Interview with Jim Edgar

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, November 17, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, and we are in with another session with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good morning, Governor.

Edgar: Good morning.

DePue: We've had quite a few of these, and it's been quite a while since our last one, when we talked about the 1990 election. And there were a couple things I know you wanted to say about the 1990 election, but let's start with this question: what was it about that election, do you think looking back at it now, that made the difference for you and your campaign?

Edgar: First of all, I don't think I should have won that election. People wanted a change. We had had a Republican administration for fourteen years. His [Gov. Jim Thompson] numbers weren't real good at that point, and I was tied to him. I had a Democratic opponent who was a pretty good campaigner, very well known. I think what made the difference was my ten years as secretary of state, just being out there—people knew me. They knew me differently than just another Republican politician. Now, I'm sure [some] thought of me that way, but a lot of folks, they knew who I was, they knew a little about my family, and there was a connect. I think that connect is critical in any election, at least in the United States, in the state of Illinois.

And I think that fact of being out and about much more than my Democratic opponent had been out and about. He was known—his name recognition was almost as good as mine—but he hadn't been out to all the groups as many times as I had been, because he started well-known. I started as an unknown when I first became secretary of state, and I think I always knew that I had to keep up that pace. Particularly with ethnic groups, a lot of associations in the Chicago area where I shouldn't have been that strong, I ran very strong. So I don't think it was because

we were Republicans; in fact, I think [I won] in spite of being a Republican. Just all those nights out away from home, all those weekends and festivals, and spending all the time with those different ethnic groups, I think made the difference in that election.

Also, I think we were better organized on getting the vote out, which was important. I think Carter Hendren, the person who headed up my campaign, did a very good job of making sure we did the absentee votes, the voter registration, and then on election day, get the votes out—more so than the Democrats. There wasn't quite as much enthusiasm in some of the Democrats as I think there was among the Republicans. And because we'd had the office so long, we should have been more complacent; they should have been hungrier. They were hungry, but I think we were just as hungry to hold on. But all that aside, again, I go back and just think that in ten years as secretary of state, I had developed an awareness on the part of the public, which made the difference.

The other thing that I think didn't hurt as much as they thought it was going to hurt—and it definitely helped me as governor; I think it made me as governor—was my position on the temporary income tax. The fact that I had said before the election I wanted to make that permanent, there's no doubt that probably hurt in some areas. It gave the Democrats a chance to tie me to what they were—the theme on [Jim] Thompson was more taxes, more taxes—but it also, I think, solidified my support among groups like teachers, maybe more of an intellectual group out there that wasn't always voting for Republicans in this state. But because I did that in the campaign, I survived, then, when I had to make it permanent—and we'll talk about that later—people didn't get upset, people didn't get mad. They knew it was coming; in fact, made it much easier to do it. I think that helped establish that you can trust or you can believe Edgar. So that was a very important thing in that campaign, which many, particularly the Republican side, thought would cost me the election. It didn't. It probably didn't help me all that much in the election, but it didn't cost me the election.

And I think because I had developed a rapport with the voters as secretary of state, and they had some kind of an impression with me, all the stuff that went on in the campaign didn't change that. They felt comfortable, even though they wanted a change, that I was enough of a change.

DePue: Let me echo a couple of comments that I've heard from some of your lieutenants about that question. And their view, especially on the surcharge, is that you ultimately were much more credible than Neil Hartigan was, that they [the voters] believed what you were saying. The public understood, we're going to take the surcharge but there will be no new taxes, and they [didn't think] what Hartigan was

saying would add up. It didn't make sense. It wasn't coming together. And that was the comment that I consistently got from some other people.[1]

Edgar: I believe that, too. I do think that people didn't trust Hartigan on that. And there's no way you can ever figure out just how many, because of that, trusted me and voted for me, versus how many still were mad about the taxes and just tied me in with taxes and the argument they were making about the Thompson administration and Republicans in general. It's hard to say. I think I could have probably won the election if I'd have been against the surtax; I don't think I could have governed successfully if I'd have been against the surtax, and I don't think people would say, "Gee, what a great governor you were," today. I think I'd have been just a one-term governor that probably lied to them and had trouble getting the budget back in shape. I don't think there's any doubt.

We did polling, too, and it showed that people believed me and didn't believe Hartigan. I'm sure that that offset a lot of the negatives that were out there about I was just going to be another expensive Republican. You have to remember back then that the Democrats—and I think a lot of people had bought it—that Thompson was a spendthrift. He'd run taxes up; I mean, he'd tried a couple times… Now, the surtax wasn't his—that was Madigan—but still, he had that image out there. And they had, I thought, a very effective commercial that we talked about before, talking about, during the Republican reign, they've raised eighty-four taxes—I forget how many; it was every little thing. But that's what they hammered away early in the campaign, which tightened up the race. And again, I look back, and I just think, I shouldn't have won that race, because there was that kind of negative feeling toward Thompson. I don't think it was because he was bad; it was just he'd been in there fourteen years, and I think any time you're there that long, there's a tendency—you begin to lose your welcome.

And the tax issue, I thought they used very effectively. I kind of played into that to some extent, but we also talked a lot in that campaign about property tax caps, and I do think there was much more concern about property taxes than there was about income tax. Now, a lot of people didn't give my property tax proposal much credence, and I don't know if the media ever took it very seriously, but I do think we probably were able, in the suburban area, to give some hope to some voters who maybe weren't crazy about the surtax position but were more worried about their property taxes. I was out there, really the only one, talking about a specific proposal. I'm not one who thinks that issues often carry the elections, but I think it probably helped me, because we ran very well, particularly in the suburban area—much better than I did downstate. And as a Republican from downstate, I think normally I would have run better down there. I think there was a lot of, "We wanted change." Thompson was not popular at all downstate. In the suburbs, I think that the property tax cap helped a little bit.

[1] Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, April 1, 2009, 27-30; Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, May 7, 2009, 48-49; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, July 23, 2009, 16-17. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

But again, going back to all of this, I don't think I'd have been in the ballgame if I hadn't been secretary of state for ten years. And if I had just conducted myself as secretaries of state usually had done, I don't think that would have been enough. I had name recognition, but people felt like there was a lot to go with that name in their mind. They had a feeling about me that withstood the attacks during the campaign and the negative feeling, maybe, toward Republicans in general.

DePue: The DUI legislation, the mandatory auto insurance…

Edgar: I think all those things showed that, Edgar got things done. I don't know if we ever got as much credit for the mandatory auto insurance. I think DUI… I think literacy helped us with a certain segment out there—maybe a little more of the intelligence group, the intellect group, because here was somebody who showed some concern for an educational problem. There's a way, as secretary of state, you could do that and have an impact, because there were very limited things you could do in education. But I think it also helped me with women, and that was one of my big strengths. It always had been, but in that election, it was really important because—I can't remember—I think Hartigan probably carried the male vote. I definitely carried the female vote, but I carried the female vote a lot more than he carried the male vote, and that made the difference. And I believe that a lot of that had to do with the issues, and the things we talked about for ten years as secretary of state, playing to women. I think maybe they worried more about that than the men did.

DePue: That's an interesting comment because it plays against the perception we have that Republicans normally play better with males.

Edgar: But I always ran way ahead with women, where the rest of the party was running behind with women, and I always had a little more trouble with men than maybe the average Republican.

DePue: Any final reflections on the campaign, on the election?

Edgar: I think the comments I made kind of encapsule what I think was the factor. A lot of hard work for ten years as secretary of state made the difference. In the campaign itself, I think we were well-organized, and I give that to Carter Hendren and the people. I was out, just kind of bumbling around. The candor kind of reinforced [the voters'] image and helped them form an image of me that did not hurt me in that campaign. I will never know for sure just how it all played out, but it definitely prepared the voters and helped me be successful in my term as governor. Again, I think if I'd have taken the other position, I don't know if I'd have made it in reelection—though it's hard to beat an incumbent governor unless you're basically on the way to jail.

But it made governing a lot easier. In the campaigns, you're so worried about getting elected—and you ought to be, because you don't want to get too far ahead of yourself. You always have to be careful in a primary you don't go too far to the right, and then you've got to come to the center in the general election. Same thing

with the Democrats—they don't go too far to the left, and they've got to come to the center. It's the same thing in a campaign. You've got to be careful. You want to win, but you don't want to win in a way that is going to make it impossible for you to govern. So, looking back, there's no doubt that [the surcharge] was the monumental issue in that campaign. There were a lot of other issues, but it was the monumental issue because of the repercussions it had on the next eight years.

DePue: Things you hadn't even envisioned at the time you were…

Edgar: No, I did not appreciate how important that was. I thought it was the right thing to do. I thought it was a political risk, but I thought it was the right thing to do. I didn't appreciate probably till after I left the governorship—you sit there and you have time to contemplate all these things—that that was a huge decision, and it was the right decision for a lot of reasons other than just purely good government.

DePue: Last time you did a wonderful job of talking about that emotional high you were on election night and realizing you'd actually pulled this off, that your team was victorious on this. How long did that euphoria last for?

Edgar: Till the next day, because the next day, I remember, I had to get a staff put together, because one of the things we had not done—and in hindsight, probably should have had somebody off in a corner putting together, this is what you need to do, this is people you need to consider. I didn't want to jinx the election. I didn't want to think about if we win—and to be truthful, I didn't think we were going to win the last two or three weeks. After President Bush went back on "read my lips," I thought we were done for.

So as soon as the election was over the next morning, I remember I got up and did the radio shows, and I was beginning to get tired that afternoon because I hadn't had much sleep. Then I started [thinking], I've got to get a chief of staff. I've got to start putting together… Plus, I've got to do the transition committee, which I wasn't too concerned about—that, I thought, would come together—but chief of staff, to me, was monumental, because I didn't have a chief of staff. I had to be careful on moving staff from the secretary of state into the same positions in the governor's office, because I didn't think it would go over well. A lot of people had been kind of, "We're not sure your staff's up to it." That's typical of every staff coming in. And I'll talk a little more about that. But in the back of my mind, I knew I had to do something there. I had to have a chief of staff. Al Grosboll had kind of been my deputy secretary of state, but I didn't envision him as chief of staff in the governor's office. So I had to get that done.

And then I had to also start thinking about the cabinet, because the last week of the election, I had made the promise that I would not keep any of Thompson's cabinet directors. I did that not because they weren't good. One of the few times that I actually listened to my staff and did something that I wasn't real sure was the right thing to do, though I finally thought, no, it was the right thing to do. They [critics] were saying, "If Edgar wins, it's just going to be an extension of the

Thompson administration. It would be the same people." Hartigan kept hammering away when we'd have these joint appearances and things. And we had one more left. It wasn't called a debate, but we were going to be, I think, on Channel 5, the NBC station in Chicago. I think it was about a week before the election; it was real close to the election. And he had been hammering away on tying me to Thompson, just hammering—it was going to be more of the same, more of the same, and we need change. So for that appearance, I announced that I would not retain any of the directors in the current administration if I was elected governor. Now, that did not go over real well (laughs) with the Thompson people, and I can understand. Not only if they didn't want to stay, it looked kind of like a slap at them, but it was more of a purely defensive mood. I didn't say I wouldn't move them from one department to another, but I just said I wouldn't retain them in those positions. So I knew I'm going to have these guys bailing out; I've got to be ready to go, and I can't…

So right away, I just got consumed with, I've got to do this staffing. And I was pretty much a hands-on—I didn't want to delegate; there wasn't anybody I felt that comfortable delegating that stuff to, especially chief of staff. I had to do that. Who I wanted as chief of staff was Rich McClure, who had been John Ashcroft's chief of staff, who had come up the last two weeks and had kind of nursemaided me through the campaign—they'd brought him up. He had been originally in Illinois, worked for Jim Thompson, we were in the same Sunday school classes, our wives are good friends. And he was somebody I thought had been through it. He knew Illinois because we'd both worked in the governor's administration. And I trust him. I just thought he would be the right person. They didn't want to pull up roots from Missouri, because they were originally from Missouri. Ashcroft had told me, though, if he wanted to go, he wasn't going to stand in his way. But he [McClure] indicated—I think maybe that night or the next morning I talked to him after the election—he wouldn't be able to do that, so then I knew I had to figure out somebody else.

That was probably the paramount thing on my mind, chief of staff, and then the other positions. And the problem I had—I knew I had all my staff. Everybody had been working so hard in the election. It's over. Now everybody's got a, Where do I go? What's my spot? Where's my office? So I knew they were getting real nervous and restless, and that's just something I knew I had to move on as quick as possible.

I remember I was going to go to Florida for a vacation. I couldn't wait to get out. I think the next day, maybe that night, we flew down to Naples. I met with Carter briefly, and Carter had put together—they had put together, in the forty-eight hours or so after the election—kind of a notebook on things I needed to think about and do. Now, Thompson had taken his campaign manager, Jim Fletcher, and made him chief of staff. I didn't think Carter at that point probably ought to be chief of staff. I also thought that I'm from downstate; so much of it goes on in Chicago, I probably needed somebody that really had a good feel for Chicago. Rich McClure wasn't necessarily that, but he was out, and there were other reasons for Rich. And I

wasn't sure Carter—he was from Albion, and that's farther south than Charleston, and he'd been in the Senate Republicans, and sometimes I think they get a little kind of narrow in their focus, the legislative folks do. And, as I said, I didn't think Al was the right person. I didn't think I had anybody in the secretary of state's office who had the stature that would be accepted.

And the other thing is, you had to have somebody that folks would say, "Yes, that's a good appointment," because that person often has to represent you, has to do a lot of negotiating and do things, as well as run the staff. The outward appearance and the outward acceptance, to me, was very important, because, again, through the campaign and talking to people I trusted, they just said, "The rap is, yes, your staff's good at secretary of state, but the governor's a whole different thing." Well, they'd been used to Thompson's people for fourteen years, and it's hard to—the next group coming in, and they don't seem like they know that. I thought we had people that knew it, but I also thought maybe we didn't know some of it, because there's a whole lot of difference between the governor's office and the secretary of state. That consumed my every moment of worry.

The transition committee, I pretty well quickly in my mind kind of knew what I wanted to do there. I wanted [Stanley] Ikenberry, I wanted Nancy Jefferson, who was the African-American lady, the community organizer in the West Side, lifelong Democrat, who had endorsed me and had helped. I wanted Bill Weiss; he was head of Ameritech. He had been kind of my chief fundraiser. He was the CEO of a major corporation in Illinois; Ameritech was as big as about anybody. That's the telephone company; then it later got bought—it's now part of AT&T. Those three people I thought would be a good—you had academia, Ikenberry; then you had Nancy Jefferson, a community person from Chicago; then you had a captain of industry. And I knew them all, liked them, and they'd always been helpful. Although Ikenberry had not endorsed me, he had, at the foundation gathering right before the election, said that people would be crazy to vote for anybody that wasn't going to make this surtax permanent, (laughter) because the university was going to lose all this money. It wasn't an endorsement, but everybody walked out of there knowing what the marching orders were. It made Hartigan furious, but he hadn't hung around U of I too much.

DePue: How about Paula Wolff? What position did she…

Edgar: We needed a transition committee, and we needed a staff. And Paula, who was somebody I had worked with in the Thompson administration and continued to stay close with, is who I asked to do it, because she is the most organized person I think I've ever known and probably as knowledgeable about state government as anyone.

DePue: So what was her specific role?

Edgar: She was the chair of the staffing of the transition committee—basically do the work. The transition committee would meet periodically and pontificate and make suggestions, but for the most part, the report that they were going to give me—what

we ought to do and things like that—which we were going to make public, would… And a lot of what the transition committee was going to do was make recommendations to me on people for positions, too. We had a subcommittee to look at positions, and they interviewed a lot of folks, came to me, made recommendations. I listened to some; I didn't listen to others. But they were helpful.

We had a committee that looked at the budget. At that point, we did not realize how bad the budget was. We knew it was going to be tricky. Art Quern, who had been Thompson's chief of staff and had moved on to Aon Insurance and was a good personal friend of mine, was on the transition committee. Pete Peters, who had been a Republican member in the House and been the appropriation person, was a good friend of mine—those two guys kind of co-chaired, if I remember right, the committee that looked at the finances.

I went off to Florida, and I think I finalized what I wanted to do on the transition committee. I think I called the three people I wanted to be chairmen, even from Florida, and asked them, and then we started putting together names on the transition committee. I don't know how many names. I don't know if it's in the book or not, but it was probably forty people at least.[2]

DePue: I saw something in an article that said forty-four.

Edgar: And it was pretty wide. We had people from various segments of society. I don't think we put anybody that had supported Hartigan on there. We had Democrats, but they were Democrats who had supported me. We even had Jack Roeser, who is kind of the screamer on the Right, who continues to be a thorn in all moderate Republicans'… Because he had ended up endorsing me after I had that primary battle, and the guy that ran against me never endorsed me.[3] And then he ran against me in '94, in the primary, but after he lost the primary, he endorsed me again; he wouldn't go for a third party. But he was one of the, I'd say, more unique people on that. Most of them were people that I had known in government or in the business world, or people who were out there that I thought had a lot to contribute; also, we wanted a pretty broad segment to make up that transition committee. As a whole group, they didn't meet that often, but the committees met a lot. I know the one on personnel met a lot, I know the one on the budget met a lot, and I can't remember what the others were; those are the two that stick in my mind.

So when I came back, we announced the transition committee, and I remember we got Ameritech's jet to fly us. And Nancy Jefferson had never been on an airplane, so that was quite a thing for her, to fly from Chicago down to Springfield. She wasn't sure she was going to be able to do it.

DePue: That gets to one of my questions. How do you fund a transition?

[2] Tom Schafer, *Meeting the Challenge: the Edgar Administration, 1991-1999* (Springfield, IL: State of Illinois, Office of the Governor), 1998.
[3] Roeser had initially supported Edgar's 1990 primary opponent, Steven Baer.

Edgar: There's a little money that they do provide in the budget for a transition. Now, Ameritech picked up flying us down because Bill Weiss—that's the name I was blank on.

DePue: Bill Weiss?

Edgar: Bill Weiss. He was the CEO of Ameritech. We announced the transition committee in Chicago, then we flew down to Springfield to announce it, and that's the first time she ever flew in a plane. She was scared to death. She was probably in her seventies by then. She passed away about two or three years later.[4]

But we set that up. The staffing thing, and particularly the chief of staff, was, again, my major dilemma or goal or concern. Kirk Dillard, who I had known, not well, had been Thompson's legislative liaison—my old position. He had then left and got into private practice. And he had helped in the campaign. We went out to Kemper Insurance—they have a deal where they'll let candidates come in and speak to their employees, and he had worked on that. And he had helped on some issue things. Kirk—you know, well-dressed. He was in a Chicago law firm, and from DuPage County; [James] Pate Philip liked him, who was, I knew, going to be kind of an issue—the Republican leader in the Senate. And I just kind of out of the blue thought, maybe Kirk's the kind of guy who could handle that; he knows the governor's office. I wanted somebody who knew all the nuts and bolts of what needed to be done, so we could move pretty quickly there. I didn't want somebody who had never been around the governor's office. So I think I surprised a lot of people because he wasn't in the inner circle; he hadn't been close to me. But I thought of him to be chief of staff.

Also, chief counsel, I thought, was going to be very important. The chief counsel of the secretary of state was a gentleman named Phil Howe, who was a very competent attorney. But the [governor's] chief counsel also had to deal with a lot of folks, be out there negotiating. Phil had been in government in Springfield, and I thought we probably again needed somebody who had been in a Chicago law firm and could deal and had a sense… And there was a person who had not worked for us but had worked on the campaign, Arnie Kanter. He was with one of the law firms in Chicago, and he had been Gene Sawyer's—who had been the acting mayor after Harold Washington died, and then got defeated by [Richard M.] Daley—but he had been his personal attorney, and he had worked with him. So he had gotten to know a lot of the African-American community, and a lot of the Sawyer people supported me in the election. That's how we got Nancy Jefferson and other people. He knew those people, and in the campaign, he was very active in working with our people and helping with the African-American community.[5] But he was also

[4] Nancy B. Jefferson was a legendary West Side community activist who headed the Midwest Community Council for twenty-five years (1963-1986). After her death October 18, 1992, over one thousand people attended her funeral. *Chicago Tribune*, October 19 & 25, 1992.

[5] For Kanter's work with Sawyer, especially during the mayoral succession fight, see Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 17, 2009, 46-56. For his organizational efforts in Chicago's black neighborhoods, see the same interview, 63-87.

Jewish; he knew the Jewish community, too. I was impressed with him and thought he might have the right get-up-and-go stature to be chief counsel. And I know I disappointed Phil Howe—he was very disappointed—but my feeling was, Arnie was a lot more gregarious and just would be the right person, and also, I got to know him. I was pretty uncomfortable with naming somebody to one of those key positions close to me that I didn't know. Kirk Dillard, I probably knew less than even Arnie Kanter—I'd been around Kanter more during the campaign.

I had an attorney working for me named Erhard Chorle. That's how we got Arnie involved, through Erhard. And Erhard—again, very smart guy, very savvy guy—even he knew he wasn't going to be chief counsel, I think. Erhard and I personally were pretty close—we'd gone to Israel together and stuff—so he was pretty high on Arnie, too. So those two guys I thought would be—they're both from the Chicago area, they both have ties up in the Chicago area—law firms and businesses; one was from DuPage, one was from Cook County. And the fact that Arnie was Jewish wouldn't hurt—again, kind of broaden the representation around me, not just a bunch of WASPs [derogatory term for White Anglo-Saxon Protestants]. I was very conscious—I was the teetotaling Baptist, which was fine, but it didn't hurt to show that other people were around other than just teetotaling Baptists. Now, I was the only teetotaling Baptist, I think, around; the rest of them didn't teetotal, and I don't know if many of them went to church. But for a variety of reasons, I thought Arnie might work, and I thought Kirk Dillard might work. I was kind of stumped on the chief of staff other than Kirk.

DePue: The chief of staff position, at least in the United States, has such a storied reputation. You mentioned the qualifications kind of external to the administration, but what did you envision the chief of staff doing within your office as a manager?

Edgar: I thought of Art Quern, who was the ideal chief of staff that I had been around, and he was very good internally. He was good externally, too, but he kept a good eye on things.

DePue: A disciplinarian, to a certain extent?

Edgar: To some extent—more so than I'd be, though I had always been a little more active. I was a lot more hands-on, it was viewed, than Thompson was. I think there was some concern I'd be too hands-on, and you just can't be that hands-on as governor because it's too big. As secretary of state, you can be hands-on.

DePue: Sometimes the chief of staff is the person who kind of screens people so that the chief executive doesn't get inundated. Was that what you envisioned?

Edgar: No, I'd have a gatekeeper to do that. The chief of staff would worry about the staff; he'd worry about the policy; he'd worry about the politics. Who got to see me would be somebody else, in my mind. Now, he'd have a big say on somebody needs—you need to talk to this guy or something, but he wouldn't be the gatekeeper. We had pretty well worked that out.

I'd had a secretary, as secretary of state, who'd been my legislative secretary—Penny Clifford, who was great—but then her husband got transferred to Florida, right when I was getting ready to run for governor; just couldn't have been a worse time. She left, so another one of the secretaries kind of filled in, but I knew that wasn't going to be right either. We had a neighbor person, Sherry Struck, who was the—I call it secretary. I'm probably incorrect these days to call them secretaries, but that's what I'd call them, and to me, that was a very powerful position. She had been the secretary over at the Illinois Coal Association, and Sherry's very organized. When I got ready to run for governor, I said, "Sherry, it's time for you to come and work for me." She kind of ran the office, the campaign office, and worked very closely with Carter and worked very closely with Mike Lawrence and all those people there, so she knew everybody in my inner circle, a lot of them, and she knew government, and she had the right temperament. So I got her to come over to be my secretary, and in some ways, she was also the gatekeeper.

Now, we had other people. Mike McCormick later on developed into that when he came up. I think Tom Livingston might have done a little, but I can't remember who else we had out doing that. But I didn't envision the chief of staff so much… I also knew that if the chief of staff was worth his pay, whoever the gatekeeper was was going to check with him. But it was more get the staff organized and… Again, this was different. We weren't up and running. We were going to put together a whole new staff. We might keep some people, but they were all going to be in different spots. There were a lot of people out there that we could pick from, but basically we had my people and we had some of the Thompson people that we might want to keep, but everybody's going to be in a different role than they'd been before. Also, I knew I didn't want the Thompson people necessarily running the show. Even though I'd been a Thompson person, I wanted to show this was a new administration.

So when I named Kirk and Arnie, I'm sure a lot of people were surprised, and I'm sure some were disappointed. People thought, maybe you ought to name Carter chief of staff, and as I said, I wasn't sure about it. But I did offer Carter—I said, "Carter, you want to be secretary of transportation?" And he didn't want that. He said, "I'll go back and work for the Senate." So he went back to work for Pate, and he kind of phased out at that point. He was always very supportive when we did things with the Senate Republicans, which was helpful, but he kind of phased out at that point.[6] And then my secretary of state staff—Grosboll, George Fleischli, Mike Lawrence—were very active, but nobody knew for sure just where they were all going to land.

DePue: Even Mike Lawrence?

Edgar: No, everybody knew he was going to be press secretary.

[6] Mark Boozell suggests that while Hendren may have been gone, he was still perceived in terms of his close relationship with Edgar. Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, August 18, 2009, 59-60.

DePue: And was that maybe your easiest decision?

Edgar: Boy, I don't even know if that was a decision; I think that was just kind of like the sun comes up in the morning and things like that. And again, Mike had been a major newspaper reporter. When I got him to come as my press secretary when I was in the secretary of state's office, it had surprised everyone because Lawrence was class A, and most of my people were kind of viewed as class B because they just weren't known; they hadn't been… But Lawrence was viewed as the top kind of person. A lot of people were surprised he'd go work for me.[7] And also seen as an indication that he thought I was going to go on. And Dillard and Kanter—Dillard particularly—I remember Pate Philip was very happy when I called and told him that's who I was going to put in there. And there weren't many things I did that made Pate Philip happy. (laughter) But he was very happy with that. Overall, I don't think anybody jumped up and down and said, this is great, but I think people said, that's fine.

And then Kirk did a very smart thing, because Kirk realized that he probably wasn't as organized as a Paula Wolff type was, and he talked Sally Jackson, who had worked in the Thompson administration, to be kind of the deputy chief of staff. She was a lot like Paula—in fact, she had worked for Paula. She was very organized. She later went on and headed up the Illinois State Chamber, then left to go over to head up the Columbus, Ohio, Chamber of Commerce until she retired. She was extremely organized, and she was super. Maybe the best thing about hiring Kirk was he hired Sally, in a way, because where Kirk was a pretty good talker and stuff, and detailed, sometimes—he was pretty good at making lists—Sally was great on follow-up. She knew the governor's office, and she knew all the things we needed to do—not just people we need to put in, things we needed to worry about. So with her there and Kirk there, we were pretty well grounded on what we had to do. Kanter, I thought, gave us somebody who could stand up to the Chicago law—and that's what you dealt a lot with, the big law firms and stuff like that.

DePue: How about the budget director position?

Edgar: Again, somebody that said six months earlier and everybody said, No, that won't happen. Joan Walters had married my former press secretary and moved to Seattle. They had divorced, so she just happened to be back when the election was over, just visiting.[8] She had a job—I can't remember if she was working for the city then.

DePue: I think she worked for the city.

Edgar: She worked for the city afterwards; I can't remember if she worked for the city before. But she was back; she didn't have a job. She was just back visiting, and when I had Paula head up the transition committee, Paula said, "Well, Joan's back.

[7] For Lawrence's decision in September 1987 to join Edgar's team in the secretary of state's office, see Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, March 4, 2009, 59-65.

[8] For the events that led to Walters returning to Edgar's administration, see Joan Walters, interviews by Mark DePue, July 15, 2009, 81-84 and July 29, 2009, 12-14.

Why don't I get her involved?" I said, "Yes, get her involved," and I said, "See if we can keep her." I think Paula's the one who came and said—I don't know if she suggested it or I thought it up—we'll make Joan head of Bureau of the Budget. Mike Belletire wanted it, we had other people who wanted it, but I wanted somebody who I felt very comfortable with and thought was organized—and who was tough, but nobody was going to die. Some bean counters are tough, but people will die because (laughs) they counted up, "We don't have this twenty dollars," or something like… Joan, I wasn't worried; in the end, she wouldn't let that happen. And she worked on the transition committee. She was very active and did everything.

I remember sitting her down, and I said, "Joan, I want you to do something for me." She kind of knew that I'd probably offer… I said, "I want you to be head of the Bureau of the Budget." She looked at me; "Bureau of the Budget? I don't know anything about that." I said, "Yes, you do. You know enough, you're tough enough, and" I said, "I don't want a bean counter. I want somebody that will do what's got to be done, that I trust, but in the end, is not going to let somebody die."

By that point, we knew we were in trouble. About a month into the transition, Art Quern and Pete Peters came to me and said, "We need to talk to you." I said, "Fine, you're talking to me." Said, "We've looked at the books and the budget and everything. We estimate you have at least a billion-dollar deficit, walking in, to…" I said, "Billion-dollar deficit?" I said, "We're not going to have much new revenue. The economy's not doing well." The recession hadn't gotten that bad yet, but we knew it was coming. I just remember saying, "Is it too late to ask for a recount?" (DePue laughs) And they said, you're certified; you've been certified in.

DePue: The numbers that were appearing in the press at the time, though, about the hole, were a lot lower than a billion dollars.

Edgar: Where were the numbers coming from?

DePue: Just reading the reports in the *Tribune* and the *Journal* and certain things.

Edgar: Oh, the Bureau of the Budget didn't let on like things were that bad, no, no. They lied to the people on Wall Street and everything else. I got the wrath of Wall Street when I went out the next year. But oh, no, they were just—everything was fine. But everything wasn't fine. Medicaid cost was the big—they always say the eight hundred–pound gorilla. And there were things coming online there that we were going to have to pay on—

DePue: Federal mandates.

Edgar: Yes. And a billion dollars—nobody had ever dealt with that kind of hole. Maybe $200, $300 million dollars, you'd be… But a billion dollars? And then you knew you really weren't going to get any new revenues, because I'd said—to make the surtax permanent—I wasn't going to raise other taxes. I'd pushed my limit on taxes, and that money from the surtax went to schools and local government; it didn't

come into the state coffers. So I knew that we weren't going to have a whole lot of wiggle room, and then they told me that. I can't remember the sequence. I'm sure they told me that before I talked Joan into being the Bureau of the Budget director, because
I think that was after Christmas, and they told me before Christmas that I was not going to have a happy new year with the budget.

Then, the other thing with staffing—I had to also figure out, what do I do with all the rest? I have Grosboll, I've got George Fleischli—I've got these people who are good, who have worked hard for me. So we kind of created what they called a super-staff. Grosboll had environment—I can't remember all he had. He didn't have education to start with; he got that later.

DePue: Department of Conservation?

Edgar: No, that was Fleischli. Fleischli had Racing Board. Fleischli was the hunter and fisherman, so he had that group. Grosboll was the environmentalist, so… But Conservation, the department, I know Fleischli had, and Al had EPA. I had done pretty well with the environmentalists in the election campaign because Al knew that stuff and had briefed me well. I don't think we carried it, but we did well for a Republican with that group. And we did very well with the hunters and all that; Fleischli had done a good job. So those two guys. I think George also had transportation, and he probably had Capital Development Board because he had done the buildings and grounds for me.

I was trying to think who the other super-staffs were. I was very conscious, too. I wanted to make sure we had women, we had minorities, and so—

DePue: Was Mike Belletire one of those, or was he another deputy chief of staff?

Edgar: He was a super-staff guy. He wasn't deputy chief of staff at that point; that was Sally. I can't remember what areas Mike had. He probably had some of the finance, though he didn't tell Joan what to do, that was for sure. I think he ended up with the Gaming Board, but I can't remember specifically all he had.

Now, at the same time, we were still looking at cabinet and stuff like that, but we brought in Felicia Norwood, who had been an intern or something in the Thompson administration and then went out in the private sector.

DePue: You're not talking about Desiree Rogers?

Edgar: No.

DePue: We can get that into the transcript later on, Governor.

Edgar: Yes, I'm just blanking on her… She came in to do the social service areas. She was an outsider—that was unusual—but she turned out to be super and worked for me for years. She went on to the private sector, and she's, I think, vice president of

Aetna Insurance—health insurance. And she got good marks. Again, she was a woman, and she was black. In the social service area, she had to deal with the nursing home people, she had to deal with the hospital association, and she had to deal with a lot of things that were real unpleasant, because it was all Medicaid-tied, too.[9]

DePue: The things we're going to talk about a little bit later—some of the decisions you had to make weren't going to play very well in her community.

Edgar: But we brought her in, and again, that was the exception, to bring in somebody at that high level—first time I ever met her, and most people didn't know her, but she worked out well.

I was doing the staff and I was doing the cabinet all at the same time, though I was trying to move a little quicker on the staff than the cabinet because I knew I wanted to have my staff in place. Particularly the people who had worked for me in the secretary of state's office—they were going to be out of a job, an office, and they were looking for their office. In fact, I remember Grosboll—I told him he had to keep running the secretary of state's office because we still had that until January. He always complained later that while he was running the secretary of state's office, everybody else was over getting their office, and he got left with a cubbyhole. He was moaning and groaning about that. And it probably was true, but he survived.

