can drive back with me." "Oh, I'll ride back with you." So we spent the next two days in an un–air-conditioned Maverick driving across the plains (DePue laughs) and got to know each other real well.

But if I'd have known I was just going to be there one year, I think I'd have really enjoyed and got a lot more out of it. I had this fear, I'm going to be stuck here. It was a nice-paying job, but I don't want to keep this running around and being close but not really being in, and I really—that was frustrating to me. I loved living where we lived. I loved our home. And we still hadn't sold our home back in Illinois.

DePue: What brought you back to Illinois, then?

Edgar: Sometime—I can't remember exactly—probably the latter part of October, early November, I'm traveling through. And I always tried to stop by Illinois, when I would be out and about states, and do business I could justify. I just happened to stop in Illinois, and I always worked out of Tim Campbell's office in the Senate Republicans when I was in town. And the day I got there, Tom Merritt, who was the state senator in our district, announced he wasn't going to run again—surprised everybody.

And immediately, Max Coffee announced he was running for the state Senate. This creates an opening in the House seat—a seat I thought would never—because I didn't think Coffey would ever go anyplace but the House. He was young; he'd stay there for twenty years. And all of a sudden, this seat that I didn't think would ever open up again had opened up. And I'm in Tim's office, I remember, and I find out Coffey has announced that he's running; so I make about three phone calls to the county chairmen, and they said, "You know, you ought to run." They said, "You've earned it. We can support you this time."

And the Edgar County chairman, somebody said, "He might be interested. If he's not interested, we'll be for you." That's what the key people in Edgar County told me. So I jumped in a bus, got a Crowne Transit bus, rode over to Edgar County, and met him. He said, "No, I don't want to run." He said, "You ought to

run. You did a good job last time. It's too bad you didn't win last time." I wanted to say, "Then why didn't you support me?" (DePue laughs) And he had been kind of neutral. He really hadn't endorsed Max, either. He said, "But if you run, I'll support you this time." I knew that if I had him, then I had Edgar County; and I thought if I had Edgar County, then chances are I could get Clark and Coles.

Herb Brooks, who had been the county chairman who got elected the night I got elected party treasurer, who had been a big Coffey supporter, liked me. We got along. He found out I wasn't so bad. He'd been at the student union when I was student body president, and he didn't like me then, but he decided I was okay. So he said, "I was thinking about maybe running," and I said, "I think I'm interested in running." He says, "Well, okay." He says, "You know, maybe I'm too old to run." I said, "I hear Bill Cox's son wants to run." "He's not going to run. Don't worry about that. He won't run." And finally after about a day, he says, "If you run, I'll support you." This was all happening in twenty-four hours, and I'm calling people and getting people's response and check...

Brenda's back in Colorado. And I'm not sure this is going to happen, but I know if anybody jumps in, I'm not going to—because we still had a five-thousand-dollar debt. Turned out we had a debt that I finally had to write a check for, because you couldn't raise any money after you lose. If you have a debt when you win, it's just a cash flow problem; when you have a debt and you lose, it's a debt. So I had just written a five-thousand-dollar check to pay that debt off. I'd borrowed money from a couple friends of mine, and I paid them off. Brenda said, "Never ever get us in debt again." And I won't have a job, because I know I'm going to have to leave the NCSL if I'm going to run, because it's a nonpartisan thing; you can't... If anybody challenged me, I just couldn't go through a primary battle and the cost and the risk, so I was bluffing. I put out a press release saying I'm a candidate for state representative. Now, they were trying to get Max to back up. They wanted somebody from Vermilion County to be senator, and they were trying to get him to back up.

DePue: Back up?

Edgar: Not run for the Senate; stay in the House.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: So this all happened in twenty-four hours, and I just happened to be—if I hadn't have been in Springfield, I wouldn't have been there. It was just the luck of being in Springfield. So finally, the next day, I put my release out; and I call Brenda, and I said, "Brenda, could you pick me up at the Denver airport? I'll be there in about three hours. Oh, by the way, I just announced for the Illinois House." (DePue laughs) This long pause on the other end. She had just gotten everything unpacked and curtains up in our place. I said that long pause lasted for about eight years. (DePue laughs)

But she kept telling me, "Everybody thinks you're going to go back home and run." I said, "I don't think I'm ever going to go back home and run." I said, "My career is over," and everybody said, "No, no." And Brenda says everybody would tell her she'd talked to back home, "Jim will come back and run sometime." I said, "No, Brenda, it just will never happen, because the longer we're out here"—now, I had not yet changed my voter registration. I had not changed my motor vehicle registration either—just by accident; I hadn't got around to do that yet. We still had Illinois license plates on our car. I still had an Illinois driver's license, too. I was just dumbfounded with this all; I just never dreamed this would happen. And I always say: you got to have a lot of luck, or you got to have somebody up above looking out for you, but you've got to be ready to take advantage of opportunity. And opportunity had just knocked, and fortunately, I was able to move quick enough and freeze everybody else out. But because I'd run the first time and hadn't taken my bat and ball and gone home, I had the chance the second time, and probably run with no primary opposition.

For the next two months—and I went back to Colorado—they're trying to get Coffey out of the Senate race, get him to go back and run for the House. He said, "I can't do that?" They said, "Why not?" He said, "Jim Edgar's announced for the House, and I don't want to go through another bitter battle with the Edgars, split our community; we just can't do that." They called me up, and they tried to say, "Well, you..." I said, "No, Max is running for the Senate. I'm not going to get out of the House race." (DePue laughs)

We made a point—and we still weren't real close at that point—I told Max, "Max, you and I never want to be in the room at the same time. I'm staying out here in Colorado, and you stay there, and we're never going to be on the phone together with any of these guys." He understood. And they called. They called from Vermilion; and they got Bill Harris to call me up, and he said, "If you want to come back to Illinois, we can get you a good job with Bill Scott." I said, "I don't want to work for Bill Scott. I don't like Bill Scott." Harris said, "I don't either," but he says, "It would be a good job." (laughs) And I said, "I don't want a job." He said, "I think they're going to get Coffey." I said, "Well, if they get Coffey out, they get Coffey out."

DePue: But if they wanted Coffey out, they had somebody else in mind for that Senate seat.

Edgar: They wanted somebody from Vermilion County. There was one guy, Johnny Meyer, who had been a state senator from Vermilion County before. He was close to Bill Scott. They had talked him into—he would run, but he wasn't going to get into a primary. He said, "You got to have no primary, for me to run," so they needed to get Coffey out. And I liked Johnny Meyer, but this was politics. (laughter) But I didn't want to work for Bill Scott because I didn't care for Bill. Like Bob Blair; I didn't want to go work for somebody like... So I said, "No, that won't do." And they kept beating on Coffey, and Coffey said, "I'm not going to back up. Edgar's in there. I'm not going to have a primary battle there and go through all that mess again." He said, "If you can get Edgar out, maybe." He knew

they couldn't get me out. And I said, "You guys are on me, but Coffey's running for a Senate. There is a House opening. If Coffey was running for the House, it might be a different deal, but he's not running for the House." We'd both stand firm but never be in the room at the same time. So in the end, it came filing day. I filed; he filed. Now, he did get a primary opponent from Vermilion County. I didn't get one. Nobody filed. And so my bluff worked. If somebody had jumped in and ran against me, I probably wouldn't have done it.

DePue: So it was you and Campbell on the ticket when two were selected.

Edgar: Yeah, no primary opposition. But it all goes back to if I hadn't run the first time, I wouldn't have won the second time. I wouldn't have been there the second time. And it was also if I hadn't have stayed in and helped the party after I got beat, I wouldn't have been able to get that the second time.

DePue: You described that trip to Springfield, the timing of it, as luck. Do you look at it as a little bit more than luck?

Edgar: I've always said the good Lord helped me. I mean, that's the only thing. I had no idea when I went into Springfield this was going to happen. And I almost didn't go to Springfield, but I usually used it as an excuse; when I was traveling through, I'd stop by just to see what was going on in Springfield. I liked to go to Springfield.

DePue: What was the timing, then, of the move back to Illinois? The date that you filed?

Edgar: No. Because I wasn't sure it was all going to work, till after filing and I didn't have an opponent. Then I told them at NCSL I was leaving, (laughs) but they kind of already—the guys working for me knew because they saw the "for sale" sign out in front of my house. (DePue laughs) So I told them, and I said, "And I realize you can't have me on the—if I'm going to be..." And I said, I wasn't positive I was going to be a candidate, until filing date's past. They said, "We'll do it January first, and you've got some vacation," so I think I got paid through maybe the middle of February. And then the House Republicans knew that there was a good chance I'm going to win—and I knew the guys there—so the leader, Bud Washburn, offered me a job with them on their staff through that period. Now, they were in the minority, and they didn't do a whole lot, but I worked on all the campaigns for them and also did some issue stuff.

DePue: What was his name again? Bud...?

Edgar: Bud Washburn; who used to be head of veterans' affairs, I think—or deputy head of veterans affairs—under Stratton, or sometime. He later became mayor of Morris, Illinois. Just died about a year ago. So we had just sold our old house (DePue laughs) about a month before all this happened. I didn't take a loss, but sold it really cheap. And if we hadn't had sold it, we'd have... (laughs) So we needed a new house. Well, we had to sell our house out there. So we knew we were going to probably lose some money on this because we had just bought it six months before. It's like buying a new car, and after you drive it, you knock the price down. And the

United States was in a little bit of a recession at that point, and there was some stimulus package, so this builder had a deal where he could build a house pretty cheap, get some federal money for it. It was a brand-new house—small, but brand-new and in a nice subdivision—in *the* subdivision in Charleston, actually—so we got that house and moved back there. And it was a little smaller than what we'd moved out of, but still, it wasn't bad, and we—

DePue: That was what month in '76?

Edgar: I'm trying to think when we actually moved. We were in by Christmas, so we must have moved in December.

DePue: Seventy-five, then.

Edgar: Yeah. We were still, I know, in Colorado over Thanksgiving, and so it must have been about two weeks later, because we were in by Christmas of '75, in our new house in Illinois. After going through all I went through two years before, this was a lot easier. Now, Brenda, as I said, just had got unpacked and liked the [Colorado] house. And this was not as nice a house as we'd had, and the thought of going through (laughs) a campaign again wasn't really high on her mind.

DePue: Do you keep taking her back to that first date, when you told her you had political ambitions?

Edgar: Yeah, I keep saying, "Hey, you remember?" That's when she told me—she didn't tell me I was windy till about then, I think. But I also pointed out, too, we lived in a married apartment to start out. At least this is new. But she liked the subdivision. It was an ideal subdivision for us to live in.

So the primary was pretty vanilla; there wasn't much going on. The only thing we had going on in '76—we had the presidential primary between Ford and Reagan. And in my district, Dan Crane, Phil Crane's younger brother, was running the Reagan campaign.[74] Ronald Reagan came into my legislative district twice in that primary. Most places, he didn't ever go in; no place I think in the country did he go in twice, but he came in twice because they were figuring they had a shot in that area. And a lot of the young turks who had been for me in Vermilion County were all for Reagan. Well, I was for Ford. That's my kind of Republican.

I remember we went up and we had a meeting with the young turks; and they were talking about doing a fundraiser, and we're sitting there—and Brenda's with me. We're talking, and they finally look, and they say, "You know, that Ford button—you got to understand, all of us, and a lot of folks up here, are for Reagan." And I said, "Well, I like Ford," and this and that. Brenda looks over and she takes that Ford button off. She says, "I don't care if you like Ford; I don't want to lose again." (laughter) Ford actually carried the district, I think, it turned out. But

[74] Philip Crane served as a Republican congressman from Illinois from 1969 to 2005, representing the thirteenth, twelfth, and eight districts.

Reagan was in twice, and I've got autographs from Reagan on programs for the kids when he was in. But—

DePue: Ford didn't come in?

Edgar: He didn't come into our district. I think his son maybe came. But he carried Illinois, and he carried that area, too. That was kind of the excitement of the primary, just that we were involved in the presidential primary and we had Reagan here twice. Of course, I had to be a little careful, too—then you had that fight right up to the convention in '76. And I'm trying to think. In the general election, we didn't have Ford; Bob Dole's daughter came in, I remember, for the homecoming parade at Eastern, which is the big deal. But for the general election, it was a whole different kind of campaign because you had all summer. You're out to everybody; you don't have to just concentrate on the primary voters. And that was '76; that's the bicentennial year.

DePue: But also not a good year for Republicans, again.

Edgar: Seventy-six was okay.

DePue: Was that a concern?

Edgar: No, '76 was okay. Seventy-six wasn't bad. Ford lost, but Thompson swept the state for governor.

DePue: Okay, that's right.

Edgar: Yeah, it was getting better. It looked like it'd be better than '74.

DePue: Because Illinois politics at the time was playing a little bit more peculiar than—

Edgar: Illinois was also—we had Dan Walker.

DePue: And I wanted to hear your reflections on the Howlett and Thompson campaign.

Edgar: Walker had been so controversial, even the first year I was there. The third year I was gone, and then the fourth year I was back. You knew Daley was going to try to take him out, and then you had the primary in '76 between Howlett and Walker. I remember going around that day, just to see how things were going at the precinct, and this one Republican election judge says, "Been a lot of activity on the Democratic side, not much on the Republican side." I said, "What is it?" She said, "A lot of those folks that came in here four years ago, we were surprised they asked for a Democratic ballot. They voted Walker in; they came in this year and said they're going to vote him out." (DePue laughs) So Howlett got a lot of crossover Republicans this time to get rid of Walker, I think.

The general election for me was—you had Bob Craig and Larry Stuffle. Larry Stuffle had been student body president about three years after I was and got

impeached for vote fraud. You'd think that'd end his political career, but he got to be a legislative intern. And it enhanced him with Democrats, we always suspected. But he was running on the Democratic ticket. He was a very articulate guy, and knowledgeable. I didn't think he would catch on with a lot of folks, but with Democrats—union guys, particularly—he had a... And he had been in Springfield and had contacts from that. He had spent years working for the House; I think worked for the House Democrats. I don't think he worked for the Senate Democrats. But then you had Bob Craig. Bob Craig got indicted for—it was the cement truck bill, I think.

DePue: So he was the one who was sitting.

Edgar: He was sitting, but he was indicted. And people said, "Ah, that won't hurt him," and I said, "Uh, I think that will hurt him." So you knew he wasn't going to run as strong as he usually ran, and Stuffle knew what he was doing; he wasn't like the guy two years before that wasn't... Stuffle was right-to-life, but he was close to the unions. He was out there stirring, and he was going to be a formidable candidate. And then I had Chuck Campbell and myself.

Then about halfway through the campaign, Chuck Campbell has a heart attack, so he can't go out campaigning. For Chuck Campbell, that was probably just as good, because he had a tendency to go out and get drunk and be obnoxious to people on the campaign. His wife—people loved his wife—but he could be obnoxious. So I always thought when he had the heart attack, it probably helped him: he wasn't out making people mad, and people felt sorry for him. Also, in Vermilion County, they were going to protect him with the bullet. Bob Craig got convicted about a week before the election, and I said, "That will beat him for sure," and people said, "Oh, no." I said, "Yeah, it will." And sure enough, Stuffle turned out running better than Craig did. Fortunately, I ran better than everybody, even Campbell. I'm pretty sure I finished first, or I finished way up.[75]

But that campaign, as I said, it was the summer, and I was out all the time. I did a lot of fish fries, chicken fries; because it was the bicentennial, and every little community had some bicentennial event, and I'd go. One of the things I began to realize, too: you could stand there and hand out your literature. You'd hand out your literature; and then you'd look, and there's your literature flying in the wind because nobody wanted it. So I learned very quickly to put my picture and my name on a pack of matches, because they didn't throw those away. They'd keep those, because back then people still burned trash and stuff out there. Even people who didn't smoke kept matches. And you knew they'd take it, they'd look at it, and they'd look at you, then they'd put it in their pocket. When they got home, they'd take it out of their pocket and look at it again. So I gave out matches.

[75] Campbell won the general election held November 2, 1976, with 71,952.5 votes; 2,755.5 ahead of Edgar. Edgar finished well ahead of Stuffle and Craig, with margins of 11,784 and 28,931.5. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 2, 1976.*

And the other thing I learned at these chicken fries: I didn't like standing in line just shaking hands with folks. What I'd volunteer to do is go pour tea, because they'd always have tea at these things, and you'd always get refills, and they needed people to pour tea. And I learned early on if I go pour tea—people knew I was a candidate, but they always said, "Ah, it's nice to finally get something from a politician." (DePue laughs) So at all these fish fries, I'd go pour tea. And I could make small talk, but it was easy because I didn't have to stand in line and do that. This was a lot easier, going around and giving people—and people liked to get tea; and they knew I was a candidate, but they got something from me. And I probably did ten, fifteen fish fries, chicken fries where I'd pour tea, and people got to know, Hey, it's the tea guy. Particularly in Edgar County and Clark County, I did a lot of that, and those rural people, that attached them.

DePue: County fairs and those kinds of functions?

Edgar: County fairs, I'd stand and shake hands and hand out things. They're a little harder to deal with because people go at night. I remember going to one of the Vermilion County fairs. It was the tractor pull. And I shook hands—or, no, it was demolition derby. I'm not convinced half those people were from the district, and I'm convinced 90 percent weren't registered to vote. (laughs) these just weren't... You'd hand literature, and they'd just throw it. That's why I was handing matches. Now, tractor pulls, maybe they might vote, but they weren't real interested. Queen contests were usually the best to go to because all the parents were there. But you got to kind of know what nights to go and what events were better to work than other events. You always wanted to be at the county fair and have your picture in the paper saying you were at the county fair, so you didn't snub them. But at the same time, while I worked the county fairs, I always thought those fish fries were a lot more effective way of getting—because I had a sign, and...

I'll never forget, I was in Edgar County fair—and I always thought the first time I ran that I'd run pretty well in Edgar County—my name's Edgar. There'd never been anybody named Edgar who lived in Edgar County, but I just thought they'd learn my name pretty quick. But I didn't do well at all that first time in Edgar County. So the second time, I'm at one of these fish fries, and I'm sitting down, and I've got—I always had a big thing that'd say "Edgar."

DePue: A button?

Edgar: It was more of a little—

DePue: Lapel?

Edgar: It was a square thing you had made up. It said "Edgar, state rep"; small, but "Edgar," big letters. And I always had that on me. So I'm sitting there, and I'm drinking some tea and having a chat with this little old lady across from me—she's probably in her eighties. And finally she looked at me, and she says, "Now, young man, tell me, just what do you do for Edgar County?" And everything in Edgar

County is Edgar County Bank, Edgar County Feed or what... She saw that, and she just figured I worked for the county in some way or I did something, and didn't think about it being my name. And I realized, I'm glad my last name's not Vermilion; I could be in real trouble. So you learn—those things kind of come up.

