

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Kirk Brown
Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Jim Edgar Illinois Statecraft Oral History project

Interview # ISG-A-L-2009-044

Kirk Brown, an engineer and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) secretary under governors Jim Edgar and George Ryan, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft - Jim Edgar* Oral History project.

Interview date & location:

Date: December 22, 2009

Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mike Czaplicki, ALPLM volunteer

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center

Edited by: Rozanne Robertson, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 87 Total Time: 4:22 = 4 hrs 22 min / 4.37 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 02/02/2010.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Kirk Brown, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISG-A-L-2009-044

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Kirk Brown was born in 1946 and raised in Harrisburg, Illinois. Hailing from a line of engineers extending back to his paternal grandfather, Kirk began working at an early age in his father's consulting engineer practice. The business was a family affair, since his mother served as his father's business manager. Despite the lure of a potential career in radio, Kirk graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1968 with a degree in engineering and began work with the Division of Highways in the Illinois Department of Public Works and Buildings. Following the creation of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) in 1972, Kirk rose steadily through the ranks, becoming head of urban planning in 1977 and Director of Planning and Programs in 1987.

In 1990, during the transition following Jim Edgar's election as governor, he named Brown IDOT secretary, surprising observers who had expected the post to go to a seasoned political operative. Brown remained in this post for Edgar's entire administration, as well as Governor Ryan's, before retiring at the end of 2002. Kirk spoke about several key issues involving his agency during the Edgar years, including Peotone Airport, Meigs Field, the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, the response to the Great Flood of 1993, and the 1994 Illinois Tollway scandal. He also talked about his selection as secretary, Governor Edgar's attitude towards transportation policy, promoting accountability in government, IDOT's relationship with the federal government, and the culture of IDOT.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Harrisburg, Illinois; Vanderbilt University in the 1960s; work at an AM-radio station; early computers; lightning strike on Edgar's plane; ethics in government; privatization of public works; IL Department of Transportation (IDOT); Jim Edgar; George Ryan; Tex Ritter; Ralph Emery; WSM (radio station); WRVU (radio station); Stokely Carmichael; IL Environmental Protection Agency; Gregory Baise; Samuel K. Skinner; Langhorne M. Bond; John Kramer; Michael Lane; ISTEPA; Illinois FIRST; David Campbell; Robert L. Hickman; Illinois Tollway; Peotone Airport; Meigs Field; Robert Crandall; Ralph Wehner; Palumbo Brothers; Interstate Highway System; Interstate 70

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee, and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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