But we were still running the secretary of state's office, and we were trying to do that properly and also get ready for our new responsibilities in the governor's office. That didn't bother me so much, because I was gone now, but the staff had to still worry about those things. And then, what staff in the ranks were we going to bring over? We did bring over some, and some, I didn't even offer because I thought they ought to stay where they were. They had an important job there, and I knew Ryan would probably keep them. And one that, in hindsight, I never thought about bringing because I thought she'd want to stay, was Bridget Lamont, who headed up the Illinois Library for me. I just figured she'd want to stay there and she should stay there because we had the new library building, and the library's important to me. Later, when George got elected governor, she left and came with George, though she's kind of said she'd done the library thing long enough. But we did bring a lot of people over, and we were starting to figure out where we were going to put those folks.

But I was also thinking about the cabinet, and the transition committee was making recommendations to me on the types of people or even some people. My super-staff was also involved with the transition committee and looking at those people, too. I remember on Conservation, we knew we wanted to bring some new

[9] Felicia F. Norwood, a Georgia native, received her M.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her J.D. from Yale Law School. She joined Aetna in 1994, and is currently the president of Aetna's Mid-America Region. "Biography," Seventh Annual Black Women's Leadership Summit, April 19-20, 2010, Washington, DC, http://www.elcinfo.com/downloads/docs/bwls2010/all_bios/Felicia_F_Norwood.pdf.

people in, because we thought Conservation needed change. So we knew we wanted somebody from outside, and I said, "I want somebody that can get along with the environmentalists and get along with the hunters." Everybody kind of looked at me like, what do you—you got to draw one. (laughter) I said, "No, no, because I don't just want a guy that's just going to go out and hunt." I think I even talked to Fleischli about it; he said, "No, I don't want to run an agency. I've run that—buildings and grounds—and I don't want to do that." Because a couple times, I tried to get him to go run an agency, and he didn't want to.

So I remember on that, we looked at all kinds of people, and I just kept saying, "No, no, that's not the right person." And finally they said, "We got somebody from Ducks Unlimited." I said, "I like this." I didn't even know the guy yet, but I said, "Ducks Unlimited—the hunters like that, but that's also a preservation kind of thing, and that makes sense." Then they brought in Brent Manning, who also, it turned out, was a graduate of Eastern; so I said, "Well, this locks it in." (DePue laughs) But he came from the right—it was a hunting group, but it was a hunting group that the environmentalists—there was understanding there, too. I waited a while on that; we waited long enough, and we got the right guy.[10] I was in no hurry to pick somebody unless I felt comfortable [with them] on the cabinet. Now, I did not have a problem with bringing people up from the ranks, but I wanted to make sure they were professionals. I didn't want to get this guy's faction or that guy's faction, and that's kind of why, with Conservation, we went outside.

DOT—of course, that's very sought-after, and that's one you pretty much always put a political type in. I said I'd talked to Carter and he wasn't interested, so then they brought names to me. I said, "No, I don't want to put a political person in there. I think I want somebody who knows transportation." And Kirk Brown, who I didn't know—I probably had seen him around, but I had not dealt with him—was head of Planning and Policy, I think, and dealt with the legislature, but he kind of knew the long-range stuff. He had not been the secretary or even undersecretary, but… I talked with him, and I liked him, and I thought… I took a lot of flak, and a lot of the legislators were unhappy. Pate was really unhappy about it. He had somebody he wanted, and, "This guy's just a bureaucrat." The staff liked him, though, because they had worked with him, and Carter and those guys told Pate, "No, that's a good appointment." And Kirk Brown turned out to be one of the superstars.[11]

One of the things I'm proud of: the cabinet did a good job, but the cabinet also stayed almost intact for the whole eight years, and that had never happened. And a lot of them were asked by Ryan to stay for another four years, which had never happened before. So I think that our cabinet was a really good cabinet, and I think

[10] Manning recounts his experience of Edgar's hiring process in Brent Manning, interview by Mark DePue, February 18, 2010, 33-39.
[11] For Brown's recollection of the process by which he was hired, see Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 54-58.

they proved that. A lot of the credit I get, I think, is because I had good people, and a lot of those were the cabinet members.

One of my favorite stories—and I usually don't tell the name, but since this is history and time has passed: Public Health is a tough one to find because you have to have a doctor's degree, and you get paid peanuts compared to what a doctor would make. So the kind of doctors you might get that want to do that may not be doctors you want running the department. So again, we looked in the ranks, and they came to me and said, "We got one of the deputy directors there who is African American and we think might be a person [to consider]." That was Dr. [John] Lumpkin. So I remember I was in the secretary of state's office. They had him in one of the staff's offices back there, and I went back. Everybody in the cabinet, I interviewed; nobody got hired without me talking to them.

I went back—I knew his background, that he was an MD—and I said, "Why would you do this?" I said, "You don't make…" He said, "My wife is a doctor, our income is enough, and I like public health. That's just what I like to do." He had pretty good marks. And I said—this is a question I'd asked them all—"Is there anything in your background or anything I need to know about you now and not find out later?" They'd all sort of said, "No, no, nothing." He kind of waited a minute. He said, "Well, there is one thing." (laughs) And I thought, oh, no—because I thought, oh, this guy seems like he'll be fine, and this is a hard position to fill. I said, "What is it?" He said, "When I was in college, I was a member of the Communist Party." (laughter) And I said, "Oh, no!"

But this was 1991—thank heaven it was 1991, not 1981—and the Cold War was basically over. I said, "Well, I'm glad it's 1991 and it's not about ten years ago." He said, "And I realized quickly my mistake, but probably my name is on some record someplace." I said, "Okay, let me tell you what we're going to do. Don't bring that up at the confirmation hearing. If you get asked, you'll have to say, but just don't bring it up." I said, "I don't think it's relevant. The Cold War's over; I don't think there will be a problem, but again, I wouldn't volunteer that at the confirmation hearing." Needless to say, he didn't volunteer that. And he was there the whole time I was there. He did a very good job at Public Health, very good.

Agriculture was probably the most sought-after. More people wanted to be director of agriculture, which is beside—director of agriculture really didn't have a whole lot to do about agriculture policy. It's PR, it's a platform, but it's more about weights and measurement and things like that. Agricultural policy is set in Washington, but everybody wanted to be director of agriculture. I had more people calling me; I had more folks who thought they ought to get that. I remember the committee had about three names. They had this one guy, and he really wanted it, and he got named by a later governor. Usually by the time I'd get them, I'd look at their résumé, I'd talk to people, and they'd do okay. Here was a guy that looked like he was probably the guy, came in—I did not like him at all. He was arrogant, and I just thought, I don't want this guy as director of agriculture. I said no. I told my

staff, "No, I'm not going to pick him." Everybody was really surprised, and I had folks calling me, and I said, "No, I just don't like him."

And somebody who had been on the transition committee and working in that area, that they all were impressed with, was Becky Doyle. She had run for state rep, I think, in a Democratic district and lost, but she had been active in agricultural things and in Republican politics, and we had her on the transition committee. I know a lot of the people on the transition committee said, boy, they were really impressed. In fact, my brother was on the committee she was on, and he said, "Boy, she's really good," and my brother's not what I'd call a feminist promoter. (DePue laughs) And I had others say it. We were looking and looking—they finally said, "How about Becky?" I said, "Maybe. How about it?" I said, "She knows agriculture." She and her husband ran a large hog farm. She had been through the program the Farm Bureau has for farm leaders, and she knew politics. And I always felt like I wanted somebody that knew a little politics of government because you have to deal with that in there.

So I named her, and you'd have thought agriculture community was going to die. Here I'd named a **woman** as director of agriculture, and they weren't ready yet. This was still a good ol' boy network of all these groups and things, and they just… Well, they couldn't say much because I'd named her, but they just were not excited. She always had, I thought, to work extra hard to prove herself, and I thought did a good job. But I think they were happy when Ryan came in and they got to go back to the good ole boy thing in that area. That one didn't work out all that well. But I named the only woman to head up the Bureau of the Budget, which, next to governor, is the most powerful, important position—at least in my years it was, because of the budget problems—and then I named the first woman ever director of agriculture, and that really shook a lot of folks up.

DePue: Not as surprising to have a woman head up the Department of Public Aid.

Edgar: No, no, that wouldn't have been as surprising. Agriculture was probably the last one. Even DOT, I don't think, would have probably gotten as much reaction from the community as agriculture did. I was a little surprised, because I thought she was very well involved in the community, but they just weren't ready yet.

DePue: You haven't gotten to one of the other big employers in the state yet, Department of Corrections.

Edgar: When I was going in as governor, the thing I worried about the most was a prison riot, because New York and others had had them, and I knew we had overcrowding in our prisons, and we weren't going to build them fast enough. So I wanted a professional there. We'd had some, I wouldn't say major, scandals, but there had been some things in the Thompson administration, questioning some things there, and people had come and gone there. So again, we wanted to get a professional. These committees from the transition committee did a lot of work, and they interviewed a variety of people, and they came forward with the name of Howard

Peters, who I didn't know. He was the warden at Pontiac at that time, and he had been a guy who had worked his way up through the ranks of the department. An African American, and I thought that made sense because most of the inmates were African Americans; I just thought that might help understand and quell or deal with problems there, so I thought that was a plus. And he had been warden of one of the major prisons, had good marks—career guy. So that made a lot of sense to me.[12]

And of course, Howard turned out to be an excellent director and went on and was deputy governor, headed up Human Services, and now is the number-two guy at the Illinois Hospital Association. Just one of those finds. It's like Kirk Brown, though Kirk Brown, I think, was a little more visible when we brought him on than Howard was. People who were in state government, had been doing a good job—the type of people who didn't usually get a chance to be the top guy, and we gave them that chance, and they did a super job. So that wasn't too difficult.

Of course, prison jobs were the best jobs in the state. Downstate, everybody wanted a prison in their community because those were good-paying jobs. County chairmen loved to have a prison because that meant a lot of jobs, and, then, we could still kind of direct a few Republicans into jobs. So county chairmen were all kind of taken aback: here's this career black guy heading up the agencies that has all the jobs for Repub—a lot more jobs there than DOT anymore. But what was funny: Howard is a motivational speaker. He's really good. And then, of course, all the county chairmen—he's the guy they got to get along with. He used to get more invitations to do Lincoln Day dinners than I did, (DePue laughs) because they found out he was a good speaker. He was really a good speaker—pull yourself up by the bootstraps kind of thing—and it went over great with Republican crowds; plus, he's the guy who had all the jobs. (laughter) So he was always sought-after. He may not have been quite as much as me, but right after me, people wanted Howard to come and do the Lincoln Day dinner. He did his job well, he did well in the political thing, and he just was one of the superstars. Again, it was just somebody that came up through the ranks.

DePue: Another potential problem area for you that I'm sure you knew was out there was the Department of Children and Family Services.

Edgar: Not really, not at that time. Children and Family Services, back when [Richard] Ogilvie had it and a guy named [Edward] Weaver ran it, was considered the best-run agency in state government. Then [Daniel] Walker came in, and he put in—oh, that attorney that sues everybody. She's still around Springfield. She came in, and it—

DePue: Oh, you mean Mary Lee Leahy.

Edgar: Yes, Mary Lee Leahy became director, and it became very controversial. Of course, everything in the Walker administration became controversial. And my brother

[12] For Peters' perspective, see Howard Peters, interview by Mark DePue, December 21, 2009, 34-42.

happened to work there at that time. He'd started under Ogilvie and lasted for a while. He didn't get fired; he just left. I'm not sure she was to blame, but it became more controversial. Under Thompson, it wasn't the golden agency it had been under Ogilvie, but it wasn't the controversy it became during the nineties.

At that point, in the early nineties, you still hadn't realized we—and it wasn't just in Illinois; it turned out throughout the nation—had this huge problem with abused children, and state agencies aren't able to deal with all these problems. They don't have the manpower, and sometimes they don't have the laws, and sometimes they make mistakes. But Children and Family Services wasn't viewed as Corrections, or Public Aid. And we named Sue Suter into that agency. That's what she wanted. I said, "What would you like to do?" She got high marks as director of Public Aid under Thompson. And then she ran for comptroller—gave Dawn Clark Netsch a good race; it was probably the closest one that we lost. I think I talked to her about Public Aid, and she said, "No, I'd rather do Children and Family Services." So she went into Children and Family Services. And at that point, everybody thought that was a good appointment. Bob Kustra—his wife had followed Sue Suter at Public Aid, so he wasn't as high on Sue Suter as some others. But other than that, everybody thought that was a good appointment. You've got the book there.

I didn't fill my cabinet, all of them, until February, probably. I knew I didn't have to have them done by the time I was sworn in; I wanted as many as I could, but I didn't have to have them all in. I remember one of last ones was Revenue. I wanted somebody who understood tax policy, because we knew the tax cap was going to be one of our main pieces of legislation, and I wanted somebody who was competent. And I had decided I wanted Doug Whitley. Doug Whitley, at that time, was head of the Illinois Taxpayers Federation, and he was a Democrat. Doug had always been a Democrat, but he was very well thought of. I had worked with him and the Taxpayers Federation over the years—he was a couple years younger than I am—and I knew that would be viewed as a very positive appointment to me. Though he was not active, everybody knew he was a Democrat. He was good friends with Dick Durbin. His wife, in fact, was Dick Durbin's secretary, or worked in the office or something like that, when he was congressman.

I had him over at the mansion, I remember—and it's where Thompson had had me over to the mansion to talk me—because I thought he may not want to do this, and I put the sell on. He agreed to do it. He came over and was director of Revenue. Unfortunately, he only stayed for a couple of years. Ameritech came and offered to make him the president of Illinois Ameritech, which was a good job; it was a credit to him. I remember Bill Weiss called me. Brenda and I, after I'd had my heart thing, went off to Pritikin to do some health improvement, and Bill Weiss called me. He said, "I just want to talk to you first." He said, "We have talked to Doug Whitley, but we haven't offered him anything. I want to just make sure you won't be upset [if we] offer him this job as president of Ameritech Illinois." I was standing there, and Brenda could hear the conversation. "Yes," I said, "I'm just curious, how much are you paying?" He said, "Oh, he'll get paid two hundred

thousand dollars." And Brenda heard that and said, "Tell him you'll take the job." (laughter)

But Doug, while he was there, shepherded through the property tax-cap bill. I was very pleased when he accepted. I thought when people like that would accept, it was a good indication that people wanted to be part of this administration. It was important to have good people, but it also was important for the perception of the administration—that this was a good group of people they were putting together—because I knew how we were first perceived as an administration would carry for a long time. It was very important we got off to a good start. So not only did we want good people, we wanted people who were good people that other folks thought were good people.

DePue: Two questions to follow up on what you just mentioned here. The first question is on the vetting process. How did you manage the vetting process for all these folks?

Edgar: First we had the committee from the transition committee. They looked, and they broke that committee down into certain areas like Natural Resources and Ag, maybe, Human Services, and then people who had kind of an expertise in that area would be involved in that and would come up with names. Once the names were getting filtered down and we thought maybe here's two or three, we would take a closer look at them. And usually the actual final vetting might not happen until after I said, "Okay, that person's all right." Then we'd vet them, or maybe they'd be vetted right before we thought it was going to be all right. We didn't vet everybody. We waited until we thought there was a pretty good chance this—as far as having the former U.S. attorney sit down with them and stuff like that.

And I can't remember who we had at that point. Bill Roberts was working on it, but we probably had Dan Webb and Jim Montana and people who had been in the U.S. attorney's office, who were in private practice at that point. I can't remember exactly who all the vetters were. There was another guy, Anton Valukas, that we used as attorney for the campaign who had been a U.S. attorney. All these guys had been U.S. attorneys under Thompson, some of them were deputy, and then some of them, like Dan Webb, became a U.S. attorney. And those guys, they would be vetted by those folks and then signed off. Again, we had a system, and we never were embarrassed. Everybody had been vetted, and we didn't have any surprises later that I can remember.

DePue: The follow-on question there was, did you have any problems getting it through the legislature? And this is a Democratically-controlled legislature.

Edgar: No, not on that. I don't think we had any trouble. I was trying to think if there was anybody they might of held up for a while, but I can't. They might have, but it wasn't over something that we had missed; it might just be the whim of the… Now, as we're putting the cabinet together too, we're kind of keeping [track], how many women do we have, and how many minorities do we have? Not that we were going to pick somebody just because they were a woman or a minority, but if we were

down to two or three people and they all seemed pretty even, if they were in a minority, that would be an advantage.

I was pretty-well getting done, getting my staff that I wanted placed and everything, by the time we got to, I would say, Christmas. And at that point, we really knew that we were going to have a real problem on the budget. But we also had to get ready for inauguration; we had to think about our State of the State address—and that's more non-budget items. So we were still trying to put the pieces together through the Christmas holidays and be ready for inauguration. And inauguration, again, takes a lot of time, because a lot of the folks were involved in that, too. George Fleischli, I know, was very involved. I know Sherry was involved. I kept an eye on that because it's not just a party: it's kind of your coming-out, and it's very important it's done professionally in a manner that's going to leave a good impression on folks.

So November, I had a week to go down to Florida and kind of rest a little bit, then come back and start worrying about this. Also, on the personal side, we had to start planning on moving out of our house and moving to the mansion, though it wasn't going to be all that difficult. Elizabeth was going to be able to stay at Glenwood; even though we technically weren't in the school district, she was already in her senior year.

DePue: I did want to ask you—since you brought this subject up, the Springfield–Chicago question—about where you should be and how you might divide your staff up.

Edgar: There wasn't any question: the staff's in Springfield. That's the state government capital.

DePue: Senator Dillard suggested, though, that you had told him as chief of staff he could spend a considerable amount of his time in the Chicago area as well.[13]

Edgar: They were going to be up there, but I don't remember telling him he could spend a considerable amount of his time. He'd be up there—and I might have fudged a little bit on that to get him to take the job. We had offices up there, and they were going to be up there during the week a lot, but they were officially based in Springfield.

DePue: And that's certainly what he said.

Edgar: Oh, no, they did—we lived on the shuttle going back—the staff went back and forth all the time. Of course, he lived in DuPage County. He had a condo down in Springfield, but he lived in DuPage County. Arnie Kanter lived in the North Shore area. So those guys were always coming back and forth, but they knew they had to be down in Springfield. They couldn't work out of the office in Chicago and say they were doing their job. They had an office up there, but they were in Springfield. Particularly at the beginning, once they were identified, they needed to be on board.

[13] Kirk Dillard, interview by Mark DePue, November 9, 2009, 8.

There is also money enabled—you could begin to do some of that. They needed to start working right away. And the—

DePue: I interrupted you when you were talking about the family move to Springfield.

Edgar: I was just saying that I was worrying about this, but I also had to worry a little bit about my family; though that was a lot easier than it might have been, because, as I said, Elizabeth wasn't going to have to change schools. We were moving about five miles. But we did have to start thinking about packing up and trying to sell our house, because we knew we weren't going to keep our house. I wanted to get another place to kind of retreat, and that was a lively discussion in our family. I wanted to go to Southern Illinois; Brenda didn't want to go more than ten feet. She didn't want to be far away and in the boonies, because she'd grown up in the boonies and didn't want to go back to the boonies. So we knew we were going to probably get a place, we just hadn't agreed yet. We didn't really agree until April on that. And we hadn't sold our house. But again, we had to think about that part of it.

DePue: The house that you had at the time was where, again?

Edgar: It was in the south side of Springfield in a subdivision called Hyde Park, which was in the Chatham School District but in the Springfield city limits. We had lived there for the last ten years. To this day, that's where our kids felt like they grew up. That's where they went to school and all.

I worried a lot. I worried in the campaign, and I worried a lot about getting the staff put together, getting the cabinet, and then worrying about the issues we're going to have to deal with. Also at that time, I had lunch with Mayor Daley. Daley and I had always gotten along well as secretary of state and state's attorney.[14] We'd worked together on drunk driving stuff and things, and I'd gotten to know his mother when we had the thing for the statue of his father. I always had good relations with Daley, so I figured there'd be no problem, I knew that Daley had not hurt me in the election. He hadn't been a big Hartigan supporter; in fact, I'd heard he'd told people his mother had voted for me in the election, and I think that's probably true.

But I remember I was going to have my lunch with Daley. It was after the election, and I got a call—how long are these things impounded, by the way? (laughter) Oh, let me say, I got a call from someone who I know very well and knew the situation very well, and he said, "You're having lunch today with Daley, aren't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Just be prepared. You're going to come away from that conversation confused about what he said. It just won't make any sense." And I said, "Wait a minute. I've dealt with Rich. I don't think it will be a problem." He said, "All right. But you haven't dealt with him as governor and mayor." I said,

[14] Daley served as state's attorney in Cook County from 1980 to 1989.

"Okay." I think we were at the Four Seasons; we were having lunch, and we spent two hours. And I for the life of me didn't know what he was talking about.

One of the big issues was going to be McCormick Place expansion, and I had said in the campaign, which surprised people, "I'm in favor of McCormick Place expansion. I think it's important for the state," and blah, blah, blah. Well, that meant you're going to have to raise some fees and taxes in the area to pay for it. That was a given, but I didn't view that as a statewide tax under my no new tax thing. So we're sitting there—Daley's up for election in March or April, whenever his election was—and I was saying, "We need to do McCormick Place." "Well," he said, "I'm not sure if we need to do that. I'm not sure yet." He did not want to commit and be on record that he was for any tax increases or fee increases that would have to pay for McCormick Place before the election, but we needed it in the legislative session that was coming up. So I was sitting there. I was this downstate Republican, just elected governor, and I was arguing we ought to do McCormick Place, and here's (laughs) the mayor of Chicago telling me why we shouldn't do McCormick Place. I just thought, this is bizarre. But it was kind of Daley. I guess we'd never had real complicated conversations. Daley just talked a little bit in circles, I thought, and then it was done, and I now realized I didn't know.

Then the press found out we were there, so they all showed up. Well, they didn't really want to talk to me, they just—it was typical up there; the Chicago media that covered you was city hall, and they just really wanted to cover the mayor. That's their beat. So they kind of [asked] politely about the two of us, then they went after Daley on some of the issues around city government. And that's the first time I really appreciated—they'd ask him a question, and Daley would give them an answer that wasn't even close to the question. (laughter) It made no sense at all, but they got their thirty-second sound bite, and that's what they wanted. I just walked away just shaking my head, and I called this guy and, "You were right." I said, "That was the most confusing lunch I have ever had." And that was kind of like you do with Daley. He would talk in riddles, and part of that, I think, was he just didn't want to commit; he just wanted to keep it flexible.

I had lunch with Phil Rock. We had a very good lunch and talked about things. And I kept calling Speaker Madigan, wanting to have lunch with him. Never could get a lunch with him. Madigan never would talk to me until after inauguration. He finally agreed to have lunch with me, but he waited—three months, I couldn't get in… I'd always got along with Madigan before, but Madigan just was…

DePue: Any reason for—

Edgar: Part of the thing I heard after the election—somebody said, Madigan says, "Don't worry, we'll get Edgar in line," or "We'll teach Edgar," or something like that. I think he thought he was going to be able to—and he kind of told me so later. He said, "I misjudged you." So during that period I was also trying to get out and talk with folks.

I want to go back to a little bit about the transition committee. In my mind, the staff was more important than the cabinet. The transition committee, I think, probably had more impact on our administration than any transition committee had had on previous administrations. Now, I know Paula had worked on Thompson's original transition, and I'm sure they had some impact. But the nuts and bolts, which is so important—Sally Jackson worked with the transition, and that was very important. Coming up with the people, they did have an impact on who got hired, who I talked to, and stuff like that. They also came up with some suggestions on policy issues. I think they're the ones that recommended, though we talked about it in the campaign, having a Conservation Congress, which had not happened in Illinois; I know they developed some ideas and things along that line. So they, at some point—I know when the report came. It came the day after we got Emy. White dog over there.

DePue: Emy.

Edgar: Emy.

DePue: Somebody told me that there are initials there that have significance.

Edgar: Executive Mansion, Youngest. It's spelled E-m-y. I always wanted a golden retriever, because Eastern's mascot Napoleon had been a golden retriever.[15] We had a little Toto, which we still had. He was now seventeen years old, kind of going blind and on his last leg. But I thought, when I've got this fenced-in yard, I want a dog. I want a golden retriever. So George Fleischli knew I wanted a golden retriever. We had just come in—we're a little ahead of the story—after inauguration, we were just settled in the mansion, and he said, "I've got a golden retriever pup for you." I said, "Good," so he brought it over. It was this white dog. I said, "It's white." (laughter) He said, "Nah, nah, it'll get darker. See those ears?" The ears were tipped a little bit, and he said, "The whole body will be like that." I don't know if you can see that picture.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: That dog's about eight years old there. You can see how white she is. (laughter) We got her about January twenty-second, twenty-third, and the next day I think the transition committee came to the mansion and presented the final report. So they gave me the final report about a week after I had been sworn in as governor.

DePue: There are a couple positions in your personal staff that you haven't gotten to yet. I'm surprised in one case: the director of legislative affairs.

[15] Napoleon, or "Nap," was the name given to a stray mutt that appeared on campus in 1945. During the years Edgar was growing up, Napoleon became a staple of campus life at Eastern—being named the official mascot in 1947, apparently attending a few classes, participating in homecoming parades, and appearing on souvenir postcards—before his death in 1960. He was buried on campus. In 1966, the student senate named a golden retriever Napoleon II, but he was killed two months later. *Eastern Illinois University Centennial* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Co., 1995), 43-45.

Edgar: That was an area where I thought—and I think Kirk recommended it, probably—that we ought to keep Steve Selcke because we were going to have a tough legislative year; he was good. And I knew Selcke—not well, but he seemed fine. And Mark Boozell, who had been my legislative guy, who had kind of worked up the ranks, I thought may not quite be ready yet to be the main legislative guy. I just thought he probably needed a little more—because again, he was viewed as just a secretary of state guy, and Selcke was pretty well thought of. I think Mark was disappointed, but I talked to Steve.[16] Kirk had talked to him. He said, "I'll stay for the transition, one year, and then I want to go on out." And I told Boozell, "We're going to Selcke, but he'll just do it a year, and you'll learn the ropes, because it's different. You were an agency liaison when I was legislative liaison, and you've been the secretary of state's, which is like an agency, but you haven't been…" I said, "Just trust me for a year."

And then Steve was excellent. Again, he had a lot of ties already with the legislative leaders; he had credibility, which is very important. Now, Mark developed even better credibility. The last four years—the last two years particularly—Boozell could go get anything from Madigan. To this day—Mark does a little lobbying—he can always get in immediately because, over the years, Madigan just developed a trust with him, which is very important with Madigan. Boozell had that rapport with legislators. But he didn't quite have that level of rapport at that point, because secretary of state was a little different; you didn't deal with the Speaker as secretary of state; you dealt with maybe a staff person, and you dealt with the committee chairman. So Selcke was very, very helpful, because he had ties with some of the Democrats we didn't have ties with, which proved to be very good. So that's right: he stayed as legislative liaison and Mark went in as his deputy. What was your other question? You've got the list there; I don't.

DePue: The other position—I think I got the title of the position correct—director of personnel? I'm talking about Janis Cellini.

Edgar: Oh, yes. She had done that for me in the secretary of state. Janis, of course, has that magic last name that can be hate or love, (laughs) Cellini, but among Republican Party folks it was love; it wasn't because she was Bill's sister; it's because she was Janis. And in the secretary of state's office, when I brought her in, she was the best people-person I have been around. She could deal with folks. She stayed late at night, took care of the problems, and it didn't matter who it was. So there was never any question either about her moving into that position. But that position—it's not what people think it is. There are limits, a lot of limits—even when we first came in—on what we could do.

DePue: I don't know that we've mentioned the term that you and I are thinking of. She was essentially your patronage chief; that's how she's portrayed.

[16] Boozell, August 18, 2009, 47-50.

Edgar: Patronage, yes, but patronage wasn't what it used to be. Under Ogilvie, or even Thompson's start, that was a big deal. By the time we got there, there were very few jobs that you could do under just pure patronage. And Janis was pretty good at finding folks that weren't necessarily Republicans but fit in pretty well in jobs. She also kept an eye on boards and commissions, too, which was one of the few things you could do to kind of reward people. But again, my philosophy on boards and commissions: I didn't mind rewarding someone, but they had to do the job. Just because a person wrote a check to me didn't mean I was going to name them on a board of trustees. Now, if they wrote a check to me and I thought they brought something to that board of trustees, that was a different thing; or if they had helped in the campaign and there was an expertise they had that I thought they could do a good job, that—if I need to name somebody with an expertise, I might as well name someone I know that I like as opposed to somebody I don't know. But I had some people who wanted appointments, and I'd say, "No, you're just not the right person for that spot." I had done the same thing in staff positions, too.

Bob Hickman, who had been my chief fundraiser, who had run my Chicago office, wanted to be secretary of transportation. I said, "Bob, you can't be secretary of transportation. You don't know anything about that agency. That's just not your…" I said, "Tollway is a traditional job where you put somebody maybe that's more the political guy. And that's a little more manageable." He was disappointed, but he did the Tollway, and I thought he did a pretty good job. He got in trouble later on because Bob had trouble—some people do—it wasn't he was doing something wrong; he was taking care of a friend. The friend did something wrong, and he took care of his friend, and he paid a price for that. But he, I thought, was an improvement on the Tollway over who Thompson had had—one of his patronage guys in there; he was a kid, and I don't think they ran it as businesslike as they should. I think Bob did a better job. But it was obvious to me that the Tollway would be fine, because historically it had always been somebody who was more political. Transportation had been, to some extent, but I wanted a professional there; I didn't want a political person. And I think Belletire was disappointed he didn't get the Bureau of the Budget, but I didn't think Belletire was the right person for the Bureau of the Budget. So you had to make those calls, and I think for the most part, they worked out.

DePue: Just a couple more questions on the staff that you put together. Of the people we've mentioned—and maybe there's some that you haven't mentioned yet—who would you consider as the inner circle, so to speak, for policy issues, and then the same kind of question for political issues?

Edgar: I don't think there was a separation between policy and political. It was policy, but policy always was what was the political… It wasn't so much, how is this going to do you in the polls; it was more, can we get this passed? We were elected. I had pretty well staked out these positions. There wasn't anything I was taking that was a whole lot different. Kirk worried a little more about it. He kept saying, "My job is to see you reelected," and I really hadn't thought about getting reelected. I had kind

of thought if I just got four years, that might be enough, and I was more worried about getting through the next year.

So it mattered what the issue was. If it was the budget, then Joan, upfront. Mike Lawrence usually was in on most of the meetings of major importance. Of course, the chief of staff, Kirk, would be involved. I'd probably have Steve Selcke in there if it took legislation, because I just wanted to, from the word go, have his input. I'd been in that office, and I knew you don't want to bring him in at the last minute, because sometimes that's too late. If it was something to do with conservation, environment, it'd be George Fleischli. Al Grosboll would probably be in there, and they might take different points of view, and I'd split the baby (laughs) or something, or figure out which one. Usually Al got the last word, and he (DePue laughs) more times prevailed than George. They had different interests; it wasn't that they disagreed all that much, but they might have a little different point of view. So it would vary from issue to issue.

The budget, we knew early on, was going to be our big challenge. What can we do about the budget? And we started pretty early figuring out what cuts can we put into place. I don't know when we came up with the decision that the first thing I was going to do the day after inauguration was announce a bunch of cuts, but we knew we were going to have to, if just for symbolic reasons. We also knew the budget we were going to have to put together was going to have to have cuts in it, which was something foreign to Springfield. Usually the issue is, if you were going to cut, you really weren't going to cut what was there; you were going to cut the increase, like at the federal level. And we were going to cut budgets. So we started working even before we were sworn in, what areas—

DePue: I know one of the things you were talking about cutting early on—at least, I believe this was the case—was your own personal staff.

Edgar: We wanted to show that what we were going to ask everybody else to do, we were going to do first, so we looked at places where we could cut back on the governor's staff. We cut back on security, too. I'd had security, but I knew Thompson had always had two cars and things and a lot of folks, and I thought one car was enough. So we cut executive security, and we sent the word to the other constitutional officers—we were going to kind of limit there, too. We never got much credit on that. I always thought we'd get a little more credit on that, because I thought that used to get stories written about Thompson and some of his entourage.

Again, during that transition period, you're not in control yet, but the Thompson people were very good at showing us the books. We knew what we were taking over, and we were beginning to get some space, so we were, I think, preparing ourselves as well as we could. But until you're actually in control, it's hard to do that. I wonder if we ought to take a break.

DePue: Yeah, this is the point in time I wanted to. Do you have any final comments about the transition period, because I think this is a natural break?

Edgar: It's kind of a blur in some ways. The campaign was stressful; I had a few days in Florida, and then the stress started back up again, just from a personal point of view. And the stress was not so much the financial, though I knew that was going to be a problem; it was just trying to put together the team, because to me, I knew I was only going to be as good as the people around me, and that was the most important thing I had to do. That would have a huge impact on how well I did as governor, because I knew this was a huge office. There's so many things I don't know about, and I've got to have good people, and I've got to have people that get along with each other—because we were putting some people together that hadn't worked together before, and we had some hurt people a little bit, maybe, who didn't get exactly what they thought they ought to get. But I needed to make sure everyone was pulling together, because we were in a whole new ballgame here. So just constant worrying about that.

And I would say a little bit of that went away when I was sworn in, because then we were there. But getting ready for there and making sure we had a good launching was extremely important. The launching really occurred from the day after election to the day I was sworn in, because every time you'd do a news conference, announce something, that was giving people something to form a judgment on you as governor—not as a candidate, not as secretary of state, but as governor. It was a whole different way they were viewing you now, so it was very important that everything you did that was public was thought out, and that you tried to put your best foot forward and leave the impression that you knew what you were doing. Because there was some thought here: This kid—I was still pretty young, and Thompson had been there so long—can he really do that job? We had to prove that, I think, and how you prove that, to a great extent, is by your first things you do, because those first impressions stick. I was very conscious, after going through a campaign where you thought everything you said or did might cost you the election, that everything I said or did after the election might cost my image as governor and my ability to govern.