That second campaign was so much easier than that first campaign, but what made it easy, part of it, was the fact that I'd been through the first campaign. And I was a much better campaigner. I think I did a much better job of meeting people, shaking hands, going around. I'd go in a room, and I'd tell you, nobody missed my shaking their hands; I might have shaken them two or three times. But I learned, because I'd got critiqued back (unintelligible; both speaking).

DePue: Were you getting better as a stump speaker, too?

Edgar: Yeah, but you didn't have to... Yeah, because you'd say the same thing over and over. And in a campaign, the first time, maybe two or three times, you can be a little more stiff; but by the tenth time, it was the same speech; you got so you should have had it down. And we did a lot of candidates' nights, Q&A and that kind of stuff, and I enjoyed that because I could usually BS my way through on any of those questions. Getting up and giving a Lincoln Day–inspired speech was not my forte; I never have got to be good at that.

That second campaign, we had all the volunteers back, and we had more volunteers. It was summer, so a lot of schoolkids helped out. We were in parades. We got an old fire truck. It was a bicentennial, so we had a 1923 fire truck. One of the fraternities at Eastern had it as kind of their thing, and we borrowed it off of them. Fred had to transport that, and so he always had to go borrow somebody's lowboy to take the fire truck. And many a time, the parade would be moving down the road, and here Fred would be coming in with the fire truck. (DePue laughs) Then the thing had a tendency—it would backfire, and one time it backfired and scared three horses, and we thought, oh, great, about ready to kill kids out here, all these little kids running around.

DePue: That just makes the parade more colorful, though.

Edgar: Then if it got stalled anyplace, it put out the worst black smoke. And I remember we were up in Hoopeston at the Sweet Corn Festival parade, and it got stalled on a corner. And there were these little old ladies sitting in these lawn chairs, and I thought they were going to be asphyxiated. (laughs) Smoke was going out, and... But what I learned about that fire truck, after a while, I didn't want to be on it. I learned to walk in front of it, because people would see that fire truck, and they wouldn't pay attention to who was on it; they just saw the fire truck. So I finally got them to get a banner for me, and I walked in front of the fire truck; and kids stayed in the fire truck and threw candy out. I realized when I was on that fire truck, nobody saw me, but when I was up front, they did.

There were a lot of parades that year, and we couldn't make them all, so—we still had the Maverick. It was a gold Maverick we had painted up: "Edgar for state rep." Unfortunately we should have just left it in a barn someplace, because we had to get it painted again. So there was some big parade up in Vermilion County, and I went up there. And there was a little parade over in a little town by Charleston, in Westville. So Fred was going to take the Maverick over and drive it through. Fred's driving it through—and he knows a lot of people in this town—and he's driving it, and they say, "Oh, hi, Jim; it's good to have you here! 'Preciate you. Hi, Jim; hi, Jim." So he was so dejected with me. (DePue laughs) He said, "There's a guy there that I just talked to two days before, and he was saying, 'Jim, it's good to have you here,' and they were waving," because they just figure it's me driving the car through, and I'm up someplace else. So I got a kick out of that.

But the '76 campaign, because it was the bicentennial year, it was probably a lot of extra events, and we were on the go all the time. There wasn't any weekend day or night we weren't out at some festival. I drug the kids along, much to their chagrin. They were getting a little older, and they were getting a little wiser about all this.

DePue: Your daughter couldn't have been too old at the time.

Edgar: No, she was only two, but still, you had to drag her. (laughter) And Brad, he was eight, almost nine, at this time, and he was… But they'd go along.

DePue: That was about the age where you decided that this running for school office was a neat thing to do.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: He didn't get hit by that?

Edgar: He didn't get hit by that, no. Elizabeth's got a little more into that; Brad never has got into that. But the presidential race that year—we weren't so involved at our level. I purposely had not wanted to go to the convention because I figured I would just get in the middle of a fight out there, and it was. Ford had to finally knock Reagan off at the convention. But I don't remember a whole lot of the presidential race. I'd watch it on television because I was for Ford; and Ford was behind, but he was coming back as it went along. And I remember the bicentennial celebrations. Then I remember the—because that was a big weekend in the campaign, but I remember getting home and watching it on television that night.

Then watched the debates, and when he made the mistake about Poland—I knew what he was saying, and I think he got misunderstood. He was saying, In the hearts, the people of Poland are still free. I don't think he was referring to their government; I think he was talking about... But that got to be a big controversy.[76]

[76] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8rg9c4pUrg for the excerpt from the October 6, 1976, presidential debate between Ford and Jimmy Carter.

And, of course, we have a lot of Poles in Illinois, and that was a concern up in the Chicago area. Ford carried Illinois. It was only twice in the twentieth century that Illinois ever voted for the losing candidate for president: one in 1916 when they voted for—oh, the Supreme Court justice over Wilson.

DePue: [Charles Evan] Hughes?

Edgar: Hughes, yeah. They voted for Hughes in 1916, and that was a close election; and then they voted for Ford against Carter in 1976. So we didn't get hurt by Ford losing, because he actually carried Illinois, and then Thompson had carried Illinois big-time over Howlett. And you almost knew that was going to happen the day after the primary. There's this famous picture of Daley and Howlett at the St. Patrick's Day parade in Chicago, laughing, and their jowls... They look just the epitome of two old-time politicians. And they ran that picture all over downstate Illinois in the newspaper. I remember seeing that, and I said, "The election's over." I said, "There's no way Howlett can win downstate after that." And at that point, downstate was the swing. Then Thompson, for a guy who had never run for office, was a natural. He's a glad-hander. He'll say whatever it takes. He can say—without lying, but sometimes he tries to get too—he'd come downstate sometimes, and he'd try to talk too much with a southern accent, I thought. But the ethics issue and his record, I think, really resonated well.

DePue: We haven't really talked much about that. I don't know if this is the time to bring that up or not.

Edgar: I can talk about the campaign a little bit, about him, if you want.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: Zale Glauberman, this guy I was talking about before, was now working on Thompson's campaign, so I would talk to him about Thompson. I met Thompson for the first time—he came down to a Republican gathering in the primary in Mattoon. First time I'd met him. And he was kind of stiff, still; he hadn't loosened up quite as a campaigner. Then I didn't see him until the county fairs, and he was walking around the county fairs in this orange t-shirt. He looked like a giant canary, and I thought rather insulting, too—I was still wearing a short-sleeved shirt and a tie, but it looked like he was dressing down to farmers at the fairs. And I told Zale, "Zale, I just think Thompson needs to—he maybe doesn't have to wear a white shirt and a tie, but at least a polo shirt. That t-shirt on him... And he gets sweaty; he looks terrible." And I said, "I think it's kind of disrespectful, like because he's down here with a bunch of hicks, he can dress like he thinks a hick would dress as opposed to"—because I always felt you wore the tie. It's kind of the respect; you have a responsibility a little bit. You're on duty or something like that. Later, I kind of changed. But I always wore a clean polo shirt, (DePue laughs) and I would always make sure my pants were pressed and all.

DePue: And you weren't wearing an orange t-shirt.

Edgar: No, I never would wear a t-shirt, no. But Thompson was a great campaigner. He was very good at that. I'm sure it probably—it didn't hurt us in this area. He was on the wrong side of the reservoir issue, but we'd already lost that under Walker and knew we were probably kind of doomed. That was a little bit of a hard sell, to some extent, in our area about him. And also Middle Fork—up in Danville, they wanted a reservoir that Walker had put on hold, and Thompson had indicated he was against it too and wouldn't revive it. So that was a little bit of a problem in Vermilion County.

My only concern in that election was just that, some way, Craig and Stuffle would split votes evenly because of Craig's problems, and maybe I'd get caught. So I worked extra-hard. The Thompson thing, I thought, would probably help overall; I didn't think it was going to hurt us. The Ford thing, I wasn't sure, but I think it probably helped us. I'm sure Ford carried our legislative district. I know Thompson did. My numbers were huge. They were much bigger than we ever thought they would be. The Republicans, we did that well. And then, of course, Craig got convicted a week before.

Oh, the other thing that happened to Larry Stuffle: about two months before the election, his twin brother Gary Stuffle got arrested for possession of opium, and the newspaper in Charleston made a mistake and said "Larry" instead of "Gary" in the headline. Now, if you knew Larry, you wouldn't have been shocked. (laughter) It turned out he had a drinking problem later on. So somebody said, "One guy gets convicted; one guys gets represented that he's possessing opium; the other guy has a heart attack." He said, "I sure don't want to run against you."

DePue: (laughs) The stars were aligned then, huh?

Edgar: Yeah. So election—that night was fun. And the big disappointment, though, was Ford getting beat nationwide. That, to me, was a huge disappointment. I remember, over at the Holiday Inn, we had our victory party this time, and being really down because Ford had lost, because he'd been coming back.

DePue: You were down, even though you had won this big victory?

Edgar: Yeah. It took the edge off of it. I wasn't down as I was maybe two years before when I lost, but I was very disappointed about that. Because Ford had kept coming back, and unfortunately, that Polish thing stalled him for a while; and he got his momentum back, but it was too late.

DePue: Guns were not the issue in '76 like they were in '74?

Edgar: In the rural precincts, I ran gangbusters. It was like '74 never happened. I spent a lot of time in those precincts, in those rural areas—county fairs, the fish fries, and all that—and I got a chance—I'd be around a lot of folks that I don't think ever got around me in the primary two years before. Our literature had the family on it, and I think the family played well and all that, particularly compared to Stuffle. He was a little questionable on some of that stuff. So I think that this time, as I said, in the

rural areas, I was carrying those precincts eight-to-one, some of them. They were just huge areas. And it was basically in Edgar and Clark where I really got beat up pretty bad. Carried Coles County. I think I beat Stuffle two-to-one in Coles County—ran ahead of him. We were both from Charleston. So the base... Everything went well in that election. And we'd worked hard; but as far as the stress factor, you kind of knew, unless you screw up, you should win this time.

And the other thing, personally: when I lost at twenty-eight and went to NCSL and worked, I really felt like I'm off balance. I'd had plans in my twenties to work to get to the legislature, and now I'm not going to be there. And while, yeah, I've got a good job, it pays well, I live in Colorado; I was very kind of disconnected because I was off my game plan, and it really bothered me. I remember I was running, and I turned thirty; and I felt really good about turning thirty because I'm back on my game plan; I'm back on schedule. Again, it really bothered me being off-schedule when I was twenty-nine, because I'm one who always plans ahead, and I didn't know what to plan ahead for. I just thought, Gee, everything I had planned for is gone now. I remember the night I was thirty—I think I was at a function in Vermilion County—and I just remember feeling really good because I thought, I should win this election, and I'm on schedule. I'm going to be thirty. It would have been nice to have been in when I was twenty-eight, but I'm going to be thirty; I'm still going to be young to be in the legislature, and I'm on track. So that's kind of how I viewed that election: I was back on track after getting knocked out two and a half years before in a primary.

DePue: We've been at this for right at two and a half hours. I think this might be a good place to take a break and pick up with your experience in the legislature, then, when we start next time.

Edgar: Okay.

DePue: Thank you very much, Governor.

(end of interview 4)

Interview with Jim Edgar
ISG-A-L-2009-019.05
Interview # 5: June 9, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is June 9, 2009. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here in my fifth session with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good afternoon, Governor.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: And we've had a wonderful time. You have a remarkable memory, Governor, and it certainly is fun to talk to somebody with a good memory like that.

Edgar: I hope I have a good memory; that I'm not just making this up as we go along.

DePue: We've gotten up to the point of 1976, and I think November of 1976, because we'd just got you elected to the state legislature for the first term. And we talked very briefly about Jim Thompson and his gubernatorial election that year. Later on in the discussion today I want to hear more of your reflections on Governor Thompson. But let's start with getting into the state legislature, and start from this perspective: here you had cut your teeth in Illinois politics by sitting on the knee, if you will, of Russell Arrington; who was probably the most dominant legislative figure of Illinois politics in the fifties and sixties, would you say?

Edgar: Oh, by far. Yeah.

DePue: And now you're a brand-new member of the state legislature. What's your impression, now that you walked into that position?

Edgar: I realized very quickly I was no longer in a powerful position. I was chief aide to the Speaker of the House, Bob Blair, for a couple of years, and I had much more power and influence over public policy and what happened, at least in the legislative process, than I did as a freshman back bencher in the minority party, which the Republicans were when I went into the legislature. We had a Republican governor, which helped, but still, it was somewhat of a comedown. On the other side, though, I was my own boss. I could decide how I wanted to vote; I could

decide if I wanted to go to a meeting or not. I didn't have somebody who says, "You have to be there because you work for me." Now, I had my constituents, but for the most part, your constituents don't know what you do in Springfield. They know some of your votes, but they're not there. I think it's easy if you want to kind of slough off, as some legislators do, or you can be just as active and busy as possible, as a legislator. But there was no doubt I found out pretty quickly that I didn't have the influence I once had as a staffer.

One of the things to start with, before I even got sworn in, is something important that I think you might want to know about. When I came back from the National Conference of State Legislatures after I announced my candidacy, I didn't have a job; and as we talked earlier, I got hired by the then-minority leader, Bud Washburn, to be on the staff during that period. And one of the reasons I got hired was one of his assistant leaders, Art Telcser, understood that I was going to win this time. He was trying to put together a group of votes for the leadership battle, and so he wanted me to be employed and be part of his group. That wasn't difficult, because Art, another state representative named Pete Peters, and I had always—especially Pete and I—been pretty close. We'd often been on the same side as a staffer, and they had been allied with Blair. So that wasn't too difficult, but it did play an important role in how things developed for me, because by doing that, I, along with Art Telcser, Pete Peters, and Bill Kepners, were four people who were together. We said we'd be for George Ryan for leader.

This was Art Telcser's plan. He did not think that George Ryan could get elected leader, but he thought if we had a group of votes together that we could negotiate with whoever did get to be leader. Art Telcser had been part of Republican leadership for the previous eight years, and he was a Jewish Republican from Chicago. That's about as rare as a black Republican from Chicago. And a lot of the Republicans thought he was too liberal. I don't know if he was liberal, but he came from a constituency that was more moderate to liberal than your typical suburban or downstate district. So Art knew that he couldn't be the leader, but he did want to be in leadership. And one of the things that motivated a lot of this was pensions, because you got paid five thousand dollars more if you were in leadership; that helped your pension. And you don't know how many nights I listened to legislators talk about their pension. That's what motivated guys around there—not the salary as much as their pension.

Art was very crafty; and I don't mean that in a negative term, but he was always thinking of strategy, the politics, and all that. So his thought was that George—who was just then, I think, in his third term—probably couldn't get to be leader, but we could put a bloc together, and we could be a factor—

DePue: When you say "leader," you mean minority leader?

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Because the Democrats were in control.

Edgar: Right, the Democrats were going to have it. And minority leaders had the same amount of money and the same amount of resources as the majority leader—that was something Arrington had insisted on years before—so being the Republican leader was an important position, particularly when you had a Republican governor. So that kind of helped me get the job with Washburn, and then when it came time for the vote on the leader—which was prior to our swearing-in; it was done, I think, in late November or early December in 1976—it turned out that George Ryan... George was pretty good at calling people—that's what you had to do—and he called people. He lined up a bunch of votes right away and surprised us all that—he may not get it, but he's going to be one of the two candidates for sure. And in the end, he had more votes than anybody else.

So a gentleman who I had originally thought would be a good leader, who even Telcser said that in the end we'd throw our votes in with, was Bill Walsh, who had been majority leader under Bob Blair. He was a suburban Republican, very ethical guy, and we thought, He'd probably have a better chance at it, but we could bring these votes in and... Well, Bill Walsh couldn't make up his mind whether he was going to run or not, and he did not have an Art Telcser. It's good to have somebody who's a strategist, and Art Telcser was a good strategist. George wasn't necessarily a good strategist, but George was fine; he'd call people, and go to them and get their support. And as I said, he got a lot of their support.

We went into the caucus that night on the vote, and we thought George had it. Bill Walsh turned out to be the guy who ran against him. At the last minute, he got in and everybody else dropped out. So it was ironic: the person who I originally thought would be the leader and who I wanted to be the leader, Bill Walsh, I'm not for him; I'm for George Ryan, and we all thought that we'd be with Bill Walsh, bringing votes from George Ryan. But it turned out that George Ryan had put together enough votes, and Bill Walsh had waited too long and did not have an Art Telcser kind of strategizing for him. And in the end, George Ryan got elected.

That was important as a freshman member, particularly, because if you're on the winning side, then you get taken care of; you get to pick your committees and things like that. So that enabled me to pick the committees I wanted and also some commissions. There was a commission on intergovernmental affairs. What was important about that commission was you traveled on that commission. I liked to be involved with the national organizations because I'd worked for the National Conference of State Legislatures, and that was the group that went to those meetings; and you did other things. So by being for George, I got the pick of the committees I wanted; and also, I was kind of on the inside. Even though I was a freshman member, I was still one of the inner guys that had put that together. So at that point, George Ryan and I were pretty close.

DePue: What was it that George Ryan brought to the position of minority leader? What were the skills and talents that he had?

Edgar: He could make phone calls, (laughs) to be truthful. He'd get up and talk. He was not bashful. He was a forceful personality, kind of, and didn't know substantive—I'll tell a story here a little later about that. But George was pretty well-liked. I liked George. I knew him from when he'd been a freshman member in 1973 and been allied with Blair. That year, I put the committees together. Blair said, "Here. Come back and tell me what guys ought to be on what committees," and I'd put Pete and George and a bunch of these guys on the appropriations committee; and that became the nucleus during the Blair time of the guys that really were allied with him on this. And that's how George Ryan later became minority spokesman on appropriations. So I had dealt with that committee and those guys a lot, and so—

DePue: You're right. You had a lot of power back in the staffer days.

Edgar: Oh, I did. (laughs) Yeah, it was amazing. I couldn't in the end do it; I could only say, "Here's the list; here's who I think ought to be," and most times, the leaders go along with me. The first thing after George gets elected: George knows he has to have a staff. He didn't know anything about staffing but he knew I did, so I got to put his staff together and pick out a couple guys that had been on the staff and elevate them up to... And it was kind of ironic. One of them was Bob Newtson, who I didn't really have much dealing with afterwards, and who became somewhat of a controversial chief of staff for George Ryan when he was governor. Another one was Dave Olean, who left a couple years later and became the lobbyist for the University of Illinois; and then he went to the University of Wisconsin, where he was in the chancellor's office—I think they call it that—and then became, I think, vice chancellor at University of Wisconsin.

So before we got sworn in, even though I was a freshman member, I was probably a little more active in the inner workings because I'd been around, knew the process. But also, I'd picked the right guy, which is very important over there in those battles because in the House, there are so many people, you can get lost if you're not on the right side; and that enabled me to get the pick of the committees.

