

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with William “Bill” Roberts

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

Interview # ISG-A-L-2010-045

Bill Roberts, Gov. Jim Edgar’s chief counsel from 1995 to 1997, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library’s *Illinois Statecraft – Jim Edgar* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: October 6, 2010 Location: Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, Chicago, IL

Date: April 11, 2011 Location: Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mike Czaplicki, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Mike Czaplicki, ALPL & Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 74 pgs Total Time: 2:00 + 2:25/ 2 + 2.42 hrs = 4.42 hrs

Session 1: Pre-Edgar professional career, including state’s attorney office

Session 2: U.S. attorney & service as Edgar’s chief counsel

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on (June 17, 2011).

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

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Abstract

Bill Roberts, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISG-A-L-2010-045

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: J. William Roberts was born in 1942 in Jacksonville, Illinois, and grew up in Roodhouse, Illinois. In high school, Roberts played football, ran track, and was class president. Robert attended Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Illinois, where he earned his B.A. in political science in 1964. Following a trip to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Robert enrolled in law school at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. While at Washington University, Roberts was president of the law school student body and co-founded the school's legal aid society. After his graduation in 1967, he returned to Roodhouse for a year to teach high school English and coach football and track. In 1968, he started work as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Illinois.

Sangamon County state's attorney Joseph Cavanagh hired Roberts as an assistant state's attorney in 1972. When Cavanagh became a judge in 1979, Roberts was appointed state's attorney; he won reelection in 1980 and 1984. Congressman Bob Michel nominated Roberts as U.S. attorney for the Central District of Illinois in 1986, and he served in this position until 1993. During this period, Roberts served a term as chairman-elect of the U.S. Attorney General's Advisory Committee of U.S. Attorneys and was involved in the Department of Justice's review of the Rodney King case. Following Bill Clinton's assumption of the presidency in 1993, Roberts returned to Illinois and began work for Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP. Gov. Jim Edgar appointed Roberts to the Illinois Gaming Board in 1993, and asked Roberts to be his chief counsel in 1995. The two agreed he would serve as chief counsel for two years. During his years as chief counsel, Roberts was involved with education funding reform, the state's fight to keep Meigs Field open, the MSI scandal, and Edgar's commutation of Guinevere Garcia's death sentence. After leaving the Edgar administration in 1997, Roberts returned to work with Hinshaw & Culbertson. In 2009, he served as counsel to the minority caucus of the special committee of the Illinois House, which was the committee that returned articles of impeachment against Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Jim Edgar; Rod Blagojevich, impeachment; C. Joseph Cavanagh; Cuban Missile Crisis; death penalty; Dick Eagleton; education reform; Equal Rights Amendment; George Fleischli; Jim Fletcher; Guinevere Garcia; Al Grosboll; Illinois Wesleyan University; Elena Kezelis; Rodney King trial; Mike Lawrence; Michael J. Madigan; Edwin "Ed" Meese; Meigs Field; Robert "Bob" Michel; MSI Scandal; Howard Peters; James "Pate" Philip; Gene Reineke; George Ryan; State's attorney, Sangamon County; Phyllis Schlafly; Soviet Union; James R. Thompson; U.S. attorney, Central District of Illinois; Anton Valukas;

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