And I knew I was going to have problems with the Democrats. I didn't know how much, as it turned out, but I knew they weren't happy. They had hoped they got a Democratic governor, not because they especially liked Hartigan, but they wanted somebody to sign the map. That's all they really cared about. (DePue laughs) That's all either party cared about in the legislature. And I could tell by the fact I couldn't get Madigan to a lunch, couldn't sit down with him, that there was going to be a problem here.

In some ways, I was relieved the election was over and I had won, I had a job. But I have to say, it was still a lot more stressful than I thought it would be, just worrying about putting that puzzle, your staff, together. As it turned out, I thought we did pretty well. I wasn't sure at the time. Even when I had them, I wasn't sure how they'd all gel and how they would mature; we all were going to have to mature. But I thought in the end, it worked pretty well. So we want to stop there?

DePue: Yes, we will. Thank you, Governor.

(End of interview 11)

Interview with Jim Edgar

ISG-A-L-2009-019.12

Interview # 12: November 17, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is November 17, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. We took a quick break for lunch, and I'm here with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good afternoon, Governor.

Edgar: Hello.

DePue: Took a quick break for a good lunch, and now we're into what I would consider one of the more important sessions that we're going to have. And let me set this discussion up: we just got done talking about your transition period, and you stressed the importance of the transition and finding the right team. But this is November 2009; we're in the middle of a pretty contested political battle. Both Republicans and Democrats have plenty of candidates up for governor. We're in the midst of a severe recession. The state has a huge budget deficit, and that's the topic of discussion: how to fill that budget deficit, how to restore some fiscal health. And probably for the next year, (laughs) we're going to hear an awful lot about how these various gubernatorial candidates are going to do that. So we're about to launch into your struggle, your first year of the administration, and that's exactly what you faced. Before we do that, though, let's talk a little bit about the inauguration. What do you recall about your inauguration?

Edgar: I thought it was a very well-done inauguration. It was exciting from my perspective because I was the governor, I was the principal. There were—I don't know how many people that place holds—ten thousand people in there.

DePue: Was this the Capitol Building?

Edgar: No, this was at the civic center in Springfield. They had moved the inauguration over there a couple inaugurations before. It's a great setting, actually, for an inauguration—good sound system, and you're not getting snowed on or rained on like outside, and it works very well. I was nervous I had to give a speech, so I

practiced the speech. I used a teleprompter, which I think is the first time I had—I bought the teleprompter. We still have it someplace; I don't know whatever happened to it.

DePue: Paid your own money for it?

Edgar: Yes, with campaign money. We didn't want the state to; the state was broke, anyway. So I had practiced it, and you weren't sure how—the media said it was kind of flat or didn't say much. Well, it was an inauguration: you don't get into specifics, you talk platitudes. But it was a fun day from the point of view that finally the day's come when you're going to become governor. Our church is Central Baptist, which was across the street from the mansion, and we started out with a prayer and a church service there; then we went to the inaugural ceremony. Actually, there was a thing in between. I don't quite understand why we do this. It's a tradition, I guess. It's kind of awkward. We went over to the mansion and had coffee with the governor and his wife, and we exchanged gifts.

DePue: So Thompson's still in the mansion.

Edgar: He's still in the mansion. Well, he's in the mansion just to have coffee with us. (laughter) We went in, and we had coffee and exchanged gifts—or I guess I gave him a gift. I think I gave him a book, some book on Illinois history. Then we went over to the convention center, and then it's getting pretty exciting, because you knew you're going, and this was it. We went in the convention center, and, as I said, I thought it went very well. They had worked long and hard on putting the ceremony together, getting the entertainment and the bands and the singers, and trying to make sure everybody got invited who needed to be invited—all the things you've got to worry about on those things.

And back then, which I think is a tradition we should have stuck with, only the governor made a speech. I was trying to think if we had any of the—if there was somebody of the other party, they'd let them make a speech, but I think I'm the only one who made a speech that day. The next year, everybody made a speech. It just went on and on. Roland Burris might have made a speech this time. Now that I think back, I think maybe we were given the option. I always refused as secretary of state to give a speech; I always thought it was the governor's place.

Anyway, it all went very well, and once we were done there, we went back to the mansion to shake hands with people who had come to the mansion. I think it was a hand-me-down from Andrew Jackson, when he let everybody come into the White House and they about tore the place up. Here, they don't tear it up, but you greet everybody. So you're now the governor, but for the next three hours, all you're doing is shaking hands with folks. You've got all this power, but all you're doing is standing at the mansion and shaking hands. So we shook hands. Then when that was done, we went over to a reception they were having at the Frank Lloyd Wright house.

DePue: The Dana-Thomas House.

Edgar: Dana-Thomas, yes. And that was for, I think, big contributors to the inaugural committee—because you had to raise private money for that. I remember going to that. Then we came back to the mansion. At that point, our clothes had been moved into the mansion. We still had our furniture and stuff we didn't move in, but our clothes, our personal things, were now in the mansion. That happens while you're over there at the convention center, all those things, final things, are moved.

So we had invited all of our families—my cousins, uncles, aunts, and Brenda's relatives—to come to the inauguration from all over the country. There weren't that many on her side, but I had cousins there from Florida and California and all over. We had a dinner for the family at the mansion before the ball. I probably enjoyed that the most because it was turkey and mashed potatoes and gravy, and I love that. And it was family. It was kind of nice, because we'd been on the go for the last—we had, I think, parties the night before, too. So we had that.

Then we went to the ball. Well, I don't dance very well. In fact, I'd actually taken dancing lessons before, so I could try to get through the one that Brenda and I would dance first. It was a fun party, but I really didn't want to—it was so many people, too, and everybody wanted to get around you and stuff. I remember we get there, and we're out dancing—and I'm probably getting—it came to our time to dance, and then everybody dances. But the song was "Strangers in the Night." That was Brenda and my song from college, when we first met. That was the number-one song. That's always been our song, so that was what they played for that dance. So we're dancing. And later, we're dancing, and this guy comes up with this cowboy hat on. He seemed kind of drunk, and he cut into me, and I thought, What in the world is going on here? It turned out it was my best man at my wedding, and I was his best man at his wedding. He lived out in Arizona, and I didn't know he was going to be there. And he's a character.

DePue: What's his name?

Edgar: His name is Jerry Gilbert. And that's who it was. (laughs) He had this cowboy hat on, and I didn't recognize him, so he started dancing with Brenda. Brenda realized it was Jerry, and I didn't know who it was. I was looking for the troopers, like, "Why did you guys let this drunk in?" And he had cowboy boots on and everything. He had come back to see his folks, and I don't know if we even sent him an invitation, because we had kind of lost track of him; we didn't see him that much since he'd been out in Arizona, at that point, for twenty years. But anyway, that was funny.

We stayed for a while, but then we went home because first thing the next day, we had a press conference. We were going to start showing we were governing. We went home, it was probably twelve o'clock, and I just wanted to go to bed. So I went to bed, and Brenda's not in bed. She's just not there, and I was waiting and waiting and waiting. Found out what she had done—all the lights were

on in the mansion. She thought she had to go around and turn all the lights off. So she was going around and turning the lights off, and all of the sudden the phone rang, and it's the state trooper saying, "Ma'am, we'll do that. You don't have to do that." (laughter) Her dad had always taught her, "Turn off the lights," so she's up—and she couldn't find a lot of the light switches, so that took her about an hour, then she came back.

I think maybe it was the next morning; we wake up, and we're in bed at the mansion, in the governor's bedroom, and there's this huge chandelier above us. We look up at that chandelier, and we realize that chandelier probably cost more than our last house did. (laughter) And we kind of look at each other: "What are we doing here?" Because one of the things Thompson, very nicely, had done before he left—he had remodeled the family quarters in the mansion. He had gotten the money and had it remodeled so we wouldn't take the blame … And one thing about Jim Thompson: he has good taste. He spares no expense. (laughs) It's the most beautiful—it was wallpaper and all the—we'll never live in a place like that. But we woke up, and we thought, gee, what are a couple kids from downstate Illinois doing here in this place? This is just unbelievable.

But the inaugural ceremony was fun. I can't say that it was the most enjoyable thing I had ever done, because I think I was worried about what laid ahead. I knew that started, and I had worried about how the speech would be taken or how people would perceive it all. There were points of it that were a lot of fun, and there were points of it where—I think just knowing you're now the governor… When we left the inaugural ceremony, we didn't get in the car we came. We got in the car that had the license plate number one on it, and that's when it hit, you are the governor now. Before, I'd had number four; now I had number one. And you're driving back to the mansion. I have to fast-forward eight years later. The same thing happened to us: we drive into the convention center, and we still have one; we walk [out]—I remember looking at my car, and it wasn't one anymore. (DePue laughs)

And it was good to have the family there. My mother was there. Unfortunately, my mother, who had had a hip replacement that hadn't worked and was almost forced to be in a wheelchair—it really didn't work for the mansion, the room there, so she stayed over at the hotel where most of our family stayed. Some stayed in the mansion, but most—because we hadn't gotten in there yet, so we weren't real sure how it'd all play out. So she didn't stay in the mansion that night, and then they went back to Charleston the next day. And unfortunately, she never did get to stay in the mansion, because then she passed away a few months later. I always felt bad that she didn't get a chance at least to spend a night in the mansion. She got a chance to eat in the mansion, but not spend the night in the mansion.

By the time we finally got to bed, I was tired, but I was also thinking about tomorrow, because tomorrow was going to be the first day and a very important day.

DePue: The next day, then. Let's start with this: at that point in your career, one day into the governorship, what did you have as your vision for your administration, your goals?

Edgar: To survive, at that point. We knew financially, we had a mess. We had a Democratic legislature that was going to be hostile. We had to learn the ropes. I'd like to say I had these four principles and things that were—we had what we promised in the campaign—but my major concern was just trying to figure out, how do we begin to get some control of the financial mess we've inherited?

DePue: Before we get too deep into that, I wanted to get your reflections on what was going on at the national or the international level, because—

Edgar: Nothing yet. It was later that day. President Bush had sent troops over to Saudi Arabia to begin to jawbone with Saddam Hussein over Kuwait, but nothing had happened at that point. And they'd been there so long, there was kind of a lull going on. He finally got the vote in Congress to give him the authority to go to war, basically, if we had to go to war, but nothing had happened for so long, I don't think it was on most people's mind except we knew we had troops over there. Not, as it turned out, the first full day I was governor, but that evening—and we'll talk about that as the day progresses.

I walk over to the mansion—I walked over to the mansion almost every day. I think of the eight years I was governor, I might have ridden four or five times when the weather was so bad, or I maybe wasn't feeling good and the weather was bad, but I always wanted to walk because I thought that was man of the people, and not… Also, it was kind of a chance to clear your mind as you're walking over and thinking about what you want to do when you get there. So I walk over to the mansion, and the first thing, we have a news conference to announce several budget cuts immediately, including cutting our own office, I think, a million dollars.

DePue: A million dollars.

Edgar: Yes, I can't remember exactly. But we also announced some other cuts. We put a freeze on civic centers and things that we could do without legislative action, things that we could do administratively. And we definitely wanted to do the office to show that everybody, even the governor, was going to have cuts.

DePue: In your own personal salary?

Edgar: No. I'm not a believer in that, no. And I'm not sure what the cuts represented in the end. We probably cut some travel in our budget, we cut certain things, but no, we didn't cut salaries. I would rather have fewer people making the legitimate salary than I would more people making less than they should. That's kind of my philosophy; I'm not sure that's correct. But we didn't cut salaries and we never did. We never went to people and said, "Cut your salaries." We eliminated jobs, but we didn't cut salaries. We did that news conference, and that went pretty well. I think that set a tone that this administration was different than how the last one was perceived, because Thompson's administration, by the end, was not perceived as

being real thrifty. Right or wrong, that was the perception, and we started off with this, the first thing out of our mouth. I think we got credit, editorial comments about off to a good start.

So we did that. I was still working on personnel matters. I can't remember who all I had to see in that day. But then later that day, we were to fly to Chicago, my first time as governor, and the diplomatic corps was hosting a reception for me. We had always, I think I mentioned earlier, tried to have an open door with the diplomatic corps in Chicago. [While I was] secretary of state, they didn't necessarily always get in to see Thompson all that much—they got in some—but on a regular basis, we would host them down in Springfield and do things, so they hosted a reception for me. I went to Chicago, and it was while we're at the reception we got word that the bombing had started on Iraq and Kuwait. About halfway through the reception, that news came, and, of course, that was a major thing that you kind of knew might happen eventually, but when it finally happened, it hit home.

DePue: Did that take away a lot of the attention from your first month or two in office, then?

Edgar: No, I don't think so. I think state government and international news don't necessarily share the same page in the [newspapers]. I can't remember if we felt like we did not get coverage because they were covering what was going on in Kuwait. I think there was a lot of interest and concern about that, but about it taking some pressure off us to some extent, I don't know. I thought we had enough pressure as it was, so I don't know if it took any off.

We had everything planned out that first week, and I know we ended up, on the second day, back in Charleston. We went to Eastern, where they held a reception for me at the student union. And that picture over there—you can't see it, it's around the corner—of my mother and I, is the best picture of my mother I think I've got, and my brothers are on both sides of me.

DePue: We'll have to certainly get some of these scanned in. I don't think that's one that your brother had included.

Edgar: No, it's not. That's probably the best picture, because we're all there and we're halfway dressed up. And that was fun. You go home, you're the governor, and on the campus of Eastern, which is always very important to me—that's where we started the campaign—that was kind of fun, too, very fun to be there. I think maybe during the day—I can't remember that day or the next day—we went down to the Metro-East area because I wanted to go down to that part of the state, and there was a picture of me talking to some kids. I can't remember if it was in East St. Louis or where. Maybe it was Belleville.[17]

[17] Metro-East is the region composed of the suburbs lying east of St. Louis, in Illinois.

DePue: We should mention, we're looking at *Meeting the Challenge*, which is the record, the official record, of your administration.

Edgar: Well, as official as anything is. It's got a lot of pictures in it, and that's what I usually look for. We wanted to be in that part of the state because they have a tendency to kind of get forgotten. And this is not southern Illinois, this is what I call southwestern Illinois. To me, there's a difference. That's the Metro-East area. That picture's someplace in here. But we did that. That might have been during the day, and then I ended up at Eastern that night.

Then, I continued to work on finalizing my cabinet and worrying about the budget, having preliminary meetings on the budget matters—though, to a great extent, I didn't have all that many meetings yet; Joan was having the meetings, and the budget people. It seemed like later in February is when I spent a lot of nights meeting on the budget stuff. And I can't remember the date we submitted that budget. It was probably in March. We had to do the State of the State address first.

DePue: Right, March sixth was the first budget address.

Edgar: At some point in there, Mike Madigan had finally come down and talked to me, and I can't remember (laughs) when it was, exactly. It was a cordial conversation, though.

DePue: We've been talking about the budget hole that you found when you still were in your transition period, and it certainly was becoming very obvious to you by this time. How surprised were you, and why was everybody surprised by that?

Edgar: I don't think anyone thought it was that bad. Illinois has always had money problems because we're a low-taxing state; but to that scale, I don't think anybody thought it was that bad. And the outgoing administration did not say how bad it was. They didn't say it wasn't. It wasn't like they hid it from us, because they let us look at the books, but they didn't go around saying, "There's going to be a big budget hole." Part of that, also, was predicting—looking at what was coming and knowing new federal laws were going into effect, and taking it all into consideration. And that was all before a recession hit. Illinois was late coming into the recession. And I think the deficit—we talk about a billion—I think by the end of the fiscal year it probably was more like two billion dollars, just because we had to keep cutting. We submitted a budget with a lot of cuts, and we had to keep cutting the budget as the legislative session went along because revenues kept falling. But the first billion, I think, was from overspending and some new programs that they didn't plan for.[18]

[18] Edgar's first budget director offers her perspective on the origins of this budget deficit in Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, July 29, 2009, 12-17. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

One of the areas we knew we were going to have problems, looking at it, was one of the tricks they always played: when you don't have enough money from the spending you want to do, you underestimate your medical cost. The state of Illinois is self-insured—at least it was then—and that meant whatever state employees' health care cost was, the state paid for it out of the general revenue fund as opposed to some insurance company paying for it. And in the previous budget that we were now halfway through, they had underestimated the health care cost by about 100 percent. (laughs) I think they had allotted about 60 million, and it was more like 120 million.

DePue: You were suggesting that they had done this deliberately?

Edgar: I would suggest the legislature did that quite regularly, and the governor's office didn't call them on it so they could get an agreement on the budget and go home. They did that on revenue estimates, too. Sometimes they would up the revenue estimates higher than they probably should have, but they would underestimate some of the liability. One of the other tricks the legislature used to do is always overestimate how much the lottery was going to bring in, because there is always a tendency in the legislature—they want to spend more money, and they don't want to raise taxes. It would be nice if they wouldn't do that, but it's also very important that the governor's office says, "No, those aren't real numbers. We're not going to sign that budget; we're going to veto it." Now, Thompson has said, well, there were times he did veto some of that stuff and they overrode him. I don't remember; that might be. But I think no one had raised the alarm that we were going to face this kind of deficit, until we looked at it and realized what we had, and—

DePue: How much of that deficit was because the state was seriously in arrears with its bill-paying?

Edgar: Not as bad as we got in the next six months when we didn't have any money, but I think you could say it was serious on the health care, because that was obvious you had underfunded something; you had to pay for it. We were behind a little bit—not as bad as it got by the end of the fiscal year—on paying our Medicaid bills and other—

DePue: Was that primarily it? It was Medicaid bills that weren't being paid, or was it other stuff?

Edgar: Medicaid was a big part. We weren't paying our state employees' health care costs—that's not Medicaid. Medicaid's the big thing we distribute out there, and that was what was behind. I'm sure there were other things, but Medicaid was the big thing. The state pays out on Medicaid, and they pay out school aid formula. And the school aid formula was not delayed yet. I think we had to delay it later for a couple of weeks.

DePue: How about pension payments?

Edgar: There were no pension payments going into the pension fund because the Thompson administration didn't believe in that. They just paid what you had to pay coming out. And everybody got their pension. Nobody, that I know of, has ever not got their pension paid. The problem is we're not putting into the fund that we're taking that pension payment out. But [Bob] Mandeville, who was the head of the Bureau of the Budget—his philosophy was that really was a waste of taxpayers' money, to tie it up there, as long as we had enough to pay when it became due. That's what got the hole going on the pension stuff. By '95, when we finally were in good enough shape, we started paying into that, and now that's been slowed down here in the last couple years.

DePue: What surprised you about the job after being there for just a week or two?

Edgar: (pause) Every minute, there was a new crisis. In the secretary of state's office, we kind of had the luxury—we knew what we wanted to do, and we had the time to do it. Occasionally we'd have a crisis, but in the governor's office, there was always a crisis. Every day there was a new crisis. And when the legislature's in town, it seems like there were three times more crises every day, because they would create crisis. Some legislator would go off on a tangent, or they'd want this or that, or they'd accuse you of that, or they'd have this newspaper story saying this or that. A lot of the crises were caused by the newspapers, because they'd say there was this problem, and then you had to deal with it. The big difference, to me, from being governor than being secretary of state was that as secretary of state, you could actually plan what you were going to do; as governor, you spent a lot of time reacting to the crisis of the day, and I think how you react to the crisis is probably the most important way to judge a governor. You need to also have some long-range plans and try to push those through, and we did, but if you don't react to the crisis, chances are nobody's going to pay attention or deal with those long-range things you want to do.

One thing I forgot to mention during the transition: we had the new governors' conference in Lexington, Kentucky. It's just ironic we were in Lexington, Kentucky. I had not really developed my real interest in horse racing. I always had an interest, but now my wife says I'm just obsessed with it. I probably was as governor; it was my diversion. But we went down to Lexington, to the new governors' conference, and the first thing they told us at the new governors' conference: if you have an emergency, if you have a disaster, drop everything else you're doing and deal with that disaster. If you don't, then it won't matter all these other things that you're doing, because if you don't deal with the disaster, you're going to pay a price. No matter all these other things you're dealing with, it isn't going to matter.

And apparently, they didn't keep teaching that, because the Katrina thing in New Orleans, I always thought, where were these people? First of all, it's the governor's responsibility, but President Bush probably—they must not have told that at his, because I think he'd have kept that in mind. He would have reacted a little differently. I don't blame him for the problems there; I think they didn't

handle the PR. When he flew over, that was terrible; they needed to put the plane down and go visit. But it's one of those things when you see it happen, and it happened—at that point, he needed to make that a priority. But the real blame lies with the governor of Louisiana. That's who should be blamed, not the president, on the initial reaction, because we were taught, that's what you do. I'm sure we learned other things in the new governors' conference, but nothing as important as that, and that will play out in about three years when we have the great flood.

DePue: Does that mean that when you selected your director of IEMA, that wasn't a position you cared to put a political appointee in?[19]

Edgar: I have to say, we heard all that stuff and we thought it was important, but I don't think we laid awake at night worrying about that. I'm trying to think who my first one was. I think it was someone who had been around there. I knew who my second one was.

DePue: Certainly not one of the larger agencies that you dealt with.

Edgar: No, no. I would say that after going through the flood, we probably paid a lot more attention to that. I'm trying to find it here. (pause) That was a political appointment, yes—Ron Stevens. But Ron Stevens was a former Army guy, wasn't he? He was military.

DePue: I'm not familiar with him.

Edgar: Yes, he was gung-ho, and he was good. He was very good at it. He got beat, and he came back and ran again. I had two or three former legislators I'd put in the cabinet. I wasn't real sure, but he turned out to be probably the best I had, because he was… You've got to react, but part of it is PR. Part of it is showing the state cares, the state's there to help, the state's doing… He was very good at that, and he was good at getting me to go do things, too. Because he wasn't there for the big flood; I think he was gone by then. The guy we had in had been kind of a career guy in the department.

Part of the dilemma there—your number-two guy really ran it, but the pay was so bad, nobody wanted the job. The good guy would always want to be number two because he could get paid more. The same thing as the insurance department. The Department of Insurance was very professional back then, and it was until [Rod] Blagojevich, I think he kind of messed that up—had a lot of professionals who were there. Directors came and went, but the deputy director really was the guy who ran it. But he got paid $150,000.00 or some huge salary, whereas the director maybe got paid $60,000.00. You had to pay them that much to keep them because this guy could go out in the private sector, because he really knew the insurance stuff. And emergency services was kind of like that until—when Stevens left, we brought in somebody who was there, and I think we were able to up the salary. At some point

[19] Illinois Emergency Management Agency. Edgar's press secretary also remembers receiving this advice. Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, April 1, 2009, 38-39.

the legislature let us increase the salary there, because that was very low; that was part of the dilemma.

No, Ron Stevens was political, one of the few, but he did a very good job at that, and I was pleasantly surprised. I wasn't real sure how he might do. But I have to say, even though we'd heard that [at the new governors' meeting], we knew we had professionals there and we felt pretty comfortable. But he was good, he was good. And all the other directors after—the next guy was good. He was the director when we went through the floods, and he was good. We had good people there.

DePue: Your first State of the State speech was February 13. How important was that event to you?

Edgar: It was important because, again, you're going to kind of stake out your issues—not the budget, but your priorities. To some extent, the State of the State address is second to the budget speech in Illinois. At the national level, the state of the nation is the main speech. And it was a little awkward because we'd just done the inauguration and we're now back to talk to them again, but it's important, and it's the checklist, and then the people will see how much of those you get done. And it's a chance again to be on the bully pulpit and usually get some state attention from the Chicago media—maybe not a whole lot. But it is not as important as the budget speech, which usually comes about a month later.

DePue: I wonder if you could kind of lay out for us, before we get into the meat of the budget fight that you had, how the process is supposed to work. And you were an intern in the state legislature at the time that this was all revised, I believe.

Edgar: Years and years ago, the legislature had a lot more to say about how the budget started out. You had to know something called the Budgetary Commission, and it really was the power in the budget process. When Ogilvie got elected governor, he created the Bureau of the Budget, and the governor took over. The governor always submitted a budget, but, as I said, the Budgetary Commission usually made a lot of changes before it ever got to the legislature. They did away with the Budgetary Commission, basically, and the governor, with the Bureau of the Budget, put the budget to the legislature. And for the most part, that's what you talked about. You didn't talk about what the legislature wanted to talk about; you talked about the governor's budget. Now, the legislature might make changes, but they made changes to the governor's budget. Every so often, some opposition leader might say to the governor they're going to put their own budget in, but it's never happened yet. Blagojevich—there might have been something similar and they compromised with them, but historically it's always been the Bureau of the Budget; they submitted the budget, the governor then submits the budget, and that's what you work off of.

To me, the most important thing a governor does year-in and year-out is budget, because that determines how the state is going to spend the money, and one of the major things the state does is spend money. Whether it's providing money to

education or other grants, like Medicaid benefits, or it's running its own agencies, what you do is determined, usually, by what money you have. So to me, the budget was the number-one legislative priority. Now, I may not have thought that going in as governor, but I came out as governor believing that, because, particularly the first three years, that was my big challenge, the budget. I wanted to get it right because I didn't want to have to continue to deal with a state that couldn't pay its bills on time and couldn't do some of the things that came up that we really needed to do.

And that first budget speech, we knew, was going to be extremely important because we had this huge problem, this huge shortfall, and we knew that we had to handle that because if we didn't do it, it wasn't going to be done. The legislature—it's just not their nature to balance a budget on their own. They like to spend, they don't like to tax, and in the end, we're going to have to do a little bit of both; it takes the governor. The governor's got the resources. The Bureau of the Budget—they've got figures, they can look at the long-term implications if you make changes or if you add things here. They really still are in a much better position than the legislature is, to determine what an amendment on the appropriation bill would really mean and what you have to have, what you could count on for the federal government. So it's imperative that the governor really is disciplined on the budget process.

DePue: So it goes from the governor to the House?

Edgar: It doesn't matter. It's not like in Congress, where the appropriations originate in the House. Usually they split the budget up; they send half to the House, half to the Senate, so they can—and I have always thought that's a little goofy, because you never do the budget as a whole—at least you have hearings on different agencies. In fact, I got the public aid budget the way they wanted to send it to me, which I vetoed. I didn't veto the whole bill, I just vetoed the (laughs) biggest part of the bill, the public aid bill, which shocked them because they never thought I'd do that. But no, they go to both houses, and then usually they don't do anything for a while. The budget's always the last thing that's resolved in the legislative session because it's the most important, and it's usually the most controversial.

DePue: We've talked a little bit about this off-line, but would the property tax cap, that initiative, have been part and parcel to the budget process?

Edgar: No. It was in the State of the State address, and it was the main thing I probably unveiled in the State of the State address that I wanted to do, the property tax cap.

DePue: How did the politics break out on that particular issue?

Edgar: The Democrats didn't laugh at me, but they ignored me. They said, "That isn't going to happen." And the lobby groups like the teachers' unions, they said, "That isn't going to happen." My strategy always is—with the budget or anything—sometimes what you introduce, you're willing to compromise, so you leave a little room to wiggle. My budgets always were lower than I thought, in the end, I could

finally live with. Usually I wouldn't go as high as the legislature wanted to go, but we had a little room to compromise so they could add something on it. And the same thing with property tax cap. We made a proposal that I thought was pretty draconian. I thought, we'll compromise on this, but this is a place to start. I'm not going to start with my compromise.

(Edgar's mic disconnected briefly)

DePue: While we're figuring this out, as we get into this topic, if you could spend a little time kind of laying out the fiscal framework here.

Edgar: Okay, but we're in the middle of talking about property tax caps.

DePue: Right.

Edgar: It had nothing to do with the budget. Whole different issue. Whole different way it was viewed and everything. The property tax cap, as I said, was in the State of the State. Made the proposal, wanted the legislature to move quickly, and I think I called a special session on it—to run at the same time they were down there, but I wanted to—

DePue: Just a month or two into the office?

Edgar: Yes. I can't remember exactly, but I know we called a special session at some point on that pretty early, because we wanted to dramatize this; we wanted something to… Nothing happened. I don't know if they even took the bill to committee. They called that special session together, then adjourned it for six weeks or something like that. And over a period there of a couple months, I probably called a couple special sessions on them, trying to get them to focus on that issue. In the House, I think, is where that bill was at the time, and they basically said, no, they weren't going to do it. Republicans would make some noise, the Democrats would ignore it, and then they'd go on and do something else. Nobody ever thought it would see the light of day. Doug Whitley spent a lot of time working on it, went to committee. I think they did finally have committee hearings and talk about it, but nobody wanted to compromise. All the interest groups figured they had a kill, so they weren't going to meet us halfway.

We might as well go ahead and talk about that—we can talk about it a little bit later, but… We'd call these special sessions, and they really got a little testy because I think one time I made them stay in an extra day or something like that. This was after about the third time they hadn't responded, so they really thought I was grandstanding, because they weren't going to do this. Of course, I kept trying to put pressure on them to do something, or at least looked like I was trying. I didn't want people to say, "Well, he didn't really mean this; he didn't really push hard enough." I began to think, we may not get this. Republican legislators kind of liked it because it was something they could talk about back home. I don't know if they cared about passing it, but it was a great issue to blame the Democrats for holding

up. So nobody thought it would happen, but I kept pushing them and kept pushing them.

And when we go into overtime, when the budget doesn't pass and we got to be there in July, we have a meeting with the Democratic leaders the day after they thought they could override me on the public aid bill. They thought that would force me, and it didn't, so we had to be there overtime, and they realized that. So they came in with some compromise, and they said, "We'll do the property tax cap if you'll exclude Cook County," because that's all they cared about. I figured, the old saying, "A half loaf's better than no loaf," and I said, "Yes, okay." I said, "The way it is?" and they said, "The way it is." They didn't want to even alter it, which meant we got the draconian (laughs) bill, and it's a done deal. Now, we didn't pass it right then, but that was going to be part of the end of session, and that was the result. And when it finally became public that this was the deal, the teachers went nuts because they went from thinking they had it shut down to getting the worst possible—it was the IEA, and the IEA's basically more downstate than the suburbs in the collar counties.[20]

So there was something that nobody thought I'd ever get, but I just stuck with it, just kept pestering them with it. And it was an issue that resonated with folks back home. In fact, the stories I was hearing—when the Democrats would go home on breaks, people would say, "Why are you guys down there trying to keep us from getting a tax break?" So they were beginning to get pressure, and… In the end, the Democrat leaders, [Phil] Rock and [Mike] Madigan figured, well, shoot, we don't care. If it's not in Cook County, it doesn't affect our governments. If those suburbanites are crazy enough to want this, let them have it. Now, a county could opt out, and some counties downstate did opt out, but not the collar counties.

But in the end, if I remember right, we said it'd either be the cost of living or 5 percent, whichever was the highest. That's what we were willing to do; that's not what we gave them. We said either cost of living or 5 percent, whichever was the least, and that's how the bill passed. I was willing to give them 5 percent. They didn't get that because we had some years there where the cost of living didn't go up very high. Or, sometimes, the cost of living went up higher than that, and they only got 5 percent. All I know is they got the draconian part of that when we were willing to give them the other way, but they never came and negotiated with us. And I remember Kenny Bruce, Terry Bruce's brother, who was the head lobbyist for the IEA, kept telling me, "We're not going to do that, we're not going to do that." Then after it happened, he was just furious. I said, "Kenny, you could have had a better one than that, but you wouldn't come and talk to me." I said, "You got to remember that in the future: don't ignore me."[21] (DePue laughs)

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[20] Illinois Education Association. The collar counties are DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties.

[21] After a thirteen-year term in the state senate, Terry Bruce (D-Olney) served as a congressman from 1985 to 1993. His brother was the IEA's director of government relations from the early 1970s to 1993. *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-Present*, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B000971. Samuel K. Gove and James D. Nowlan,

In the end, I think everybody was stunned that we got it, and I was stunned when the Democrats came in and made us that offer. That didn't resolve the budget problem, but it was something they figured would… And eventually, a couple years later, we finally applied it to Cook County because they couldn't take the heat. The people kept complaining in Cook County, "Why don't we get it? Everybody else is getting it; we're not getting it." They just kept badgering, and maybe'93, we finally got that passed—and we had to give Chicago some special things. I had to give Daley some money for some things, to get that passed, but we finally got it passed. But it was something that nobody thought when we first started we'd ever get, and I wasn't real sure we'd ever (laughs) get it, either. It's something we just kind of kept badgering them on and made them really mad at us, but we kept doing it, and lo and behold, they came in and offered a pretty reasonable compromise.

As I said, if you look in those collar counties, they have saved hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars in property taxes. We didn't reduce property taxes. I kept saying, "If we don't do this, guys, we're going to have an effort in here to roll back taxes, not just slow down their growth. We're not even capping. You get a little growth, but you're not going to get any growth more than you need." Of course, the schools have argued they've lost a lot of money, and there are a couple technical problems in that, but I don't know if they ever got those resolved. But for the most part…

But it was something that we talked about in the campaign. I don't think a lot of the media ever took us that seriously. I think there were people in the suburbs that did, that I talked about earlier; I think that helped us in some of those areas. And then when we put it before the legislature, they wouldn't take it seriously; the media didn't really take it seriously; but people back home, I think, took it seriously. I think we just kept pushing and pushing and pushing, and finally, the Democrats, trying to figure out how to get out of the budget—and I give them credit; they weren't just stonewalling, they were trying to figure out a compromise—came back with what I thought was a very reasonable compromise. We both kind of got something from it, and that was done. But back in January and February, nobody thought it was going to happen. In March, April, they were about ready to slug me every time I brought it up, they were so mad about it. But that was separate from the budget. I think the Democrats viewed it—it probably was something that was going to have to be dealt with if we were going to resolve and get out of there.