The committees I picked were not easy committees. One was appropriations, because I thought I wanted to be where the money was. I didn't know much about revenue and I thought, Taxes, so I went on the revenue committee. And much to everybody's surprise, I wanted to be on what basically you'd call human resources, or the welfare committee, which was all the social service. Everybody thought I was nuts to go on that committee, and I think in retrospect I probably was. But my sense was that so much of the issues we dealt with in the legislature and so much of the money went to those types of issues, and I thought I needed to learn that, so—

DePue: Why not agriculture? You're from a very agricultural area.

Edgar: The state doesn't do much in agriculture. Really, it's pretty minor. It was a minor committee. It's like Director of Agriculture later, as we'll talk when I'm governor. More people wanted to be that, and I don't know why. It's a PR job. Agriculture policy is set in Washington.

Then they created a special committee on government reorganization. There was a provision in the 1970 constitution that allowed the governor to reorganize state government by proclamation. The legislature could reject it, but it wasn't like you had to pass a bill. And there was the indication that Thompson was going to do some of that, and so they created that special committee.

DePue: Was this strictly for the executive branch?

Edgar: The executive branch had the power, but in the end, the legislature could veto it.

DePue: But it wasn't affecting either the legislative or the judicial branch?

Edgar: No. For the most part, no. It was always consolidating agencies or things like that. So that was a special committee that was established, and I got to be the spokesman on that.

DePue: The spokesman?

Edgar: Meaning I was the ranking Republican on that committee. Wait a minute, I take that back. That first time, I was just a member of that committee. I forget who the spokesman was, but I probably knew more about it than he did. Consolation prize, he got that. I wanted that, though, because I wanted to be involved in any reorganization. So those were my committees, and that was a very heavy load, and I spent a lot of time in committee meetings. Most members didn't spend that much time in committee meetings; they could go play softball or go do other things. (laughs) I was always in committees, it seemed like, from the word go.

Again, I was surprised as a member, though; I found out everybody came to me. Lobbyists came to me. Everybody was nice to me. A lobbyist, because they wanted my support; they wanted my vote. The fact I had been around Springfield, they knew me, kind of; and they knew that I probably knew a little more, and I'd picked the right guy for leader, so it probably enhanced my possibilities.

So the one thing I do remember—I did a lot of sitting, in committee or on the House floor. You just sit a lot, waiting for the leaders to finally decide what are you going to do. In committee you sat and listened to witness after witness just drone on and on, which had no bearing on how people were probably going to vote in committee. It probably was already decided how they were going to vote in committee. But particularly on that human resource committee—public welfare—I forget the exact name of it.[77] We spent hours and hours listening to people.

And that committee was made up of all the people who had been on the wrong side (laughter) of the leadership battle, because nobody wanted on that committee. So most of the Republicans on there had not voted for George Ryan, and most of the Republicans on there were extreme conservatives: anti-abortionists, Religious Right types. And most of the Democrats on there were the liberals, flaming liberals.

[77] House Human Resources Committee.

Genie Chapman, who we talked about on ERA; she was the chairman of the committee, and she talked incessantly. And she was very sincere, but she talked a lot, and so committee meetings took forever. And I remember Aaron Jaffe, who's now, I think, a judge in Chicago. We were on some vote one day in that committee, and it came to me, and he said, "All right, now we're going to find out what real Americans think, as opposed to the crazies on the right or the crazy on the left like us." He said, "Edgar's the only guy who I think's normal on this committee." (DePue laughs) And I think I was. I think I was probably the only guy in the middle, and often I could be the swing vote on things because I was in the middle. And that committee—it was either they were off far to the right or far to the left, and me in the middle. And that was an interesting experience.

Revenue—I didn't know tax law at all. And I still don't know if I know it, but we spent an awful lot of time there talking about the property taxes—it is such a screwed-up tax—and how you administer it. Most of the discussion usually revolved around something to do with property taxes—very little on income tax or sales tax.

DePue: Was that a conversation that was dominated by the Chicago suburbs?

Edgar: No, because the Chicago suburbs are primarily Republicans, and we were in the minority. It was primarily an awful lot of rural concerns over property taxes, or it affecting township government, or this or that—assessments and things like that. To this day, I'm not sure I understand. But it was a dull committee. I have to say that I had to pinch myself often to stay awake and figure out what they were talking about.

DePue: How about discussions of inheritance tax, because that would be another hot button for rural areas?

Edgar: There was some discussion, I think, but we didn't do anything on it because you didn't know how to make up the revenue loss.

Then the third was appropriations. Pete Peters was the spokesman on that committee, and I was one of the reliable votes and very allied with the administration on trying to get through a budget. We'd spend hours. And late in the session, when everything was kind of waiting, it was always the budget that was the main issue. So again, when most members are out going to movies or playing on the softball team and things like that, I was sitting in appropriations committee hour after hour. And because I was a reliable vote and Pete trusted me, I was given certain responsibilities on that committee. So I was busy on those committees.

But still, it wasn't like being the chief aide to the Speaker; because even if I had been the minority leader, I don't know if I'd have had the power I had as the chief aide to the Speaker when we had the power. But being around that before did help me. I knew a lot of the Democrats, and I probably got along with a lot of the Democrats better than some of the other freshman members who were a little more

partisan-oriented than I was. And a lot of these Democrats remembered when I was important. They used to have to come to me. So fortunately, some of them I had (laughs) been nice to. I remember Tommy Hanahan—who just passed away here in the last couple months—he was one of the labor guys in the legislature, and I sat next to him. I think it was on the appropriations committee.

And he was an outspoken guy. He was anti-ERA, big-time. He was the one who talked about ERA supporters were brainless, braless women, or something like that, in a speech one time on the House floor that got quite a commotion.[78] But a very union guy. So I'd sit by him in committee a lot, and we got to know each other and be pretty good friends. And I remember one time he was talking about—he had a place down at Hilton Head, and he wanted to get away and spend the weekend down there. Then something came up, and he said, "Yeah, I own stock in that company and this company." Finally I look at him and I said, "Tommy, you've got a place in Hilton Head"—which I had never been able to afford to even visit for a week. I said, "You own stock. I'm lucky to pay my bills. You're representing the working man, and I'm supposed to be representing all the fat cats, and you got a lot more money than I do." (DePue laughs) He said, "Jim, remember, I represent the working man; it doesn't say I *am* the working man." (laughter) Which was a good point.

But it also brings up another point that I found, being a legislator, was a change. I mentioned earlier, when I got to be chief of—or Blair's main aide, I got paid twenty-five thousand dollars. That was a huge salary. I was now a state legislator making maybe twenty thousand, and this was six years later. And my wife commented often about how I was never home; I was always out running around the district when I wasn't in Springfield; and I left a lot less money at home than I did before. And one of the things I found very difficult was just making ends meet, because legislators' salaries were still not considered full-time salary, though a lot of people made less than that. But compared to what I had been making... You're doing a job where you have less influence, less power, than you did before, and you're making less money. So I decided to try to keep costs down; and maybe as a little bit of an investment, I bought a mobile home to live in, a used mobile home.

DePue: In Springfield?

Edgar: In Springfield, yeah. Because we got a per diem— I think it was thirty-six dollars a day—and that paid for your hotel room and food. So I figured if I could pay for a trailer with that and then maybe build up a little equity—

DePue: Where were Brenda and the kids, then?

[78] Thomas J. Hanahan (1934-April 3, 2009; D-McHenry), a longtime member of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, was elected to the Illinois House in 1964 and served for eighteen years. He gained notoriety for his opposition to ERA, especially his labeling of amendment supporters as "braless, brainless broads." *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 2009, 22.

Edgar: They were back in Charleston. This is a small trailer. It turned out I got taken, too. I bought it off some divorced lady, and it had her mother and her kids living in there. I went to this trailer court, and they told me there's one for sale. And I remember I said—I didn't know much— "Now, do you have heat tapes?" because I knew you had to have heat tapes on to keep the pipes... Says, "Oh yeah, we got tapes up." They were tapes, but they weren't heat tapes, and that thing froze up the first year twice on me. And I didn't have a phone in that trailer because I couldn't really afford a phone in that trailer.

We used to make all the lobbyist events, because if you made all those events every night, you could get enough to eat; you didn't have to go out and spend money on food. And back then, legislators used to get free passes to the movie theaters, and we'd go to a movie, and that would be free. And I loved to go to the movies.

DePue: Kerasotes did that, or...?[79]

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: So that was just kind of a local Springfield thing?

Edgar: Yeah. That was a huge deal. I didn't drink, I didn't party, so I didn't want to go do that, but I'd always go to a movie. Sometimes others would go to a movie. We would always eat at the receptions and go to the movies, so it didn't cost us anything at night, and we could save our per diem.

DePue: I wanted to jump in here and go a couple different directions with what you're talking about. We had discussed before, the golden days of the state legislature where they are meeting only every other year, and then Arrington comes along and changes the dynamics of that. But also during that timeframe, legislators had another job. Most legislators had another source of income, and it was accepted that you couldn't possibly make a living off of what you were going to be earning as a legislator. So I'd like to have you explain what the legislative year looked like when you first got there.

Edgar: By the time I got there, we were in annual sessions, and it was really more of a full-time job. Many of the members still had income coming in—they had other jobs—but they didn't have to go out and create those jobs; they already had them. I had a life insurance license. I could have gone and sold life insurance, but I didn't have any business built up, and you've got to spend time doing that. And then you had to worry about any potential conflicts. You got people that want something from you over in Springfield. But even if they did, they didn't think I was important enough to offer me any business. So I'd have had to spend a lot more time than I had available to build up that life insurance business. I think the same would have been true if I was going to start any kind of business, because I didn't have a business. I didn't have a family business; I hadn't had an occupation except government.

[79] A Midwestern movie-theater chain.

DePue: Were you the exception or the norm at that time?

Edgar: I was more the exception. Most of them had incomes from some other place. Now, when I got elected, Brenda always thought it would be kind of fun to have a Merle Norman cosmetics studio. You probably don't know what that is, but it was a certain cosmetic that was very prevalent in small towns, and they had stores, and she had always used Merle Norman cosmetics. The store in Charleston came up for sale, so we decided that'd be something for her to do and make some money, and we bought it. We never made any money off of it. Got a great education on retailing, but we learned (laughs) that you don't make any money off that. And she spent hours and hours... But we really struggled financially getting by.

But most legislators, as I said, had some other source of income; and [for] a lot of it, they were being carried because they weren't able to put the time in, because of their legislative duties. Particularly a downstate legislator, because they were much more visible in their district—their districts were geographically much larger—when you were back home, you had to be working. In fact, I used to say it was easier for me in Springfield than it was back in the district; I worked harder in the district because I had to drive everyplace, and my district was about 130 miles long and 70 miles wide. Most of the people lived up in Vermilion County. So every night that I was home, I usually was going someplace to a meeting, because most meetings were at night. In the daytime, maybe I'd have some meetings, but I know at nighttime, it seemed like everybody... And, of course, I had two other state reps in my district; so the pressure was on you. If you didn't show up and they did, it was really noticeable you weren't there. Now, if you showed up and they showed up, you all cancelled everybody out, and you didn't get a whole lot for it. What you hoped: you'd show up and they wouldn't show up, but then you'd wonder, maybe this wasn't worth it.

DePue: (laughs) Maybe they're someplace you're supposed to be.

Edgar: That, or—yeah. And I always went. The others didn't always go, but I always went. So you were on the go all the time. And then when you weren't in session, once a month—they gave you an allowance—you could go over to Springfield for two nights, or something like that. So I'd usually go over at least once a month when I wasn't in session. Brenda knew why I was going over: it was great; I would go over there, go out and eat, go to a movie, not have to worry about kids and all that. And poor Brenda's at home, so she used to, I think—though after a while she said it was good for me to go over because she needed a break; because she wasn't used to me being around all the time.

But there is a hardship—or "hardship" may be too strong. It's not all that great a life, particularly for a family, for someone to be in the legislature, because you're gone. You're not permanently gone; it's not like Congress, where I think these guys who commute are nuts. I think that's got to be really tough on a family. Of course, they don't spend that much time in Washington these days. But in Springfield, you would be over there. Very few people had their wives over, and they'd be older

couples whose kids were grown and gone, and maybe the wife would come over for a couple days a week. But for the most part, there were no wives, and you had the option of going to a movie or going out and partying; and I wasn't a partier, so I'd go to the movie, and I'd go home then and read a book.

DePue: A lot of that networking used to go on in bars and partying and—

Edgar: It did, but when they got the per diem—before I was there—that allowed a lot of them to go buy condominiums. Because they were down there so much, a lot of them went and bought condominiums—I couldn't afford a condominium; I bought a used trailer—as opposed to all of them staying in the hotels when they weren't there all that much. When they were all staying in the hotels, they did do a lot of networking at night at the bars.

DePue: And card games and...

Edgar: Yeah. But when they got the per diem, and guys started buying condominiums, they all scattered, and they didn't associate as much. And it was a little different breed of guy, too. I don't think they were quite as much partiers as they used to be, and so they didn't go out and socialize. Not only were they partiers; they were much more social and they got along a lot more. There was a lot more of a relationship between Republicans and Democrats, and over the years that has drifted away, unfortunately. And in Congress it doesn't exist at all, but in state legislatures—when I first went over there, outside—they'd sit across the aisle from each other; at night, you wouldn't know who was what. They associated together.

After they went to more of a full-time legislature, members got their own residences down there. Often they bought a condominium or something, or they were in apartments; they weren't staying at the hotels—you began to see that kind of disappear. By the time I was there, I would say probably a third or less stayed in hotels, and the rest of them—you could tell. I could pick up which guys were socializing; I just didn't. And that probably—[80]

DePue: You don't think that hurt you, though?

Edgar: Oh, I think it hurt a little bit. Yeah, I think it hurt a little bit. It hurt, and it didn't hurt. Maybe I wasn't as close to as many members, but I think probably a lot more members—there was a trust factor, a respect. I would go over to the Democratic side, because I was a moderate Republican; and often on nonpartisan issues, I would be voting with some of those guys on issues; and often I could go over there and get help on some of my bills.

DePue: If you can, walk us through the typical legislative year, [starting] with the beginning of the session.

[80] See Kanter interview pp. 98-102 for his take on sociability in Springfield during the first years of Edgar's gubernatorial administration, after the shift Governor Edgar describes.

Edgar: You'd start in January. Usually you'd meet for a day or two, then you'd adjourn for almost a month while they set up the board and did all these things. And also, the governor probably hadn't submitted his budget yet—we hadn't yet—a lot of bills hadn't come in yet, that were major. So after that, you'd go back to your district and you'd spend time in your district, probably going around and seeing what people wanted and what they thought about this or that. And then sometime in mid-February, the governor would give his State of the State address, which was platitudes—maybe a few bills came out of that. Then usually, sometime in the end of March, he'd give his budget speech; and that really is what mattered because that was what you spent most of the time down there worrying about.

In the latter part of February, you started to have more committee hearings. Everything was slow. Very few bills on the floor. Didn't spend that much time on the floor of the House, but you spent more time in committees. And things moved at a very slow pace; you didn't have all that much activity, so they took a lot longer. You'd still take five hours in a committee, but they'd take five hours on two bills as opposed to five hours on a hundred bills. I learned you never wanted to be up early in a committee because everybody had all their energy and just gave you a hard time. If you had a bill, you really wanted to be late in the agenda, when everybody just wanted to get things done and go home.

Then, by the end of March, things picked up because you had to start getting things out of committees—non-budgetary matters; started to spend a little more time on the House floor. Often, though, you'd sit on the House floor, and you'd just sit because the leaders would be trying to decide what to do, if there was some issue.

One of the dangers sitting on the House floor was that—I found this was a big difference from being a staffer—we had pages. Pages would go and get things for you, like bills and whatever, but they'd also get food for you. And across from the state capitol, there was an ice cream shop called the Dairy Rose, and it made the best hot fudge sundaes, milkshakes, and all those things that are very fattening. I think I lost about ten, fifteen pounds during the election; and I think [about] that first year, sitting in my blue chairs and having pages go get ice cream sundaes for me in the afternoon, and then we'd eat this fast food. I gained 30 pounds. There was a place in Springfield called the Shack. They had Italian beef sandwiches and fried chicken that probably added to some of my heart problems, and they used to go get that and we'd eat that at lunch. And you'd eat at your desk often, whether in committee or in the House floor. But those sundaes in the afternoon—the House would come in session in the afternoon, and you'd be sitting there, you're kind of half-awake, and you'd be eating on an ice cream, sitting in those chairs. I gained back all the weight I lost and an extra, probably, five or six pounds. But you spent a lot of time waiting because you weren't in the leadership; you didn't know what was going on. I had never had that happen before, because I was always in the back room plotting out the strategy while those people all waited for us out there.

So you get into April, then things move quicker in committee; you have more bills on the House floor. By May and June, you're spending a lot of time on the House floor. Late-night sessions. A lot of sitting, a lot of listening to talk just go on and on and on—it doesn't influence any votes, usually. A lot of nonpartisan issues. Partisan issues usually occurred more and more toward the end of the session—usually around the budget would be the—

DePue: When was the session supposed to end at that time?

Edgar: It was supposed to end at the end of June.

DePue: So they've changed it since then.

Edgar: Pate Philip got a constitutional amendment passed that—I think it was about the second year of my governorship—to pass a budget—to pass any bills after the end of May took three-fifths, which meant you had to get the budget done by then. Which was nice, too: it gave the agencies a month to plan, after they knew what their budget was. But usually we would get done June thirtieth. Maybe we'd go until three o'clock in the morning, but never until that first year I was governor did we go a few hours past that deadline.[81]

DePue: So during this timeframe when you were sitting in the legislature, there was no supermajority session where you had to have that 60 percent?

Edgar: Never got there. No, you didn't. If you'd have gone past July one, you would have had to have a supermajority, but we always got everything done, usually before midnight; and if we didn't, more times than not, it was just a technicality; we just hadn't got there yet.

DePue: And I don't know if we've mentioned it before, but it's worth mentioning that the fiscal year for the state begins July one.

Edgar: July one. And back then, you didn't pass the budget till July one, usually, or June thirtieth, so a lot of the agencies didn't know till they were in their fiscal year what their budget was going to be. Later, when they changed it to the end of May, it did give them a month, which was a huge help to the agencies to plan, because even if they got cut, at least they knew and could kind of plan around that. But back when I was a legislator, no. You knew you were going to get done that night; you just didn't know what time. And usually it'd be three o'clock in the morning. (laughs)

One of the things I learned, too, as a legislator: I always thought, gee, being a state legislator, this is really an important job. People ought to really care about this. So I tried to get there, got there, and thought, boy, I've arrived. I remember after—I don't know if it was the first session or the second year. I'm on the appropriations

[81] On November 8, 1994, Illinois voters approved the amendment to Article IV, Section 10 of the Illinois Constitution by a vote of 1,525,525 to 906,383. After May 31, only bills passed by a three-fifths vote could take effect prior to June 1 of the next calendar year. http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lrb/conampro.htm.

committee, so I'm usually up late at night the last week hashing out the budget compromises and stuff like that. I remember the last night of that session, I'd been up late all week. We finally, I think about three or four o'clock in the morning, got the budget passed; and Thompson always had a party over at the mansion afterwards, and everybody went over and drank. I was just tired, because I had to drive back to Charleston, so I went over there for a minute; and I jumped in the car, drove home, got home probably about 4:30, went to bed, and about 8:30, Brenda's shaking me and says, "You got to get up. Brad's got a Little League game, and you've missed the last three because you've been over in Springfield." I said, okay.

So I remember I'm sitting out on a lawn chair, half-awake, but pretty proud of myself at this Little League game because I'd been over at Springfield being a state legislator, doing important things, and making sure we had a balanced budget and things got taken care of. And being from a university town, I knew this was really important to people; I knew these people really thought I was an important person; and it's nice I was out at the game; and I'd done these wonderful things for them. So I'm sitting there feeling pretty important, and this lady comes up whose husband is a college professor, and I knew she was coming up to thank me for the great job I had done. She said, "Oh, Jim, when did you get back from Washington?" (DePue laughs) I thought, She doesn't even know where I am! But I think that (laughs) was one of the things that I began to realize. Being a state legislator, I might think it's important, but most people think it's eh, or, poor guy, couldn't get a real job.

So being a legislator after all those years of wanting to be a legislator, and also being in a position where I've had some power and influence, wasn't what I thought it'd be in some ways. It was not as rewarding, and I think I spent so much time worrying about my personal finances. And Brenda, I know, was not crazy about me being gone all the time, because we had two small kids, and she was trying to struggle and get by on our meager salary. So it was a little bit of a disappointment.

As a freshman legislator, I wasn't determining policy on RTA and things like that, which I did as a staffer, but I was pretty active for a freshman member. Again, I kind of knew the process. The one bill that got me on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune*, which I think I was the only freshman to get on the front page of—I got on twice that year. I proposed, and I got Jim Reilly, who became one of my best friends; who later went on and was chief of staff for Thompson, then headed up the McCormick board, and now heads up the RTA in Chicago. He's from Jacksonville, and he got elected the same time I did.

DePue: Jim Reilly, is it?

Edgar: Jim Reilly, yeah. And Virgil Wikoff, who was the state rep from here in Champaign, had been the former mayor of Champaign—we were all freshmen. And I came up with this idea. I said, "We can't pass the school referendum in our town, and really we need to use the income tax. Let's give the option of an income tax," because downstaters, farmers, and seniors don't like property tax; they think it's unfair. Most the people in my district who have income would be happy to pay

more for the schools, but they can't get a referendum passed. So I put a bill in—I was the lead sponsor, and I got these two to cosponsor—to create a local school income tax. *Tribune* banner headline: (laughs) "Freshman legislator..." "Proposal for school income tax."[82]

DePue: And a Republican, to boot.

Edgar: Yeah, we were all Republicans. So that got a banner headline. I remember walking down the aisle of the House the next day, and Bill Walsh, who was still the guy I wanted for leader, said, "Jim, don't you like it here?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You worked so hard to get here." He said, "You're only going to be here one term." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "That income tax bill you put in. That'll kill you." I said, "I don't think it will in my district." And it didn't. I had to explain it, but people kind of understood it. But I remember that bill and that day, because I just never dreamed I'd be the banner headline in the *Chicago Tribune* on that bill.

That bill, of course, went to revenue committee, which I was a member. And interesting: the Democrats—Mike Madigan wasn't the Speaker, but he was running things then. He didn't like that bill. It was in committee, and Madigan didn't surface then, but Dan Pierce was the Democrat chairman of the revenue committee, and I worked on him—nobody thought it could go any place. But the farm groups were for it. I think the Taxpayer Federation spoke favorably for it. I had a lot of groups come in, and again, I'd been around, and I'd done my homework; and I had the votes lined up in committee, to the surprise of everybody. Madigan, who used to send down the messages, what bills to come out and what bills not, had put a kill on that; the vote came down, and the key vote to put it out was the committee chairman. I'm a member of his committee. Now, I'm a Republican, but I knew him for years; I'm not a troublemaker on committee, and I help him out some, so he voted to get the bill out, and the bill came out.

Madigan just went nuts (laughs) because this bill... And I went to him. I said, "What do you got against that bill?" He said, "I know what you're doing, Edgar." He said, "You're going to pass that bill, then you're going to tell us in Chicago, 'We're not going to give you any money for your schools; go raise your own income tax.'" (laughs) He said, "I know what you're doing." And I said, "No, that's not what I'm doing, but I understand where you're coming..." And he said, "No, I'm going to have that bill recommitted." Here I'd got it out of committee, and now they're going to send it back to committee. And I said, "Look, leave it out on the House floor. I won't call it, but leave it out, because I just want to have discussion about it; and I got it out of committee, and that makes me feel good. I don't want to..." He said, "You give me your word?" And I said, "I give you my word: I will not call that bill this year." He said, "All right." So it stayed out, but I never—one time they accidentally called it, I was off the floor, and I came. I said, "No, no, no, don't," because Madigan got all excited.

[82] "Bill would permit local income tax for schools," *Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 1977.

DePue: I was going to ask if one of the other sponsors could have called it.

Edgar: They wouldn't. They knew the deal. It was my bill that they went along with. But then the next—

DePue: Before we leave that, how—

Edgar: I'm not done with that story yet. I was just going to go and finish, because school income tax was my big thing as a freshman legislator, and I always was for the income tax later on as governor. The next year we went back into committee. That time, I did have enough votes to get it out of committee, even though I don't think Dan Pierce had to vote for it, get in trouble. But we got it out. I had no commitment to Madigan. I called it on third reading. Back then it took eighty-nine votes; I think I got eighty-seven votes. Everybody said, "Boy, that was close." I said, "Eh, I had eighty-seven votes, but if I'd have had ninety-one votes, I'd have lost thirty votes; Madigan would have…" I had all these Democrats voting for it in leadership because Madigan figured it wasn't going to pass, so he didn't put the hammer on them. But if it had got over eighty-nine, he'd have put the hammer on them. That was my first big issue and my involvement in the income tax early on. And got me traction, got me a lot of the education people—we would talk because they knew this was kind of a novel approach.

DePue: The thing I wanted to ask you about that proposal: was that based on a county-wide income tax?

Edgar: No, school district, which made it real complicated, because school districts' boundaries resemble no boundaries in the state. They cross county lines and all.

DePue: But they tend to remain fixed over time.

Edgar: They do, but the Department of Revenue went nuts trying to figure out how they were going to administer that. And it was by referendum. You had to pass a referendum saying you were going to raise the income—just like you would on a property tax. And my argument was, if people want it, let them have that option. But they did have a referendum. There was no property tax offsetting reduction; it was just they'd add it. But that'd give them an option, because in Charleston School District, we had lost three referendums in a row, and the schools really needed the money. We finally passed a fourth one (laughs) only because we had a big snowstorm and the seniors couldn't get out to vote against it. The farmers could: they still came out in their tractors to vote no, but the seniors couldn't get out, and I think we passed it by fifty votes.

DePue: And the referendums were all based on an increase in property tax, I assume.

Edgar: At that point, it's the only option you had. If you're going to raise more money for your schools locally, your only option was to raise the property tax. What I wanted to do was to give then another option, give them the income tax. Administratively, it was going to be a nightmare for the Department of Revenue, but as I told them,

"I'm sure with computers, you can do anything." And they were never excited about it, but I got the governor's office to back off and not have revenue testify against it as they wanted to, and that helped. So that was one issue. There were five issues as a legislator of some importance. I don't know if you want me to run through them.

DePue: Yeah, but I would like to spend just a little bit more time—maybe a lot more time—on the income tax versus the property tax, because this is going to be a theme when you get to your gubernatorial election.

Edgar: Yeah, and I think part of it is growing up in Charleston, a rural area. I'd seen the problem we had. And I'd written a paper back when I was in college, talking about how the property tax wasn't that fair, and it made more sense to have an income tax and rely on it more. Actually, I still have a copy; I happened to see it a couple months ago. And just my feeling that the income tax was a fair tax. It all went back to fairness to me. And even though, as I told that story, I think, before, about that guy telling me, "Sonny, the only fair tax is a tax on the other guy." Maybe because I had no income, I thought it seemed fair, too. But I also knew, in my hometown, at Charleston, we had real difficulties trying to get enough money for schools because seniors did not want to see their property tax go up. They were on fixed income, and they paid an inordinate amount of their income on property taxes. And farmers, who made up a big part of our population, didn't want to see the property tax go up because they have a lot of property. They don't pay much in income tax, but they pay a lot in property taxes. So it just seemed to me the right thing to do, plus politically the right thing to do, to be able to come up with more money for education.

DePue: At that time, what percentage was the state paying for school districts?

Edgar: Oh, about the same as it is now. That number hasn't changed a whole lot over the years.

DePue: Is it, what, 30 percent, 25, 40?

Edgar: Maybe. I'm not sure what it—40 percent, maybe, at most, maybe a little less.

DePue: And this has been a huge political issue for as long as I can remember in Illinois.

Edgar: Yeah. See, in 1969, when Ogilvie passed the income tax, you did see an influx of money into the school aid formula; but there really hadn't been any huge influx since then because there hadn't been any tax increase at the state level, and downstate schools didn't have much property tax base. Suburbs had a good property tax base. So we'd sit down there and we'd hear about those schools up in the suburbs that had swimming pools and things like that. We were lucky if we could just keep the lights going in some of our schools. And I had two kids in the public schools. I was a product of public schools. So I was always very concerned about public education; I was always concerned about downstate poor districts having

enough money to fund a minimal amount of services at their school so the kids had a chance when they competed.

DePue: I'm going to ask you one more quick question, a political question, and then I'll let you go back to those issues that you had picked up. How is it that Mike Madigan ended up emerging as such a powerful leader, as such a young, new person in the legislature?

Edgar: First of all, he's smart. I always remember that about Mike Madigan. No matter what you might think of him, he's probably smarter than anybody else, and he's focused. Jim Thompson is probably smarter, but Mike Madigan is more focused. And he had been a Con-Con delegate in 1970, and his roommate was Richard M. Daley. I think Richard J. Daley probably wanted (laughs) Mike Madigan to keep an eye on his son. And the old man liked Mike Madigan. So Madigan comes down there, then—I think he's elected in '70, maybe '73.[83]

DePue: He would have just been finishing up his Con-Con time.

Edgar: Yeah. A lot of them came then. They actually got elected to Con-Con in '69; they finished up in '70; and they got elected in '70. Dawn Clark Netsch and a bunch of them came in from Con-Con that next time. So you had Jerry Shea, who was the mayor's guy in Springfield. Clyde Choate was the leader, but the mayor's guy was Jerry Shea; he was the assistant minority leader. Then when the Democrats get control in the 1974 election, in '75, Bill Redmond is the Speaker, but Jerry Shea is the majority leader. And then after the 1976 election, for whatever reason, Mayor Daley indicates he wants a change in his guy; he wants it to be Mike Madigan instead of Jerry Shea. So one of the first things that happened in 1977 after I was sworn in: Jerry Shea resigned from the legislature. Madigan was already the majority leader. That's who Daley wanted, for whatever reason, because he was closer. He was from Chicago; Jerry Shea was from the suburbs. He was from Berwyn or someplace like that. And Mike Madigan was a ward committeeman.[84]

DePue: But it's as simple as that? You no longer have Daley's blessing, so there's little else to do but resign?

Edgar: He didn't want to stay if he wasn't going to be important. He could go make a lot of money as a lobbyist—and that's what he did. He still lobbies a little bit, besides being chairman of the U of I board a few times. George Ryan made him chairman.

DePue: But it illustrates that there's enough people who are Democrats from Chicago who are going to be following Daley's bidding and say, "Okay, Madigan's your guy? He's our guy."

Edgar: Yeah. Not always. If you go back to 1959, the classic battle for Speaker. When Democrats got control of the legislature, Daley wanted a guy named DeLaCour,

[83] Madigan began serving in the Illinois House in 1971.
[84] Chicago's 13th Ward.

who everybody thought was too much of a hack. So all the reformers supported Paul Powell, and I—read "Bipartisan Coalition" by Tom Littlewood. It's a little pamphlet Eagleton put out; it's fascinating about that period.[85] You had Paul Simon and Abner Mikva, all these do-gooders: they were for Paul Powell, because that shows you how bad Daley's pick was. Other than that, I don't know of any time Daley didn't pick who the Democratic leader was. Now, he had to within reason—go back to Cec Partee. That wasn't their first choice; they knew they could have stuck with their guy, but he was going to lose, so they had to go for Partee. But he was acceptable.

In this case, Bill Redmond was from the suburbs, and he was from DuPage County; that was kind of the compromise. He never was the real power; the real power was always the majority leader, particularly when Madigan emerged in 1977. Madigan also was chairman of the bill assignment committee, and you had to go over and talk to him, make sure you got the bill in the right—and in fact, I had to, I think, on that school income tax, get him, but he did put it in revenue. But what was your question? What (laughs) got us into this?

DePue: How he became so powerful, so quick.

Edgar: He was a ward committeeman: that's very important to remember. That's the power base in Chicago, ward committeeman. The mayor liked him, thought he was a bright young guy. And he was focused; he did his work down there, and he emerged.

DePue: I think we're ready now to go to those other issues you were referring to.

Edgar: The other thing that got me in the front page of the paper in my legislative career, in the *Tribune*, was a bill to do away with the innocent—back then, you'd be found guilty of a murder, but if you'd be proven insane, you were innocent for reasons of insanity. And it wouldn't be uncommon that somebody would kill somebody; they'd get ruled insane; six months later, the psychiatric division would say, "The person's cured"; and he'd walk free. So there was a lot of unhappiness about that procedure. And we had an incident in our district where somebody had killed his family and then had walked a few months later, after being found guilty or—I don't think even found guilty, just determined innocent for reason of insanity, which almost was automatic: if you were insane, then you weren't guilty. And so I put a bill in. I wanted to put a bill in to change that.

There was a lot of discussion, not just in Illinois but around the country at the time, [about] "guilty but insane," which would mean you're insane and you're guilty; you'd go off to a psychiatric ward, and once you're cured, you'd have to go back and serve time. George Ryan had something in his district, and he wanted to do that, too. And I remember the staff came to me and said, (clears throat) "George Ryan's got a bill, and he wondered if you guys could go together." I said, "Yeah.

[85] Thomas B. Littlewood, *Bipartisan Coalition in Illinois* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

He's the leader. He gets first." They said, "He wants you guys to cosponsor the bill," and I said fine. So we introduced that bill together, and I remember that made the front page of the *Tribune*.[86] In fact, one of the members pointed out to me that that was the second time I'd been in the front page of the *Tribune*; it was the first time he'd been on the first page of the *Tribune*. But it kind of underscored George's style. George was a good legislator type: went out and took guys out to dinner at night and was good at that; was very I'll support you and help you, and this and that; but he really wasn't too much into specifics.

DePue: A good ol' boy legislator?

Edgar: He was a good ol' boy legislator, but he wasn't into the specifics of the issues. He said, "We're going to meet in Chicago the night before we're going to introduce the bill, and we'll go over it." So, fine, we meet at the Bismarck, and we get something to eat. And George—I'd been around him a lot; been around him a lot since—never drank that much. That night, for some reason, he was drinking, and he got a little rowdy and gave the waiter a pretty hard time, I thought, which was not characteristic, usually, of George. I don't know, maybe he just had a bad night. But then we ate. He should have eaten before he drank, (laughs) I think, that night. And he finally said, "I'm going to bed. Edgar, you meet with the staff and go over this. Tomorrow, I'll let you answer any of the questions." So I sit up with the staff, going over the bill—because this is complicated. To this day, I'm not sure I understood it. But I did know a lot more than George did, it turned out.

The next day, we did the press conference, and George just read the press release, as he usually did—never would go off the cuff. Then he said, "If anybody has any questions, Representative Edgar would be happy to answer them." (laughter) And I did. I spent about a half hour answering. And I just remember one of the guys watching said, "He didn't know what was in that bill." I said, "No, I think he does." But that was kind of George's style: the details were not his thing. And as governor, he'd always read a speech. I don't know if he ever gave much off the cuff because he—it just wasn't his thing. He wasn't going to take the time. He would take the time to do the politicking or the fellowship or whatever you want to call it. He'd go out with guys at night; and if he was the leader, and you'd have a problem, he'd bring in directors from agencies and harangue them in front of you to show that he was going to go the… Then he'd call up the director later and say, "Nah, it was all just for show; don't get mad." And he'd do that to me when I was in the liaison office, later. But as a member, he was very good to his members. He was very protective, and he helped them. He'd go to their districts and raise money. But when it came to knowing (laughs) what was in the bill, that just wasn't his thing. So that got some play, and—

DePue: Much more positive, I would think, than the income tax.

[86] "Offer tougher law on insane criminal," *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 1978, 3.

Edgar: No, the income tax was very positive in my district. You had some people probably mad about it, but it was positive from the point of view that the education community thought, Here is somebody that's being visionary and courageous. So I got points off that. I think that helped me in my career; I don't think it hurt me. In fact, I remember there was an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* about my bill. They talked to me on this.[87] So I thought, Boy, that's pretty good as a freshman legislator.

The other thing: the first session, I'm on the reorg committee; I'd worked on energy matters, and I thought, We need a department of energy in Illinois and we don't have one, and that's a big issue. I start maneuvering around, and I have Jimmy Houlihan, who's now the Cook County assessor; who's a Democrat; who had been Walker's guy on the House floor. So he wasn't in the mainstream of the Madigan types at that point, because he had been a Walker guy, and they had never really trusted him (laughs) all that much. And I can't remember if he was chairman, but he was on the reorg committee, too. So we start working on this bill to create a department of energy and do some stuff in the energy field. He can get Democrat support, but I've got to get Republican support; and I also have to get the administration not to kill it, because they didn't want it for some reason.

I remember everybody thought they had that bill killed several times; and I remember going over to the Senate Republicans, and there had been guys who were there when I was there as a staffer years before, and they were used to kind of listening to me. Even though I was now a rep., I wasn't their staffer anymore, they'd still listen to me. And I remember they thought they had the bill—they passed the bill out of the House without much trouble. They thought they had it killed in the Senate three times, and we kept bringing it back. And the last thing they did in the Senate floor before they adjourned the session for that year was pass the energy bill. They killed it once, but I got some Republicans who'd voted against it to go in and move to reconsider, and they called it up at the last minute and passed it out. So we created the Department of Energy.