DePue: Why was this a state-level initiative when we're really talking about local governmental institutions? Property tax is going to the local areas.

Edgar: Property tax laws—everything is set by state statute. There are a lot of things in there. There are limits on how far a government can go without a referendum. But what was happening here was you had property values—they weren't raising the

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Illinois Politics and Government: The Expanding Metropolitan Frontier (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 185.

levy. They weren't raising the rate, but a home went from being worth two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand—we were having huge jumps in home values—and so people were seeing their property tax bills go up 30, 50 percent. But they weren't selling that house, and their income hadn't gone up that much. And if you were a senior on a fixed income, that was extremely hard to deal with. They didn't have any say on that. It wasn't like if they were going to raise the rate, and you'd have to have a referendum because most all of these were at the maximum rate. But that was the argument. And again, out in the suburbs particularly, people were really… Not so much Cook as DuPage, because Cook—you got that differential. They charge more on the corporate than they do on the homeowner, so those home taxes aren't as bad as in the collar counties. Only Cook County has the ability to do that. But in DuPage County, people were seeing their property tax bills go up 50, 60, 70 percent a year. They weren't getting that kind of increase in their salaries, and they weren't selling the house, so they weren't realizing that benefit. So it was a real issue in the collar counties, and people—again, I don't know if they ever—their bills didn't go down, and I don't know if they ever appreciated, but if you look at the numbers, it's pretty spectacular. If Doug Whitley had stayed in the race for governor, I'm sure you were going to hear a lot about how he (DePue laughs)—and he had. He had worked hard on that, done a good job.

DePue: One of the dynamics in Illinois politics, certainly, is that mixture of property taxes versus the state bearing more of a burden for education expenses, and that's why I was thinking there was a more direct link than you're suggesting there.

Edgar: Not really, because we weren't talking about school funding so much in here. That was off in the future.

DePue: That was a couple years down the road.

Edgar: At that point, I had already used all my political capital to say I was going to make the surtax permanent, (DePue laughs) and I wasn't trying to suggest anything else at that point. And you wouldn't have gotten it. It wasn't the right time to try it. There were talks—there was a movement—in fact, there was a constitutional amendment that got put on the ballot in the '92 election to do that, but it wasn't well thought-out.[22]

DePue: Now, if you're making that decision to cap property taxes, wasn't there more pressure to find some more money somehow to give to education?

Edgar: I think the educators might have felt that way, but I don't think most people did, no. They thought that education was getting enough money.

DePue: And your team didn't feel that way?

[22] Although 57 percent of those voting on the amendment supported it (1,882,569-1,417,520), it fell short of the 60 percent threshold. It also failed to receive a simple majority of all ballots cast in the election, picking up 36.45 percent of the total. http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lrb/conampro.htm.

Edgar: No, not really. We thought if we had to raise more money for the school aid formula, then maybe, but it was… Suburban school districts had all kinds of money. That's part of the dilemma, if you looked at it. And when we finally did something, we didn't give them any money; we put the money in the poor school districts downstate, and we had to give city—always have to give the city something to buy them off. But most of the suburban districts were spending twice as much per student as the downstate districts were.

DePue: Let's go back to the budget.

Edgar: To the budget? Okay.

DePue: Let me set this up, and then I'll get you to flesh this out for us. We're talking about a timeframe where the United States is going into a recession, and you suggested there's kind of a lag here, that Illinois doesn't necessarily follow the national trend. In January, we're looking at a 6.4 percent national unemployment rate, and that's going north; it's going higher, and it will continue to go higher.[23] And I'm sure that your people, Joan and yourself and others, are trying to anticipate what direction this is going to go, because part of the whole budget process is anticipating revenues that are coming in. So you're anticipating at least that you're not going to get as much revenue as maybe you had hoped or had, certainly, the year before. At the same time, when you have a recession and unemployment, what happens to the budget pressures in the state itself?

Edgar: The welfare rolls go up, which means Medicaid's cost goes up. That's the craziness: when your revenues go down in a recession, your demands for government service goes up, and states don't have printing presses, so you're in trouble. Our unemployment figure in Illinois always ran above the national average until I think about the last half of my administration. It was the one time in Illinois history we were able to turn that around. But the unemployment figures, we figured, would go up. Revenues were already beginning to come down—not just because of unemployment, but people weren't making as much, they weren't paying taxes as much, they weren't anticipating… So it wasn't just for next year; we were experiencing it right then. So the budget we were in kept sinking. It wasn't just that we knew we were going to have that next year; we already had a budget that we had to deal with too. How we were going to have to deal with that was to kind of take care of it in the next year's budget.

DePue: Was this a time period also when there were some industries moving away from Illinois?

Edgar: I don't know if they were moving away as much as they weren't expanding, or maybe they were coming down a little bit. Mayor Daley—that's all he said: jobs, jobs, jobs. But I don't know it was so much they were moving at that point as they just weren't expanding or they were laying off. So you were trying to find new jobs.

[23] Illinois' unemployment rate reached 6.6 percent in January 1991. Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/lau/#tables.

We had not done anything like we did back in the seventies, when we raised the workers' comp and unemployment insurance rates higher than neighboring states and lost some industry. We hadn't done anything quite like that recently to make us out of kilter with other states. It was just, I think, the general economy was down throughout the nation.

DePue: You had also mentioned a little bit before that there were some things that were being mandated at the federal level, which pertained to Medicaid itself.

Edgar: Just certain provisions; certain people now were covered who weren't covered. There was something called the Boren Amendment that happened, too, and the Boren Amendment supposedly was put in by then-Senator [David] Boren. He was a U.S. senator from Oklahoma; I think he's still the president of the University of Oklahoma. He put in this amendment, and supposedly it was to put in a ceiling on how much you could charge on rates for Medicaid. Well, the courts interpreted it not as a ceiling but as a floor, which meant that the states couldn't cut rates. If you came in and said, "This costs so much," you had to pay it. The Boren Amendment was something we've always talked about at governors' meeting: "We got to get the Boren Amendment repealed." Of course, providers didn't want to repeal because they could get higher rates. We could not control rates, and it was a very expensive… So that had gone, that had been interpreted, and that was in the mix, too. So you've got Medicaid—it's expanding the benefits, and the number of people qualifying is going up. Plus, the recession is bringing more people on the rolls, and the state of Illinois pays 50 percent of all Medicaid costs. We pay more than most states. I think we were one of six or seven states that paid 50 percent. Most other states got more money back.

DePue: Is that a factor of federal or state law?

Edgar: Federal law. Maybe a state got sixty cents back for every dollar they paid on Medicaid, and we only got fifty cents back because we were a wealthy state, and that's based on per capita income. Well, those formulas were pretty old. Kirk Dillard, I heard him now quote things—I think we're the fourteenth-richest state per capita; we're not the fifth like we used to be, and things like that. So even if we'd have gotten fifty-five cents on a dollar back instead of fifty cents on a dollar, that probably would have solved our budget problem, because you're talking hundreds of millions of dollars each time you change that percent.

So Medicaid was the eight hundred–pound gorilla that was eating our budget alive, and we weren't even looking at increasing education stuff because we couldn't; we had Medicaid.

DePue: I wanted you to respond to this chart here that I had, and it's a chart that shows various expenses. It's got Medicaid, and it gets to about the '91, '92 timeframe and practically doubles.

Edgar: It practically doubles, yes, and it passes education on how much we're spending—elementary and secondary education.

DePue: So you're in the midst of this budget crisis, revenues are decreasing; at the same time, this dynamic is going on as well.

Edgar: And that's a big part of it, to be very truthful. That's a big part of what happened across the country as far as—and that's what happened and put us in a deficit even if we didn't spend any new money.

DePue: Had you anticipated that kind of increase in Medicaid?

Edgar: No, no. Well, my transition committee had figured it out. But as you look at it, it starts in '91. That's the fiscal year we were in, and it had new rules and regulations that had just gone into place. I don't know if the Thompson administration had anticipated that. In the '91 budget, which we inherited, it was obvious there wasn't enough money in there for that. So what added to the dilemma for the budget we were putting together for '92, was the '91 budget that we inherited. There wasn't enough money there, so that was the deficit we were kind of shifting over to '92. But '92 was even going to be worse because we were going to be in the midst of the recession, plus these other problems.

DePue: That gets us to March 6, 1991, and your first budget address. I've got a couple quotes here, and just get your reaction. These are quotes that you made. "Government"—

Edgar: Throw away the credit card. (DePue laughs) Tear it up. Don't use it. Tear up the credit card.

DePue: That wasn't one of them, but I like that.

Edgar: Oh, that was the one that got the most quotes. I'm surprised you don't have that. That's the one that people caught the most: I said, "It's time we're going to have to tear up the state's credit cards." But go ahead with your quotes.

DePue: It's along the same lines. "Government no longer can be all things to all people. There are limits to what our citizens are willing to pay for. We can't spend money we don't have."

Edgar: "We don't have." Yes, I used those lines a lot for the next three years. And people understood that. People understand you can't spend money you don't have, and that's what we've been doing.

DePue: Philosophically, were you in agreement with "government can't do everything for all people"?

Edgar: Yes. I think we can do a lot of things, and I think that there's certain people, particularly the people in need, we have a moral responsibility for, but I don't think

we can… I don't think, when your state is twelve billion dollars in debt, you can freeze the rates on the CTA for everybody, like our current governor just did. I mean, that's nuts. It's not a big thing, but it's just nuts. It's a terrible perception out there. So I think that you've got to live within your means. Now, if you decide that you need to do more, then you've got to raise your means. My battle was going to be—because Madigan wasn't in favor of making the surtax permanent at that point. He just wanted to make it temporary. I was going to have to fight with him on that, too.

DePue: I'm not sure I understand why he was taking that position. He was talking about extending it for two years, I think, for much of this time.

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: Why was he against making it permanent?

Edgar: He wanted everybody to come back and grovel at him in two years. That was his leverage. The compromise was we let education get it, but for the mayor and the local government, it was only two years. So Mayor Daley had to come back and grovel at the Speaker. That's what he wanted. But that's another story.

DePue: Let's just go through some of the highlights here of what you would recommend, and you can correct me if I get some of this wrong.

Edgar: If you've got it down, I've forgotten a lot of it. I just know—

DePue: Obviously, make the income tax surcharge permanent.

Edgar: I didn't get a lot of applause, I remember, during the speech. (DePue laughs)

DePue: A 25.6-billion-dollar budget. Do you remember if that was roughly in line with what it had been in previous years, or was that an increase?

Edgar: It wasn't much of an increase, if it was any kind of an increase.

DePue: You're looking at starting fiscal year 1992—which means July 1, 1991—with 627 million dollars of unpaid bills, and that probably is going to head north; then $440 million dollars of cuts in spending for various locations; and obviously, the hiring freeze and cuts in the state payroll. Does that sound about right?

Edgar: Um-hm.

DePue: So what happened after you made these announcements? What was the reaction you got in the public and in the legislature?

Edgar: Got a lot of news coverage. (laughter) Jim Thompson called me and said, "I want to congratulate you." He said, "I wish I could have done a budget like that." I almost said, "Well, why didn't you?" (laughs) I think the press, for the most part, said that

it was facing up to the facts. Democrats said it's kind of dead on arrival and heartless, and interest groups went nuts. A lot of things would come down to specific things. They didn't do the overall budget problem, just, You're cutting this, you're cutting that; these people are going to be out of work; blah, blah, blah. Even Republicans were—certain issues, they were complaining. I remember I went down to southern Illinois to do a Lincoln Day dinner. It was a late Lincoln Day dinner at Carbondale, and Ralph Dunn, the state senator down there, had some nasty things to say about me in the newspaper because I was cutting some programs.[24] I wasn't sure how people were going to react when I went down there, and I went down there, and I just said, "Folks, we don't have the money." They cheered, they clapped, they understood.

I went to this huge credit union gathering in Chicago. There must have been a thousand, two thousand people there in this audience. They were just officials from all these credit unions. I remember I got up, and I was a little—people mad at me right now, so I got up and said, "You understand finances and you got to pay your bills and all that." I said, "The state has got to understand: we cannot spend money we don't have. It's just like you have to tell your kids you can't get a new bicycle or you don't get a vacation." I said, "That's what we've got to do with the state of Illinois. Everybody's got to pay their bills." They gave me a standing ovation, and it kind of dawned on me, these are middle-class, average folks out there. These are my votes. And they understood it; they understood that you can't spend money you don't have.

DePue: Where was this?

Edgar: This was in Chicago at a credit union—it was an association. They were from all over the state, and they were pretty knowledgeable and involved people. They understood it; they got it. That talk that day—I walked away thinking, we might win this because people understand. The guys in Springfield don't. They're scared of their shadow. Interest groups beat on them, they got nervous, and every interest group, it seemed like, at some time was picketing outside my office. But the guy on the street understands everybody's got to pay their fair share of the burden, as long as you're leveling with the folks. There weren't many speeches I gave that I kind of came away … But that one, I just remember, really made me feel like, okay, at least folks out there don't think I'm nuts or I'm heartless. They understand what you've got to do here. And that eventually began to seep through to the legislators.

DePue: Let's touch base on some of the other specifics here, what you had recommended, and I'm sure some of these things were very—they probably all were very controversial. (laughs) Cancelled state trooper training. Now you're getting into safety.

Edgar: Cuts. We're just cutting state employees. That's what that meant.

[24] Ralph A. Dunn (R-DuQuoin), served in the Illinois House (1973-1985) and in the state Senate (1985-1995). One of the more notable pieces of legislation he sponsored was the 1979 bill that raised the state's drinking age to twenty-one. *Chicago Tribune*, February 23, 1979 and May 6, 2004.

DePue: Delayed Big Muddy Corrections Center opening. Closed prison work centers. Reduced welfare assistance. And oftentimes in some of the stuff I'm reading, I'm reading about General Assistance.

Edgar: Yes, we eliminated General Assistance.

DePue: Tell us about what General Assistance was.

Edgar: General Assistance was a state-only program in Illinois that provided public aid benefits to able-bodied men and women who did not work. It wasn't aid to dependent children—that's federally mandated and was something that I did not want to cut. I wanted to cut everything before we cut aid to dependent children, so I made the draw that I would get rid of General Assistance, which we paid 100 percent of, so we could continue aid to dependent children at the current level—which we got 50 percent reimbursement, but still. It's kind of like I chose between folks and kids, and I chose kids. I always said, "If I have to choose between even old folks and kids, I'll choose kids and that aid to dependent children." That was a **very** (laughs) controversial thing, which caused quite a hullabaloo in the legislature. We finally compromised, and what we compromised with worked very well.

DePue: I would imagine—you close a prison work center, that's one dollar figure; you reduce or eliminate General Assistance, and that's a lot bigger dollar.

Edgar: It wasn't as big as you'd think. And actually, if you look on those charts, too, welfare cost is much smaller than Medicaid cost. Look at that page with the dark green and the light green. See how the dark green kind of goes down, even, because we eliminated welfare costs? But look at Medicaid cost. Welfare itself was not the budget-buster, it was Medicaid, but anybody on welfare qualified for Medicaid. They tell me years ago they had this meeting of the White House and the governors. The White House offered that if the states would pay for welfare, the federal government would pay for all of Medicaid, and the governors said no. Now, we've been trying to find those governors and dig them up and shoot them (DePue laughs) because nobody at that point realized what a cost Medicaid was going to be. Health care costs have gotten so much greater, but welfare cost rates haven't gone up. We haven't raised welfare rates in a lot of—they weren't a huge amount. It was better than nothing, but Medicaid's what was going out of control.

DePue: Was there anything that you were considering, that the administration was considering, to control the increases in Medicaid?

Edgar: We were trying to decrease the qualifiers for it. We were trying to make sure—later on, you probably have in your notes, the MSI [Management Services of Illinois] scandal.

DePue: Um-hm.

Edgar: What MSI was doing was trying to go through and identify people who were on the Medicaid rolls that shouldn't be on the Medicaid rolls. And they identified a lot of

folks; we got a lot of folks off. Some, we could switch over to Social Security, for which the federal government paid 100 percent; some, maybe for Medicare; and some that didn't qualify for Medicaid. But we were trying to find out and make sure we limited who got on Medicaid as much as we could, without denying the people who should have been on Medicaid. We also were trying to find ways that we could provide Medicaid service at a more reasonable cost. Now, we always ran up against the Boren Amendment that said you got to pay whatever it costs out there. We couldn't negotiate as much as we wanted to with providers—say, you do this, we'll pay you X number of dollars. So we looked at everything.

We also looked at how could we work with mothers, or soon-to-be mothers, to receive better health care so their kids didn't end up in the emergency room. We tried pilot projects in Chicago till they came out of our (laughs) ears, trying to figure out how, again, we could do… We tried to put what money we had in early childhood preventative medicine kind of things, because our theory was if we help that child early on, that child was less likely to be sick later on; that meant less emergency room visits, which are extremely costly. That's where a lot of the people on welfare go for their medical care. So again, we spent an inordinate amount of time trying to figure out ways we could cut Medicaid costs, do that, and how we could keep people off who shouldn't be on, because that was where you really made some savings in the budget.

We did a lot of other things, too. We put a freeze on state employees, and they actually had to come to the governor—they had to go through Joan Walters to get a job in the state of Illinois.

DePue: Joan Walters?

Edgar: Yes, the freeze was that tight. It was a real freeze. They'd never had a real freeze before. Besides the fact that we actually laid people off, we had a real freeze too. Neither one of those things had ever happened before in state government.

DePue: Oftentimes, that's an opportunity for the governor's office to have a lot more control over the hiring process when some of the things, like the *Rutan* decision, would be taking that power away.

Edgar: At that point, we still had that kind of power anyway. They were our directors; if we wanted to, we could go tell them to hire these… But it was Janis fighting Joan, (DePue laughs) because Janis was trying to get people on the payroll—not just political, but people. They were all calling her, driving her nuts. And Joan, she just—"No, no, no."

DePue: I can almost envision that one. (laughs)

Edgar: Yes. They didn't necessarily eat lunch together a lot anyway. They hadn't ever. (laughter)

We knew that Medicaid was the problem; that was the huge problem. And we had little control over it because so much of it's mandated, but any time we could save anything on Medicaid… Now, the other thing: I spent a lot of time in Washington those first two years trying to get some changes in how the state got reimbursed on Medicaid. There was a way we could get more Medicaid money in doing—it was a trickery thing, but it was there in the books, so we took advantage (laughs) of it.[25] And then, office of—whatever the equivalent is to Bureau of the Budget at the federal level—wanted to change that, and I was beating on the president. President Bush was still president, the elder, and his people just said, "You can't do that to us. We're sitting here, we're getting murdered by Medicaid, and now you're going to take away the one way we get a little extra money." And I said, "My state, we don't get anything. Fifty percent, you know." There was a guy from the office of management—what is it called?

DePue: Management and Budget?

Edgar: Their main guy. I used to get on programs with him, and we'd debate and yell at each other and stuff.[26] (DePue laughs) We got to be good friends. And finally we prevailed. We got a little help from the federal government; we could kind of double-bill some things. But it was—

DePue: I think that was in the out year, '92 or '93, when you accomplished that.

Edgar: We got some of that in '91, because I think they were trying to change it. We were getting it, and they were trying to do away with it. But we were trying to figure out everything, because anything you could do in Medicaid would save you hundreds of millions, whereas cutting state employees would save you maybe ten thousand. And the trouble with cutting state employees is you still had to give them severance benefits and everything, so you didn't save 100 percent of their salary the first year. You might have saved, maybe if you were lucky, 30 percent the first year, but the second year, you would save 100 percent, and that's why it took two or three years before we really saw the fruits of some of this anguish we went through. But we also recognized we had to do these things to show folks this was a serious problem and we were in crisis, and we had to make sure we didn't have loopholes in this.

Now, one of the problems—the first day, I said we were going to put a freeze on civic centers. Every town wanted their own civic center. It was nuts. The state was paying a good chunk of that, and it was little towns like West Frankfurt. In the election, there had been a mayor in one of the western suburbs—he's an Italian guy—who was a Democrat. Maybe it was Melrose Park; it's something in that area. He supported me, and he wanted to build a civic center. He already had everything

[25] Edgar is talking about the Hospital Assessment Program, a very important innovation his administration developed to address the state's Medicaid burden. For details on the program, see Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009, 37-41

[26] Richard G. Darman served as the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) during George H.W. Bush's administration. For conflict between OMB and the states over this issue, see *New York Times*, September 11, 1991.

in, and it was all going through the process before I ever became governor. I knew this was a big deal to him, but this was already done; it was going to be done.

I did well in his town. He had a little machine out there, and they went for me. The western suburbs was the battleground in the governor's race in '90, and we basically had to turn a lot of Democratic areas, towns that had Democratic mayors, to get as many of those guys for us as we could. We got some, we won that area, and I think it was the battleground. So this guy had really helped. It turns out that when I put this freeze in, his paperwork had been held up by some accident, and he hadn't gotten the approval that I thought he had. (laughs) We put the freeze in, and he was frozen. He missed it by a day. And he never got it. (laughs) I don't think he was for me the next time.

DePue: Did you hear from him?

Edgar: Oh, yes, and I felt terrible. But I said, "I thought you had this." He said, "I thought I did, too, but apparently they didn't have the paperwork done or something like that." And I said, "You know, I can't go in there, because it's clear. We…" The guy didn't get his civic center. I don't know if he finally got it some way, but we just said, "We've got to stick on this stuff, because we make one exception, that undercuts our credibility on all of this." So it was a pretty difficult thing. We were laying people off. There were people at my church we were laying off, and it wasn't because they did a bad job, it's just their job was not essential, and that's what we were down to; we were going through these agencies trying to figure out what's essential.

Now, we worked with the unions. I will say that they didn't like what we were doing, but we did have as good a working relationship with AFSCME as you could have (laughs) when you were laying people off. We said, "They'll get first shot of any jobs that open up that we have to fill," and we tried to make it as easy [as possible] on the severance benefits and all that. And throughout my time as governor, for the most part, we had a pretty good working relationship with AFSCME. For a Republican administration, when you're cutting jobs, that was amazing. They had people in AFSCME that didn't like it, but they could look at the numbers too, and they understood, and they were trying to figure out the way to minimize the problem. They probably encouraged us to lay off people in jobs that weren't under AFSCME. It was a very difficult time in Springfield. You've got to remember, we're all—most of us—living in Springfield, and my daughter, at that point is still in high school. There probably are kids in her school [whose parents] are getting laid off by me, because that's a company town. There are a lot of people…

We also had the problem that folks weren't able to get medical care because doctors wouldn't take state workers; they never got paid, and that was getting to be a problem. I'm sitting there, "How do we pay these bills when we don't have any money?" [Dawn Clark] Netsch was comptroller—and she was very good to work with, by the way. Sometimes she could disagree, but for the most part, she worked

with us very well in trying to make sure that we had money in the till, just to pay the bills. And eventually we created priorities. There were certain hospitals in Chicago that were, like, 100 percent Medicaid. We made sure that they got reimbursed quickly, because if not, they closed their doors. Now, suburban hospitals that had deeper pockets, that maybe only had 20 percent Medicaid, probably didn't get paid for a year. That wasn't fair, but it was kind of like the lesser of the two evils. You didn't want a Mount Sinai in Chicago, which does 100 percent Medicaid, closing its door, because where are those people going to go? And as I tried to explain to suburban hospitals, "We'd be putting them on buses, sending them out to you." (DePue laughs) The other thing was, even when they got reimbursed, they still lost money on Medicaid patients. They did have a legitimate beef of what we were reimbursing them and what they were getting paid by insurance companies for the same things.

Our first year as governor, (laughs) and we're doing this day-in and day-out. We made mistakes, and we learned as we went along, and I was dug in. I just figured I didn't have any alternative, and I wanted to get it over with now. I didn't want to do this every year.

DePue: That leads me to this question, then. This might be kind of a peculiar question. You'd been working towards this goal for decades, since you were a young kid and said this is my aspiration, to be in this kind of a position. Were you having any fun?

Edgar: No, no. I wasn't having any fun. I can't say that I thought, gee, I should have never done this. Occasionally I might have fun, but it didn't last very long. Everybody, even the Republican leaders in the legislature—I wouldn't say they were real sympathetic all the time. And the next year, they were just really bad on me. The Democrats and Republicans ganged up the second year and beat me up. But the first year, Republicans stayed in line only because they wanted me to veto the redistricting map bill that was coming through. I'm convinced if it hadn't been for that, they'd have gone south on me, but they knew I could cut a deal with the Democrats on probably everything I needed and sign their map.

DePue: So the redistricting issue was working through the legislature in 1991 as well?

Edgar: Yes. That was—

DePue: I was thinking it would take longer than that just because the census results would take a while.

Edgar: It doesn't take very long with computers. You get the census data, and you can go quickly, especially if it's one-sided. It may take a little longer to compromise, but you can move pretty quickly. So they were going to have a map. They knew the Democrats were going to pass a map by the middle of June, and they did. But that kept the Republicans, I think—that's why a lot of them helped me in the general election, especially after I came out for the surtax being permanent. They were scared to death they'd get a Democratic governor and they'd have a Democratic

map. So that was my leverage with them. I remember Mike Lawrence came in a couple times, and he said, "Sign the map, sign the map," because he figured we could cut a deal with Madigan. And we could have. I'm sure Madigan would have given me everything I wanted—including property tax caps—anything, to get the map the way he wanted it.

DePue: And redistricting—they'd have to override your veto just like any other bill?

Edgar: They didn't have enough to override me. Yes. I eventually vetoed it, but…

DePue: You were getting pretty well pummeled by just about everybody at this time. April first—you might remember this date—Gary LaPaille, Democratic Party chairman for the state, comes out with this chart of you with "Edgar Scissorhands." I think it was about this same time he became—

Edgar: The movie.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: The movie was out.[27]

DePue: You also were "Governor No."

Edgar: Yes. I didn't understand "Scissorhands" because I hadn't seen the movie and didn't know about it. So I didn't know what they were talking about. "Governor No," I understood, and I took it as a compliment. I always took "Governor No" as a compliment that I was doing my job. People understand "No."

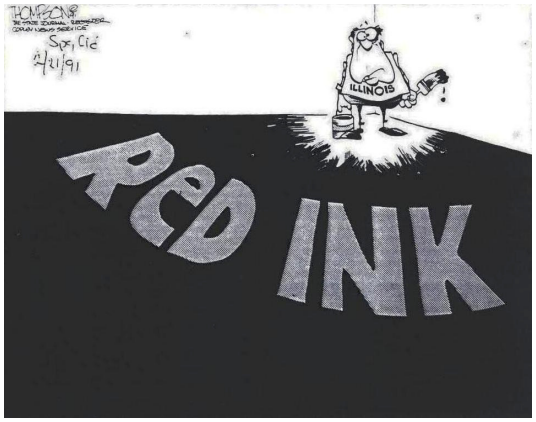
DePue: I think I've got a picture here for you of "Edgar Scissorhands."

Edgar: The favorite cartoon I always liked—I had it on my desk—the Springfield paper did. It shows me going down a highway, and it has one sign one way—

DePue: Damned if you do.

Edgar: "Damned if you do, damned if you don't," yes.

DePue: And there's some others here. I've got a cartoon. The state of Illinois is backed up in the corner and surrounded by nothing but red ink, and he's got a paintbrush in his hand. So not just the state of Illinois, but Jim Edgar is painting himself in the corner with all this red ink, I guess.



[27] *Edward Scissorhands* had been a popular film released for the 1990 holiday season, the protagonist of which had scissors for hands. LaPaille's graphic featured a sketch of Edgar with a similar pair of hands.

Edgar: That doesn't look like me.

DePue: No, that's not you.

Edgar: It doesn't say there—that fat guy with that double chin.

DePue: No, the picture of you, the cartoons of you—Thompson always had the little price tag on the hair.[28]

Edgar: And I finally asked him what that meant. He said, "Because it looked like you had paid to have your hair done." I always said, "You'd say I'm for sale?" And he said, "No, no, your hair looks like it's got a wig, it's so perfect." That's what he told me, because I finally asked him after all the years he did that.

DePue: And there's the one you were talking about.

Edgar: Yes. Those are my son's favorite ones. He kept that one. He has that on a wall someplace.

DePue: The one at the bottom here?

Edgar: Yes, that was the next year.

DePue: This is Edgar and a couple of—it looks like thugs. Daley's in one of these. "We want our surcharge. Edgar unfair." And then you're going into the water, probably Lake Michigan, or—

Edgar: With cement.

DePue: With cement on your shoes. "That's the last time I ask Chicago politicians to choose between kids and concrete."

Edgar: That was next year, when I was trying to get the money from local government and give it to general revenue so we could do more for schools.

DePue: Do you think the press was fair?

Edgar: Yes. There were probably certain stories I thought they got wrong, but the editorials were pretty supportive. We got media coverage, which got the issue to the people, not just—the interest groups are going to get the message; whether we got it or not, they were going to. But you had to get to the guy on the street, and I think the guy in the street got it. They got it on tax caps, there's no doubt about that. They thought I was right on, on that, and that put pressure on the Democrats. And when I'd get up and just say, "We can't spend money we don't have," people understood that. I had to be sure they didn't find that I said that and then did something different. That's

[28] DePue is referring to *State Journal-Register* cartoonist Mike Thompson. Thompson explains why he created the price tag, in Mike Cramer, "Poison Pen Pals," *Illinois Issues* (August 1994), 15. Also see, Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, September 9, 2009, 28-29.

what I always worried about. And for the most part, I don't think there was ever any major—anything that stuck, where we were saying one thing and doing something else. We were pretty frugal. And as long as Daley was out there calling me "Governor No," that was reinforcing that I was saying no to people, and again, I think most folks understood that. Politicians hate that word, but folks on the street understand that word.

DePue: Joan Walters was the one who was in the trenches on this deal, I would think, and maybe Mark Boozell and Selcke, working with the legislature. How do you think they did?[29]

Edgar: Oh, I think they did excellent. Because in the end, we won, so I think we did well. I think Joan particularly—everybody was on her.[30] She had her agencies' heads in, appealing. We haven't got into when we finally prepared the budget, but I spent a lot of nights at the mansion meeting with these folks after they had spent several days trying to come up with a budget proposal. It was always, how much are we going to cut from this agency? What are we going to eliminate? And in the end, we had a deal where any director, if they didn't like what Joan was doing, could come and talk to me. I had a lot of meetings with directors. Now, most all the time I stuck with Joan. I usually stuck with Joan on budget issues over directors. On other issues, when directors would come to me over super-staff, I usually went with the directors because I didn't want the super-staff running the departments. On the budget, I just thought it was the bigger picture they had to keep in mind, and they needed to make their case, but in the end… But I didn't have as many of those appeals as you would think. They usually would work it out. Now, part of it might have been that directors didn't want to keep trying to go over Joan's head, because they thought it might make it tougher for them next time or whatever, but they all came in, and they understood the problems.

What helped us get through this budget thing, and one of the reasons I think it worked, is that when we told state agencies, "You're going to have to do a 5 percent cut in spending," we'd say, "You tell us how to make those cuts. Ask your people. They know more than we do about how you can do more with less." And a lot of the cuts that were put in place were cuts that they didn't want to do, but when they realized they had to do them, they came up with ways to minimize the pain and the problems those cuts would cause. The other thing we did not do—in the end, it wasn't across the board.[31] Everything didn't get cut the same amount. Some got cut a little more than others, but everybody got a cut. I even wanted to cut elementary and secondary, which we didn't in the end, and I did cut higher education, which

[29] For Boozell's discussion of the first budget fight, see Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, August 18, 2009, 56-66.

[30] See Walters, July 29, 2009, 32-34 and 47, for her perspective on the intense pressure she felt. Also see Boozell, September 9, 2009, 11-12, for his thoughts about Walters' critics.

[31] Perhaps reflecting Paula Wolff and Joan Walter's experiences on Governor Thompson's program staff, Governor Edgar's administration tried to avoid across-the-board cuts as they wrestled with the huge budget deficit they inherited. See Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, July 29, 2009, 15-19; Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 11, 2009, 21.

they never let me forget here at University of Illinois even twenty years later, and they don't let me forget they went a few weeks without a paycheck, too, when we were going through our little showdown with Madigan.

But I think our people performed very well. They had to work through a lot of federal requirements, and they had to try to figure out just what this cut meant, because sometimes you can make a cut, and you find out three months later that you've just eliminated a very important program. It's kind of like the legislature thinking they cut MAP in half; they went home, and they had to come back and reinstate it.[32] Now, the fact that they don't have any money to reinstate it doesn't bother them. This is kind of a new era in the legislature and the governor and the way they deal with financial things. But I think we would have known in July that if we made that cut, we'd probably have to be back in December and undo it. So we wouldn't have made it; we would make a cut that we thought we could live with. Sometimes we made mistakes, but… And we always were willing to talk to folks. We'd listen to the groups. Even if they were protesting outside, we'd still listen to them. It didn't mean we were going to, in the end, give them what they wanted.

DePue: Do you remember any particular protests or complaints about a budgetary decision, which you especially took to heart because that was one that you really didn't want to have taken?

Edgar: The thing that bothered me the most: we finally had to put kind of a head tax on hospitals and nursing homes, which was extremely controversial. But if we did that, we got more federal money that way.

DePue: A head tax?

Edgar: It was kind of a head tax. A bed tax is what I think they actually called it, a bed tax, with nursing homes and hospitals.

DePue: So a person spends a day in the hospital…

Edgar: In a hospital, they'd have to pay a fee, an add-on, that would go to the state.

DePue: And then you'd get reimbursed from the federal level?