I'd also got the governor's people, who needed me on a lot of other things, to agree that if that bill passed, they would not veto it—thinking it would never pass. They thought for sure they had it killed, (DePue laughs) so they thought that was an easy promise. But they made the promise, and lo and behold, we pass it. So they're just beside themselves because they can't veto it; they promised me, and I was a stickler on that and made it clear; they also didn't just want to have me really ticked at them for lying to me.

But I remember Paula Wolff and Joan Walters, who later came to work for me, were just fuming that bill had passed; and they were really mad that Sam Vincent, who was a legislative liaison, had promised me the governor would sign it and wouldn't veto it. But I knew they were trying to figure out some way around this, and he amendatory vetoed it. Didn't veto it; he amendatory—just made some

[87] "Illinois bill would abolish innocent-by-insanity plea," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 11, 1978, 12.

changes. They never called it when it came back; they wouldn't bring it up, so it died.

DePue: What were the issues that the opponents had to it?

Edgar: I can't remember why they were opposed to it. We were going to take Mines and Minerals and parts of Natural Resource—or Conservation—and put it together in this bill, and I cannot remember why they were opposed to it.

DePue: It strikes me, though. You mentioned the Department of Agriculture as an area where it's predominantly dominated by federal legislation. I would think a Department of Energy would be the same thing.

Edgar: Coal. So we'd spent a lot of time—and I'd worked as a legislative aide—we created a Coal Development Act. Coal is such a big issue. And the thing was this is—

DePue: Coal reclamation, for example?

Edgar: No, desulfurization. Dealing with strip mines; but mainly promoting coal and doing something to desulfurize it. That's really what a lot of that money was to be spent on. So that was part of the driving force; and to do away with—we had a legislative commission on energy that had kind of got screwed up on a leadership fight, and the wrong person got to be chairman. The thought there was this would create a stronger voice on Illinois policy on energy. Had a lot of groups for it. I can't remember who opposed it—some did—but the governor's office just had something else in mind. They didn't want to do this. And it was more staff. They had their plan, and this wasn't in their plan. But I got done in. It was fun, because the governor's office was sure they'd killed that thing four times, (DePue laughs) but I knew enough of the process and could outmaneuver them; we got it passed. I just couldn't get the other.

The other bill of importance that I dealt with as a legislator—came back to haunt me as governor—was when I was with NCSL. We'd looked at a concept where the legislature would be able to review administrative rules promulgated by the executive branch, because the feeling was that, often, the executive branch would take a bill passed by the legislature and enforce it in a way that was broader or different than what the legislation called for. And this would allow the legislature some ability to rein in an executive branch that disregarded the legislative intent of agencies and rules, and things like that. Very pro-legislature versus anti–executive-branch kind of thing. I had worked on this at NCSL, drawing up the model law that states could look to, so when I came back as a legislator, I threw this in.

There was a Democrat named Buzz Yourell, who had a similar bill; and I think he'd picked it up or his staff guy had picked it up from NCLS, too. So they came to me and said, "Look, we're in the majority. Your bill's not going to pass; ours will. But why don't you become the cosponsor with us, and we'll work with you, and you can be part of it?" And I said, "Fine," because I knew I wasn't going to... So he was going to be the lead sponsor, and I'd be the second, but we'd be

cosponsors, which happened often. And as with the energy thing with Jimmy Houlihan, I thought we had a chance. I could get Democrats and we'd get the thing passed; my job was to get the governor to sign it.

I went to the governor's office again and said, "This is really important to me." I had another guy, there, his chief legislative guy—Zale Glauberman—that's the guy who had written the Stalin speech I told you about.[88] He was now Thompson's chief legislative aide, and he finally agreed Thompson would sign it. Actually, I think the staff was trying to kill it, but Thompson kind of said, "No, I can sign that for Edgar." And I think it was the last bill he signed that year. I tried to get a press conference, but they said, "Just be glad he's going to sign it."

But we got that passed and he signed it, and then the commission was set up. It was pretty common then: if you passed a bill that creates a commission, whoever the sponsor was, got to be the chairman in most cases; and Buzz Yourell was going to be the chairman. He's the Democrat, and the Democrats control things in the legislature. It was agreed that I would be the vice-chairman, and in two years, I would then become chairman. Every two—it would change. So he became chairman and I became vice chairman, and we set it up.

And unfortunately, they've misconstrued—they've gone farther than the legislative intent. The legislative intent was to slap the hand of the executive branch if they passed a rule, a regulation, that was broader than what the law called for. What they now have used it as is just if they don't like the rule, they'll kill it. And lobby groups will go to a legislator and say, "We don't like this rule." Even though it clearly gives the executive branch the power to promulgate a rule in that area, it's not broader than the law gave them the power to do; they just don't like the rule. And unfortunately, that was not the intent.

Now, there's a real question whether, constitutionally, this would stand up. It has always stood up, pretty much. There have been challenges. And, oh, the governor's people, a lot of them, just furious Thompson signed the bill and "This is going to be a nightmare." It was, and it became a nightmare for me (laughter) later on. But that was a very important piece of legislation, and it was ironic. Here was a piece of legislation passed to make sure the executive branch didn't abuse the power given them by the legislature in a law, and what it became was a law where the legislature abused the power given to them. And unfortunately, they vote up and down, whether you like the rule or not. And that wasn't the intent; the intent was: is the rule within the parameters of the law? But I was on that for about a year and a half, then I left to go to the governor's office. They weren't too bad to start with; but after I left, it just went pretty much the other way.

DePue: That whole discussion sounds like an inside baseball kind of a thing, but I would think it was especially important with our last governor and his abuses.

[88] See Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 29, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 189.

Edgar: Right. It was. I think there are times governors will abuse it, there's no doubt; but more times than not, the history has been, I think, that the legislature probably abused this one, where they don't even say it's—they just don't like it. And lobby groups will go to them, when they lose their position dealing with the executive branch when they're promulgating that rule and regulation. They'll go in and talk, and they lose; the executive branch will then file their recommendation—they'll just go to the legislature and get them to kill it.

DePue: The constitutional challenges have been over individual rulings, then?

Edgar: Yeah, at the NCSL, when we did it, the way it was worded, we thought it would stand a—and in Illinois, it has stood the challenge. In fact, as I said, it's much broader; the way they do it, I thought would have been unconstitutional. It was a major piece of—an insider thing, you're right on that—but a major thing in the process that passed, which I was proud of, that came back to haunt me later as governor.

It seemed like there was another issue, I thought, of legislative significance that I was involved with. Mental, income tax, energy...maybe that's... But compared to being the chief aide to the Speaker—these were important things, but there were a lot of other major things that I didn't have anything to do with and just...

Oh, the only other one—and this is the other deal with Mike Madigan: for years, Republicans had always thought, If we could keep the polls open later in the state, particularly in Cook County, it would help Republican voters; because a lot of times, voters are coming back from working downtown, and it's too late to vote. And the Democrats have always thought, Yeah, that'll help Republicans, and we're opposed to it. So any time we'd try to pass it, for years, a bill to have later—it's seven o'clock we close the polls. It used to be six o'clock. We wanted to do it seven o'clock; we wanted to extend it an hour. The Democrats would always kill it.

Some way, in the Senate, on a bill that I had sponsored, a bill for the administration—it was a technical bill on something—they got an amendment put on to do that; and got it sent back, much to the consternation of the Democratic Party. It was back on our calendar for concurrence, and as a sponsor, I wanted to call for the concurrence because this would give us that extra hour of voting. We knew it was going to help us, and the Democrats knew it was going to hurt them.

I got Redmond, who was the Speaker—and I got along with Redmond okay—to promise to at least give me a hearing. Not that he was going to vote for it, but he would call the bill, because the Speaker can determine whether to call anything or not. And it had to be called by midnight one night or it was dead. Redmond kept promising me he'd call it, and he'd given me his word. Well, Madigan was just adamant he didn't want to call. So I keep talking to Redmond. Redmond says, "Yeah, yeah, we're going to call it; we're going to call it." I said, "It's getting close to midnight; when are you going to call it?" "Well, we'll call it; we'll call it."

And then Madigan was up. Madigan would preside sometimes when Redmond didn't preside. So Madigan was up there. I said, "Hey, this bill, we've got to call it." And he looked at me, and he smiled. I said, "Redmond promised me he was going to call it." He said, "Edgar, we're going to"—I won't use the language he used (DePue laughs)—"eff you," and he smiled, and he said, "That's what's going to happen on this." (DePue laughs) And I at least respected the fact he was candid with me. Five minutes before midnight, Bill Redmond came back on the floor of the House and called my bill. There was no way, in five minutes, we were going to get the debate done because the Democrats all lined up to talk about the bill. They talked about it till twenty after twelve, and Redmond said, "We're taking this bill out of the record; it's past the deadline." So that was a great… But I appreciate Madigan was honest with me. If Madigan ever told you he was going to do something, he did it. He'd tell you up front he was going to stick it to you, and that's what he told, in very graphic words.

But as a member, there were important issues and things; but it wasn't like I had experienced as the chief aide of the Speaker.

DePue: Your story does give me the opportunity to go back to the legislative cycle. So we're now at July first. What happens for the rest of the legislative year?

Edgar: We go home, and I do my victory lap about being an important person back in... And I would go off to the National Legislative meeting, which would usually be in the latter part of July and August.

DePue: On whose dime?

Edgar: Intergovernmental Cooperation, because I voted for George Ryan. I didn't have (laughs) any money to do anything. I'd go, and of course, I'd been on their staff, so I got named to chair a committee and things like that.

Then you'd be at home. And I had an office in Mattoon, Illinois. I lived in Charleston, and if you know anything about Coles County, you better keep both towns happy. We had three legislators from Charleston in that whole legislative district—only four legislators, but three came from Charleston, so I knew I better put my office in Mattoon because Mattoon was very resentful of Charleston having everything. I had my office in Mattoon, and I would have office hours; people would come in. And then I'd go around the district, go speak to Rotaries and Kiwanis, talk about what happened. You'd be invited to a water conservation dinner; you had this retired teachers' meeting... There were all these things you got invited to that—I tried to go to all of them if I could, particularly when we weren't in session. So usually during the week, I was on the road, going around the district, or I was in my office in Mattoon. A couple times a month, I'd go to Springfield, see a movie—I had a secretary in Springfield, and I'd do things over there—do mail and some stuff.

DePue: You had a budget for your staff, then, as well?

Edgar: I had an office allowance back in the district that allowed me to hire a secretary and have an office. The office was pretty inexpensive. It was upstairs in Mattoon, which was good because it kept a lot of cranks from walking up the steps. (laughs) If you were on the ground level, you'd have more people walking in just to complain. And you had a little money for mailing; postage, and things like that. Then you had your office in Springfield, which the state paid. That didn't come out of your allowance; that was an office you were given in the capitol. And the secretary, I shared with—I guess just two of us; Virgil Wikoff and I shared a secretary.

DePue: When you're not in session, are you receiving a paycheck?

Edgar: They used to pay at the first of the session.

DePue: For the whole session?

Edgar: The whole two years, used to.

DePue: Oh, wow.

Edgar: And then guys would resign the next day, (DePue laughs) so they decided they had to stop doing that; you started getting paid monthly. So we got paid monthly. We were getting paid twenty thousand dollars a year, and then when we were in session, we also got thirty-six dollars *per diem*, which was to go to food and room. We didn't have to report that, but we got that thirty-six dollars. And it went. In fact, I had it kind of figured—I had to almost go to Springfield twice a month just so I got that money; help make my payments on my trailer. And that *per diem*: as I said earlier, if you could get free food at a lobbyists' reception, then went to a free movie; thirty-six dollars a day—I didn't spend that much on my mobile home and food. (laughs) You made a little bit to offset the other days. So as I said, just getting by was close.

So then you'd come back in veto session sometime in the fall, which wouldn't last all that long—usually.

DePue: October? Late October?

Edgar: October sometime. Late October, early November. If it was an election year, it'd probably be after the election.

DePue: What were the voting rules in the veto session, then?

Edgar: If you wanted to pass something with a simple majority, it didn't take effect till the following July. If you wanted something to take effect immediately, you had to have an extraordinary majority.

DePue: And these are things that the governor had either vetoed or amendatory vetoed?

Edgar: Yeah, and a lot of times it would be other things that would come up in the meantime that needed to be addressed. It wasn't just limited to vetoes. That's what the original intent was, but you brought up other issues, and sometimes you'd go back to the calendar and take up bills. The RTA was passed during, theoretically, a veto session in the fall because we were there and—it's just not a full—you don't start everything over again. You don't usually have as many committee meetings and everything.

DePue: So the dynamics of that session are a little bit different than in the spring?

Edgar: Yeah. The veto session is usually pretty much all spent on the floor of either the House or the Senate. You're not in committee very much. Usually it's limited; not every issue in the world comes up; though sometimes they'll throw it open, and it will just go down the calendar. It's usually a lot more waiting for leaders to work things out. Again, you spend a lot of time sitting. Now, when Madigan later got to be Speaker, he was much more organized; you didn't sit as much. When Ryan was Speaker, after I'd left, you sat a lot. Blair, you sat a lot. You sat a lot with Redmond. But Madigan—and he sat, too, a lot of times—he was a lot better at not having to sit. Maybe they wouldn't be in session, but they wouldn't be sitting on the floor doing nothing as much as they used to do when I was there.

DePue: During the time you were in the legislature—one of the standard critiques of the Illinois legislature is it's so dominated by the Four Tops.[89]

Edgar: Yeah. It wasn't quite as much then, because we had cumulative voting, and you had three members from a district; you had much more variety of different types in the House. You had a harder time pulling a caucus together because maybe the guy you worried most about was the other Republican from your district; because you knew one was going to go. It was not uncommon for me as a freshman member to be able to have some influence—freshman member of the minority party. So it wasn't as bad to be in the minority as it is today. A rank-and-file member had more say. When Bill Redmond was Speaker, he was a very weak Speaker; he was more of a figurehead. So you had different factions that had more power in some ways, but individual members meant more than they do now. Leaders still were the most important down there, but it wasn't as dominating as it is today.

DePue: What I'd like to turn to next are some of the initiatives that Governor Thompson—the new governor, elected for the first time in 1976—took up. Let's start with Class X.

Edgar: Yeah, I don't think that was a big deal. A big deal, but it was not tough to pass. Some defense attorneys didn't like it because it was going to put more sentence—but most legislators, even Democrats, wanted to do things that were going to put bad guys behind bars more.

[89] The four legislative leaders.

DePue: Could you start with a definition of the Class X felonies, what Thompson was trying to do?

Edgar: I'm not a lawyer, so I can't really—not something I spent a lot of time thinking about, worrying about too much. Class X, I think, just meant you create—you're in a class of a really bad criminal. Not that criminals—

DePue: Armed robberies, rapes, murders, manslaughter...

Edgar: Certain crimes that were very worse, and so you would face a tougher sentence, maybe a mandatory sentence—which turned out to be terrible. Mandatory sentences turned out to be terrible on the other end because our prisons got so crowded, and they did a worse job than they had before. But of course, he'd been a U.S. attorney, and that was his kind of get-tough-on-crime thing. And the opposition probably came from those in the legislature who were defense attorneys, who were in the minority, so… There are arguments back and forth, and to me, I always thought there was never any question that it was going to pass in the end.

DePue: You voted for it, then?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. Most legislators did, if you look at the roll call, I think.[90] Class X was a good PR thing. Thompson had a couple things, like Build Illinois... It underscores the importance of how you communicate these things to folks. You've got to have something kind of catchy. Class X was catchy. When Thompson came in, his big problem was the budget. The budget was a little wobbly when Walker—not as wobbly as it was when Thompson left, but it was a little wobbly, and so he [Thompson] had to worry about budgetary issues, too. Of course, you had a change, too. Mayor Daley had died after the election, before Thompson was sworn in, so you didn't know what you had in Chicago. Chicago just wasn't the power it was, because they were leaderless, really. Had a guy named [Michael] Bilandic who was the acting mayor, but he wasn't Richard J. Daley. So in some ways, that gave Thompson kind of a break, though he'd have probably been able to deal okay with Daley. It was just different in Springfield as a result of that. It was ironic that Daley had already sent word that he wanted Madigan to be his guy, because by the time we got around there in January, he was dead.

DePue: That's right, I'd forgotten that piece.

Edgar: But the change had been made.

DePue: So that part of his plan sticks.

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[90] On November 22, 1977, the Senate approved the bill, 48-7. The next day, the House sent the bill to Thompson on a 145-25 vote. The bill grouped "rape, deviate sexual assault, aggravated arson, armed violence, armed robbery, treason, 'heinous' battery with intent to harm or disfigure permanently with caustic substances, certain hard narcotics transactions, calculated drug conspiracy, and aggravated kidnapping for ransom" under the new category of Class X offenses. Conviction of a Class X offense came with a mandatory six-year minimum sentence. *Chicago Tribune*, November 23 and 24, 1977.

Edgar: Yeah, it did. Yeah. And I think a lot of members wanted it, too. Madigan was just viewed as a very smart guy, and I think they felt a little more comfortable with him than they did Shea.

DePue: Even as young as he was at the time?

Edgar: Yeah. How young was he? He would have been—let's see, I was thirty. He's, what, six years older than I am? He'd have been about thirty-six.[91]

DePue: Another one of the initiatives—maybe this is part of the Class X discussion—the death penalty, re-imposing a death penalty.

Edgar: Yeah. That was made possible because the U.S. Supreme Court [in 1976] had ruled that, in some cases, you could have a death penalty. What had happened originally: the [U.S.] Supreme Court [in 1972] had banned death penalties in all fifty states. It wasn't something the legislature had done—they never would have done that—but the Supreme Court did it. Finally, there was a ruling that kind of gave some wiggle room, where on limited cases you could reinstate a death penalty. And again, I don't think there was any doubt that was going to pass; it was just a question of how much. I voted for it, as George Ryan voted for it, and most legislators voted for it; but it was very limited—more limited than it is today, and Illinois is still more limited than a lot of states, like Texas. But I remember that was a tough vote for me because I had reservations about whether even the state should take somebody's life. And that was probably, in a lot of ways, a vote I—"anguish" may not be quite the right word—had qualms about and thought about a lot. But my district clearly was probably 90 percent in favor of the death penalty; there was just no doubt about that.

DePue: I was just thinking back to that timeframe. There were a couple very infamous serial killers from Illinois who were—

Edgar: You had two. You had one who was on Death Row, and then it got stayed because of this, and that was [Richard] Speck. Then you had [John Wayne] Gacy, who got tried—and I might have these out of order. I don't think I do. Speck got tried after the ban, so he never got the death penalty; he got life imprisonment. So when it was re-imposed, Speck got off. The first one I dealt with as governor was Gacy, but he'd been convicted under the old law, death penalty, and then was executed after the change was made.[92]

[91] Born April 19, 1942, Madigan was thirty-four in January 1977.

[92] Richard Speck was sentenced to death in 1967, a sentenced affirmed by the Illinois Supreme Court in 1968. His sentence, along with forty-one others, was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1971 because potential jurors had been wrongly excluded on the basis of their opposition to capital punishment. In 1972, the Court ruled the death penalty, as then practiced, unconstitutional. In 1976, the Court clarified the grounds on which the death penalty would be constitutional, paving the way for its reinstatement in the states. Gacy was arrested in 1978 and sentenced to death in 1980. *Chicago Tribune*, December 6, 1991 and May 5, 1994; *Furman v. Georgia*, 408 U.S. 238 (1972); *Gregg v. Georgia*, 428 U.S. 153 (1976).

DePue: Make sure that nobody's going to misinterpret this. When you say Speck "got off," he got off the death penalty.

Edgar: Yeah, he had a life sentence, and he died in prison while I was governor.

DePue: Any other issues that you recall really struggling with, in terms of votes?

Edgar: Death penalty was probably for me, but once I decided—I made the decision, and I don't know how much it was a rationalization, because I knew where my constituents were on that issue. On limited cases, these people probably have forfeited their rights, and we shouldn't have to support them the rest of their life. I don't know if I ever thought of how much of a deterrent it was—I'm not sure—but...

No, some of them, I have to admit, I wasn't sure what I was voting on, because there were some very technical bills. There was a story (laughs) I tell. If you're a member, you got 177 guys in the House at that time. There were guys on both sides of the aisle you knew were experts in certain areas, and guys who I respected. And I had been around before I became a member, and I knew who I thought were pretty respectable guys and knowledgeable guys. So on some issues, you would look to see how these other people voted, because you had this voting machine, and in the House, it took forever to take a roll call because everybody would get up and talk. You had debate, then you took a vote, and during the voting, people got up and talked. And it might take an hour and a half—

DePue: You mean, they're talking, and they're not paying attention to what's going on in the floor?

Edgar: No, they're talking—they're up to speak. Explaining their vote is what they called it. And sometimes it'd go for an hour and a half, two hours—having a roll call, explaining your vote. So you'd be sitting there, and you'd watch the board. You'd see how guys were voting, and if you knew a certain legislator knew a lot more about this issue than you did, often you might follow that person's lead. And I remember we had some bill on drainage districts or something I wasn't familiar with. It was kind of a downstate thing or suburban thing; it wasn't anything in the city, either. And it was droning on. Some guys would just get up and talk, and it was going on for about two hours. And I don't know how to vote, but Jim Reilly, who comes from a district—Jacksonville; I came from Charleston—very similar areas—and a good friend of mine, had a great deal of respect for him. And I thought he might be on the committee that bill had come out of—it wasn't one of my committees. So I had voted no, and he was voting yes or vice versa; and I looked up, and I saw that he was voting the other way. I thought, he must know what's going on; I don't. So I switched my vote to how he was voting.

DePue: After you'd already stood up and discussed it?

Edgar: No. I didn't stand up. I very seldom ever got up and talked on the House floor, very seldom.

DePue: But actually after you had...?

Edgar: I had already flipped my switch; but you flip your switch, and you'd change your mind several times. So I was up green, he was maybe red, and I decided, he must know. So I flipped it to red. They took the roll call, and later that day, I saw him someplace, and I said, "You know, that bill, I followed your lead." And he said, "Well, I followed your lead." (DePue laughs) I said, "No, you were voting no, and I was voting yes; and I saw you had voted no, and I figured you must know something about it." I said, "I didn't know anything about it. I thought it came out of one of your committees." He said, "No, I was just flipping back and forth, and I saw that you had gone to red, so I left it on red at that point, because I was just getting ready to vote green till I saw you'd switched to red." So neither one of us knew what we were voting on.

Not to scare people. That did not happen on the big bills, and that didn't happen on most bills, but it happened on some bills. But that's why you relied—and again, it was not uncommon—for me, there'd be some Democrats I'd rely on, on some issues. There'd be some social issues, or things that guys who maybe were liberal Democrats who I respected on some things, and I'd follow their lead. And there would be times when I needed help on a vote; I'd go over to the House Democrat side, and I could pick up some votes. And that was not uncommon. You'd go back and forth; and guys you knew from committee, you'd ask them to help you on the floor, and because they knew you, they'd help you. So it was much more of a comradeship thing back then, and you relied on other members, their expertise, because you knew people had expertise in different areas. There were very few people who knew something about everything or knew that much about everything; but there were many who knew a lot about something, and you knew who you could trust and who you thought was knowledgeable enough.

DePue: You remember any occasions where you'd see Thompson's legislative liaison coming down and working the legislature?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. Yeah, a lot of time. And I—

DePue: Who was it at that time?

Edgar: Zale Glauberman was his head guy, and we'd worked together on Blair's staff, and we were friends. I handled a lot of their stuff, particularly in appropriations committee on dealing with the Department of Public Aid. That was a big fighting point. Art Quern was the director, and I handled a lot of their legislation for him; that's how Art Quern and I got to be good friends. He later became Thompson's chief of staff when I was the legislative liaison. Unfortunately, he was later killed. I made him the head of the Board of Higher Education. He'd gone with Aon Insurance. He was killed in a plane crash when I was governor.[93] So yeah, they

[93] Arthur F. Quern was killed October 30, 1996, when the corporate jet he was traveling on crashed while taking off from Palwaukee Municipal Airport. At the time of his death, he was chairman of the Illinois Board of Higher Education and chairman of Aon Risk Services Companies. *New York Times*, November 1, 1996.

would work the floor. There was more than just him. Sam Vincent worked the House, and they would be on the House floor working bills. But they didn't have to usually work me too hard because I was allied with the administration. I was pretty much supportive, both as a Republican and just my nature,; and the guys in that administration, I was usually pretty close to.

There was one time, though. There was one time when I did raise up and say no, and I think it had a big impact on the relationship between Thompson and myself. In that first year, Thompson wanted to reorganize law enforcement agencies, and he wanted to do something in Department of Law Enforcement—change the name to state police. I think that's when they did—they were going to do a bunch of stuff. There was a question whether the legislature could change the rule promulgated by the governor, and the feeling was you couldn't change it, so it was either up or down. You'd reject it; you couldn't amend it. And they said they couldn't change it.

They came in and they had this proclamation. Ty Fahner, I think, was then the director of law enforcement, who later became attorney general, and he came in and testified on—it was either him or the staff guy from Thompson's office; it might have been the staff guy from Thompson's office—what they wanted to do with this proclamation. And it was obvious what they wanted to do wasn't what was in the wording; they had screwed the wording up. And this was the first one we'd ever done under the new constitution this way, so this was a precedent. The Democrats were kind of moaning and groaning just because it was a Republican making a proposal, a Republican governor.

And I said, "Wait a minute. You say you want to do X, Y, and Z, but that's not what this proclamation says." "Well..." I said, "But you need to change it." "We can't change it. You can't change it. Once you submit it, you got to leave it this way; you can't change it." And I said, "You want me to vote for something that doesn't do what you say you want to do." I said, "That's a bad precedent to set," and this is the first one ever. All of Thompson's staff, people are looking at me like, Wait a minute. They knew it was going to be close, because they had all the Republicans; they had a couple Democrats they'd picked off just to get it out—they had to get it out. And I said, "I've got to just be truthful. I've got problems on this."

So they came to me, and they said, "What do you mean, you got problems?" I said, "Listen, this doesn't do what you said you want to do." I said, "I can't approve this. That's a terrible precedent. I don't want to go against the governor, but you guys screwed up. Withdraw it." "Oh, we can't do that; we made a big deal about this," and they go on and on. So I said, "Well, I have problems with this." There were enough Democrats, and they knew that I had reservations, so that kind of gave them a little backbone, too. (DePue laughs) And they thought I also influenced a couple of the other Republicans on this committee who weren't that crazy about just—they weren't always in lockstep with the governor, but if I'm going to—and I've got a good reason to go off the reservation, they're going to go,

too. So they get worried that I'm going to—and this is early on. This is a big deal. This is a law enforcement thing; it's one of Thompson's first initiatives.

I'm a freshman legislator, and I'm over in my office, and my secretary says, "Uh, you just got a call from the governor. The governor would like to see you." I said, "Oh, no." She said, "What's the governor want to see you for?" And I said, "Oh, they're trying to talk me into something." And she said, "You better go." And I said, "Uh..." She said, "That's the governor. You've got to..." And my secretary had been with me at the Speaker's office. She'd been around for a long time. I said, "All right"; so I go over.

When I went in there, it was just Thompson and me. He said, "I understand I've got problems with you on this proposal?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "What is it?" He said, "I know you're not holding out for a job—that's not your style. You're the last guy I would think to be holding me up." I said, "I'm not holding you up." And he said, "What is it?" And I said, "What your guys said they wanted to do, that's not what this does." I told him they said they can't make changes; they can't withdraw. And I said, "I just can't vote for it." This is the first time we've ever done this, and I said, "I'm not going to knowingly vote for something that doesn't do what you say you want it to do. I have problems with the way it's worded."

He said, "If we made these changes, would that accept?" And I said, "Make this change." "Yeah, okay, we'll make this change." I said, "All right, I can vote for that." He said, "All right." So he wrote a change on that, which they said they couldn't do; they wouldn't do; they just couldn't do this. They added that, and the agreement was we would then pass a bill to this effect, because we wanted to codify it; we didn't want to just leave the proclamation. So we went back, we passed out of committee, and I won my point.

And I always think, from that point on, Thompson respected me because I kind of stood up, but I wasn't trying to hold out for a job or anything like he was finding out most legislators wanted; it was the principle of the thing. Because we didn't really have a whole lot of dealings. We argued over the pay raise later on, but when he wanted me to come and work for him, I think part of it went back to the fact he had dealt with me on that and thought there were things that motivated me that were not just jobs and whatever. And—

DePue: How well did you know him before that?

Edgar: Didn't know him. In the campaign, I'd first met him, and he didn't remember. He came down to Coles County and spoke at some dinner, and I met him early on. Then in the campaign, he came to the Coles County Fair; and that's when he had that yellow t-shirt on, like the biggest yellow canary, and I complained to Zale, who was working on his campaign, that I thought he was insulting us downstate—dressing down, thinking he was in... Then I ran into him right before the election at that dinner in Sullivan, because Brenda had never met him, and Brenda was with

me at this dinner. And he said, "Yeah, your husband and I, we're going to Springfield together." I'd see him, and he knew who I was, but I wasn't in leadership, so I wasn't in the meetings, and—

DePue: So this encounter is basically the first substantive meeting that you've had with him?

Edgar: Yeah. And I have to admit I was nervous. I had a great deal of respect for the office of governor, and I had a respect for Thompson, and so I was very nervous going over there. I'm a freshman legislator, and I'm going to tell my governor no when he's wrong? But I thought, it's what I think, so I did; and I think it helped. It didn't hurt me with Thompson. And I wasn't holding him up; he ended up getting basically what he wanted. The changes were insignificant in the overall scheme of things to him. More important, he had to get it; he couldn't have it rejected; it'd be a defeat. And I got what I wanted in the principle, and that turned out to be the way all reorganization things were done in the future: you had to have conforming legislation to go along with the proclamation, and—

DePue: Conforming legislation, meaning...?

Edgar: You would take what the proclamation said and put it in legislative form to conform, make it so you had legislative—and that really wasn't called for in the constitution, but that was kind of the deal we worked out in that meeting. But more importantly, for me, it was really my first dealing with Thompson.

And later we dealt a little bit—we wanted to get a reservoir. They wanted one in Vermilion County. They wanted one in Charleston; they also wanted one in Vermilion. Walker had opposed it, and Thompson came out against it, too, so we worked out a compromise where we got state money to enlarge the lake, Danville Lake, enough to take care of the water needs. I didn't negotiate that with Thompson, but I along with the local legislators there were very emphatic on that issue, and we were able to work that out with his staff people and then flew over with him when he did it. It was ironic when we flew over...

The other issue Thompson and I really differed on was how he handled the legislative pay raise. You didn't live in Illinois at that time, probably. This is 1978.

DePue: Yeah, I wasn't here then.

Edgar: Yeah. This was a huge issue.

DePue: But I certainly know the story about it.

Edgar: Just a huge issue.

DePue: Can we talk about that after we discuss the '78 election?

Edgar: Sure, okay.

DePue: That was one of the issues in the ’78 election, wasn’t it?

Edgar: No.

DePue: I know it occurred right after the election.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Is there anything else we need to talk about before the ’78 election?

Edgar: No, I think we’ve probably...

DePue: I’ve got to tell you, Governor, I don’t really know too much about the story of that ’78 election, but maybe there isn’t that much of a story to it.

Edgar: There isn’t much of a story. Thompson got elected in ’76 against Howlett, and it was definitely a vote for change. Howlett was the old—I think maybe I mentioned there was this picture that appeared throughout Illinois the day after the Democratic primary when he—

DePue: Yeah, you mentioned that last time.

Edgar: Yeah, and that set the tone, I think, in a lot of ways. Here is the old politics, and here’s the new politics: Jim Thompson, this reform... And Thompson just took to politicking like a duck to water; he was a natural for a guy that had never been around it. He was a little stiff to start with, but after he got into it, he was almost too hammy; he was good. But also, Howlett just was the old time, and people wanted change.

Thompson’s first—and I always thought it helped him. A lot of people thought that two-year term might hurt. I think it helped him, because he was still on a honeymoon, still on that... Thompson was all over the place. He was a master at the media. He had a couple guys—one guy in particular—really good at getting his picture in the paper and getting interesting kind of things, but he went overboard a little bit. There’s a picture of him drinking some kind of alcohol from a plunger during a college parade. To some, they thought, ah, that’s really... That hurt him with a lot of basic Republican voters downstate. Years later, people complained about that. And another time there was a horse they brought to the capitol to promote some—I think it was a charity horse show—and he got on the horse in the rotunda of the capitol, which again was a great photo, but it wasn’t real becoming of a governor on a horse inside the capitol rotunda. The whole thing was a little...

But for the first two years, he was still in that honeymoon; and Class X and all this stuff, he had enough to talk about legislative-wise. And he was different. He was young. I always said it was like a comet: it’s very bright to start with, but sometimes it wears out quicker. (laughs)

DePue: Mm-hmm. He's also recently married at the time; he's got a new daughter, doesn't he?

Edgar: They had a baby. I can't remember if Samantha came during the cam—I think she did.

DePue: She was born, as I understand, during the '78 campaign.

Edgar: Yeah. So he had all that. He was going to win anyway, but there was still this aura about Thompson. He was a great media event, and you had no real competition in Chicago. You still had this temporary mayor, Bilandic, who's a nice guy, but pretty bland. (laughs) So Thompson really was able to kind of capture the Chicago media, which governors don't usually capture because usually it's the mayor of Chicago. But Thompson was a lot more exciting to watch than Bilandic, who was very bland.

So in 1978, the Democrats put up Mike Bakalis, who was the state comptroller, and he just never really got very far. Also, '78 was the off-year election. Carter was in the White House. Traditionally, that doesn't go well, and Carter was not any ball of fire at that point. He was not that successful as a president, I think, and so Thompson had a lot of that going for him. But the first two years, Thompson was still in a honeymoon. He didn't win as much that time as he did the first time; he won, but it wasn't spectacular. If it'd have been a four-year term, I think he'd have had a much more difficult time, because I think, as we saw later, that comet began to fade.

DePue: The '82 election, which we'll talk about a couple sessions down the road, was a classic, as was yours in that year as well.

Edgar: Yeah, I think if it'd have been in '80, it may not have been that close, but it would have been pretty close. It would have been a lot closer than probably it was in '78, if it had been '80.

DePue: How about your own election that year?

Edgar: (laughs) I almost got defeated because of my success. I had all the endorsements, and everybody figured I was going to run first, and they got worried about Campbell a little bit. And also, the Democrats had a decent second candidate. They had a young guy—I forget his name now—but I liked him. In fact, I was hoping he'd win. Had Larry Stuffle, too, who I wasn't—I thought I liked the other guy a little better. But Stuffle, of course, being the incumbent, had done his constituent stuff. He was probably not going to get beat, though there was a chance he might get beat. And then you had this new guy who I thought was a very attractive candidate on the Democratic side. And everybody thought I'd run first, and Stuffle and this other guy and Campbell could be close.

DePue: Were Stuffle and Campbell the other ones from Charleston?

Edgar: No. Coffey was the senator from Charleston.

DePue: That's right. I'm sorry.

Edgar: Had a senator and two state reps. Campbell was from Vermilion County, the big county of the district. Lo and behold, the election came out—they pushed real hard at the last for bullets for Campbell in Vermilion because they were worried about him not doing as well, and we didn't push for any bullets because we thought we were going to do well. And this other guy, this other Democrat, was taking some votes from me because a lot of people didn't like Stuffle. They would have voted for me, but they thought I'm all right; we'll go give this kid a—so he can beat Stuffle. A lot of people did that, I knew. And in the end, we all ran close together.[94] (laughs) In fact, there were times that night I wasn't sure. I ran second, Stuffle ran third, and this other guy ran fourth, but we were all pretty close, and Campbell ran a little bit ahead of me with a bullet. So yeah, I got reelected, but I have to say it was a little longer night than I had planned.

DePue: It's got to require a certain level of sophistication in the voting public, though, for them to understand, I can vote a bullet; I can split the one and a half—

Edgar: All they ever thought about was a bullet or two votes, splitting it twice. Nobody thought about three or anything else, but the bullet was a pretty well-understood concept. (laughs) And as I said, a lot of folks were thinking, Edgar's all right; we're going to go vote for this other guy because we can knock off Stuffle, and it almost… Then a lot of people thought, We'd better worry about Chuck, because Edgar is going to run gangbusters but Campbell could get caught in the switches here. So I knew a lot of people who weren't for Campbell more than they were for me, they just thought I'm home free, and they were worried about Campbell. And that was the thought going around the district at that point: these two guys are really going at it, and if they split the votes evenly, he could get caught if Edgar runs way ahead, so we better just give him...'78 election is an off-presidential election; you don't have quite as much of a turnout, either, so you can have more controlled votes, I think, in that kind of election.

DePue: Were there any issues that really rose to the—

Edgar: No, I don't—no. For the representative race?

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: Not really. I can't think of any major issues that came up. Just your usual. We all represented the same people, so a lot of our votes were pretty similar. Stuffle got in a little bit of trouble. He had been a big proponent of the death penalty, and he had missed—he wasn't on the House floor. (DePue laughs) He was someplace. I won't speculate on where he was that afternoon, but he wasn't on the House floor. So the next day, they had a rule: even if you weren't there, you could later go in and ask to

[94] Campbell won the general election held November 7, 1978, with 51,157 votes, 8,740.5 ahead of Edgar. Edgar finished ahead of Stuffle and Neil Young, with margins of 271 and 4,267. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 7, 1978.*

be added to the roll call. He went in the next day and asked to be added to the roll call on the death penalty, and the media got a hold of that back in the district, and they just went nuts over that because if you weren't there to vote, how can you vote a day later? That's terrible. It's bad enough you didn't vote for the death penalty after you'd campaigned for it, then... (laughs) But Larry was always getting those kind of things. He had a tendency to—as I said, he didn't watch things close enough.