Edgar: We'd get reimbursed from the federal government. We got twice as much as whatever that fee was, it turned out. We did this with nursing homes, and we did it with hospitals. Also, it hit hospital patients who weren't on Medicaid. You had to do it that way. I knew a woman whose daughter I'd gone to school with. Her husband had been a professor at Eastern, and I knew them—nice people. He got Alzheimer's or something and had to be put into a nursing home. She wasn't getting Medicaid for it, but apparently she wasn't getting Medicare—I don't know why she wasn't—and they were barely getting by. Then they got this tax added on, and they

[32] The Monetary Award Program (MAP) is a state-administered, need-based grant program for Illinois residents attending approved Illinois colleges.

weren't getting anything back for it, and she wrote a rather uncomfortable letter to me. I really felt bad because it was one of those situations where this thing wasn't 100 percent fair. They had the means, I think, to get by, but they were in a difficult situation paying for his nursing home when they didn't get reimbursed. So I remember that letter bothered me probably about as much—people I knew, and I knew a little bit of the situation, and I felt… Now, that only stayed in place for about two years on the hospitals; we finally were able to get it off. But those were the kind of draconian things we had to do to get by that year, and you'd try to find the lesser of the evils.

Same way with the cuts. There were jobs we had to eliminate and people we had to lay off, and I'm sure there were people that really were in bad ways. As I said, though, those folks always got priority on any new jobs, and over the course of the next three years, we hired a lot of those people back. It was a very difficult time, but again, we felt like we didn't have any alternatives, and I felt comfortable that we were doing the best job we could do.

I thought Joan did a super job. I don't think Joan Walters has ever gotten the credit that she deserves for kind of getting us through this mess. There hadn't been anybody who'd had to go through a mess and do it—well, we're in a worse mess now, but we haven't even begun to think about how we're really going to get out of it. But she did a very good job of it. I always felt good about—because I knew in the end, Joan could differentiate between a program that was nice but wasn't going to mean the difference in lives, and ones that were going to mean the difference in lives. Throughout the time she was head of the Bureau of the Budget, I always felt very comfortable knowing that if she recommended a cut, it was a reasonable cut. It didn't mean we always agreed. But she knew my priorities pretty well, too, and so…

In some way, Boozell and Selcke probably had it a little easier because they were dealing with legislators, and they all kind of understand that stuff. But the other guys, the Grosbolls and the Fleischlis—all of them had to go out and deal with the groups. And Felicia Norwood had to go out and deal with the social service area. She was kind of petite, African American, young—she was probably just in her early thirties or late twenties—and here she was, going out and dealing (laughs) with all these nursing home people and stuff, and just telling them no and beating on them. And then you had the nursing home industry. They had three different groups, and they fought among themselves all the time, and that added to the problem. So I think the staff—whatever retirement benefits they get from that, (DePue laughs) they well deserve, because there wouldn't be any retirement or any other thing if they hadn't been able to do the job they did. I get a lot of the credit, but those folks did have to go out and just put up with a lot of abuse during that period.

DePue: What were you hearing from Daley in terms of the budget?

Edgar: Did Dillard talk to you about that at all? Did you ask Dillard?

DePue: No, I don't think so.

Edgar: Dillard was talking to Daley's people all the time, and I'd talked to Daley some, and Daley said, "Yes, I understand your problem." I said, "We need to make this surtax permanent." "Yes, I agree," because local government money was a big thing to him. So I said, "Well, I need your help. I need you to get the Democrats…" "Oh, I'll help you, I'll help you." He told me that, and his people told Kirk that, and never, never did anything—never did anything. That session, we got along okay. He got mad at me the next session when I vetoed a bill that he wanted. He wanted to strip the city treasurer of all her power because she wouldn't go along with him on some things. That's what he got mad about, but the first year, he wasn't personally mad at me or anything. He was worried about some of the cuts, but he wanted the local government money. And that's why he was happy, I think, I got elected governor as opposed to Hartigan, because Hartigan was going to do away with it.

DePue: We should say that half of the surtax went to local government.

Edgar: Half of it went to local government and half went to education. It did not come to general revenue of the state, but it meant maybe we didn't have to pay out, particularly for education, to make it up. It was a boondoggle for local government, because all of the sudden this money drops in their lap, and most of them are using it to build buildings; they're in pretty good shape. But he kept saying, "I'm going to help, I'm going to help." Well, he never did anything, because Daley didn't like to come to Springfield; he didn't like to deal with that because they're going to want something from him, and he didn't want to do it. So he kept saying that, but it never happened. It finally happened when we were there in July, and this was after several calls I'd made—and Dillard had made calls. Finally his guy came down and started moving around a little bit about, let's get this resolved, let's make this surtax…

Because we fought through the budget with the Democrats, and they were opposed. The big showdown on the budget came—and then, we used to go to the end of June. It wasn't the end of May; we went to the end of June, and the fiscal year started the first of July, so you went right up against the fiscal year. About the second-to-last day of the session, probably the twenty-ninth of June, the Senate was going to pass a public aid bill that they'd passed out of the House—I think they'd passed it out of the House—which I was opposed to. It was way out of kilter, and I said I was going to veto it, but I didn't want them to put it on my desk and have to veto it; I'd rather have the thing killed in the legislature. And this is where Selcke really shined. At that point, I think the Democrats had maybe thirty-two senators, and you needed thirty votes to pass a budget bill. The public aid bill came up, and three Democratic senators took a walk and didn't vote for the bill. Selcke had gotten them to do that, and they were some downstate Democrats who I forever remembered. (laughs) There wasn't anything specific I can remember that we traded on that, but they just—and the bill was controversial. There were a lot of things in there that they were… The bill failed, so the Democrats couldn't put the public aid bill on my desk that I was going to veto.

At that point, their whole effort to pass an alternative budget kind of fell apart, and they knew that come July one, to pass a budget, it took three-fifths vote, which meant you had to have Republicans and Democrats. So that was the key moment. Now, I would have vetoed that, and they couldn't have overridden me, but it would have been embarrassing because I'd have vetoed the public aid bill, and they'd say, "The reason you're not getting money is because the governor vetoed it." But I was prepared to veto it. The fact that we killed it, I think, kind of shocked Phil Rock because he thought he could get it through the Senate, and he couldn't. And that meant we went into overtime. Then when we went into overtime, it changed the whole dynamic. Then you had to have both parties.

DePue: A couple questions here. You got the public aid bill. Does that mean the budget doesn't come as one complete package—

Edgar: No, it doesn't.

DePue: —that it's divided up?

Edgar: Yes, it's in bills. It's an awkward way, and we've talked about over the years, but there's never been agreement to do it. What you usually do, you usually hold everything till the end, and so while there are different bills, you know the total budget. But they were trying to send the public aid, because that was the most controversial. That's where I had cuts and they had restored them, and they were trying to put me on the spot either to veto or sign something. I think they were really surprised when the bill lost, but it took a little of the pressure off me, because then I didn't have to veto the bill.

DePue: I know we've talked already quite a bit about Madigan's preference just to make this a two-year surtax, and I think Daley was of the opinion that it should be a permanent surtax.

Edgar: Yes, because he didn't want to have to come and grovel (laughter) to Madigan. He wanted assurance he was going to get this money.

DePue: But I thought Madigan was supposed to be Daley's guy. He's the one who's really representing the city's interest.

Edgar: At times. (DePue laughs) He may think he knows the city better than the mayor. You got to remember the dynamics between Daley and Madigan. This is not Richard J. Daley, this is not the dad; this is the son, and these guys were roommates in Con-Con. Then in 1980, there was a bill—I think we talked about it—passed to take the sales tax off food and drugs all at once, and Thompson vetoed it.[33] That was Daley's bill. And Thompson made a deal with Jane Byrne, who was then the mayor of Chicago, and we were going to come in with one penny a year to give us a little time. Madigan was Jane Byrne's person in Springfield, and he had been

[33] Con-Con refers to the state constitutional convention held in 1970. Edgar recounts the maneuvering around the sales tax measure in Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 36-41.

penalized by her because she didn't think he had delivered on some stuff; she took all his jobs away. So then, trying to get back in good grace, he agreed to support her position, and her position was, you support Thompson on the sales tax thing. So Madigan is in favor of Thompson's alternative, which is less costly, and opposed to Daley's proposal.

Daley then comes into Madigan's ward, and that's a no-no, and tries to stir up opposition to Madigan on that issue. Madigan was furious. I remember, because I was dealing with Madigan on the bill at that time. Madigan's job in the Con-Con was to kind of keep an eye on Richie and keep him out of trouble. He was a very loyal guy to his dad, but Richie was Richie—and that wasn't Richard J.—and he didn't want to be pushed around by the kid. And he'd rather have that [a temporary surtax] and make Daley have to come to him.

But he really got mad when Daley was down [in Springfield] and trying to go around to his members to get them to go against him on this issue. You've got to remember, we had gone into July with no budget. They came in the second day of July—it was the next day; maybe it was the first day of July—with this compromise, and we're pretty close on the budget. They gave me the tax caps in this compromise, but they wouldn't do the surtax. I said, "No, I need the surtax." And Rock really didn't care, but Madigan was the one who didn't want to do the surtax. Rock just wanted to go home. His wife was sick, and he just wanted out. He didn't run the next time. He just wanted to go home. He wasn't the problem; it was Madigan. And so we went from about July second to July twenty-fourth or whenever we finally passed.

DePue: July eighteenth.

Edgar: Eighteenth. And that hadn't happened before. I mean, that's—

DePue: You missed a payroll.

Edgar: We missed a payroll, and—

DePue: You had a bunch of state employees standing outside your window on the sixteenth, protesting, probably screaming up at you.

Edgar: Now, we were able to make public aid payments. That's one of the things the courts had said, that you don't need the bill passed to make the same payments. So we were able to make public aid payments. We were afraid we'd get put in a position where they'd say, "Take this or public aid recipients are going to go without any money." But the courts had ruled before, and we thought we were in—so we made public aid payments; we just didn't make state employees' payments. I don't know if we even could have.

So we go for eighteen days, and there's nothing happening. Members are tired, they've seen all the movies, they've played all the golf, (DePue laughs) they've eaten at all the rest—they want to go home. And the Democrats made a

mistake—I think it was over the Fourth of July—and let them go home one weekend. They went home, and everybody was mad at them—said, "What are you guys doing down here? Why don't you give us property tax caps? Why do you guys want to spend money we don't have?" They were just getting beat up by people back home. So all these Democrat members came back telling their leaders, "We got to cut a deal. We're losing this battle back home."

DePue: Which is the best thing that could have happened for you.

Edgar: Yes, we just out-waited them. And then when Daley came down—his guy came down—and started moving around, it infuriated Madigan. It's like him going into his ward. Now he's coming to his caucuses and trying to get his members. So he came down to me. He'd had something wrong with his—was it his nose or his ear? He had to go to a doctor. He said, "I want to come down to talk to you. I have to go to the doctor first."

DePue: This is Madigan now?

Edgar: Madigan and I—every day we'd meet. We'd have lunch together. It wasn't a personal thing. We'd sit and try to figure, how do we get out of this mess? I said, "I'm not doing this every two years, Mike. I need the money now." I said, "One time's enough." "No, I'm not going to…" So we went back. But pretty much everything else had been agreed to. The budget had been pretty much agreed to. The cuts, they were going to buy. We compromised on the general welfare. The African-American legislators from Chicago were going nuts over this, because they said, "It's going to cause riots in our streets." I said, "Would you rather have me cut aid to dependent children?" "No, no." And in the end they knew they were going to have to… So they said, "If you let these people go into job training for six months and pay them their benefits, we'll do that." And that turned out to be a lot better bill, because a lot of folks went into job training and actually got some jobs.

I had this great story I'd tell about this—I don't think you've heard me tell this story about when I'm running for reelection in '94. It's late in the campaign, and it looks like I'm going to win—the polls have me way ahead—but I'm trying to do well in all parts of the state. And I get an invitation to go to a ground-breaking on the South Side of Chicago. This building was going to be built in this neighborhood. I think Children and Family Services was going to put an office there, so with the guarantee of that office to Children and Family Services, they could get the funding to build the building. And this was a neighborhood that hadn't had a new building in decades, probably; it was just really pretty poor. So this is a big deal in this neighborhood. It was a beautiful autumn afternoon, I remember, and I drive out there with my troopers, and we're going to go do this ground-breaking. I get out and walk over. There's probably two or three thousand people there because this is a big deal in this neighborhood. We shovel the dirt and everything's fine, and I'm walking back, and the crowd's surrounding me. Everything's fine, everybody's in a good mood, and I think, "This is great."

All of a sudden this guy walks up, this big guy with kind of old clothes—rough-looking guy. He says, "Are you Edgar?" I kind of look at him and think, I wonder what he wants. I look around, and I don't see my troopers anyplace. And I'm thinking, I just spent about three million dollars on a TV blitz in the Chicago area saying I'm Edgar. It's going to be a little hard to deny I'm Edgar. So I say, "Yes, I'm Edgar." He says, "Well, you know what you did to me?" And the crowd is really getting into this: Oh, great, there's going to be a confrontation, and the governor is going to get his. And I'm thinking to myself, boy, I don't know what I did to you, but I sure wish I hadn't have. I knew it had to be someone on public aid. I'm going to win the election in two weeks, but I'm not going to be alive to see it. I'm looking, and I don't see my troopers—they're two Irish boys—I don't see them anyplace. They stick out, they're white, and they're just not there. So I look back at the guy, and I say, "What did I do to you?" He says, "You took away my public aid," and I think, oh, boy, here it comes. And the crowd is… And no troopers anyplace. And he says, "You know, that was the best thing you could have done to me." I kind of look at him. The only reason I think he may not kill me is he has a little girl on his shoulder. And I say, "Huh?"

"Yeah," he says, "I had been on that General Assistance for years. It wasn't very much money, but it was better than nothing, and I didn't try to get a job; I got that." He says, "Then I had to go into that job training to keep that check. I went to that job training, and I learned a few things." And he says, "I got a job. Not a great job, but it's a job. And every night when I come home now, I feel really good because my little girl—she knows I've been to work. And I just want to thank you." I'm saying, where are the TV cameras? (DePue laughs) It's one of these things where you realize, hey, you were doing the right thing and this does work.

We looked, and a lot of folks that had gone through that job training got some jobs. They weren't great jobs, but they got some jobs. But the job training part, that compromise we worked out—and we did that in June or July, sometime in overtime—made it a better bill. It always reinforced for me two things: one, nobody wants to be on welfare, I think. Most people don't want to be on it. Unfortunately, they don't have the skills sometimes to get off of it. Two is that compromise often is better than the original two things. Because here were folks coming from the South Side, the legislators, and they had one point of view, and I had another point of view. But we both kind of understood the other point of view a little bit, and we were able to agree on something that I think… And we haven't had General Assistance since. We never had riots in the streets they thought we'd have—I thought we would too, maybe. We never had that problem. Now, none of these jobs they probably got were great, but it started them, hopefully, up the ladder. But I had people trying to catch me about those public aid jobs. They were really [unintelligible].

That was agreed to—everything was agreed to but the surtax, and that was the holdup. And then when Daley's guy started going around, Madigan got mad. So after he got by the doctor, he came by and said, "Look, Daley's down here; they're trying to get guys to come off my position and support you." I said, "Yes, I know.

He promised me a long time ago." He said, "Well, he's not pushing me around." He said, "I've done well enough. I don't have to put up with this." He said, "I'll make you a deal. You need it for education. I'll do the surtax permanent for education; we'll make local government for two years." I said, "You have a deal. The education is the part I care about. To be truthful, I want that local government money for general revenue, and we can argue about that next time, because I don't know how we get along without that eventually. But I got to have the school money because I can't make that up."

Everything else was agreed to, so we got Rock and we got the Republican leaders, and we had it agreed to on that—because Republicans were willing to do whatever I wanted to do on the surtax. That was my thing. In fact, we even had Pate Philip getting up to say, "We've got to make this surtax permanent." He said, "We got to help these teachers." Now, you got to understand, Pate Philip hated teachers. He was always against—thought teachers got way too much. I had him up—

DePue: Teachers or the teachers' union?

Edgar: Teachers. Well, teachers' unions. He ran it all together. But he was up making a speech about why we needed the surtax to help teachers, (laughs) and I wanted to get a tape of that. (DePue laughs) He was being a pretty good trooper because I don't think I'd vetoed the districting bill yet. (laughs) But what was holding up the session was not the property tax caps. We'd resolved that about the second day of overtime. It wasn't the budget—we'd been working that out even in June, but in July they started sitting down the Democratic budget guys with Joan and agreeing on things, so we had that pretty well worked out. The holdup was the surtax, and that's what kept us there for about two weeks. And what finally moved that—it was Daley, but it wasn't the way we ever thought; (DePue laughs) it was in spite of Daley.

DePue: Or to spite Daley.

Edgar: Yes. So then, we sit down and we're working—and it takes time to put this all together, though some of it had already been coming together. And Boozell and Selcke did a great job of reassuring the Democrats and working with everybody and getting everything done. Everything's moving along, and they came to me, and my budget people said, "Oh, we made a mistake on this bill." I said, "What's wrong?" They said, "It's three hundred thousand dollars over." Now, this is a twenty-four-billion-dollar budget. Well, it's all estimates.

DePue: Twenty-seven point six billion.

Edgar: It's all guesstimate to some extent anyway. But I'm just, by gosh, we're going to keep it right, no devi—I call up Phil Rock. I say, "Phil, we got to redo this." He says, "What do you mean? The bill's being printed. It'd take us two more days to do…" I say, "We're three hundred thousand dollars over." He says, "Governor, chill out." (laughter) People say, "What is the best advice you ever got?" I say, "It's

Phil Rock telling me, 'Chill out.'" I never did chill out till the second term, but I just remember him saying—and later I thought, here he is, he just wants to go home, and here's this freshman governor who's made his life miserable, and he's arguing over three hundred thousand dollars in a twenty-seven- or twenty-four-billion-dollar budget. I'm sure Rock was just furious with me at that point. I say, "All right, I'm going to have to take it out of the budget someplace by veto." "Do whatever you got to do"—slams down [the phone]. So we got past that.

Well, it takes a while to get the bill printed and all that, and you have to leave it on the desks so long. It meant we were going to go over to the next day, but all four leaders were in agreement; they'd gone back to their caucuses, we had the deal, and everything was going to happen. Next morning, headline in the *Tribune*: "Edgar Wins Budget Battle."[34] They hadn't voted on it yet. Tom Hardy wrote this story: Edgar wins showdown with Madigan and the Democrats on the budget, gets pretty much everything he needs, blah, blah, blah. It's a great story, it's just a day too early. (DePue laughs) And I'm just stricken. I'm thinking, the Democrats are going to say, forget this. They didn't. They went ahead and in a few hours voted the bill out, and I signed it. And Madigan made the comment to the press, "I misjudged Edgar." He said, "You know, he's a little more like me than I thought." (laughter) He was very complimentary and came over to the mansion that night—of course, I didn't serve any booze. Not many of them did; it was like three o'clock in the morning and they were all wanting to go home, but he came over and was very cordial.

Then, to finish up the budget story, I vetoed out about two hundred thousand dollars of the CTA stuff that I had agreed to, to make up whatever the shortfall was. Rock overrode me; (laughs) he just shot it through. So he proved his point. But that budget battle was very important for me because that was my first test. I think a lot of folks didn't think I could stand up to the Democrats, and they thought I'd cave. To be truthful, that's kind of what happened in the past. Thompson would fight, but in the end he usually would compromise and the budget would be a little bit out of balance, especially the last few years. I think Rock thought for sure we could just sit down and have a drink and split the thing. The trouble was, we just didn't have the money, and I just had to have the bottom line, what I had to have, because I didn't want to put up with that. Now, it turns out—and we'll talk about it maybe some other time, unless you want to do it now—a few months later we had to come back and cut the budget even more, which was the worst thing I ever had to go through. But at that point, I felt pretty good. The *Tribune* headline—that was a nice headline. People that hadn't thought I would be able to handle the job or stand up to the Democrats—and Republicans really thought, boy, Edgar beat Madigan. To this day, people will say, "Oh, that time you stood up to Mike Madigan…" Fortunately, they don't remember the next year when they just walked over me (laughs) in the session. My whole key was, "That first year is critical," and I think we came through that first year very well—not just the budget, some other things, too. The tax caps…

[34] "Edgar's Decisive Victory Shuts Door on Thompson Era," *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1991.

One of the last things that happened in that session was we still hadn't done the expansion for McCormick Place. Daley had won his reelection, so he was now for McCormick Place expansion, but Republicans were complaining. They didn't want to pass it. I said, "If we get a deal, you got to pass it." "Naw, we'll just hold it." And Pate said, "I don't want to do it, I don't want to do it." So Rock said, "I want to do McCormick Place." I said, "Pate won't do it. I think we ought to put it off." "I don't care, I'm going to do it," and Phil pushed it. I sent Dillard down, as well as the legislative folks, to put Republicans on McCormick Place. I don't know if it… (unintelligible)

DePue: Is this a separate bill?

Edgar: It was separate, yes.

DePue: But wouldn't that be a part of the budget?

Edgar: No. This was to authorize McCormick Place expansion and authorize some taxes in the Chicago area to go up, auto—

DePue: So Chicago taxes.

Edgar: Yes. Some of them went over to the suburbs, too. There was an area there, and there were hotel tax… Pretty much everybody agreed to it; these were fees to pay for McCormick Place, and it was going to be the largest expansion ever. And Jim Reilly's head of McCormick Place at this point. Of course, he was down talking to me quite regularly about it. And we got about five Republicans to go on. It took thirty-six because it was to take effect immediately. We got about five or six Republicans to vote for it, and I remember Pate was yelling at Kirk, "Ah, this is terrible. Tell the governor this is the wrong thing to do," blah, blah, blah. It went over to the House, and I went to [Lee] Daniels and said, "We need votes on this." He said, "All right. I'm not going to vote for it, because I don't want to listen to Pate, but I'll make sure…" They put plenty of votes—and it passed easily out of the House.

So, (laughs) it's about a month later, I'm going to sign the property tax cap bill up in DuPage County, and Pate's there. Pate pulls me aside after I sign the bill, and he says, "There's something I want to talk to you about." Oh, great, what's this going to be? He pulls me, and he says, "Now, I'm not going to do this very often, but you were right and I was wrong on McCormick Place. That was the right thing to do." And he was right; he never said that again (laughter) to me the whole time I was governor—"You were right and I was wrong"—because the next year we got into a huge fight over the airports and stuff.

But that session, we got McCormick Place; we got tax caps; we got a budget that I could live with, and more importantly we got it my way; and we got the extension of the income tax—made it permanent, at least for schools, and everybody knew the other was going to be permanent now; we pretty well got

everything I wanted. I had to compromise, which was all right. So I had a great session and came out of that—my job approval rating was sky-high.

DePue: And a compliment from both Madigan and Pate Philip.

Edgar: Yes. Madigan's, at least, was public; (DePue laughs) Pate was off to the side, and only I could hear it.

DePue: I did want to go back and just touch base on a couple of things during this budget fight, because they struck me as being kind of unusual, in one case, at least. Mike Madigan at one time came up with this proposal: let's do a four-day workweek for state employees. Do you recall that?

Edgar: No, I don't.

DePue: I don't know how serious he was in that.

Edgar: There were all kinds of things being thrown around about how you deal with…

DePue: This is something I think was quoted in the book *Meeting the Challenge*. Phil Rock got a hold of you one time and sat you down or had a conversation. "You've been dealt a bad hand," he said. "It's not your fault. You've got to raise taxes." Remember that conversation?

Edgar: Um-hm. I just told him I couldn't. I said, "I made a promise in the campaign. I'm going to make the surtax permanent, but we're going to draw the line there."

DePue: What kind of taxes was he suggesting?

Edgar: Income tax.

DePue: Income tax?

Edgar: Anything, but income tax is probably what he was thinking of. Phil's approach was, hey, let's split the difference. That's how they kind of did it with Thompson, and they just were, we'll let the budget guys come up with new revenue estimates, or something like that. And I think that's what the Democrats thought all along they could do with me on this budget: that I'd never be able to get this passed; it's too draconian, and they'd be able to stop it; and in the end, I would cave and do some tax increases, and then they'd pound me the next time I ran for reelection. But he was very nice about it, and I was very pleasant back to him. I just said, "I can't do it, Phil. We're going to have to make do with what we have."

But I have to say, I think Phil was pretty frustrated with me most of—because here was this freshman governor just being obstinate. I'd have Phil down to watch horse races because I liked horse racing and he did, too. And I'd try to have him down in the office when we were stuck in late sessions, just to have something to

do. Had my staff run out bets for him, and we'd run out bets at the OTB.[35] Now, Madigan—I'd have him down for meals. Phil was always a very reasonable guy; Phil just had a little more difficulty with his members than Madigan did with his members. But yes, I remember that talk, and I just said, "I can't do it." Phil probably said, "I'll go and talk to him about it," or something like that, because those guys talked all the time. One would be the good cop and one the bad cop, a little bit.

DePue: Rock and Madigan?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: More so than Daniels and Philips?

Edgar: Well, those guys, they would just both be the bad cop, (laughter) though Daniels was a little easier to deal with. He wasn't quite as obstinate sometimes as Pate would be. And on things like McCormick Place, he understood. He practiced law downtown, and he wasn't about to stand in the way of that. And that was the largest public works program in the history of Illinois at that time. When we opened that thing, it was under budget and ahead of schedule. Of course, a recession helped a little bit. Reilly did a good job of supervising that.

DePue: One other thing I wanted to ask you about: I think July tenth—we don't have a budget; it's not looking like we're going to have a budget for a while here—you proposed a 319-million-dollar stopgap budget to put you through at least till the end of July.

Edgar: That was to do payroll, and we might have been worried at that point about public aid, because I'm not sure when we finally got the word we could do the public aid checks.

DePue: Was there a strategy also that that might push the legislature towards making an agreement?

Edgar: No. You get to July, you had another twenty days to try to work out something. My big fear was that everything would come unraveled, and while maybe I was right, if state government doesn't function, the governor gets blamed, not the legislature. We worried about public aid particularly, those checks not being able to go out, and people dying, kids starving. That worried me both governmentally as well as politically, because if you had complete chaos in the state—again, people look to the governor to solve the problem, and that would put a lot of pressure to do something quickly, not necessarily right. So I can't remember when we finally knew for sure that we could do public aid, but even if we might have known that, we just wanted to get through July, because there was this paycheck we were going to miss. The Democrats, I think, thought maybe that might put pressure on me to do

[35] Off-track betting. Edgar's love of horse racing began early in his life; Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 70-72.

something because I didn't want to miss the paycheck. I think when we missed the paycheck too, they knew, he might just keep missing the paychecks. As the Democrats always told me a couple of years later when I had heart trouble, they were amazed to find out I had a heart, (DePue laughs) because they thought after that, that I was heartless.

DePue: Yeah, "Governor No."

Edgar: And they didn't understand: I was taking it as a compliment, that "Governor No" stuff. That scissors stuff was a little goofy, but "Governor No," I kind of liked, and I still refer to that. I take it as a compliment. But they did some polling in August, and my job approval was in good shape.

DePue: I want to make sure I understand the nature of the surtax. So one-half of the percent of income tax, surtax, for education was made permanent?

Edgar: It was a half-percent increase in the income tax—went from 2.5 to 3 percent for two years. What we said was you got to make that permanent, and of that half-percent increase, half of it went to elementary, secondary, and higher education; half of that half percent went to local governments. We made the education part of it permanent; the other, we extended for another two years to local government.

DePue: Was there any discussion at that time that that would go into general revenue instead of local government?

Edgar: Only in my mind.

DePue: Only in your mind.

Edgar: Because we thought all along, Daley was going to come in to do something to help us, and we knew he had to get that. Now, the next year and the year after, I tried to get some of that money and finally did. We didn't get all of it. I think the municipalities and I worked out a compromise, and then, as I said, I gave Daley a bunch of stuff too, just for the city. I don't know what we ended up getting. I don't know if we got half of that half or what, but we got something because that was the only new money we had coming in to help us get through the budget problems. And locals got some, they just didn't get it all. But they were using it for capital projects; it wasn't like they needed it to run their day-to-day business. That's why that cartoon about—

DePue: Cement blocks on your feet.

Edgar: And in my speech, I said, "You got a choice between concrete," which were the capital projects, "or kids." It was a great line, I thought, (DePue laughs) and then they made that cartoon, which was even a better cartoon.

DePue: This has been a wonderful discussion about the budget—lots of twists and turns in this thing. I was thinking that maybe we can go through January of '92 and just pick

up that discussion, but I'll leave that to you, because in between here, I think we also have redistricting.

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: And January of '92 leads right into the budget year of 1993, so maybe we want to postpone it.

Edgar: The rescission of the budget was such an unusual thing, maybe we ought to save that, and I'll try to get my mind straight on that a little bit. I'd just as soon we skip over the '92 session as quickly as possible, because that was my worst year, probably—at least the first part. They all had to come back in later and undo what they did, but still, that was not a fun time. Plus, I had to go to the hospital and do some heart things and all that. And we might talk a little bit about just settling into being governor and doing some other things, too. Also, my mother passed away during that period.

DePue: September.

Edgar: But, yes, the January thing was—you kind of think you're out of the woods and just find out you're a little deeper in it and you didn't know it. You just came into a clearing there, July eighteenth; it wasn't out of the woods.

DePue: That's because the unemployment rate kept going up and up and up.

Edgar: Yes, and at that point the recession was really taking hold. Prior to that, we were dealing with overspending. Now, while we thought we had spending under control, the recession just kept going and going, and all our projections were wrong. I don't know what our unemployment finally got to, but it—

DePue: Seven point eight percent about the middle of '92. That was the national unemployment rate.

Edgar: Yes, we were higher. We were probably more like eight-something, I would guess.[36]

DePue: I'll see if we can find that out for the next session, Governor. So we have plenty to entice the listeners here to come and find out how this works out for the next year.

Edgar: Okay, thank you.

DePue: Thank you.

(End of interview 12)

[36] In June 1992, the national unemployment rate reached its recession-period peak of 7.8 percent. Illinois' rate stood at 7.6 percent, which represented an improvement from its three-month peak (January-March 1992) of 8.5 percent. Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/lau/#tables.

Interview with Jim Edgar

ISG-A-L-2009-019.13

Interview # 13: April 23, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Friday, April 23, 2010. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today is an important day. I think after about a five-month hiatus, I'm back with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good morning, Governor.

Edgar: Good morning.

DePue: We are where?

Edgar: We're at my office in the Institute of Government and Public Affairs, on the campus of the University of Illinois.

DePue: See, I figured I'd let you say that because that's quite a mouthful.

Edgar: That's quite a mouthful.

DePue: Last time we spoke we had a very interesting discussion about the first budget year that you had; we got to the point where after a pretty bruising fight, the budget was adopted in late July. You missed a payroll by a day or two; then the budget was passed.

Edgar: Yes, we missed a payroll. Professors on the campus here continue to remind me that when I was governor they went without a paycheck one time. So it really didn't have much bearing. Public aid recipients, people who really had to have that money to survive, were paid. There were some people who went without a paycheck; they did notice it and remember it.

DePue: We're going to talk a lot today about the budget because you had to make some significant adjustments in the '92 budget. Then we're going to talk a lot about the fiscal year '93 budget. But I wanted to start today with September 1991 and your mother passing away. We've already talked about how important that relationship

was for you, but now you're a sitting governor with incredible demands on your time. What was it like having your mother pass away in that first year?

Edgar: It was a shock, first of all. Mother had not been well. She had had a hip replacement that hadn't worked, and she was kind of bedridden, could only get around by a wheelchair or whatever—which was a very difficult thing for her because she liked to be active—but none of us thought that there was anything life-threatening. Sometime in that period, and I can't remember exactly when, it turned for the worse, and she was still home in Charleston. They thought she had a heart attack, so they brought her over to St. John's in Springfield, which has one of the best heart facilities in the state. It turned out that wasn't the problem. She stayed for a few days, for a while there. I can remember that she liked that part, the hospital. She felt pretty good and everything seemed to be going well.

Then she developed some other problems. Her bone structure, really, is what the issue was, and they transferred her to another part of the hospital, which she never did like. (laughs) But again, there wasn't any thought that this was life-threatening; it was just she might be incapacitated the rest of her life, which was very hard on her, and I think on all of us, because we knew what it would mean to her. Then one day, I remember we were out at the cabin—I don't know if we talked about the cabin. When we sold our house in the south side of Springfield, I wanted to get a place in the country—originally intended it would be much farther away—that we could get away to. Brenda had realized that I might stick her out in the boondocks a hundred miles away from Springfield, and kind of took control of that in the first days of the governorship, when I was busy doing other things. She went out and found a log cabin about ten miles out of town, instead of a hundred miles, and we purchased that. So we spent a lot of our free time—that was our getaway. We would go north of town to our log cabin.

I remember we were out at the cabin when we got a call saying that she had really taken a turn for the worse, and they just weren't sure she was going to make it. We went to the hospital and really spent the next several hours there, till she passed away. But it happened pretty quickly. Again, she had serious problems, but no one ever thought this was going to cause her to die, until this happened; then within twenty-four hours, she was gone.

DePue: Who ended up serving as the executor of her estate?

Edgar: I can't remember. Maybe Fred might have. I don't know.

DePue: Certainly with your schedule, I wouldn't think you'd have the time to do any of that.

Edgar: No, I didn't do it. I can't remember, unless an attorney in town did it. There wasn't much of an estate. I remember after she passed away, all she really had was her house, which was a very small ranch house. I think it sold for about thirty-five thousand dollars, maybe. I remember Fred, Tom, and I—my two brothers and I—

went down to the house, and we just kind of divided up her personal property. What was left, Fred had somebody come and take. I would guess the whole estate was probably—I don't think it was over thirty-five thousand dollars. There wasn't a whole lot to deal with; there was mainly the house and her personal effects, which weren't very many.

DePue: Did you have an opportunity to really do justice to the grieving process?

Edgar: I don't think so. I'm not sure. When my father was killed, I was very young and it did not have the impact on me that it did my brothers. I kind of like, when I have a problem, to get on something else and just not think about it. Right after she passed away—we had already had a trip planned to go to Kentucky. I had a couple of meetings, and we were just going to spend some time, go to some races and things, and we knew some people down there. We went ahead and went there, so that was kind of a getaway. In this case, the grieving probably occurred over a long period of time, over several years later, in some ways. The job was, as you said, very demanding. We were still getting used to being governor. We were in a little bit of a lull because we had dealt with the legislature, and we thought we had dealt with the budget; it was a chance to kind of sit back and relax. Then this occurred. The following week, we did go down to Kentucky and spend about a week there, and then came back. When we came back we began to realize that we had budget problems coming back up again.

Now if I hadn't been governor, I'm sure it would have probably been more of a grieving, but I think the demands of the governor probably kept me occupied. I probably thought about her a lot more later, because every day I usually would call my mother. All the time I was secretary of state and then the governorship, even that first year as governor, sometime in the day I'd give her a call on the phone. So I think that's what I noticed: I couldn't call Mother. Not that we ever talked that long—I didn't talk over my problems with her or anything like that—it was just that every day, you'd talk to Mom, and that didn't happen anymore. As time went on, that probably even had more of an impact in a way—the holidays and things like that; you would think of that.

DePue: Did you have some friends outside your immediate circle, who you spent time with to kind of get away from the grind of government?

Edgar: Most of my friends are people I work with, to be truthful. Still to this day, I kind of go do things with people I worked with. Now, there were people from church who also were tied into state government. It's hard in Springfield for anybody not to have some tie into state government. But there were some people. Also Doc and Pat Walker had just moved to Springfield from Kane County. They had a Standardbred [horse breed] farm. I had met them a couple of years before, when I was trying to learn more about harness racing just so I would know the nuances of that industry. They moved in probably right before the election. I liked horses, I liked horse racing, and that was kind of a good getaway. We'd go out to their place, or we'd go eat with them. So they were people we would socialize with who were outside the

immediate involvement in state government. There were some people from church that were in state government, but the reason we kind of dealt with them was because we knew them from church.

Other than that, we didn't go out much. In fact, we didn't have time to go out much because we were out all the time. If we had any free time, we went to the cabin. The cabin was just our place. It was off-limits to government people. I know one time Pate Philip said, "I'll invite the Republican leaders," and I didn't say anything. I mentioned it to Brenda. She said, "I don't want those people out here. This is our place; this is not the mansion." So we would have close friends like the Walkers or maybe some people, as I said, from church who we still saw somewhat, but for the most part, it was just Brenda and I. Our socializing was just the two of us going to watch a movie.

DePue: You had a long tour in the secretary of state office, but did it surprise you how little control you had over your schedule?

Edgar: As secretary of state I had 100 percent control over my schedule. As governor I only had about 95 percent. I still had a lot of control over my schedule. I was my scheduler. I didn't do breakfasts. I think maybe as governor I had to do about four or five breakfasts in Chicago with business folks, which I couldn't get out of, but I still—maybe more so the second term than the first term—dictated my schedule. But there were a lot of things you just knew you had to do. I guess it wasn't so much they forced me to do it; I just knew I had to do it, so I never viewed that I had lost control. That was one of the things I had to do as governor. There were very few things I had to do that I didn't in my own mind think I should do, and so it was easy to do. Occasionally I'd say, how did I… But I think I'm different than the other people I'd worked with—nobody every scheduled me; I scheduled myself.

They knew that, and they also knew that I wouldn't give them a quick answer, but when I gave them an answer I almost never canceled. I probably had the least record of canceling, of any governor. My predecessor and successors are notorious for that and for being late; I also tried to always be on schedule. But the demands—you were always out as governor. But I'd been out as secretary of state. I was always out, preparing for the election for governor, so I was always pretty busy, and I was busy as governor. But as governor, people have to come to you in most cases; you don't have to go to them. So you do have control over your schedule.

DePue: You made the comment that you didn't do breakfast, but you started your career in government with Arrington—

Edgar: That's probably why I didn't do breakfasts.

DePue: —who did breakfasts. (laughs)

Edgar: I hated those things, yes.

DePue: So is it fair to say, then, you're just not an early morning guy?

Edgar: It is very fair to say. I point out that Pearl Harbor happened early in the morning. Good things don't happen often in the morning. I wish I was an early person, because when I did get up early—I wouldn't sleep late at the mansion—I'd get up, I'd go exercise, then I'd read the paper and eat breakfast. Brenda and I, that was a chance we had, and we weren't exhausted at that point. Usually by the evening, when I came home I was pretty well exhausted and really didn't want to talk much. But in the morning it was a much more relaxed atmosphere, particularly when I knew I didn't have anything in the office till maybe ten o'clock. Usually I wouldn't schedule anything before ten o'clock in the office.

Sometimes I'd have to go to Chicago, so maybe I'd have to get up and leave at eight o'clock and catch a plane, or get up to do something, but when I was in Springfield, for the most part I never scheduled anything before ten o'clock. When I was in Chicago, sometimes I would have to go do things. When you were in Chicago, usually you were attending functions, and you couldn't always control those. But you had more say than anybody else on just when you went to those things; they kind of planned their programs around when you were available. I remember the Civic Committee, which is the major business group in Chicago. I had a breakfast meeting with them about the third airport. Now, it's a little hard for you to tell the top one hundred CEOs in Chicago, hey, I don't do breakfasts. That's just when they gathered, and I needed to get in front of them, so I went and did that. But I didn't do it very often. Usually I would have lunch with them one-on-one or something.

DePue: The next subject I wanted to turn to here was one I think dragged out for a while. In November 1991, I believe you ended up making a decision about Dickson Mounds. Do you remember that fight?

Edgar: Yes. You've talked to Al Grosboll; I don't know how else you got this on the agenda.[37] (DePue laughs) You had the conflict between some Native Americans and some Illinoisans over Dickson Mounds. Dickson Mound had been this burial site over in western Illinois, just on the other side of the Illinois River, south of Peoria. It was kind of a tourist attraction. Schoolchildren from that area would be brought every year to see Dickson Mound. Indians objected to it because it was—basically all it was was a bunch of skeletons laying out and dirt. It was morbid. I had never been there, but this controversy had been kind of building when I was secretary of state, so I stopped by one time when I was over in that part of the state and went to it, and I thought it was a little morbid myself.

Native Americans very much did not like the remains of Native Americans being on display like that, but the local folks thought it was historical. It had always been there. It was private, originally. It was, they thought, an educational thing. It was also a tourist draw; that was a big draw. They got people into that area because

[37] Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, July 23, 2009, 62-68. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

they went to Dickson Mounds. But it got to be a controversy. The state had taken it over. I don't know when we had purchased it, but originally it had been a private thing. So that drew us in because we owned it, but the locals viewed it as theirs. This was their state park kind of thing, their state prison—the thing that created jobs and created money. That, I think, really was what motivated them the most, and I can understand that. They didn't want to lose that.

But I also personally thought the Native Americans had a point. As opposed to Chief Illiniwek—where I thought there was great respect shown to Chief Illiniwek, which is a battle later on—in this case, I clearly understood why Native Americans were upset. I never really did understand why they were upset over Chief Illiniwek. I understood why some mascots, they were upset, but I never understood that. I'm not a Native American, but just being a WASP, (laughter) I can appreciate their unhappiness with that. So what do you do about it? You had people over there who wanted to keep it, the local legislators wanted to keep it, but you also had the Native Americans—who really aren't a major political force in Illinois but I thought had a legitimate complaint.

DePue: And that is their major issue.

Edgar: That was their major issue. The chief had always been there, but this is kind of what they were concentrating on. I thought they had valid arguments about Dickson Mound. As I often would do—let's put together a group and see if we can resolve this. We sent Al Grosboll over to sit down with both sides. I can't remember if we had a formal committee of people from both, or if he just met with both sides and tried to come up with something. After several months they were successful in coming up with a proposal. Of course, it cost a lot of money. (laughs) We were going to build a new facility over there, which to me was far better than what had been there. Part of that was you would cover up the remains of those Indians. That satisfied the Native Americans, but also this brand new museum, top quality, which was going to cost a few million dollars, satisfied the locals that they were going to have something to continue to draw people to that part of the state.

DePue: Next I'm going to ask you your opinion about gambling casinos as an approach for raising revenue, because I believe it was 1991 when the state opened some of its first gambling casinos.

Edgar: I had made the comment that if I had been governor, there would have been no riverboats in Illinois. That had occurred the last year of Jim Thompson's administration. I think it occurred at three o'clock in the morning, after they'd killed the bill several times. Everybody that was opposed to it—a lot of them had gone home, and then they revised it again. They did it because Iowa had done it. The idea

was to put a riverboat on the river, particularly on the Mississippi to help the Quad Cities, which were depressed. It was going to be an economic boost thing.[38]

But when I became governor it was already on the books; they were there. They'd already started applying for licenses, and during my first year we actually issued them. The process had started well before I'd become governor. What was ironic was that most of the so-called experts did not think they'd make money in Illinois. They thought the tax was way too high, so you didn't have a lot of people come in and bid or make application for the first round of casino licenses. That's how you ended up with two in Joliet. It makes no sense to have two in Joliet, but we didn't have many applications that would pass the muster on background checks and all that. So when all was said and done, you had one in Aurora, two in Joliet, one in Alton, one in the East St. Louis area, one in Peoria, one over in the Quad Cities, and one up in Jo Daviess. If I remember right, they were all issued at that time. The only one that exists today that wasn't issued was Elgin. I think we had one more to do later, which was another story. But these really went kind of begging. It wasn't everybody and their cousin trying to get one of these licenses, like occurred later, because the experts didn't think they would make money.

DePue: What was the rationale initially for why Chicago would not have one?

Edgar: Mayor Daley, who was then state's attorney, insisted that Cook County be excluded from having casino gambling. That's the only reason. He did not want the criminal elements, the problems. The legislature said, hey, if you don't want it, fine. Some Chicago legislators—I don't remember the whole story, because I was secretary of state when this all happened—wanted to get it, but Daley, even though he was state's attorney, still had a lot of say. That's the reason they were excluded. Everybody else wanted it in their areas, but they [Chicago] didn't want it, and that's fine. Sometimes he would forget that later on. (DePue laughs) But that's the reason they don't have them. If it hadn't have been for his opposition, they would have been included and I'm sure they would have got something in that first round.

DePue: I know the lottery existed at that time, because you selected Desiree Rogers to run the state lottery. It couldn't have been that old at the time. What was your view on the efficacy of the lottery system?[39]

Edgar: The lottery had been at least ten years old. I didn't get too excited one way or the other. I didn't have a problem with it. To me it was different than casino gambling. I thought you couldn't rely on it. We did know, by the time I became governor, this was not a constant source of revenue; you have to keep tinkering with it just to keep where you are. But again, no way you were going to replace it. My philosophy on the lottery and particularly on—not that I really was that opposed to it to start

[38] After Iowa legalized riverboat gambling in 1989, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Riverboat Gambling Act in 1990, which legalized riverboat gambling on all waters within Illinois, except Lake Michigan. Unlike Iowa, Illinois law did not limit bets or losses. *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 1990.

[39] State legislators approved the Illinois lottery in 1973, and it began operation the following year. *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 1973.

with—casino gaming: I was not for, but it's on the books, so we have to make it work. We tried to maximize the return to the state. So I did not have a problem that we issued the licenses, it's just that I would not have signed the bill if I'd have been governor originally; but now we have it and we'll administer it. Once we started receiving revenue, we knew we couldn't get along without the revenue. The lottery and the boats brought in several hundred million dollars—now, not as much money as some people think. It's not the silver bullet to solve all the state's financial problems, but once you have it coming in, it's awful hard to make it up if you lost it.

DePue: The third area is the racing industry, which had been around in the state for a long, long time. Your view on that?

Edgar: Probably inconsistent—

DePue: You've got a personal interest there.

Edgar: Well, at that point, not as much, but I always liked horse racing.[40] I thought it was fine. Also, by my first year as governor, I knew there were a lot of jobs involved in horse racing—many more jobs than casino or lottery—I mean, tens of thousands of more jobs, actually. I viewed it as a good economic tool in the state. To be truthful, we don't get much money in state racing tax anymore. Compared to what you get from lottery or you get from casinos, it's not as significant, but what is significant is the economic jobs it creates. It creates jobs for people that are often hard to find jobs for, and it's jobs all over the state. Particularly in downstate Illinois, particularly in southern Illinois, it's important to many folks. It supplements their income. A lot of people involved in racing—whether you're a trainer or you grow a special kind of hay, or maybe you help somebody out—usually have another job, but in most cases those jobs don't pay all that much. This supplements their income and enables them to have a much higher standard of living. In the Chicago area, you've got a lot of Hispanics who work at the tracks; if they didn't have that job, they'd probably have difficulty finding jobs. You have a lot of other people working at the track. I viewed it as an economic thing, not so much a tax revenue source.

DePue: We're at the tail end of 1991. Maybe it was a little bit of a tougher year for you than you had anticipated, walking into it with the budget crisis. What were the budget numbers looking like at the end of the year?

Edgar: I can't remember specifically, I just know that after we dealt with the budget in August, I felt pretty good. I thought we'd gone through this terrible session and all these problems and had come up with a good solution. Politically, I had been viewed as the winner, so I probably felt a little cocky, too. Then Mother's death happened. Then as we started moving through, it was obvious that this recession

[40] For Edgar's early interest in horse racing, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 70-72.

was not ending, so a lot of our economic forecasts proved not to be accurate.[41] We did not have as much revenue as we hoped. We hoped we would see an improvement that didn't occur. We also continued to see demands on the spending side, particularly Medicaid. So by the end of the year, while I felt pretty good about the year, we began to realize it was going to be bad again.

DePue: Let me just throw out a couple of numbers to put this into perspective. U.S. unemployment in January 1992 was 7.3 percent. The state's unemployment rate for December 1991 was 8.3 percent, so you guys were running significantly higher than the U.S. average.

Edgar: Illinois always for the most part ran higher than the national average. Later on, we were below it and I took credit for that, the rest of my governorship.[42] But historically, if you look, Illinois usually is a little bit above the national average. We definitely were above it here. We had come into the recession later than some states, and now we were in with all feet. I remember Mayor Daley at the time said, "Jobs, jobs, jobs." That's all he said. That was a huge concern out there. As a result we realized that we were going to have a problem with not so much next year's budget yet [FY1993]; we were going to have a problem with this year's budget [FY1992], which we'd fought over and cut, and done all kinds of things; it was obvious at the end of the year we were going to have to go back in and do something else.

DePue: I think it was in the discussion long before this, but certainly Illinois was identified at this time as one of those Rust Belt states that had a heavy dependence on manufacturing. In 1991, the state lost seventeen thousand manufacturing jobs, eleven thousand of those in November alone.

Edgar: Could be. We just knew unemployment was high.

DePue: But that sector was hit especially hard?

Edgar: In'81, you'd started having that concern. That wasn't anything new. I can't remember if there was a certain big company that closed down or something like that. I don't remember that, but we just knew unemployment was high. We really thought Illinois was more diversified than Michigan or Ohio, which is what we always looked at to see how things were; they were in the same boat if not worse in some ways. I think Michigan has a graduated income tax; revenues were down more than ours. But no, it was just unemployment, and then the ramifications on the budget from the recession were a major concern. Economic development—everybody wanted to be out there creating jobs, and I did too, but I was very

[41] See Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, July 29, 2009, 24 and 42-47, on the difficulty of economic modeling during this time period.

[42] In June 1992, the national unemployment rate reached its recession-period peak of 7.8 percent. Illinois' rate stood at 8.1 percent, which represented an improvement from its three-month peak (January-March 1992) of 8.5 percent. In February 1994, the unemployment rate in Illinois dropped below the national rate and remained there until early 1999. Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/lau/#tables.

suspicious about some approaches to job creation; tax incentives and all those things, I wasn't a big fan of. I have to say that at that point, my major concern was still just worrying more about the budget than worrying about the job thing. Later on, end of '92, probably spent more time talking about jobs.

We just recognized that this budget we had sweated blood over and made all these sacrifices, we were going to have to do more of that. One of the dilemmas I think you have anytime you go through a major battle: you feel like you finally succeeded, then they come back and say you got to fight that battle again. Everybody says, ah, we're exhausted; no, no, we can't do this again. I think that was kind of the attitude in the administration, and it was the attitude of the legislature, too. I think everybody just thought, oh, no, not again, because everybody had just exhausted themselves mentally and physically, and politically to some extent. To think we were going to have to go back at it again…

DePue: That's an interesting reflection, because the state has had a huge budget shortfall for the last few years. It seems like the political answer has typically been, let's kick the can down the road. Was that ever an option in your mind?

Edgar: No, no. One of the huge differences from 1991 to 2010 is everybody knew we had a problem; we had to figure it out—the four leaders and the governor. This was not something we could kick down the road, it's just something we had to deal with. Now, we may not have agreed on how we were going to deal with it, but we sat at the table—we did that in August—till we finally resolved it. I don't think anybody ever thought about, we're just going to go home. The Democrats did suggest—I remember Phil Rock came down one time and just said, "You just got to raise taxes." I said, "No, we're not going to do that." But nobody suggested, let's pass a six-month budget and go home. Now, a few years later they did, and that was dead on arrival; that didn't go anyplace. I think everybody just knew. I think the legislators knew they had to do it because the governor said you had to do it. The governor was pretty adamant he was going to veto something that wasn't balanced, and he wasn't going to sign something and say, "We'll come back later and fix it." We were going to veto it that first year. When it came up that fall, late fall—

DePue: Of '91 now.

Edgar: Yes. Actually, it seemed to me at the time—and looking back on it—easier to deal with than I thought it was going to be. I don't know if the legislators were as fatigued as we were, but there was not as much pushback. There was a little more, all right, we got to do something—what do you think we ought to do? A lot more of that attitude. Now, I think one of the things you sent over, the story in the *Tribune* or whatever, implied that this [the shortfall in revenue] was something the legislature figured out. It wasn't. It was something we figured out, but with them.[43] There was constant communication going on. Again, we had our differences, but I

[43] *Chicago Tribune*, December 18, 1991, and the editorial that ran the following day.

don't remember it being as acrimonious as what we went through the previous spring.

DePue: The veto session, that's normally in November?

Edgar: Usually, yes.

DePue: Was there any discussion in the veto session about it?

Edgar: I cannot remember.

DePue: You've expressed before that you don't normally put a lot of emphasis on the State of the State—

Edgar: But that State of the State, I think we had to make it into how do we handle that budget.

DePue: That was the focus.

Edgar: Yes. But long before that, we had already had discussions with the legislative leaders on this; I can't remember exactly when that occurred. By the time I did that speech, I think everyone was pretty much on the same page.

DePue: That's January 1992.

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: Here are the specifics—you can correct me if I got this wrong. Basically you're saying, for the fiscal year that we're in—fiscal year 1992—you had to look at another 7 percent in across-the-board cuts, basically another $350 million dollars in cuts. Then, let's take a look at short-term borrowing of a half billion dollars.

Edgar: One of the things that's important there—if you listen to my rhetoric today about the Republican candidate, I don't like the idea of across-the-board cuts.[44] Two reasons we did across-the-board cuts at that point: we had already set priorities in the '92 budget we'd passed in the summer of '91.

DePue: And the priorities, to remind us again?

Edgar: Each area got cut some, and some didn't. Like aid to dependent children didn't get cut as much; we eliminated welfare for able-bodied men and women. My philosophy was you couldn't just go in and say, "We're going to cut across the board." Some programs were more of a priority or more essential than others. You had to be careful in public aid—you cut the dialysis line too far, people were going

[44] Perhaps reflecting Paula Wolff and Joan Walter's experiences on Governor Thompson's program staff, Governor Edgar's administration tried to avoid across-the-board cuts as they wrestled with the huge budget deficit they inherited. See Walters, July 29, 2009, 15-19; Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 11, 2009, 21.

to die because they just wouldn't get dialysis. So we did not cut across the board in the summer. We made massive cuts throughout the budget, but they varied from area to area. We came to this one and we had to do it quickly, so I agreed I'd go along with across-the-board because we'd already set the priorities. If we'd have been starting out a new fiscal year I wouldn't have done across-the-board, but in this case, because we had already spent a lot of time looking at our priorities earlier in that year, I felt much more comfortable with doing across-the-board this time.

The other thing was we needed to move quickly. This wasn't something we could spend six months debating, because the fiscal year would have been over by then. We knew if we didn't move quickly to correct this, there wouldn't be any savings because we would already have spent the money. The feeling was that we had already set the priorities, so you could do the across-the-board with less worry. Also, it was something you could do quickly and get quick agreement on, because everybody—including the Democrats—knew we had to make these cuts. As I said, there just was very little real resistance to make these cuts. Nobody came back and said, let's just put this off or let's raise our revenue estimates, as they used to do in the old days.

Now, the borrowing: one of the dilemmas we have in state government is revenue doesn't come in evenly; it comes in at some points of the year more than it does other points of the year. This is a period around Christmas when it's a low point of revenues coming in, so what we were borrowing was short-term. We were borrowing within the fiscal year. We wouldn't borrow long-term. There were attempts to do that, and we said, "We won't do that, but we will borrow short-term, within the fiscal year," realizing that there's a point in the fiscal year where this money will come in, but we needed to spend it now. That's the kind of borrowing that was done. It wasn't borrowing from one fiscal year to the other, which some wanted us to do; we said no. All that's doing is putting off the problem, and we didn't want to deal with that. But this money—as I said—we would get it later in the fiscal year.

DePue: But part of the problem that you inherited, certainly in this kind of an economic environment, is the backlog of bills that the state was carrying.

Edgar: Yes. To be very truthful, we did not deal with that very well at this point because we just didn't have the money. In fact, I'm sure in '91 the backlog probably got worse as we went along. In '92, I know it was a big problem, probably to at least the year '93. But we got pretty good at managing the backlog. I will say there was thought given to the backlog; you knew who you were sticking and who you couldn't afford to stiff. Like certain hospitals in Chicago—Mt. Sinai, which is 100 percent Medicaid—you had to get them paid on time because if you didn't pay them, they'd have to close their doors.[45] Suburban hospitals, maybe they had 10 percent Medicaid. They probably didn't get paid for six or seven months, even

[45] Arnie Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009, 39-40.

longer. Now, I'm not sure when we—but this got it. Paying the needy first is pretty well accepted.

The nursing homes didn't get paid. It was interesting to deal with—and this probably occurred more in '92—but I remember talking to the nursing homes one time. I said, "Maybe we ought to just hold your rates down, but we can pay you on time." They said, "No, no, no, don't do that. We'd much rather have you pay us late but at a higher rate, because we can go to the banks and get borrowed money based off our rates. If you lower our rates, we can't get as much money." It was interesting—they'd really rather keep the rates up, even if it meant they had to wait six or eight months to get paid. That was important for their whole collateral, because a lot of these nursing homes were pretty heavily leveraged.

That got to be a major concern and a major issue. At the end of '91, I don't think it had surfaced quite as much as it did later, at least in the health care area. One area we began to notice that was a real problem was the state's self-insured. The year before—the year we had gone until July'91—they had run out of money.

DePue: The state's self-insured. Can you explain that a little bit?

Edgar: The state's self-insured means, we don't have an insurance company. We pay it out of our state treasury. We have somebody that administers it, but it comes from the state treasury, feeling that since we're big enough, it saves us money. Some big corporations do that too.

DePue: I'm still unsure, though: who is it that's receiving the payments for what?

Edgar: Doctors, hospitals. But they get paid by the state. When you were putting the budget together, you looked at revenues and expenditures. One of the tricks they used in the past was, ah, lottery can bring in more than that; ah, we're not going to spend that much money on our state health insurance program, we'll lower down how much we're going to spend. When the legislature met in 1990, they had brought down the health care estimates, what it was going to cost for state employees, below what I think had been originally recommended; they also had upped the lottery.

Well, the lottery didn't go up, and that health expense sure didn't come down—if anything, it went up—so we ran out of money. The state stopped paying vendors; doctors, hospitals, and druggists started saying, "Hey, you're a state worker. We want cash; we want some money down. We know we'll never get paid." And all of a sudden, state employees started having a real—you know, they were getting worried: are they going to get health care coverage? So that began to surface. That's the one I remember surfacing first. In Springfield, since you have so many state employees, it really impacts a drugstore or a doctor, because they've got so much money they're getting from the state. Now, you add on top of that Medicaid and these other things—and often they do. The state worker thing I remember because there were doctors and pharmacists who said state employees have to pay cash. They'd have signs saying that. So that's when I remember first

realizing this payment cycle thing was a real problem. As we went into '92, I remember spending a lot of time listening to various groups come in and talk about how they hadn't been paid; it was a very embarrassing thing for me. We had these obligations, we owed this money, but we weren't paying folks. To me that was perhaps one of the most unpleasant or difficult parts of this whole thing for me. My mother had taught me, you pay your bills on time; you don't be a deadbeat. The state was the biggest deadbeat there was.

DePue: I was waiting for you to mention your mother (laughs) in that process.

Edgar: Yes. That really bothered me, but there wasn't really much we could do about it. If we sped up the payment cycle, we were going to have to cut programs, and we'd cut programs about as much as we could; so you just try to do this balancing act. But later in '92, for fiscal year '93, we had to look at that, and there were some things that came up on hospitals and nursing homes at that time.

DePue: While we're talking about this part of the budgeting process, I'm listening to you and thinking to myself, gosh, the treasurer at the time is Pat Quinn, the comptroller is Dawn Clark Netsch. Let's start with Netsch. What were you hearing from her as far as what's the challenge?

Edgar: Netsch was very, very conscientious, and she was very concerned. She often wanted to come and just sit down with me and work this out; I really didn't want to sit down and work it out with her. I kept sending her to talk to Joan Walters, and those are two strong-willed women, who had… (laughter) I thought that was only appropriate; I didn't want to get in the middle of that. But I have to say that Netsch, while she had very strong convictions and sometimes wanted to go in a different direction, for the most part was very easy to work with. I always knew she was sincere. Of course, she was sitting there, couldn't pay the bills, and people were calling her. But she had an appreciation for the overall problem and a concern about that.

Now, I say that, but I didn't have to deal with her every day (laughs) like Joan or some of the other people did. I'm sure they might have remembered it as a little less pleasant than I do. Oh, occasionally she'd take a shot at me maybe in the media on something, but for the most part I just don't remember having a negative feel toward her. I had a much more negative feeling toward the secretary of state, George Ryan, who thought we had all the money in the world; he just kept spending and spending, and he wouldn't cut his budget. He was much more difficult.

DePue: When you made the 7 percent cut, did that include the—

Edgar: Everybody.

DePue: —constitutional officers as well?

Edgar: Yes. But again, that 7 percent was minor compared to what we'd done in the spring. It was a fine-tuning to try to deal with this. I don't think it was as difficult as—I

know the cuts weren't, and getting the cuts made, and getting everybody to agree, or at least enough agree to pass it—it wasn't a third of the difficulty as we had in the summer.

DePue: But didn't that translate into a lot of these directors having to make staff cuts?

Edgar: Yes, you had to make cuts, and they had to make… But they'd already done that before. They had made some pretty significant… The difficulty with this cut was we were halfway through the fiscal year. Particularly with education and schools, we'd finally told them in August, "This is what you're going to get." They go spend based off that. Now we come back four months later and say, "Nope, you're not really going to have that much."

That was not well received, needless to say. I think everybody knew we didn't have an alternative, because nobody thought of kicking the can down the street or playing the funny financing they've done the last ten years in Illinois, meaning the last ten years from 2000 to 2010. I think everybody knew that wasn't going to happen; they knew it wasn't going to happen mainly because I wasn't going to do it. I didn't have to go through that kind of battle with them again, like, we're going to test him. Is he really going to stick with this, or can we roll him—like they thought they could that first session. I'm not sure they agreed with me, they just figured, he's so stubborn, he's not going to, so we might as well just go ahead and deal with this now. Again, state government was tough on them, but I think everybody knew we didn't have a choice; we'd been through this exercise, and we'd figure out a way to get through. The entities that receive the big dollars from the state, like health care or education—I think they did not like this, but there wasn't a choice.

Also, remember, in health care, we were limited on what we could do in Medicaid because the federal government dictated, so we had to cut other places more. Now, saying all this, it's not like this went down real well, because we did make more cuts, like in public aid.

DePue: And this is something the legislature has to approve, I would think.

Edgar: Yes, they had to approve this budget. When I gave that speech—I don't know if we're waiting to go into that—that was probably one of the most exciting days I had (laughs) in my life.

DePue: You're talking about the State of the State speech in January.

Edgar: Yes. Everybody knew this was another one of those bad-news speeches. The press had a lot of it already—these cuts we're going to have to make. Of course, the Democrats had pretty well signed on, but it was my proposal. (laughter) They were grudgingly going along.

DePue: Happy to hang this one around your neck and call it the Edgar budget?

Edgar: Right. They were going to be supportive, but not any more outwardly than they had to. So the day came for the speech. We had a lot of groups come down, particularly from Chicago, welfare groups, protesting the cuts because they knew more cuts were coming. So the capitol building and the grounds were packed with these people coming down, protesting. I went in to make my speech and there was a lot of tension, because legislators knew, oh, shoot, we're going to have to make these tough decisions again and do these unpleasant things. The chambers were packed—people on the floor that probably shouldn't have been there. That's all right.

I'm into my speech; there's not a whole lot of applause for my speech when I'm announcing these cuts, but it's okay. All of a sudden, I see this person coming down the aisle, rushing me, yelling at me some profanities. "I'm going to…" It was on the Democratic side. A couple of state troopers who were there—I don't know if they were there for me or one of the other—caught this person right before they got to me on the podium. I remember I just kind of paused a minute and looked. They dragged her away—it turned out to be a woman—and I just went back to the speech.[46]

DePue: Made no comment.

Edgar: Made no comment that I remember. I'm pretty sure I didn't make any comment. I didn't really have to. I mean, that just had never happened before. Years ago when I was in the Senate, we had had welfare groups down, and somebody got over in the Senate, thinking it was the House chamber, and waved their finger at Paul Simon, thinking it was Ralph Smith; he just had the wrong chamber, the wrong person. (DePue laughs) But it wasn't as electric as this was, though. That was pretty electric that day, but this was—everybody kind of, Whoa. But I went back to my speech, and I think I got applause then. I just remember that I knew I didn't have to make a comment; I knew I was all right. People understood that these were tough things; you had to do it. That really probably helped me in some way.

We did raise the question, how did that person get on the floor? That person was not supposed to be on the floor, and that person was over by the Speaker's desk. Madigan swore he… She had got on because she'd gotten permission from the Democrats to be on the floor. So we kind of gave him a hard time about trying to have me upstaged during my speech, which he always denied having anything to do with. I think the Democrats were a little embarrassed, too, because it had come from their side. But we got through the speech.

That same day—now this hits home. I think one of the most important things that happened in those first few days when I was governor—we got a dog. I can't remember if we talked about Emy. I can't believe—

DePue: I think we have.

[46] Mark Boozell also remembered this incident. Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, September 9, 2009, 19-20.

Edgar: —I let you get through (laughs) without me talking about my dogs.[47]

DePue: Remind us again what "Emy" stands for.

Edgar: Executive Mansion, Youngest, E-m-y. Elizabeth had coined that. I think this was the time. We had demonstrators all around the mansion. They were protesting, marching around the mansion. I remember Emy came inside, and she had lipstick all around her neck.

DePue: What breed of dog is Emy, again?

Edgar: She's half-golden and half-Samoyed, so she's very white, with long hair. What we finally decided had happened was one of the demonstrators had grabbed her and put lipstick around her neck. That really concerned us because she's part of the family. I remember that's one of the few times I got on the troopers. I just said, "Guys, you ought to have better surveillance on what's going on out there. It's obvious somebody reached through the fence and grabbed her, because nobody inside the mansion put lipstick around her neck." She was always very hostile to certain people after that. When we saw her she was fine, but it probably had scared her, because she had been used to running around the mansion grounds, and everybody was friendly to her.

That just underscored how there was a lot of unhappiness with some of the things we were doing. It impacted people. I never felt too much at risk. For the most part, I thought my family was pretty—of course, my kids were gone. Elizabeth was going to school in Ohio; Brad was already out and working in Washington, DC. I never had any sense of worrying about danger that much because I figured I had the troopers, but that was one time I just thought, this is serious what we're doing, and people do get very emotional about it. But when they got my dog—people who know me, (laughs) when I think about my dog—I was really upset, and I did chew on the troopers a little bit about that. Are the cameras working? You guys are looking? What are you doing? Why… We had surveillance around, so they should have seen anything going on, on the grounds.

DePue: Was there much of a legislative battle about passing this mid-year budget?

Edgar: Not that I remember. It seemed like we met with the leaders, we went back and forth and exchanged ideas and thoughts, but **nothing** like what we'd gone through that summer. To me, this was much easier. I think we all compromised. It wasn't like I'm here and they're there, and they had to come here. We kind of talked to each other, so we wanted to all come down on where we were pretty close, because nobody wanted to go through a protracted budget battle. We couldn't afford it. We had to act quickly to save what money we could save in the budget, because we knew if we didn't, next year was going to be even **more** impossible. So I think that encouraged everybody to say, let's work this out. Again, I think we worked it out relatively close. Now, that's not to say that there weren't stories leaked, or there

[47] Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 50-51, and November 17, 2009, 47-48.

wasn't somebody grousing about this and that, or we didn't have some problems. My recollection was it was much easier than I thought it was going to be, based off what we'd gone through before. It proved to be much easier than the next year's budget turned out to be.