DePue: Recall a proposition being on a ballot that time, about voters being asked about property tax?

Edgar: Oh, yeah, property. And again, where Thompson and I did differ.

DePue: What were the specifics of that?

Edgar: Thompson got worried. It was at the same time as Proposition Thirteen out in California, and so Thompson wanted to put something like that on. He thought he'd put that on the ballot, and it would show that he was anti-property tax and draw people out to vote for that and vote for him. I thought it was a terrible thing; I thought it was too restrictive and just did not like it. Bernie Epton, who later ran for mayor of Chicago against Harold Washington, and I were the only two Republicans in the House who refused to sign onto that.

DePue: That didn't hurt you, though, back in the district?

Edgar: No. I don't think so, no. Then they got in trouble because they forged signatures to get that on the ballot, and that was a real controversial thing.

DePue: You need to tell me some more details on that.

Edgar: You got to have so many names on a petition to get that on the ballot.

DePue: Oh, so when they went around and got petitions on it.

Edgar: Yeah, they had a petition drive, and as I said, Bernie Epton and I were the two who would not put our name on it, and we wouldn't support the petition drives. Thompson's people were short of names, so they sat around one day and wrote names on. Later, he had Ty Fahner investigate that, and nobody went to jail, but some guys lost jobs over it, and it was a pretty touchy thing with him. I just had said, "I think this is phony, and I'm not going to be part of it." And Bernie Epton and I were the only two Republicans. I remember they said, "Just you and Epton are the only guys..." I said, "Even if Epton signs it, I'm still not going to do it. I think this is phony; I'm not going to do this."

DePue: This is your third race. Of course, you lost the first time around. How were the finances different, and how was the organization of your campaign different this third time around?

Edgar: Finance was easy because I was an incumbent. And it had really been easy the second time because I wasn't an incumbent, but everyone knew I was going to win, and I knew people in Springfield from my other days in Springfield. Even the first time, raising money was not as difficult as it should have been if I'd have just been somebody running for the first time; who had never been in Springfield and [didn't know] where some of the sources of money were and some of the groups that you had to get their support to get money. But the third time, we had plenty of money. We had fundraisers. We had Thompson over to do a fundraiser the end of the first year, and we had a huge turnout. It was the biggest turnout they'd ever had in the county. So we had plenty of money. The trouble was, though, there wasn't the enthusiasm. Everybody said, "We just did this two years ago. (DePue laughs) You're in, and you're going to get reelected." Nobody worried about me winning. So it was a little harder to get all the volunteers and everybody as enthusiastic.

DePue: Did you have paid staff?

Edgar: No. They went out and did the things, but it struck me that it was not—it was just two years, and we'd gone all-out in '76. Of course, in '74, we'd gone all-out and lost, but in '76 we'd gone all-out and won. It was like, wait a minute, we just did this. And everybody took it for granted I would probably top the ticket, and it just wasn't—you lost a little bit of that zip, it seemed to me; it wasn't as much fun that time around as that first time, because you didn't have much to prove. You had already proved it.

DePue: So you're working just as hard, but you're not having the enjoyment out of it.

Edgar: Yeah, the buzz you got wasn't quite the same as it was that first time. And you could see it among the people, too. A lot of the people had worked both the other two campaigns with me. They were there, and they did everything, but it was just kind of—maybe they didn't work quite as long at night and maybe make as many stops as they had before.

DePue: Where was Brenda at with being the wife of a politician this far down your career?

Edgar: She was a trooper. This was not her first choice, and her theory was she'd stay at home and take care of the kids because I was never home. It was tough, though. I was gone a lot; and the kids were small; and we didn't have much money; and I'd come home tired; or every time, it seemed, like I'd sit down to eat, we'd get a phone call. I never knew how people knew when I was going to eat, because we ate at a different time every night, but between the fork leaving the plate and going into my mouth for the first bite, the phone would always ring. And I was probably frustrated at some things, as I usually was. I could get frustrated pretty easily. So I don't think she viewed that as a great life. Now, she had her Merle Norman. She was getting that going, and that was a struggle; but I think she enjoyed some of that, and other parts of it wore her out.

I wasn't around, and when I did come home, I was usually worn out, or I was on my way to someplace else. So it's a tough—and that's what I always tell people, "You just don't understand." That's why later on I never would help the House and the Senate recruit candidates who were young and had young families; because I just think—as I finally realized—it's not a natural way to spend a part of your marriage and your family life, when kids are small; running back and forth to Springfield. There's got to be something else better than that.

DePue: Unless they really wanted it.

Edgar: The wife might want it; then I would have to be suspicious of the wife. You'd be insane to want that, no matter how much of a political junkie you are. And on the kids, throughout my career, I was gone a lot, and Brenda did a great job of raising the kids. I'd drop in for football games and basketball games. It's tough on the family; it's really tough. Then there was an incident that happened after the '78 election, the pay raise thing. Really, I think that did it for Brenda. She didn't tell me—

DePue: That's the perfect opportunity to go into that, because there's quite a bit of meat on this story, is there not?

Edgar: Yeah. This made Pat Quinn, changed the House, and probably made me, too, in some ways. There had always been a problem with raising legislative pay because legislators are always very hesitant about voting for a pay raise. And the const—

DePue: Can I just add one more thing?

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: This is in part a result of Arrington wanting to professionalize things and have every year instead of every other year; and you get more people like yourself who rely primarily on legislative pay.

Edgar: Yeah, but it always had been a problem, even back when they were part-time. There's just always a nervousness about voting for your own pay raise and then having people—people could relate to that, and if anybody was making less than that, they thought you were making way too much. And while I said twenty thousand dollars, we were having a tough time getting by, a lot of people were getting paid less than that. But we'd kind of grown accustomed to living with more money than that.

It started with Arrington, too, and the first thing I ever saw the legislature do in 1969 was to override a governor's veto on a pay raise after the election. Of course, they couldn't get at it until then, but they did it after the election. And then in 1970, they voted another pay raise after the election, and I can't remember after that if they did another one or not—they might have. No, they hadn't, because we hadn't had a pay raise for a while. That was part of the dilemma. Then they set up a pay commission; this was to look at the issue and recommend back what salaries

ought to be. And they came back, and they recommended that our salaries ought to be thirty thousand dollars a year. We hadn't had one for about six years at that point. And you got to remember, inflation was going pretty fast, interest rates were real high. This was not a great time. And I remember the report came out in, I want to say, March 1978, and right after it came out, I was asked, "Would you support that?" I said, "I would support that." Larry Stuffle, the Democrat, said he wouldn't. And they said, "Your other state rep says he wouldn't support that." I said, "I think I'm worth thirty thousand. Maybe he doesn't think he's worth thirty thousand—I won't disagree with him on that." (DePue laughs) But I said, "I think I'm worth thirty thousand. So I'm being very candid with you: I would vote for it."

And I remember I was flying—I might have been going to Danville—I was flying with Thompson, and Thompson, I think, thought he was just going to have a nice conversation with a state rep. And we get on the pay, the commission. He said, "We'll just put it off till after the election and do it then." I said, "Governor, I have been involved in the last three pay raises, and we've done them after the election. You cannot continue to do that. This is going to blow up in our face." I said, "Let's just hit it head-on." I said, "I think it's a huge mistake to put this off till after the election. We need to..." And I was pretty forceful because I was just beside myself, because the commission had come out, and we had enough time. We'd do it now and let it settle, but I just did not want to have this thing put off till after the election because I—

DePue: What timeframe was this again?

Edgar: This was probably in March.

DePue: And you think Thompson was in favor of the increase?

Edgar: Oh! (laughs) Of course he was! (DePue laughs) He had more trouble balancing his checkbook than I did. Yeah, he wanted it, but he was trying to figure out—he said, "But we'll just wait till after the election." No, he wanted it. And I really got into him, because later George Ryan said, "I talked to Thompson. He said, 'Jiminy, what got into Edgar? He just jumped all over me on the flight over to Danville about pay raise.'" And he [Ryan] said, "Edgar feels pretty strong (laughs) on that stuff, you know." Of course, they didn't do it; they waited till after the election. And Thompson had said he'd veto it.

DePue: In the election campaign.

Edgar: Yeah, in the campaign, he said he'd veto the pay raise. This is when Carter is the president, and the economy's just going nuts. Inflation's going high; interest rates are like 18 percent. Carter, about this time, right after the election, puts in the wage price freeze. (laughs) There we are. We don't have any legislative pay raise, we hadn't had one for six years, and I'm thinking, "Ah, there's no way I can stay." So the legislative leaders say, "We're going to pass a pay raise. I remember I said, "Thompson's going to veto it." They said, "Yeah, he's going to veto it, but we got

the votes to override, and he's going to veto it real quick so we can override real quick." It was all a planned deal, and I just shook my head.

DePue: Who did you hear that from?

Edgar: The leaders. We all knew what we were doing; everybody knew the game plan. Thompson was out of state—he was at some conference in Virginia or someplace—

DePue: Florida, I think.

Edgar: I don't know if he was in Florida. I don't think it was Florida this time. That was later, when that snow storm (laughs) —and they forced him back earlier. Now, he was in Virginia or North Carolina. This was in November. He was at a governor's conference or something. The Republican Governors usually met that time of year.[95] So we all lined up, and I said, "Hey, I said throughout the campaign I was going to vote for a pay raise; I'll vote for one now, but this is nuts." I said, "I can't believe Thompson is going to veto it. People are going to see through that." That's what he's going to do. He's going to do a veto because he's out of state, but he'll do it so we can just turn around a half hour later, then override him.

So that's what we did. We vote for it. Thompson autopens—they have this all set up—he autopens it, and within a half hour, an hour, we have another vote on the pay raise to override him. I will tell you—what would it be, 118 votes, 109 votes—there weren't 109 people on the House floor. Most people had gone home, but we were flipping switches, (DePue laughs) and nobody dared call for a verified roll call—which didn't matter. If we'd have had everybody back, we would have had enough to override him. And so we passed the pay raise.

The press went nuts (laughs) the next day, and they really went nuts at Thompson because it was so obvious that this was all a planned deal. Governors don't usually veto a bill thirty minutes after it passes and set them up so they can then do an override. It was obvious what he was doing, and that made people even madder at him than anything.

But I remember I had a paper... So I go home. Like, eh, I'm going to catch a little flak, but we've done this before. But this is nuts; we shouldn't have done this. The next day, the Mattoon paper comes out. Mattoon paper never wrote an editorial on anything. Front page of the paper, (laughs) there's not only an editorial, it's bordered in black. (laughter) And I remember the publisher of the paper had called me six months before, asking me, on the revenue committee, to vote in favor of raising the amount on official notices that had to go in the newspaper. How much a paper could charge is set by statute, and he called me. They wanted a 50 percent increase because they hadn't had an increase for ten years, and I voted for it, because that's reasonable, you hadn't had it in ten years. I voted for it. So I remember I called him after I saw that editorial, and I said, "Your editorial today—

[95] Thompson was vacationing in South Carolina at the Kiawah Island resort when he vetoed the measure. *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 1978, 3.

a little sharp, wasn't it? On the front page? Wasn't that a little overdoing it?" "I don't think so." I said, "Tell me how this is different when you called me six months ago and wanted me to vote for a 50 percent increase in the rate for public notices." "There's no similarity at all. (laughter) And I said, "I guess you and I think differently."

Then Quinn started this teabag thing. This is how Quinn got public notice, he started—

DePue: And Quinn at this time was what?

Edgar: He was nothing. He had been in the Walker administration. He was out—I don't know what he was doing. But he—

DePue: Was not in the legislature.

Edgar: No, he never was in the legislature. He started this rebellion, like the Boston Tea Party.[96] In fact, I think it was on the (laughs) anniversary. Quinn tells me he's big on these anniversaries, and that's how he thought to send teabags to Thompson. There's a revolt. Thompson gets, I don't know, several tens of thousands (laughs) of teabags, and this thing just keeps going. The local TV station, the CBS station, Channel 3 here in Champaign, which was the most watched at that point in central Illinois, wanted to have me on and Tim Johnson, who is now congressman—he was a state rep, and he'd voted against it, too. In fact, I was one of the few downstaters who voted for it. Max Coffey, my senator, and myself, and I think maybe two other downstaters, were the only two downstate votes for this pay raise. But I told everybody, "Hey, I campaigned on it. This is no secret. I said during the election I was going to vote for a pay raise."

So I go on TV with Tim Johnson. And (laughs) was not a smart—Coffey was smart enough to be out of town—he avoided it—but not me. I figure I can tell everybody just why I did it, and they'd see that I'm right. So I'm not sure I convinced anybody. But they tell the story that after Johnson was going on, I said, "If they don't want the pay raise, they don't have to take it." "Oh, yeah, we have to take it. We'll get taxed on it." I said, "No, you don't have to take it. Don't take it, then." So then the next day, the story I heard was Johnson's accountant called him up and says, "I got a list of charities for you." And he [Johnson] says, "What for?" He says, "To give that pay raise." (DePue laughs) "Oh, I'm not going to do that. I'm going to keep that." "I just thought for sure after watching you on TV, you'd want a list of these charities."

So downstate it was just horrendous. Brenda felt so bad, she didn't want to—she needed to get a new dress for something. She wouldn't go get the new dress. She wouldn't go outside the house because she was afraid everybody who saw her

[96] On the relationship between public outcry over the pay raise and the Cutback Amendment, see Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, March 4, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 38-41.

would figure she's out spending money from that pay raise. And I remember some function at Eastern and people making some crack about, probably using that pay raise money, or something like that.

(laughs) That's the only issue I've ever known that really saw people—even taxes, they don't react—people were just enraged. Of course, the media was playing it up. I can understand why they were enraged, and it all goes back to I told Thompson this was going to blow up in our face—and it's really blowing up in his face. He's reelected, but he is nervous. And so he calls a special session of the legislature to reconsider the pay raise.

I was furious with him at this point; I was just beyond myself, because here we had taken all the heat, and all he was doing was (laughs) to make us then give it back after we'd taken all this heat. And I get asked by a reporter what do I think about... I said, "I guess if I was the governor, and I lived in a tax-paid house and the taxpayers paid my utility bills and the taxpayers paid for my food and the taxpayers paid for my transportation, I guess I would say we could roll back this pay raise, but I don't have the taxpayers paying all those things like the governor has. You hear the governor's going to roll any of that back for those things? No, he just wants us to roll back this pay raise." (laughs) And George Ryan said he read it, Thompson went down, and he said, "What in the world's got into Edgar?" (DePue laughs) And Ryan said, "You don't mess around with Edgar's pay raise. He wants his pay raise, and he is..."

And we had a revolt in the—the legislature just—but Thompson really put us in a bad light because he said, "We got to roll this back." We went over there, and I remember Tim Johnson about got punched out by a Democratic senator because he was running around the districts, stirring up in our districts. He sent a guy into my district stirring up my vote on the pay raise. And I said, "Tim, stay out of my district." I just remember I got really mad.

DePue: What was his motive in doing that?

Edgar: Oh, future, just to build up... I don't know why. And most of the guys downstate—everybody wanted the pay raise; there was nobody who was going to give that pay raise back, (laughs) let me tell you. They were just hoping they could vote no. As they say, "Vote no and pray yes." That was the motto. And that's fine. They vote no, but they didn't have to go around—Johnson was the one guy going around the state just stirring this up. So I remember (laughs) this one Democratic senator from over in western Illinois, who had voted for it, came over, and he says, "By gosh, I'm going to punch you out, Johnson." He's about ready to go at it. And I was really ticked because he was coming in my district.

But we go in, and the Senate Republicans and enough senators were going to go with Thompson. They were going to roll it back. And the House, we refused to. Both the House Republicans and Democrats—we had a joint caucus—said, "We're not going to go back." And George went down and told Thompson, "No, we're not

going to...” So we finally compromised. I think we went the first year to twenty-six thousand, and then the next year we’d get to thirty thousand. (laughs) I thought, There’s never going to be another pay raise. But at that point, after that, Brenda just says, “I’ve had it.” She says, “This is terrible. I don’t want to live in this kind of an environment. I go out,” and she says, “I feel guilty, like people think I’m taking their money, and stuff like that. I know how hard it has been for us to get by.” And I’m sitting there thinking we’ll probably never get another pay raise after this.

But it got handled so poorly. And I was enraged at Thompson at that point. Just, I’d had it. I thought, The phony... The guy, he should have just been candid upfront. And then he got himself in trouble because he pulled this stunt of vetoing it by autopen, and it was obvious to everybody what he was doing. So I just had had it. I wasn’t planning on quitting, but I just... And this all happens probably about December. Then we go into January, and got a new team, and the—(pause) I got two horses racing right at four o’clock, so...

DePue: Yeah, I understand I have to finish before 4:00, so we’re in good shape.

Edgar: This will lead us up to me leaving the legislature and going to work for Thompson. So it’s a new House. We’re still a minority. And Ryan asked me to nominate him at the caucus, which is a sign that I’m on the rise because I’m the nominating... So I nominate him. They split the appropriations committee in two, and that’s a paying job. They’ve made that a paying job. Pete Peters is going to be one, and they got to figure out who’s going to be the spokesman on the other committee. It’s not officially leadership, but it pays, and it also is an obvious step.

So the leaders meet with George, and they all say, “It ought to be Edgar,” except for Art Telcser, who says, “No, you can’t pick Edgar.” Because George is probably going to go along with him, and Pete was arguing, “I want Edgar,” because, he said, “there will be times we’re going to have to work together, and I don’t want somebody who’s going to be impossible. I can work with Edgar.” And a couple of the other leaders said, “Yeah, Edgar, he knows what he’s doing”—because I was getting reports back from about three different people in these meetings. And Telcser said, “No, no, he’s just a second-termer, and if you do that, you’re going to make all the other second-termers mad because you’re picking favorites, and you don’t want to do that.” So finally, George picks some other guy, a guy who’d been around for a while, and I don’t get it. And I was really disappointed because I was kind of counting on this; get a little more pay, and also start moving up the ladder and have a chance to be leader or something like that; because I still planned to stay in the legislature.

It was late January, and I was pretty depressed after this happened. And I was just kind of down. The pay raise thing had been a—the whole thing had been a fiasco. I remember I’d been to a meeting, and I got home late at night—I got home at about 9:30—and Brenda says, “The governor called you.” This was the day Thompson had gone to Florida and they’d had a big snowstorm in Chicago. Not that he could do anything about it, but he was down there, and the media went after him

in Florida to show, here's the governor on the beach in Florida, and everybody back in Chicago is suffering from this snowstorm. And Thompson—

DePue: Is this the snowstorm that led to Jane Byrne?