My experience in Springfield up to the time I left as governor, going back when I was an intern—there were many times when there were emergencies. The general assembly and the governor would come together, put aside a lot of the partisan and personal bickering, and do what had to be done. I think this was one of those times. I thought we did it in the summer; it just took a while (laughs) to get there. We bickered a little longer than maybe we had to, but still, we all knew we had to solve that problem. This time, we all knew we had to solve it and we all knew we had to solve it quickly. It just couldn't be protracted. Madigan and Rock both seemed to me much more willing, okay, let's get it done. I think Rock particularly—he had been kind of left out in the spring. That was really Madigan and I kind of going at it, and I think he was frustrated. This time, as I remember, he was much more aggressive, and let's get this resolved and let's do this.

DePue: Those two gentlemen are more important because they represent the majorities in the state house.

Edgar: They control both chambers. The Republicans—I don't remember them being all that difficult. It was always difficult to some extent, but it wasn't any more difficult than usual. I do remember I thought the Democrats—everybody just kind of said, all right, we got to do this, we got to do that. Now, it's going to be my cuts, (DePue laughs) but that's fine. The necessary votes would be there; they were, and in a relatively quick time we got this resolved.

DePue: And even this early in the calendar year, January'92, everybody is recognizing it is an election year.

Edgar: It is, yes. It wasn't my election year, so I (laughter) didn't worry about it quite as much. I think they also just understood, we have to do this quickly because if we don't, the problems are going to be even worse, and it's going to be worse in an election year. The other thing they gave me, too—I just said, "It's going to take me a little longer to get my budget." They did extend the time for my budget speech, because this just threw us back; we had to start from ground zero again because of all these additional cuts we had to deal with.

DePue: You mean you presented your budget speech later in the calendar year?

Edgar: Yes. I can't remember how much later, but it was a little later.

DePue: April seventh is when you gave that.

Edgar: I don't think it was as early as it is now, but it usually was sometime in the middle of March, or maybe even closer to the first part of March.

DePue: Governor, if you don't mind, I would like to turn our attention now. You've already said the fiscal year 1993 budget is going to be a tough budget given the state of the economy and what you've already done. This is going to be a long conversation, so I'll give you the opportunity here. Do you want to have a short session here, where we take a break right now, do lunch—

Edgar: No, let's go ahead and do this. Of all the things, this is the most unpleasant year I had as governor, so let's get through it.

DePue: I did want to take some more time to go through this in detail and read a lot of this information in. I'll let you react to some of this stuff.

Edgar: You can read it, but a lot of this information, you got from the *Tribune.* As I said, the *Tribune* was not that accurate, I didn't think, at that period of time.

DePue: I trust that you'll tell us when it's inaccurate.

Edgar: Yes. Well, I don't remember it all that well. That's one of the things I tell people: That's the trouble. We got to write things down because later on all they ever use is what's written, and so much of our emphasis is on the electronic media, but they never go back and—not that they get it right.

DePue: Let me just throw this comment in here. We have a young man who's doing a very thorough job of editing all of this as well, and I can guarantee that when we get into this, he'll verify the facts and go to a variety of sources to make sure that we'll get some of this stuff correct.

Edgar: Well, I don't want to belabor this, but it's not the facts; it's kind of the tone and how you… I don't know how you check that. I mean, all you've got is the written word. Most of our memories are pretty fuzzy at this point. I'm not being critical. I just know in that period, my remembrance, I never thought the *Tribune* had it that accurate, what was really going on.

DePue: How about the other newspapers?

Edgar: I thought the Springfield paper was a little better, though not necessarily. There was a lot of stuff going on that never got to—

DePue: That would be the *State Journal-Register*.

Edgar: —the front. Charlie Wheeler was a better person on the budget, though he was pretty critical of us this year [1992] too. He's the one who at the end used a sophomoric phrase. I didn't know what it meant. I still have to have him explain that to me every so often.[48]

[48] Check SJR for Wheeler quote Edgar is talking about.

DePue: Charlie Wheeler is one of the people we do want to sit down and interview towards the end of this whole project. April 7, 1992: this is the day that you unveiled the 1993 fiscal year budget of 28.6 billion, which is an increase of 3.7 percent over fiscal year '92. You projected a gain of 300 million from economic growth—again, hard economic times, but most economists at that time were expecting an uptick. Eliminating income tax surcharge sharing with municipalities, which would give you another $237 million dollars to work with. $559 million dollars in cuts to public aid programs, including $76 million from cutting off general assistance to able-bodied adults, which you've already talked about a little bit. Called for user fees on alcohol and some tobacco products.

Edgar: That really stirred them up. (laughter) That stirred them up more than the other stuff.

DePue: The fees would triple alcohol taxes to $83 million. Then 1,100 more layoffs [of state workers], with 750 of those coming from Public Aid. So I'll turn it over to you.

Edgar: It was another grim budget. Things had not gotten better. We were still dealing with an economy that was probably continuing to get worse.

DePue: Are you looking for the names there, Governor?

Edgar: No, I don't know if the cartoon's in here. There's a great cartoon.

DePue: I might have them here. Here's the selection of cartoons.

Edgar: My son's favorite cartoon, of my whole time being governor.

DePue: I'm pretty sure it's in there.

Edgar: Yes. That one.

DePue: Let me just read that in.

Edgar: Because we're going to talk about that. You were talking about what are the big controversies in that…

DePue: Here we've got a couple—

Edgar: Thugs.

DePue: Thugs, either union thugs or—

Edgar: Or Mafia.

DePue: —gangsters—

Edgar: Yes, gangsters.

DePue: —standing on the dock, obviously with some Chicago skyscrapers in the back, holding up signs, "Edgar unfair." Got a Daley here, "We want our surcharge." They're throwing you into Lake Michigan, with your feet firmly embedded in some concrete, and your comment is, "That's the last time I ask Chicago politicians to choose between kids and concrete."

Edgar: Yes. That was my line in the speech when I wanted to take the money from local government. That was the money from the surtax that continued to be temporary. We had made some of it permanent; that was a compromise between Madigan and myself.

DePue: For the '92 budget year.

Edgar: Yes. In the summer of '91, we finally broke the impasse over do you make the surtax permanent or do you just make it temporary again so we have to come back? I did not want to make it temporary. He did, because he wanted people to come back to him. (laughs) The compromise was we made education permanent, but we made local government temporary because he wanted Mayor Daley to have to come back; he was mad at Daley because he thought Daley was trying to go behind his back. But we also got a little bit of the money that went to local government; a little bit of that money went to the state that year. My argument was, and it was even more true when we did this budget, local government is using this money mainly for capital projects—cement. We need it to pay for ongoing things like schools. "So what's more important, kids or cement?" That was my line. Then they came up with that cartoon. My son, who was about twenty-three at the time, got a copy of that; he's always said that's his favorite recollection of my eight years as governor, that cartoon.

But I just said that we're in a position where the state needs this money a lot more than the local governments. Local government is not wasting it, but they're using it on things that are nice but not necessities, necessarily, whereas we need them for necessities. And this is a state income tax. This isn't local property tax or anything like that. So I made that proposal, and of course Mayor Daley just went nuts; so did a lot of the other mayors.

DePue: What was the reaction from Pate Philip and the suburban Republicans?

Edgar: They weren't excited, because they had their mayors beating them up too, but they're not quite as tied to their mayors as the Democrats are, particularly to the one mayor [Daley]. There wasn't a lot of excitement for that. I have to say, what stirred

them up more was my liquor tax. They went nuts over that. Phil Rock particularly, who had always kind of championed that industry—he was very much opposed to that, and—

DePue: Was that more of a Democratic response?

Edgar: Yes, I think the liquor industry lobbyists had a lot of influence with the Democrats. I also don't think the Republicans were real excited. They didn't like taxes either. Who really went nuts was Anheuser-Busch, because if I remember right, we had a big increase in the beer tax, which had not been increased in a long time.

DePue: How about the tobacco lobby?

Edgar: Oh, yes, they didn't like that either. But the liquor—

DePue: But more so than the alcohol?

Edgar: I think the tax on liquor was a lot more. Beer had not been increased in years in Illinois, and we were really low.

DePue: Apparently you're proposing a tripling of the tax on alcohol at the time.

Edgar: I'm not sure that was the same for both beer and spirits. I can't remember. It seemed like there was a differential. Spirits had been taxed along the way; beer had almost never been taxed. Anheuser-Busch didn't like me anyway. They'd tried to beat me in the '90 election, when they were paying back for all those signs that got picked up at the bars.[49] I just remember, I probably got as much controversy on that as in the… Also, the local government thing is what I was going to cut—

DePue: More so than layoffs, more so than significant cuts to public aid.

Edgar: Oh, yes. Yes, this affects special interest groups that have influence with the legislators. Yes, they went nuts. It's not to say we didn't have groups complain about these other things, but I'm just saying I caught a lot more flak from the legislators and opposition from the leaders, and got nowhere, if I remember right, on most of those tax increases.

DePue: May 11, there were a large number of protestors chanting outside your second-floor capitol office. You weren't in town that day, perhaps. But was there a lot of energy—

Edgar: That happened all the time. That wasn't anything new. It wasn't a big deal. I had groups from the year before through this year. They were always down there protesting and complaining about me making cuts. That didn't figure into a whole lot of this. It might have made great copy, but that probably didn't influence three

[49] Edgar is referring to the practice of some tavern owners, still angry over his push to strengthen drunk driving laws, to pay bounties for Edgar campaign signs. Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, August 18, 2009, 29; Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, June 15, 2009, 36, and September 2, 2009, 4.

votes in the final say of… Now, you had certain legislators who were sympathetic to what those people were saying, and they weren't going to be there, but with the leaders and the governor, that didn't carry. If I'd have let that stuff bother me, we would have kicked the can (laughs) down the street a long time earlier.

DePue: You were already a year into having people call you things like Edgar Scissorhands and "Governor No."

Edgar: Yes. I didn't know what Scissorhands was because I didn't see the movie, and "Governor No," I took as a compliment, so it didn't bother me that much. What bothered me was that people said I couldn't get things done. I thought as governor I had to move the ball along. What worried me is if we'd come to a stalemate. So those other things, yes. You don't like groups [protesting] out there, but I'd been out among the folks enough to know that most people understood the cuts we were making. Just as long as they thought they were fair and I'd thought them through. I understood that nobody likes to lose a program. I also knew there were groups that were pretty good at getting people on buses and sending them down there; they didn't have anything else to do. So again, all those crowds out there didn't influence me that much. It made the Capitol pretty noisy and congested, but that wasn't that much of a concern to me as just trying to get something agreed to and worked out.

That session was extremely difficult in the end because the problems continued to get worse. There weren't as many options as there had been the year before. We'd found all the low-hanging fruit, and now we had to make up things. This local government thing—they were just beside themselves. The liquor tax—that was obvious that wasn't going to go anyplace, so that took out revenue.

DePue: It means you've got to find more cuts.

Edgar: You have to find more cuts or you have to find other sources of revenue. In the end, we found another source of revenue. It was extremely controversial, and to this day it's probably one that I can't say I'm proud of, but we put the bed tax on. That was the **big** issue in that session, the bed tax on hospitals and nursing homes; that allowed us to get some more federal money.

DePue: Since you brought it up, why don't you go into a little bit more detail explaining what exactly the bed tax was.

Edgar: If I can remember it all. It was kind of complicated. Part of the problem was Medicaid—that was what was killing this budget. Hospitals and nursing homes were concerned: they couldn't afford their rates being cut; they weren't getting paid quick enough and things. The nursing home people were more accepting of it than the hospitals—I'll tell you why in a minute. You would put a tax on these institutions for each—I can't remember if it was non-Medicaid or Medicaid patients, or maybe everybody, and non-Medicaid had to pay the tax as well as Medicaid. They [the institutions] would pay the tax to the state, then we would give back so much in federal dollars. They'd get more money back, but it still was a tax

that they had. Non-Medicaid people had to pay that tax, but they didn't get any money back. So it was a real difficult thing to do for suburban hospitals and for a lot of nursing homes that had non-Medicaid patients.[50]

I remember a lady in Charleston whose daughter I had gone to high school with—very nice people. Her husband had been a university professor. He had got Alzheimer's and was in a nursing home; it was costing a lot of money. This tax came along; they didn't get any benefit from this, but they had to pay the tax. And just how terrible of a burden this was on them. I really felt bad, but it was one of those things where it's 70 percent better and 30 percent terrible; she was in the 30 percent, unfortunately. The tax that went on these beds enabled us to get more federal dollars—because they matched this money; that brought in twice as much as the tax was—and that enabled us to kind of get over this hump. That was a huge, controversial thing. I think we had to come back in a couple special [sessions] during that period, to get the legislature to do that. That was probably the biggest battle I remember that session.

The other issue on the budget that I remember being a real problem was Democrats said, "We can cut, too, so we're going to cut your budget." Well, they cut it in the wrong places. They cut Children and Family Services. I remember I kept telling them, "If you cut here, you're going to have to come back in the fall, and we're going to have to put this money back because we've got a federal judge telling us what we can do in Children and Family Services. You just can't cut there." "We don't care, we can cut." This was right before all the problems with Children and Family Services in Illinois, and throughout the nation, became real prevalent, with a lot of publicity on it. They thought they could cut here, and we just kept saying, you can't. You're going to create some real serious problems on dealing with children; also, we're going to run afoul of this federal judge who's telling us we can't do that.[51]

Now mixed into all of this—you have to understand the dynamics—it wasn't just the budget; something called the third airport was in this session, too. That impacted my Republicans.

DePue: The third airport we're talking about is the third major airport for Chicago. So you had Midway, which is small—

Edgar: And O'Hare.

DePue: —and O'Hare, which is huge.

[50] One of the innovations developed by the Edgar administration to bolster Medicaid funding was the Hospital Assessment Program. Kanter, December 29, 2009, 37-41; Kirk Dillard, interview by Mark DePue, November 9, 2009, 30-31; Edgar, November 17, 2009, 43-44.

[51] In August 1990, DCFS head Jess McDonald started talks with the various groups that had filed lawsuits against DCFS, seeking to consolidate and settle the suits out of court through a consent decree. The ACLU's suit, filed in 1988, was the most broad ranging, and it was finally settled in August 1991, when U.S. District Judge John Grady gave preliminary approval to the 69-page consent decree that outlined a comprehensive reform of DCFS. *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1990 and August 30, 1991. Kanter, December 29, 2009, 48-49.

Edgar: But you needed expansion. People around O'Hare did not want to expand O'Hare. This was something Pate Philip was very in lockstep with—Lee Daniels to a lesser extent, but both of those guys, because they came from the district that was around O'Hare. Jim Thompson had set up a commission years before to come up with a recommendation about a third airport. The commission was getting ready to come up with a recommendation. At the last minute, Daley came in with a proposal to put one on the South Side of Chicago. He didn't want to lose the airport and have it go out someplace else. Peotone, and that area out there, was probably where they were going to recommend for that third airport. He'd always been against it, but he came and said, "Build it here, in the Lake Calumet area." It was the South Side of Chicago; it was pretty much factories. There were a few homes, but it was a pretty desolate area. His proposal was to build the airport there.

I was trying to get along with the mayor. He had votes on the commission; I had votes on the commission. I said, if he'll go along, we need a third airport. I don't really care where it is that much. If that's what he wants to do and that gets him on board, I might be willing to do that. But there were also some things I wanted. I wanted an airport authority. I knew the suburban guys weren't going to like that, because they didn't think it could be built there; they thought this was just a façade to do something that wasn't going to happen, and that Chicago really wanted to expand O'Hare. So I came back and said, "I'll go with your site, even though there's opposition, but I want to create an airport authority for the whole region, of which both suburban and city people will have a say." I modeled it after the RTA agreement that I had been involved in as a staffer, which said to get any meaningful things done, you have to have an extraordinary majority.

DePue: Not just the Chicago Transit Authority, but something for the entire region.

Edgar: The RTA. It got created back when I worked for Bob Blair, and I had worked on that.[52] In fact, it's still in force today. It's the only regional thing that's ever happened up there. There's always this suspicion between the city and the suburbs, but I wanted the suburban folks to have some input—not control, but input—on what happened at O'Hare. I thought that was reasonable.

At the same time, I wanted to try to go along with the mayor and build the airport he could live with. Now, his proposal would have had to close down Midway, which needless to say caused another problem internally in the Democratic Party. This airport almost overlapped into Gary—trying to get the Indiana support on this too, because it's kind of a regional airport—but the air patterns were such that you'd have to close down Midway if you built this. But that was his proposal. So the two of us worked out an agreement; we met quietly, worked for several weeks, and we announced it.

[52] Regional Transit Authority. For the political considerations behind the RTA's creation in 1974, in which Edgar played a role as chief of staff for Speaker W. Robert Blair, see Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 28, 2009, 74-78.

We announced it in Chicago. The mayor's talking about it; then I got up and said, "I think this is good for the economic well-being," blah-blah-blah. I said, "The other thing, too: for the first time, suburbanites will have some input on what happens on airports in Chicago, which I think is right." And I remember his chief of staff or chief attorney looked at mine and said, "That's not right. What's he talking about?" Arnie Kanter said, "Yes, it is right," because this guy had been involved in the final drafting of the proposal. He said, "It is right. That's what the governor insisted on, that you had this—"

DePue: Now, who is saying it is right?

Edgar: This is my guy, my attorney, talking to Daley's attorney, who had not been involved in the actual bill draft; some other people from his office had been. He said, "What? Daley gave that away?" (laughs) So what I got was basically: I'd name the suburbanites, I would appoint them, and the mayor would name his. There'd be enough suburbanites there that you'd have to get at least one of those suburbanites to agree with a budget or anything you were going to do at the airports, how you spent money. That's the same thing we did in the RTA, and that's how we had that.

Pate and his people were opposed to it; they were convinced it would never be built there because it was environmentally unsound. Now, I did have my secretary of transportation tell me, "You'll never build that. You'll never get that approved; there's too many environmental problems."[53] I said, "That's where the mayor wants it. I'm willing to go along with him on this. We'll see." But to create this authority and do all this, we had to get this authority passed by the general assembly. The Republicans refused to go along, because these people said it'll never be built. I said, "Do you understand? You approve this and you now have veto on what happens at O'Hare." They never could get that through their head.

DePue: They could then block the expansion of O'Hare.

Edgar: They could block it, yes. Well, the argument was, you have this third airport; you don't need to expand O'Hare as much. You're going to have to do some things; you don't have to do as much. Their argument was, you never will build this. This will never fly, and that's why Daley proposed it, so you'll have to expand O'Hare just all over. This doesn't provide the third airport. My argument was, we'll let the environmentalists and the lawyers fight that out, but at least in the meantime you now have input on what happens at O'Hare, which you've complained about for years. Even if the airport wasn't built, this authority took effect. That's what I always wanted to get at.

The stories I heard back later from Democrats, who always said—they would always deny this if they were ever asked publicly—that Daley just got raked over the coals when people realized what he'd agreed to. The airlines said, "You're

[53] Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 112-113. For discussion of the airport site negotiations more generally, see Brown, 109-119, and Kanter, December 29, 2009, 49-56.

going to let Pate Philip control O'Hare Airport?" (DePue laughs) Now, I was going to make the appointments, and I was going to be very careful on who I named. A lot of people on City Hall said, "You've given away the crown jewel—O'Hare." I think Daley then began to have second thoughts. But in the meantime, the tension in the legislature—the biggest and most tense thing was this third airport; it wasn't the budget as much. This really got to the Republican leaders; they were beside themselves. So it made it difficult, particularly dealing with Pate on anything that session, because all he cared about was this airport thing, and we were on opposite sides.

DePue: Can I ask a couple quick questions on the airport?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: I know that O'Hare Airport generates a huge amount of revenue for the city of Chicago. If they were to find that third airport location, Peotone, wherever—

Edgar: They'd lose that.

DePue: They wouldn't be getting that revenue?

Edgar: No. Not unless—maybe if you had an authority, they might get some. It's also the contracts. It's also all the leverage you have with that airport.

DePue: The other question is Meigs Field. Did that enter into the equation at this time?

Edgar: I had a meeting with Bill Daley on this, early on. We'd kind of reached this agreement—we create this authority, we get some input for the suburbanites, we go along with his proposal, I'll get my votes on the commission to vote for it. At the end I said, "Let's talk about Meigs Airfield," and he said, "Oh, no, don't talk to me about Meigs. You got to talk to my brother. I don't want to. He's adamant on that." I said, "That's crazy."

DePue: Adamant in terms of closing it down.

Edgar: Closing down. He said, "You got to talk to him. I can't negotiate (laughs) on Meigs Airfield." So it never was part of this, *per se,* no—not like George Ryan made it later, when he did expansion. I had never really believed Daley would be that foolish to close Meigs Airfield, because that made no sense, but of course he later proved me wrong. (DePue laughs) My major thing was to get this authority, so I didn't push it. We just kind of dropped it, and I hoped Meigs wouldn't come up again for many years.

But the other thing that Daley ran into trouble with, besides the guys who thought he'd given away the crown jewel: the people around Midway were incensed that he was going to have to close down Midway. In fact, they told me he went out and made a speech and got booed in that area.

DePue: He wasn't necessarily accustomed to that?

Edgar: No, he wasn't. That's pretty close to his bailiwick. It's Madigan's ward, but it's still…

So Republicans weren't for it—at least Pate was adamantly against it. The bill came up in the House first; Daniels really was not that opposed. He had to act like he was opposed, but he spent a lot of time downtown and had a lot of pressure on him from business guys: "You got to do something about O'Hare and you got to do something about a third airport." All the business guys were for this. This would solve the problem about crowded skies. And there were a lot of jobs. Building this airport was huge; labor and everybody was on board. So Daniels quietly took the pressure off some Republicans, and we could get them to vote for the airport. He opposed it—he got up and made a speech against it—but he wasn't going to tell all his members that if you vote for this you're *persona non grata* in our caucus, like Pate did.

I found out later, Madigan told me they were shocked when the bill passed the House—because they had to put their votes on it because Daley was for it. But they really weren't for it anymore, because Daley had gotten cold feet after he realized he'd given me this authority thing, and also the Midway thing—this was their base, and these people were really unhappy. We did call it three times in the House before finally we got to vote. We finally got the votes and passed it. Madigan told me later, they were just dumbfounded that we had the votes, that we got Republicans to vote for it and it passed, because he thought it'd die there, and they could blame me for it.

So then it goes to the Senate. You have to understand, this is happening throughout the session, and this is like the closing days of the session—

DePue: So we're into May and June [1992] now.

Edgar: Yes, and we're still dealing with the budget, but this is the overriding issue in that session, as far as me dealing with the Republicans. So it undercut my ability to hold the Republicans, particularly the Senate Republicans, in line on the budget. This comes to a vote in the Senate. I think I'm able to peel off about three or four Republicans, but Pate makes it, this is all I care about; anybody that votes for this is sticking it to me, blah-blah-blah. I think we lose on the first vote by one or two votes. Eh, it took us three votes in the House. We came closer in the first vote than I thought we would. That happens. Daley quickly calls a press conference and says, "It's dead. The third airport's dead. We got to move on; it's just dead." Well, he was looking for (laughs) a way to get out of this.

Again, I was told this by a very prominent Democrat who always said he would deny it; he's on the second floor, and he's probably the most reliable guy I dealt with on the Democratic side. He came down and said, "Daley was sure hoping… He didn't want this to pass. That's why." I had said, "Why'd he do this

press conference so quickly?" Both the Democratic leaders told me he didn't want it anymore, but he didn't want to be the guy to pull the plug, because obviously everybody wanted a third airport. But he was just dumbfounded when you passed it out of the House. So the first chance he had… (laughter) It made no sense, because everybody knew this was just postponed consideration, which meant we'd bring it back. That wasn't uncommon, to bring a bill back two or three times, a controversial bill, before you passed it. He pulled the plug and just said, "Well, it's dead. Edgar couldn't get the Republicans, and I'm off this now." And it died.

And of course Pate wasn't talking to me; he was just furious with me. I was trying to talk to him about the budget, and he wouldn't talk to me. In the meantime, he made a deal with the Democrats on the budget. He went along with their cuts. So I got left hanging out on the budget.

DePue: That might explain a couple of things here. I want to get back to the budget now if we can.

Edgar: But to understand the budget this session, you got to understand the third airport. Then the other issue was this bed tax; that was very important in this, too. But all of that was intertwined with the budget. The airport particularly made it much more difficult for me on the budget.

DePue: You already discussed this a little bit, but I wanted to show you this chart. This is a brochure I got from the Illinois Tax Foundation.

Edgar: This one?

DePue: This one, yeah. You look at the lines on that, and the thing that stands out is, what happened to Medicaid payments? It's happening exactly the timeframe we're talking about: '90, '91, '92, '93. The line goes straight up on that. What was going on, in terms of federal Medicaid policy, that caused that?

Edgar: We talked about it, I think with the '91, because that's really when it hit, the year before. The federal government had passed several what we call unfunded mandates, saying that you had to provide this and that service and Medicaid. They paid their 50 percent, but they didn't pay our 50 percent; that meant our 50 percent was a lot more than it used to be. That's what was sending that up.

DePue: So they expanded those who were covered by Medicaid?

Edgar: They expanded the benefits as well as maybe who was covered. Also, you had a recession. Just by the nature of it, people on welfare are covered by Medicaid. Well, more people were on welfare because they were unemployed. So you had those two things coming together right then. Health care cost just in general was going up. We were finding more things we could do to help people, but they were all expensive. Everybody had to have this and that, the newest equipment, and they had to pay for it some way. They raised the Medicaid fees; we couldn't control fees. That was this

Boren amendment thing that I think we talked about.[54] Probably most every other state showed the same thing with Medicaid. It hurt us more because we only got a 50 percent match. A state like Ohio or Michigan—they maybe are getting 60 percent on the dollar or 55 percent on the dollar. Well, that's a lot of money. For Illinois, it was particularly difficult because we were getting the least amount of federal reimbursement, of any state.

DePue: What was the reimbursement rate based on?

Edgar: Based off of wealth of a state; Illinois was viewed as one of the wealthy states—per-capita income, we were in the top five—so we did not get as much. Who did the best? The Southern states. When was this put in? Back when all the committee chairmen in the Congress were southerners who'd been there for thirty years, and seniority got them the chairmanships.

DePue: Southern Democrats who had been there for their whole life.

Edgar: Yes, exactly. Midwesterners hadn't been there very long. The Medicaid thing was what continued to exasperate the budget. There's little we could do in Medicaid, so we found other areas. The big problem I had with the budget that the Democrats and the Senate Republicans had agreed to was they cut into Children and Family Services. Other than that, we were going back and forth; we could have probably lived with it, but that was the biggest problem I had with it.

DePue: May 20, Madigan schedules a vote on your income tax surcharge and the user fee proposals. This is in the House, obviously—the vote is zero to seventy against eliminating the surcharge revenues. All forty-six Republicans voted "present." Now, is this part of this discussion with the airports as well?

Edgar: A little bit. They weren't quite as hostile. Daniels wasn't quite as hostile, but they didn't want to vote for it and make all their mayors mad, and they knew it wasn't going to pass on the surtax.

DePue: When you initially proposed this in April, did you think it would have nearly that much resistance?

Edgar: I knew there was going to be resistance. I just didn't know if these guys really wanted to give the locals that money, which meant they had to make more cuts themselves, or if they might want to keep some of that money and use it themselves and not have to take all the heat that they were going to have to take to make the cuts they were going to have to make.

[54] Pair of changes to the Medicaid Act, which Congress passed in 1980 and 1982 and named for Sen. David L. Boren (D-Oklahoma). The Boren Amendment was repealed in 1997. Malcolm J. Harkins III, "Be Careful What You Ask For: The Repeal of the Boren Amendment and Continuing Federal Responsibility to Assure That State Medicaid Programs Pay for Cost Effective Quality Nursing Facility Care," *Journal of Health Care Law & Policy* 4 (2001), 168-70. Edgar, November 17, 2009, 32.

DePue: Your comment before—the cartoon and the cement—was that this was for…

Edgar: To me it was a no-brainer. Yes, it's nice to give local government money to build parks and things they were doing, but it's more important that we provide adequate money for education and some of these other programs. Legislators should be rational people and understand that. But it didn't happen.

DePue: But it sounds like county chairs and mayors are saying, no, we're going to have to make cuts ourselves if we don't get this money.

Edgar: They weren't going to make cuts, they just weren't going to spend the… Now, some local governments had made the mistake of putting it into their ongoing expenditures. They had been told when it first passed, "This isn't permanent." Most of them were using it for capital projects, one-time expenditures. My feeling was it would be pretty easy for them to do that.

DePue: But zero to seventy, with all the Republicans sitting on the side and just voting present—that's got to be something of a blow to you in terms of your political clout.

Edgar: No; it was an embarrassing thing, there's no doubt about it. But on taxes, nobody sticks their necks out on a tax unless they think it's really going to pass.

DePue: Let's get into June. Now we're getting more serious about, okay, we're getting close to the deadline; we've got to have some kind of a budget. Was this a supermajority yet, or that happens in July?

Edgar: No, it's still July 1.

DePue: So June 11, you hold a closed-door session with the Senate Republican caucus and kind of get down to brass tacks. You remember anything about that particular session?

Edgar: No, it was always just—

DePue: That's an ongoing process?

Edgar: Usually a waste of time to go talk to the Senate Republican caucus, but you often had to because Pate wouldn't talk to them. He'd come down and agree to something, then he'd call back and say, "I can't get my guys to go along." The only caucus I used to have to do that with. They'd sit there and complain about, I didn't know what I was doing—this and that. It was one of those things you had to do, but it was not something I looked forward to.

DePue: And what was different about being with Philip as a person, as an individual, versus Daniels?

Edgar: If Lee said, "We'll do it," he went and got his guys to do it. Pate often would say, "We'll do it"—in fact, a lot of times it'd be his idea—he'd go up, and he'd have trouble with his members. He didn't want to force them to do it, so I'd have to go up and talk to them; he'd sit over in the corner like he didn't know anything I was talking about.

DePue: Was that a function of his personality or a function of the dynamics in the Senate?

Edgar: I think his personality a little bit. If it was something he really felt strongly on, like the third airport, he'd just beat them up; but a budget or something he didn't care about, if they had some problems, he didn't want to take the heat. I would have to go do that. I didn't do it a lot, but I'd go up there. They'd just want to sit there and vent and tell me I didn't know what I was doing.

I'll never forget: we had some of these young senators—there were about five of them—and they thought they kind of knew how do to all this stuff, and they used to rant and rave at me. One of them was Chris Lauzen, who ran in 1998 for state comptroller. I didn't support him in the primary because he'd been a pain; all these guys had been a pain. He won the primary; he ran in the general election, and he lost. I had just left the governorship. He called me, and I wouldn't take his call. Finally, I got a call from Carter Hendren. He said, "Take Lauzen's call. You want to take his call." I said, "He probably just wants money or something like that." "No, no, take his call."

So I took his call and he said, "Governor, I'm calling to tell you I want to apologize." I said, "Apologize? What?" He said, "You were right and we were wrong. When you used to come to our caucus and we'd give you a hard time about things, you'd say, 'You guys don't understand the state. It's not like your district. You got to be a little more balanced.' When I ran statewide I realized you were right, and we didn't know what we were talking about. I just want to apologize for…" (laughs) I was dumbfounded because he kind of goes off on tangents sometimes. They didn't realize that then. I don't know how many of the rest of them—that ever ran statewide—figured that out. It was just a very difficult thing to do. You never got anything from it; you just had to do it. You didn't usually persuade anybody, because they'd sit there and kind of rant and rave at you. So I might have gone to that caucus, probably did, and I'm sure I didn't get anything from them.

DePue: It was a week later, June 17, when the House votes down a moderate GOP budget and passes Madigan's version of the budget, which passes by a minimum of sixty votes and cuts an additional $372 million dollars beyond what you had proposed.

Edgar: A lot of that was in Children and Family Services. The problem with his cuts, we said, was you can't do them. You can make a case—though we thought they were cutting caseworkers way too low in Children and Family Services—but there's some things you can't do here because we got federal court orders. I said, "We'll be back here in veto session," and we were. We had to put the money back in, which

never got a whole lot of press after they beat me up about how that session went. But in the end, they were proven wrong. The House Republicans weren't in on this deal quite yet; it was the Senate Republicans in this deal. The House Republicans were a little less into the deal. I think eventually they went along, but Daniels hadn't quite signed on. Of course, the airport didn't bother him as much as it did Pate.

DePue: June 30, the House votes against your plan of taxing medical service providers to raise $735 million. June 30, of course, the clock's ticking.

Edgar: Yes, no budget.

DePue: No budget. So the fiscal year starts the next day.

Edgar: Another year, yes.

DePue: Now the math in the legislature changes as well. How does that change the battle when you go into supermajority?

Edgar: It changes it. You got to have the Republicans. But in this case, it didn't help me all that much.

DePue: In other words, to pass a budget with a majority in each house, you're going to have to have Republicans participate.

Edgar: Yes, because the Democrats didn't have three fifths in either chamber. The same thing that had happened the year before, but this time… On the budget itself, the Senate Democrats were a problem. On the bed tax, the House Republicans were the problem, and now they've got to be part of the solution.

DePue: Are these two separate bills going through the legislature?

Edgar: Yes, they're separate. These cuts that Madigan is talking about are one issue; the other issue is on this Medicaid bed tax. They're not completely separate, but they're different dynamics on both of them.

DePue: Different votes.