Edgar: The Bilandic and—yeah.[97] So Thompson, after about twenty-four hours of that, gave in and came back. Of course, then they just beat him (laughter) because he's at the airport: Yeah, forced him back. So he's back—and I knew that happened. It had happened the day before, I think; he'd come back. Maybe he'd come back that day. And she said, "The governor wants to talk to you." I said, "He's just going to call and say he wants to get along with me, and we've had our disagreements, but he wants to work with me." I said, "I'm not putting up with any more of that stuff. I'm not calling." Brenda looked at me; she said, "He's the governor. You're calling him." And you've got to understand, (laughs) Brenda never does that.

I said, "All right." So at ten o'clock, I called Thompson, and he said, "I need a new legislative liaison," because Glauberman wanted to leave and go do something else. He said, "I need a new legislative liaison, and I want you." I'm thinking, Here I was, just beating him up and been a thorn in his side, and he's calling to ask... And I said, "Governor, I appreciate that, but I don't think I want to do that." He said, "I think there are probably other things down the road you'd like to do." And he said, "You come and do this with me, and then you can have the pick of whatever you want in two years. You want to be on the state ticket—whatever." But he said, "My staff has come to me, and they've come up with names, and you're the only person I want." I said, "I appreciate that, but I just want to..." He said, "Don't give me an answer tonight. Just think about it, and the next time you're in Springfield, come by and talk to me." I said, "Okay. I won't give you an answer, but I just want to tell you that I don't think I want to do this." I said, "I've worked for other guys, (laughs) and I'd really just as soon be on my own, but I very much appreciate the offer." I was trying to be very civil, and I'm just stunned, because this is the last thing I thought he would do.

So I hung up, and she said, "What was that about?" And I said, "He wants me to take a job with him." And she said, "Take it." (laughs) I said, "I don't want to." She said, "I want out of this. This is terrible." I said, "No, I don't think I want to do this." I make some calls. First of all, I call Glauberman. I said, "Zale." He said, "No, we came up with all kinds of names. And he said, 'Give me a list of the legislators,' and he looked at the list, and he said, 'This is who I want,' and he pointed to you. And I told him, I said, 'Governor, he can't lie for you.' He's not like me'"—because Glauberman was known for lying. He got himself in a lot of trouble sometimes. "And he said, 'That's all right, that's who I want.'" Because they wanted somebody else. The cabal, the staff, they had somebody else they wanted, and he didn't want him. He said, "No, I want him."

[97] The poor response of city agencies to several days of heavy snowfall in January 1979 was a major factor in eroding support for Bilandic shortly before his February primary loss to Jane Byrne. Paul M. Green, "Michael A. Bilandic: the Last of the Machine Regulars," in *The Mayors, 3rd Edition: The Chicago Political Tradition*, eds. Paul M. Green and Melvin G. Holli, 3rd ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 165.

DePue: You don't want to mention the name?

Edgar: No, I can't remember for sure, but it was a one of their guy's kind of thing. And he said, "No, that's who I want." This is how Zale explained it to me, and I've kind of confirmed it from other people. Then I started calling around some of my friends. And Thompson said, "If you want to, after two years you can have the pick of any cabinet position you want. Then if you want to be on the statewide ticket, we can get you on the statewide ticket at some point." So I'm thinking, Money-wise, probably…I'll get paid a lot better working for him than I will as a legislator. (laughs) It's obvious I'm not going to get anything more as a legislator. And in the future, the cabinet, that might be a good place to go. Then you can go out to the private sector. I don't think I'm doing anything politically in the state legislature. It's obvious. After not getting this appropriation thing, I'm going to get frozen and stuck, and who knows if I'll ever get a chance to move up. And if George had given me the appropriations thing, I would have flat-out said no, no way I'm going to consider that [becoming legislative liaison]. And it's kind of ironic, because later I become secretary of state instead of George Ryan.

But I call some other people I know around the district, and I said, "What do you think?" Said, "Oh, take it. We didn't really want to tell you, the state legislature's kind of a dead end. We were all happy to help you, but there's better things to do than being a state representative." And that's when I began to realize most people didn't think that highly (laughs) of being a state legislator. (DePue laughs) They thought it was okay, but it's not a job for a normal person. And I was really surprised with that, and everybody I—

DePue: Who were you hearing this from?

Edgar: People in my district who had supported me—professional types that I dealt with. And then I started checking a little bit in Springfield, trying to get the scuttlebutt, and that's when people were saying they had somebody else in mind, the staff did, and Thompson did not want to do that. Said, "The story we hear, he wants you because I guess he figures you'll tell him what he needs to hear." And I think it goes back to what I did when he was trying to do the rule on the reorganization, part of it. Thompson, when he had come to my district for the fundraiser; I think he was taken back by the size and the reaction of the people there in the district, because he made comments and Jane made comments about the reaction of the people at that fundraiser. So I think all those things; and I think he knew I wouldn't lie (laughs) to him, too; and I think he was getting a little frustrated with the staff maybe not always telling him what was going on.

But I was shocked by him asking me, especially after I'd really—on the pay raise thing, I had just lit into him big-time. But that was Thompson. Thompson never holds grudges. One of the great qualities of Jim Thompson was—besides he's the smartest guy I ever dealt with in Springfield by far—he did not hold grudges. He was the least paranoid, and that's a very important trait in a politician that most of us don't have. But it was obvious on this because he should have really just, stick

it to Edgar; we're not going to do anything with him. Of course, maybe that job was the way he was going to stick it to me, (DePue laughs) because he wanted to raise the tax and—there were all kinds of things going to be tough that year.

So I don't go to Springfield for a while. I finally get over there, and all the sudden I get a call. Thompson says, "When are you coming by to see me?" And I said, "Well, I got to..." He said, "No, no, I'm sending a car for you right now. Come over here." So I go over, and we meet in the study; and that's why it's my favorite room in the mansion, probably—the wood-paneled library little thing off the main ballroom at the mansion. He has the fire going, and he picked me up. He had a Checker cab he drove at that time—this is one of his PR things—most uncomfortable car.

So I'm sitting in there, and he said, "I figure you'd like to be governor someday." I kind of looked at him, and I said, "No, I'm like you: I'd like to be president some day." (laughter) And he said, "Look, you come and work for me for two years, and you can have the pick of the cabinet, and we'll find you a spot on the statewide ticket." And he said, "It can lead..."

DePue: When he said "statewide ticket" —as his lieutenant governor, or one of the constitutional offices?

Edgar: He didn't specify; he just said "statewide ticket" at that point. We didn't talk about lieutenant—that was later that came up. I had a list at this point, because I thought I might do this; but I had learned a long time ago, I had a list of things I wanted. I wanted a certain salary; governor had an appointment on the Intergovernmental Cooperation Commission, too, and I wanted that, so I still had the opportunity to do my travel and go to these national meetings and things I got to go to. So I had a list of things now. He's going on, and he says, "You're the guy I want, and I think you can do it." And then he says, "This will set you up to do other things."

I had talked to other people and had mentioned that, and they said, "Ah, I wouldn't believe that. They'll get you in and they'll use you up and they'll dump you. You'll never get..." And Thompson kind of had a tendency—legislators at that point weren't real sure that he'd say things they could always count on. I always said that Thompson never lied. Sometimes he was a pretty good lawyer; he could come right up to it and make you think you heard something you didn't really hear. Later, when I was legislative liaison, a lot of times we'd walk out of the room with people and I'd shake my head: These people think he just said yes, and he did not say yes. (DePue laughs) He just said, "Boy, that's a great idea"; but he didn't say yes. But a lot of legislators thought that he had said yes when he hadn't, so there was a lot of mistrust, I think; and of course, there were still some bad feelings over the pay raise and stuff. So these guys are saying, "Just know you go in there, he won't keep his word. Something will happen. They'll blame you for something failing." I said, "That's a real possibility."

So we're sitting there—and Brenda had just said, "Take the job." The more I got thinking about it, the more I talked to people around the district, and folks I really trusted their opinion, they all said, "You ought to do something other than being state representative. It's just not a great future," (laughs) which was completely different than my attitude. My attitude would always be, gee, I could be a state legislator forever if I could move up the ladder and get to be the leader or something like that. Yeah, I'd like to be governor, but to be the leader, that'd be… But it was obvious to a lot of folks that wasn't a big deal; they didn't have that high of opinion of state legislators. They'd been nice to me, and maybe they had a high opinion of me, but they didn't think my profession necessarily warranted that.

I have to say, when he first asked me to do that, there was no way I was going to do that. I was amazed. Here in about two weeks, I had begun to change my mind. But I think a lot of it, too: I was very disappointed on the appropriations thing and frustrated in the legislature to a great extent, and realized that maybe I take a gamble, and that's what it was—it was a big gamble. Yeah, I'm going to go make more money. I had a salary, and I told him what I wanted, and he said, "I think that's more than I pay anybody else except my chief of staff." And I said, "Then the liaison's underpaid and everybody else is underpaid, but that's what I want, to come." I think it was forty thousand dollars—double my salary from what I had been as a—I think the chief of staff made forty-five at that time. I said, "That's what I want" and went through all these things. I want to be on Inter—he said, "What's Intergovernmental?" I said, "That's something you have an appointment to." I said, "It's not a big deal. I want to do it because it allows me to continue to be involved in some of these national groups, and I want to be involved in them." So I went through all this stuff and—there wasn't much other. And he agreed to it all. He said, "Fine. Go talk to my chief of staff, Jim Fletcher, and he'll work out all these things."

And I can't remember if I told him yes then or if I came back one more time and had the list with me. But the meeting over at the mansion pretty well—if it wasn't the final one, it pretty well sealed it. In fact, Thompson was quoted in the book on George Ryan, something about, "I told Edgar he'll be governor some day." He said, "Tell Brenda: you do this, you're going to get to be governor someday." And he didn't understand I didn't have to tell Brenda anything; (laughs) Brenda was pushing me all the way to take this. Again, if Brenda had not been so adamant, I don't think I'd have maybe early on given it that much serious consideration. Between Brenda and what happened with the appropriation thing in the House, and just kind of the frustration, and everybody saying, "Hey, you got to do something different from this," and—

DePue: I did want to go back. You were talking about Brenda's reaction to the pay raise fiasco, as you expressed it, and her saying, "I've had it." What did that mean?

Edgar: I don't know if she actually said, "I've had it," but you could tell she was really just—the other times, she'd put up with everything, but this really frustrated her. She was afraid to go out of the house because she thought people were looking at

her. And we needed a new car. She said— our car is about ready to fall apart—"We can't buy a new car."

DePue: Did she see you going to this new job as a chance to have a more settled family life as well?

Edgar: Oh, yeah. We moved back to Springfield. In fact, let me tell you: the day after I resolved this, she was in Springfield looking for the house. (laughter) She did not let any grass—it was boom, (snaps) like that.

DePue: What, you're not going to live in the trailer?

Edgar: (laughs) No, the trailer I'd got rid of. I got rid of the trailer after I took the job with Thompson. But no, within less than a week, she was in Springfield. A sorority sister of hers was a realtor in Springfield, and we were looking at houses. (laughs) And we had a signed deal within a week. She didn't move over till July—get our house sold and everything—but no, she was ready to go. It surprised me, because if somebody had told me two weeks before that that I'd even think about it, I'd say no; but I think the pay raise problem just left a bad taste in everybody's mouth; not getting the appropriations thing; and then everybody's reaction, which surprised me. I just thought everybody thought it was wonderful, me being a state representative, and I was surprised.

DePue: One of the stories I have heard from other people is that one of the conditions you put on Thompson was that he would be required to go back to your district and explain why this was a good deal.

Edgar: Why I was leaving. Yeah. I said, "You have to come over and do that in the district."

DePue: Can you tell us a little more about that?

Edgar: I'd just been reelected, and I did feel this responsibility to the district, and I wanted him to explain why it was important for me to do this and...

DePue: Where was the event? How many people were there?

Edgar: The event was at Eastern, at the student union. Everything I did was around (laughs) the university. When I announced for governor, we kicked it off at the university. Was at the student union; and I was very emotional that day, because I always got emotional about that kind of stuff. Thompson came over, and (laughs) I remember his staff just shaking—"I can't believe he's coming over—you got him

to do this." And I said, "That's part of the condition." He came over and explained to people why I needed to go to Springfield and work for him.[98]

Of course, part of it was I also, at that point, realized what I was getting myself into. Thompson wanted to raise the gas tax, do a bunch of things that were going to just be impossible in that session, which we'll probably talk about another day; and I was giving up my safe seat and going into unknown water. I knew enough to know you're going to get caught up in a bureaucracy of personalities and staff intrigue; that you don't know how that's all going to work out. It wasn't like I was close to a lot of the people on his staff. Some I was, but not that close. You also knew you had some real tough issues to deal with and try to get done, and you knew his credibility after the pay raise thing was down, and I had to kind of shore that up.

I think that's part of why he took me, too: he wanted a legislator, somebody that came from their ranks and somebody that wasn't viewed as maybe one of his stooges—and I don't think I was viewed as that, at that point. But yeah, I remember that day. That was an emotional day, and I many times wondered (laughs) afterwards why I did it. It was a hard thing to do to give up a seat that you'd spent a lot of time working and trying to get. But I think by that point, I kind of knew this wasn't all what I thought it was going to be. It was fine, but it was not the end-all. And this was a chance—maybe politically—some people said, "From a personal point of view, it's a great move—you're going to do well financially—but politically you're pretty well dead. You're not going to get on a statewide ticket. You could be a fall guy if things don't happen, and other staffers can blame you because something didn't happen; or you might go on and get a good job in one of the cabinets and go out in the private sector and do well, but politically, this is pretty much kind of a dead end for you."

DePue: What was? Sitting in the legislature or being his legislative aide?

Edgar: No, going to his legislative—politically. A lot of people didn't think being a political dead end was a bad thing, but they didn't think, politically, that this was a good political step. It was a good career step, but not a good political career step.[99]

DePue: That's where I kind of want to finish off today. I think this is a good place to break. But a lot of times in the past, even from the age of eight, ten, seventeen, eighteen years old, a few years before this time, you always have been talking about, "I had a plan. I had a vision of where I wanted to go in life," and clearly Thompson calling you kind of changed that plan or at least caused you to think about changing that plan.

[98] According to Fred Edgar, at the student union event, Thompson also made a prediction to him about Jim Edgar's future career. Fred Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 22, 2009, transcript, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 61-62.

[99] See Mike Lawrence, March 4, 2009, 47-50, for his take on Edgar's appointment as legislative liaison.

Edgar: Oh, yeah. No, it was the last thing I expected. As I said, I expected it was going to be some pabulum about, we got to get along, that he would do at times with people, and I just really didn't want to listen to it.

DePue: Your plan before that call was to be a leader in the state legislature?

Edgar: That, I guess, was my immediate goal, yeah. Stay in the legislature. And I was frustrated; I didn't think that looked as promising as I thought it had maybe a month before, when I thought I had a shot at this other thing.

DePue: But you still had aspirations to be governor or president even, did you not?

Edgar: Oh, the president thing was probably more of a joke at that point in life, and the governor thing was—that's the top job, but you knew that's still a… My chance, I thought, the best thing: if I ever got to run for comptroller or something like that and use that as a stepping stone. The fact that nobody's ever stepped from there—they just step down, usually—and to just get there for a Republican downstater is about impossible anyway. Yeah, you kind of knew that your options were limited. But at that point I also thought, listening to other people, which I don't always do real well—I've done it twice—I did it then, and I did it when I decided not to run for governor three years ago; have people kind of change your point of view based off listening to what people are saying. I have to say I thought chances of getting to statewide ticket probably were less than 50 percent. The chance of getting a cabinet post was probably 75 percent, and that could maybe give me something to at least go out, if I wanted to go out in the private sector and make a decent living.

DePue: But you've already said that Thompson was promising the stars, pretty much.

Edgar: The governor thing, yeah, but that was going to be a statewide first and then get a shot at that. And I knew enough people who said, "You'll never get that statewide," and I just wasn't real sure. That's today; what happens two years from now when there's some other pressure out there? That always—and it's not just Thompson; it's just reality of life. You just don't know what might happen that could change circumstances whereas somebody maybe intended—I believe Thompson, as we were sitting there by the fireplace, meant what he said. I wasn't convinced that later, he'd still mean that. (DePue laughs) And it wasn't just Thompson; it was just I was, at that point, thirty-two years old, and I was beginning to realize that sometimes things don't work out, or things change a lot.

But again, I have to say that was a big gamble, I felt, on my part, from a political point of view. Maybe from a career point of view, for a lot of folks, that wasn't much of a gamble, but for me it was. I rolled the dice, and probably more than I'd ever done before. Maybe when I moved back to Charleston and ran that first time, I kind of rolled the dice; I just didn't know how much I was rolling the dice that time. This time I knew what I was giving up—what I really had been working for—for a maybe from somebody that I'd just gone through a spell where I wasn't sure I trusted him all that much. Rolled the dice, and as we'll talk later, it

worked. And he was a man of his word, and turned out to be an excellent person to work for, just as a person.

DePue: Last question, then, for today. Any reflections on your term—basically one term—in the legislature?

Edgar: I'm very glad I did it. I think it gave me an insight that made me a better governor. I know sometimes legislators wondered if I remembered where I'd come from, but I think I understood the process.[100] I probably compounded knowing even better, being the liaison, too. But being a member and going through the experience of being an elected official: I think that made it possible for me to be successful as secretary of state and to go on and be governor. I think if I had not held an elective position, been through that, knew the pressures and the realities, I don't think I would have even won a primary for secretary of state, let alone get elected. So while it didn't work out as well as I'd hoped—it wasn't as rewarding, it wasn't as enjoyable as I thought it might be—I think it was an important step. I think it was an important part of preparing me for what was going to happen later on, and gave me an understanding that you can only get by being there.

Ty Fahner—we'll talk about him later—got appointed attorney general a few months before I got appointed secretary of state. I always thought if he'd had an elected office—if he'd have been elected something before, he'd been through a campaign before—I think he could have done the political part. I think he did the governmental part fine; the political part was all new to him. And unfortunately, you don't always get enough time to learn that. I think if he'd been a state legislator, maybe, that would have enabled him to get a better leg up on that office, the political part.

So as I look back—and as a freshman member, I had my input, it just—after being the chief aide to the Speaker and being the aide (phone rings) to the senate president, it just wasn't quite the same.

DePue: I hear the telephone ringing in the background. That's a good place to stop for today.

Edgar: Yeah.

DePue: Thank you, Governor.

(end of interview 5)

[100] See Kanter interview for his sense of the importance of Edgar's legislative experience to his governing philosophy.