Edgar: Different votes, yes. Also, you don't just vote one vote on the budget in total; you got different parts of it. But the problem on the bed tax: Pate was not as opposed to it as Lee was. Lee was opposed to it. He was very close to his hospital; I think he might have been on the board, or I don't know if he's a lawyer for his hospital in DuPage County. One of the hospitals there, he was very close to. They were adamantly opposed to this because they didn't have that many Medicaid patients, but they were going to have a bed tax. They didn't want this. A lot of the suburban hospitals were like that. So Lee, who was very close to this hospital, was opposed to it; he didn't want to do this. He got his guys to be opposed to it, and that's why the bed tax thing didn't happen at that point.

The rest of the budget, I knew, was screwed up. I was mad, and I found out from Phil Rock that Pate had made a deal with him and that was happening, but I was more worried… We had to have the bed tax just to have the necessary money to keep the thing afloat. That's why I spent most of my time in the extra hours beating on Lee and trying to get the bed tax thing done, putting pressure on him. In fact, I think they might have gone home for a day or two. The nursing homes really wanted this; they just kind of dumped on him and his members. Again, it was trying to bring pressure and get something resolved. We'd already lost on the airport and Daley had pulled the plug, so that was gone. And the budget, I don't know if I already knew; I was going to get taken to the cleaners on that. The more important part was to get this bed tax so we had the money to deal with Medicaid and do all the things we had to do. If we hadn't have gotten that, there was no way we were having any kind of budget resolution.

DePue: July 2, the House agreed to the budget with the Medicaid assessment plan. July 8, you came back and announced that whatever had passed in the budget, you were going to do a line-item veto and take thirty million dollars out of it.

Edgar: Could be. I don't remember [the amount], either.

DePue: And to free up twenty million to fund DCFS, which you've talked about quite a bit. One other question: was there any discussion at the time about delaying state pension payments?

Edgar: I don't think we were making real good state pension payments then. We didn't do it till '94, when we finally put a plan in place that really…

DePue: To fix that particular problem?

Edgar: To fix it. I don't know, because Thompson had never made the payments very well. That's kind of what started all this.

DePue: Can you flesh that one out a little bit for us, then?

Edgar: [Robert] Mandeville, his budget chief—his philosophy always was: as long as we pay out what we got to pay out, that's all we need to worry about; we don't need to stockpile money in the pension funds. I can't remember if we ever put any money in the pension funds until we finally did that thing in '94. We didn't have any money to speak of, so I'm not sure why we would have. We probably took care of payouts. I'm not sure what we did on paying in what we should have paid in, because that had always been kind of the practice up till '94, when Madigan and I worked out an agreement to start paying some money into the pension stuff.

DePue: We can hold on—

Edgar: It could have been, and it could have been said that—but it wouldn't have been a shock to anybody if we hadn't, because it just hadn't been done for years, to speak of.

DePue: It wasn't too many days after you made the line-item veto that Netsch was coming out with some criticisms about the budget estimates your office was making in the first place, saying that you were being too optimistic on it. Is that just par for the course in the political arena?

Edgar: A little bit. And she might have thought that. (laughs) It's interesting, since I don't know why she'd have been… She'd been saying that at the end of July?

DePue: Yeah, July 14.

Edgar: The budget's already done.

DePue: Yes, exactly.

Edgar: I don't know why she didn't say it during the session. (laughter) So it might have been. Of course, she might have been worried, too, that she's going to get stuck holding the bag, trying to make payments. That session did not end as harmoniously as the one before. I said, "I'll sign the budget with some changes, but we're going to be back here in the veto session; you're going to have to redo this budget, because it isn't going to work." And that's what happened. They did have to come back, and we had to put money back in for Children and Family Services. So I don't know. It was just a very, very unpleasant session. I always thought part of the reason was that it ended so well for me the first time; I think the Democrats (laughs) were determined they weren't going to let me off. Now, if the airport issue hadn't come up, it might have been different. That's what a lot of the media, a lot of folks focused on—that I wasn't able to get the votes on the airport, and I had failed on that.

DePue: It sounds like it also really strained the relationship that you had with the four leaders and the dynamics in the legislature.

Edgar: Particularly with Pate. One of the things the Democrats knew if they could go around me and get the Republicans to go with them, fine; they don't have to deal with me. That's kind of what happened in this case, the Senate Republicans in particular, on the budget part. As I said, the House went along at the end, but the instigator was the Senate Republicans. I think a lot of it was Pate was mad at me over the third airport. And he wanted to go home. The other thing you always got to remember: a lot of this stuff has personalities and personality quirks. Pate Philip wanted to leave July 1 so he could go up to Wisconsin and go fishing. That's all he cared about. Everybody knew Pate wanted to leave. Pate always wanted to leave early, so he would start making any deals he could to get out of there. So that was part of the dynamics you had to worry about. Madigan would just sit back, and he knew Pate would want to go home. (background noise)

DePue: One other question then, Governor, before we move on from the budget. You said, after the battle in '91 for the fiscal year '92 budget, you walked away feeling like you won that battle. Would you say the same thing in '92?

Edgar: Oh, no. No, no. I walked away just glad that they had left town. (DePue laughs) That's the only consolation—to get these guys out of town. But we knew that we had not gotten a budget that worked, and we knew we were going to have to come back and do some changes so we could get through the fiscal year. Also, by the time they came back, Children and Family Services was getting a lot more visibility; it was really hard for them to justify the cuts they had made that cut caseworkers.

DePue: Was it just dealing with the cuts, or were there a couple incidents? I know later on there were some incidents.

Edgar: I don't think the incidents occurred till later on, but there was getting to be just much more visibility on that issue. I just remember when they came back, they restored the money rather quietly. We didn't have another battle with them to get the money put back in.

DePue: As I recall, the federal courts had made a decision on DCFS that dealt with case loads that the individuals could be dealing with. Was that part of the strain, then?

Edgar: We were under this—I forget the exact legal term, but we had a federal judge basically looking over our shoulder.

DePue: A court order?

Edgar: A court order, but kind of second-guess everything we did. One of the agreements we had with the ACLU—that doesn't seem like it'd be the ACLU, but one of those do-good groups you deal with—we'd worked out an agreement for a certain ratio of caseworkers to clients. I don't know exactly when that happened, but that all figured into all this.

DePue: I think that was right at the tail end of the Thompson administration, so that's something—

Edgar: No, Thompson didn't agree to anything. We inherited the mess. The courts were in there. We had to work it out with them on the settlement because we got the mess; we did not have any (DePue laughs) resolution. That's one of the biggest messes we got. In the end, we got high marks from the groups—we did work it out with them—but it cost money. As I said, these cuts that Madigan's people made were undermining that. I can't remember all the things that happened, but I just remember when we came back into veto session, very quietly the money was put back in. We didn't have a big, protracted battle with them; they just kind of knew they had to do it. But that session was, as I said, the most difficult session I had in my eight years, by far. We had a lot of things going on, the airport being probably the most disruptive of them. Now, eventually I got—maybe it was the next session—some of that local government surtax.

DePue: Yeah, that was the following year.

Edgar: Mayor Daley got a new state police lab for the Chicago police, too. That was part (coughs) of what we gave him to get him to… I sat down with the Municipal League and we made peace, and we loved each other from then on—not Daley and I, but the Municipal League and I. That was the next year, I guess, when that all happened. But that was a tough year, a very difficult year. Of course, that was an election year, the presidential election, which was a terrible year. (laughs) And also—let's see, when was it? September '92 I ended up in the hospital with my [first]heart attack.

DePue: Yeah, that's what I wanted to talk about after we get back from lunch.

Edgar: Fine, yes. But I give a little credit to this session, probably, on that, too. (laughter) No, this session was probably good for me, because the first session everything kind of fell in my lap, and I kind of thought I was a little better than maybe I was. This was a very humbling session in many ways. Outside of the cuts they did in Children and Family Services, I think we held our own in at least getting the bed tax and getting through another year on the Medicaid problems. We did not make the problem that we had walked into worse. I'm not sure we made it a lot better that year, but that was one of those years where if you could just not make it worse, you probably were ahead of the ballgame. Again, it wasn't unique to Illinois. I'd go into the governors' meetings and everybody was kind of going through this.

DePue: In fact, here's a very short quote that you had at the time you're signing your amendatory veto, that the budget was filled with "fake cuts and other gimmicks."

Edgar: Yes. That's a good reason why a legislature should never do budgets. (laughs)

DePue: (laughs) You've done a great job of laying this out and providing a lot of background to it. We're not going to spend nearly as much time on future budget battles, a much smaller percentage.

Edgar: Actually, there was no other future—a little bit of '94.

DePue: The fiscal year '94 budget or the fight in '94?

Edgar: No, fiscal'95. That probably is the only other one of significance, because we did go overtime. Madigan—it was an election year—and I'm sure that's why he was doing it. In the end, he kind of caved on that one because he was getting beat up really bad.

DePue: Can you talk for just a minute or two about EarnFare, because that was something that started on July 1, 1992, during this timeframe. Is that something we want to hold off until later?

Edgar: Was EarnFare what we did…

DePue: The voluntary work program and welfare reform effort.

Edgar: Yes, yes. So many names I can't… EarnFare came out of the compromise I had with mainly the black legislators, when we did away with welfare for able-bodied men and women in '91. That was, at least in the short term, we thought, very successful. We did not have the riots that they thought we'd have when we did away with the welfare program, but we did have a lot of folks come in and get jobs.

DePue: We did discuss that last time we met.

Edgar: I'm sure we did. Did I tell the story of my groundbreaking on the South Side of Chicago?[55]

DePue: Yeah, where you had the gentleman come up and approach you?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: Yes, we got that.

Edgar: You got the whole spiel, then, on that. When did you say that took effect?

DePue: The date I have is July 1, 1992, so that would have been legislation that had passed before this budget fight.

Edgar: Yes, but I'm wondering why it… I guess maybe when we ended up passing it in '91, there was a delay with some time on that, because why wouldn't that have been in the fiscal year of '92 budget? I don't know.

DePue: Just to put the machinery together to make it work?

Edgar: Might have been. Yes, could have been. That could have been. I don't remember that part of it, but that could have been. I could see why it wouldn't be July 1. I could see January 1, maybe, because we were so late on the budget.

DePue: Is it time to take a quick break, then?

Edgar: Yes. I got here late, so I'm probably not noticing it's time to eat, as you are.

DePue: Okay.

(end of interview 13)

Interview with Jim Edgar
ISG-A-L-2009-019.14
Interview # 14: April 23, 2010
Interviewer: Mark DePue

[55] Edgar, November 17, 2009, 64-67.

DePue: We are back after a quick lunch break. This is Mark DePue, director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. It's still the twenty-third of April, and we're in the governor's office. Good afternoon, Governor Edgar.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: We spent a lot of time this morning talking about the budget fight, especially the fight for the fiscal year '93 budget, which obviously happened in the early part of 1992. Nineteen ninety-two, though, is an election year as well, and I always like to get your perceptions on politics during that timeframe. So let's start with your '90 election; you still had a little bit of a campaign debt that you had to take care of, did you not?

Edgar: I might have. When you win, it's only a cash flow problem; it's only a debt when you lose. I had lost one time and had a debt, and it's a debt. Contrary to what they had told me prior to the election—that they had left a little money in the kitty so we could pay bills afterwards—they had actually overspent. We had a half million–dollar debt, maybe. But as I said, it's only a cash flow problem, because once you win the election, you don't usually have trouble paying off a reasonable debt. I don't remember any great problems in raising enough money to pay the debt off.

DePue: I've had the opportunity to start interviewing Gene Reineke. I talked with him about that, because he was basically put in charge as executive director of Citizens for Edgar to, in part, surrender the debt. At the same time, as I understand, he was executive director of the Illinois Republican State Central Committee.

Edgar: Yes. He was the state party's executive director.

DePue: Before we get into the politics of that year, tell us a little bit about the dynamics of having this political function, this institution, and being governor at the same time.

Edgar: Historically in Illinois, more so the Republican governor than a Democratic governor, the governor is really the head of the Republican Party. We don't have a mayor of Chicago; we don't have anybody equivalent to a governor, and there isn't a strong party organization, per se, statewide, so the power really resides in elected officials. In the case of the governor, that's the most powerful political position, and by default, whether you want it or not, you're the head of the Republican Party. When I became governor, I had my hands full, particularly just dealing with the

state's financial problems, but being governor, too. I really did not want to have to spend a lot of time worrying about the state party.

The state party had a chairman. At that time it was Al Jordan, from McHenry County. He was an old-line county chairman, had been state party chairman probably for about four years. Nice guy. He was very supportive of whatever I wanted. He was of the old school that way. But I really did not want to spend a lot of my time, because I only had so much time, on party matters; I relegated that to people on my staff who were more the political kind of guys. You mentioned Gene Reineke. He was somebody held over from the Thompson administration, but he had done politics stuff as well as policy stuff. Later became my chief of staff. Very, very bright person. About this time, we hired Andy Foster, who had been an aide to President Bush. In the White House, they actually have a political office; he was in the political office, and I think his area was the Midwest. I had dealt with him in the campaign and later in the White House. He wanted to leave the White House and come back to the Midwest, so I hired him. So those two guys were two of my primary political guys. Carter Hendren had gone back to the state Senate, so these were two guys that I relied on. Andy was in the governor's staff, and then Gene was at state central.[56]

DePue: So he's paid off of…

Edgar: I think he was probably jointly paid. State central didn't have much money; we probably had to go out and raise the money to pay him. But he was at state central. There is a building, an office, and we needed somebody over there. It made a lot of sense to have your person there; it just saved a lot of aggravation. You had the House and the Senate campaign committees; they were in charge and responsible for the legislative candidates. Congressional was kind of haphazard; maybe somebody from Washington worried about that. That year we also had a senatorial race, I believe. That was the year Alan Dixon was up for reelection, which we thought was a shoe-in. Of course, he lost the primary. Rich Williamson was the Republican candidate. Carol Moseley Braun was the Democratic candidate; she had won that primary.

DePue: What was it that led to her victory in the primary against a sitting senator?

Edgar: I think the guy's name was Hofeld that was running against him; he had a lot of money and spent a lot of money trashing Alan Dixon on TV commercials and everything. At that same time, you had the—

DePue: Justice Thomas and Anita Hill.

[56] Mark Boozell suggests that some continued to perceive Carter Hendren as working to advance Edgar's interests; Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, August 18, 2009, 59-60. At the very least, his presence helped Edgar's relationship with Republican leader Pate Philip; Kirk Dillard, interview by Mark DePue, November 9, 2009, 36. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

Edgar: —Justice Thomas confirmation hearing. He was on the Judiciary Committee and voted for Thomas, which caused him a lot of anguish, particularly with women, in the Democratic Party. But still, he would have not lost that primary if Hofeld hadn't spent a lot of money—I mean, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars—on TV commercials, very negative ads, just attacking Alan Dixon. Then on top of that, you had the Thomas hearing; he voted for that confirmation, which I have to say I didn't think would beat him. I really thought Alan Dixon would win the primary—maybe get beat up a little bit, but he'd win it and win the general election.[57]

Lo and behold they split the votes evenly, and Carol Moseley Braun had 32, 31, 30 percent or something; she had 1 percent more than the other two, and she got the nomination. There's a tendency when there's one African-American candidate in the Democratic primary: they'll get the African-American vote, and that's about 30 percent of the primary vote—maybe not quite that much, but something like that. Then you had a lot of the women who were unhappy with Dixon over the Supreme Court vote, so they voted for her. But a week before the election, nobody dreamed she had a chance. She didn't have much of a campaign, no money, really wasn't viewed as that strong a candidate—and she won.

So when she won, it left the impression that, gee, we have a chance of winning this U.S. Senate seat. Rich Williamson, a lawyer from Chicago who had never run for office before—he had worked in the Reagan White House—wasn't a natural candidate, I think. I don't think campaigning out there and doing all those things were necessarily something that came natural to him. But there was a possibility we could win that seat.

Then you, of course, also had the presidential race. Illinois used to be the bellwether state in the country; not only how Illinois went, but almost the percentage Illinois went was how the presidential race usually went. When that really began to change was in 1988. George Bush won the presidency over Mike Dukakis pretty handily. He barely, barely carried Illinois. In fact, I think it was the next morning before we knew for sure he had carried Illinois; most people had given up—he was going to lose Illinois. So while they voted for Bush, that was probably the first time the percentage in Illinois had been so different than the national percentage, which indicated things were moving more Democratic in Illinois.

I know in the '90 election we were very concerned. We were particularly concerned—Bush had done poorly in the western part of the state among rural voters because there was a problem in agriculture at that time; we were very worried that maybe we would… Now, in the end we spent a lot of time in western Illinois, northwestern Illinois where Bush had done terrible—we did fine. But it was

[57] A nationally polarizing debate followed Anita Hill's accusation before the Senate Judiciary Committee that Clarence Thomas had sexually harassed her during the time she worked for him at the Department of Education and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The committee did not believe her allegations and voted to confirm Thomas as a Supreme Court justice. The Senate soon followed, in a tight 52-48 vote.

obvious that nationally things weren't as Republican as they had been. Then in '92, Bush originally had a very large lead after the war in the Middle East had gone so well and quickly, and it looked like nobody could touch him. But then you began to have problems on the economy, and he had problems on domestic—

DePue: "Read my lips: no new taxes."

Edgar: Yes. I'm sure we talked about that at some point.[58] At the '88 convention, I remember sitting there on the front row when he made that comment, and just said, "Oh, I wish he hadn't have said that; that's going to come back to haunt you." It came back to haunt him, and almost beat me in the gubernatorial race, when he did go back on that. He'd done that, but then after Desert Storm, his numbers shot up, so you thought, maybe that's behind him. But later that came up in the campaign time and time again.

DePue: In the primary election, he had a significant challenger in the name of Pat Buchanan.

Edgar: I wouldn't call it significant; he had a challenger. There never was any doubt. I don't think it was that close, but you did have Buchanan out attacking him. It always hurts an incumbent to have somebody in your own primary attack you. I don't think it hurts as much when you're not the incumbent, when you're all kind of starting out, but I think it hurts an incumbent. It probably did hurt him, and probably [caused] misgivings among some conservative Republicans or independent Republicans or people who voted for him before. But I never thought that Buchanan was going to come close to beating him anyplace. It was just, when somebody from your own party attacks you, it gives the Democrats a little more ammunition for the fall.

DePue: Would it be fair to say that you saw yourself as much more a Bush Republican than a Reagan Republican or a Buchanan Republican?

Edgar: Yes, yes. (laughs) I think anybody who follows Illinois politics would say definitely true. I was more in the moderate wing, and I had been close to the Bush family. Barbara Bush and I were good friends from doing things on literacy.[59] Vice President Bush—we'd always been very cordial when he'd come into the state. Usually he would spend time with the governor, Jim Thompson, but he'd spend a lot of time with me, and some of his people, I knew well.

DePue: What'd you think of Bush's chances, let's say in August, right before you had gone to the convention?

Edgar: We knew it was going to be tight. I remember telling my wife in 1980, when we were at a governor's conference in Denver and Bill Clinton was walking by, I pointed, and I said, "He's going to be a possible presidential candidate. That's the

[58] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 2, 2009, 33-35.
[59] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 22, 2009, 22, 27-30.

person who I think, of the Democrats from my generation, will probably be one of their candidates for president."

DePue: What struck you about him then?

Edgar: He was young—he was my age—and he was governor, and pretty articulate. I mean, he was from Arkansas, but he already had a good following among the Eastern establishment types. Now, he lost that election—that's the year he lost—but he came back two years later, and he survived that. Then he did that terrible speech at the Democratic convention, but he survived that. He'd proven in the primary that he could survive scandals and things. He was the comeback kid. He just, I thought, had the right combination and could be a very serious candidate.

I remember at the governors' conference in 1991 in Seattle—it was about the only time that Bill Clinton was at the NGA when I was there, because he was governor, but he was getting ready to run for president. I remember talking to Tom Hardy, who then was the political writer for the *Chicago Tribune.* Clinton was making noise about—and I just said I thought Clinton would be the toughest Democrat against President Bush. That was after Desert Storm. We were at the governors' conference about the time that they tried to topple Gorbachev in the Soviet Union.[60] But I just said that he might be a tougher candidate than people realize. I didn't necessarily think he was going to win, but I did think that he would be the right kind of candidate against President Bush—a governor, not from Washington, young…

DePue: I want to take you quickly back to the primary season. Isn't this the year that Paul Simon made a run for president as well?

Edgar: No. I think that was before.

DePue: Was that back in '88?

Edgar: He might have been '88. I don't remember. I thought you meant '92.

DePue: Yeah, that's what I was thinking, that he would have been making his run in '92.

Edgar: I don't think he did. He might have made one in '88. I don't think he did in '92. I thought there was one he didn't do. Because he quit in '96.[61]

DePue: What'd you think of his chances in his run?

Edgar: I've always had a great deal of respect for Paul Simon; later on we became very close when we both had left office. We had a respect—we always talked—and a very cordial relationship. I never thought he could get the nomination to be

[60] Communist Party hardliners attempted a coup in August 1991.
[61] Paul Simon ran for president in 1988 and won the Illinois Democratic primary. It was his only victory, as Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis won the nomination. Simon did not seek the presidency in 1992.

president. I just didn't think that was going to happen. So I never thought that was a real possibility.

DePue: Again, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but part of what you saw as a strength for Clinton, as an opponent for the Republicans, was that he was a moderate Democrat, that he positioned himself that way?

Edgar: Right, he positioned himself… I always thought a southern Democrat does well. Jimmy Carter had done well. I still think that's a pretty good strategy for the Democrats. Now, Al Gore didn't do quite well enough, but he hadn't spent a whole lot of time in Tennessee, I don't think, (DePue laughs) before he ran for president.

DePue: He lost his own state.

Edgar: Yes. I think the fact that you can carry some of the southern states, but you're acceptable to the Eastern—I shouldn't use the word "establishment"; that's really a Republican term. That he would do fine in those other areas, but he could hold onto some of the South—I just thought that was part of it. I thought it was more, too, just his style—a younger, fresh approach—that might work. I thought a U.S. senator would probably be the last thing I would do. I've always thought that, though. Particularly when you're running against an incumbent president, it's better to run from the outside. But for a whole host of reasons, I thought he—I didn't think at that point he'd beat him, but I thought he might be their strongest candidate.

DePue: Did you attend the Republican National Convention, which I believe was at the Houston Astrodome that year?

Edgar: I was chairman of the delegation. As governor you chair—

DePue: Have little choice, huh?

Edgar: Yes. No, you want to [attend], but you're chairman of the delegation. I had attended the two previous conventions as a delegate, but Thompson, of course, was the chair when he was governor. So this time I got to be chairman. In fact, we were the feature story on *Nightline*, I think the second or third night of the convention. They traveled around with me, in our delegation when they had the *Nightline*—because they thought Illinois was going to be one of the pivotal states. So that was a fun thing. Houston was not the most exciting place to be, and it wasn't the most exciting convention. I think there was a lot of concern when we went to the convention. I think President Bush had fallen behind, if I remember right, at that point, and there was a question whether he would be able to pull it out or not. Then you had the Ross Perot thing, which I think definitely hurt President Bush.

So the convention wasn't as happy a convention as the '88 convention had been in New Orleans, but for me, I was a much bigger player. As a governor of one of the major states, I had a major speaking role at the convention. I talked about free trade. I got interviewed by Brokaw and Peter Jennings and Dan Rather; they all

came by to see me and interviewed me. That's pretty heady stuff. I don't know if any of that made TV, because you don't know what they covered.

DePue: Did they do that because they thought that here you are, a major northern industrial state, you're a candidate yourself in the future?

Edgar: No, I think they did it because I was the governor of a major state that was an important state, so they interviewed me for that. I don't think it was so much thinking down the road. Now, it was interesting. I had a group of Texas businessmen that wanted to meet with me when I was down there, to talk to me about running for president. I found out—these guys are some heavy hitters—they didn't like Phil Gramm. They knew Phil Gramm wanted to run for president, and they were trying to figure out some way to stop that. They were looking around, because if Bush gets reelected, that's his last term, he will have been in eight years; they were looking for who's a possibility. How they got my name or why they settled on me, I don't know—and maybe they talked to some others.

I can't remember—I think Gene Reineke and Andy Foster went with me to that meeting, maybe Mark Peterson too. Mark went with me to a lot of the political stuff; he was on the staff at that time. In fact, Mark might have been the guy that dealt with them from my office and set the meeting up. I said, "Tell them I'll talk to them, but I have no plans to run for president." In '92 I was just worried about the state staying solvent, and I'd just had that rough legislative session; I really wasn't thinking about (laughs) anything like that. Plus, I always thought I would have a hard time as a moderate Republican. So I met with them. I told them, "I really don't think that was what I had plans to do; I'm a moderate Republican, and that could be difficult." They said, "No, no, if you'd do it, we'd be interested in talking to you. We'll help you raise money," and all this and that. But it came out that they really did not like Phil Gramm. I said, "Well, my sense is Phil Gramm is not going to be the Republican nominee for president in four years." Of course, in every state people have a tendency to think somebody from their state is a real possibility for the nomination or for president; they thought he might be a possibility, not that they wanted it. We talked for about an hour. I discouraged them; I wasn't interested, and I really thought that they probably were worried about something that wasn't going to happen.

DePue: How much were you getting from your own delegation or from people within Illinois who said, "Governor, you should be thinking about this?"

Edgar: None that I can think of. Not really. People thought, you might be a possibility for vice president. There was talk at that convention about dumping Quayle because they thought he was a drag on the ticket. In fact, I can remember being at the governors' meeting before we went there, in New Jersey, talking with some of the Republican governors about that; one of the possibilities was Colin Powell.

DePue: Colin Powell.

Edgar: That was one of the names being mentioned as a possibility. I thought that'd be pretty good, because this was after Desert Storm. I remember talking to one of the southern governors who was pretty much tied into what was going on. He said, "Oh, that'd be terrible. He could never carry my state." Well, I found out later, he thought he had a possibility, (DePue laughs) and that might have been why it was. The reason I mention that: about that time, Richard Nixon was quoted as saying that if President Bush decided to have somebody else, then he ought to look at some of the governors, and my name was one of three names he mentioned. And the guy that does *Hardball*, Chris Matthews, had mentioned on air that Bush ought to look at some of the governors, particularly some of the moderate ones, and my name was one of two names he mentioned.

So there had been that talk, but nobody seriously thought he was going to dump Quayle. And nobody said, gee, you ought to think about running for president. Now, I had some people, maybe folks in Illinois, but not anybody who viewed it as a serious thing. My main thing was just trying to get back and figure out how we try to carry Illinois for Bush, which was going to be tough. But the convention itself was fine. Houston is kind of spread out. I remember we were all scared it was going to be real humid, and it wasn't; the humidity was low. But other than that, things didn't go well.

One of the huge problems at the convention was that they did have to try to mollify Pat Buchanan and his crowd a little bit, so they let him have primetime speaking. In fact, it was the same night I was the speaker. I spoke before him, then after him was to be Reagan. I was up to give my pitch for free trade and all these things, which Buchanan was probably against, but it was an interesting… I did get mentioned: The *Wall Street Journal* wrote a nice editorial on my speech.[62] I don't know if anybody else saw or paid any attention to my speech.

Speaking at a convention—I did it both times—is a very difficult thing to do because nobody's listening, unless you're maybe the nominee or Sarah Palin or somebody like that. There's this constant murmur going on out there, people moving around, talking to each other. Particularly like a speech I was giving. It was early in the evening. People didn't want to hear about free trade. They were more interested in talking with somebody from another state. But they had a bunch of young college or high school Republicans in front of you to cheer for you. They told you, "Just stare at the camera; don't look at the crowd. You look at the crowd; they're not looking at you. Just look at the camera." The only trouble with the kids—they'd cheer, but they had the wrong spot in the speech where to cheer. So all of a sudden they'd cheer at some point where… But you had to put that all out of your mind and just look at the camera; nobody was paying much attention on the floor, but there was an outside possibility somebody might be watching this on TV and paying attention. At this convention, at least, this speech was still on network television; the next one, I don't know if any of this was on network television.

[62] "Late-Inning Rally?" *Wall Street Journal*, August 19, 1992.

DePue: So this was an evening speech?

Edgar: Yes, this was about 7:30. I think there was another person after me, then Buchanan, and then Reagan. I was one of the warm-up…

DePue: And people would be paying attention to Buchanan and to Reagan.

Edgar: On TV, yes. So I'm looking at the camera, and I'm making my speech and all that, but it was just a very … I remember when I was back in the blue room or whatever you want to call it, waiting to go on. Reagan's people were there—he wasn't there yet—and Buchanan was there. I didn't say a whole lot to him, and I went out. Buchanan, of course, came on, and instead of talking his allotted fifteen minutes, I think he talked half an hour, forty-five minutes. Very negative speech, made everybody in the world mad listening to it. He also pushed Reagan off primetime, because by the time he finally stopped talking—it was well after when he was supposed to—primetime was pretty well used up. Then Reagan came on, and some of the networks cut off halfway through Reagan's speech. But it was more his tone. I just had more people tell me how negative they thought his speech was, and I think that cast a cloud over the convention, which proved to be harmful as we went forward.

DePue: There was a lot in play in that '92 campaign season. You already mentioned you had Ross Perot's insurgency campaign; most people think it pulled a lot more votes away from the Republicans than the Democrats. You had the bad economy. But was Illinois at that time—putting those two things aside—going more blue?[63]

Edgar: Oh, yes, yes.

DePue: And what was the cause of that, do you think?

Edgar: I think two things. One, the Republican Party was moving more to the right—maybe not so much President Bush himself, but just the perception of the party. And Illinois was, I think, changing. If you look at the demographics, and studies have been made, the influx of people coming to Illinois probably tend to be much more Democratic than Republican. I think it probably had started before, but we had missed it because we always had moderate Republicans running for governor. Between Thompson and myself, we had controlled the state in some ways, and we were Republicans. Now, we had a Democratic legislature at the time, which is some indication, though part of that has to do with how the draw goes. I don't know what the congressional split was. We didn't have a Republican senator at that time. So I think there were indications we had already become a blue state; we just didn't realize it because at least gubernatorial, we had been able to hold on, and that is a major factor in how you view a state.

[63] In the 1990s and 2000s, "red state" and "blue state" became a popular shorthand to describe whether a state's voters tended to support Republicans or Democrats.

But there's no doubt that movement—the Republicans going to the right and the state moving a little bit to the left—was occurring; it showed up, definitely, in '92. In fact, I remember when *Nightline* did the thing on us, they had a poll that said Bush was within ten points in Illinois. Ten points is not considered real close, but it's closer than what it had been. We had trouble, though, getting Bush's national campaign to view Illinois as a winnable state, so we didn't get the resources. Well, that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you don't have the resources, you don't have the visibility—it's harder to win the state. I think that Tommy Thompson and John Engler, even, were able to convince them that they had a chance in their state.[64] I don't think in the end they did any better in Michigan than they did in Illinois, but they spent a lot of time in Michigan. Wisconsin was closer, but still, they spent a lot of time and a lot of money. They spent almost no time, except for fundraising, and almost no money in Illinois.

Now, they did come in. Bush had done it for Thompson in '88—one of the first things he did after the nomination was come to the Illinois State Fair in '88. He came again in '92; he was going to fly around the country, and one of the stops was going to be in Springfield, at the state fair. One of the big issues at that time was ethanol, whether or not the federal government would help with ethanol. There was a bill to provide a tax credit. But Bush had always been lukewarm to that. Part of that was his oil background. He was from Texas and had been in the oil business; oil companies didn't necessarily like ethanol. I remember the head of Amoco Oil and I—good friends and a good supporter—agreed to disagree on ethanol. So there was some concern about where Bush was on ethanol. That's all that farmers really wanted to know. It was going to be a predominantly farmer reception for him, because I think it was scheduled on a Sunday. A lot of the people who were going to be there were going to be agriculture.

So I'd told his people, "The president's got to come out for ethanol when he comes to Illinois. If he doesn't, this is going to be a disaster. You got to get him…"—because he hadn't said no; he hadn't said yes. I remember I had left the convention, had come back to the state fair. I was sitting out watching the harness racing; my staff came up and said, "The White House wants to talk to you." They actually said Air Force One, because Bush was flying around the country. So I remember walking up to the top of the grandstand so I could get reception on the cell phone. The president came on the phone and said, "Jim, this is the president. I'm kind of concerned about this ethanol thing. I really don't feel comfortable about that." I said, "Mr. President, to be very candid with you, I think you have to talk about ethanol. That's the major issue here among the agriculture community; this is going to be mainly an agriculture audience you're going to speak to. That's all the press is talking about. I think if you don't address the issue, if you just stay silent on it, it's going to be very damaging." He said "Well, maybe I just shouldn't come; maybe I just ought to cancel." I mean his voice got up; I've been around George Bush a lot then, and before and since, and I've never had him… Later, in the heat of the campaign, he was getting killed—he never got mad. He was a little hot.

[64] Thompson and Engler were the Republican governors of Wisconsin and Michigan.

I'm sitting there thinking, You're just a first-term governor. Be careful. You can't… I just said, "Well, Mr. President, that would be disastrous too, because everybody knows you're coming. If you cancel, I think that will be very, very damaging in Illinois. I think some way you've got to address the ethanol issue because I just think it's going to have to happen for us to be able to have a chance in Illinois." He said, "Let me think about it," and he hung up. Again, this was as heated a conversation I'd ever had with a president, particularly George Bush. So his staff got a hold of me and they said, "We'll figure out something. I said, "How about we get a group of farmers, farm leaders, and have him talk with them about it. They can at least say that they've met with the president and they've talked about it," blah, blah. "Okay."

I think it was Sunday morning. It could have been Saturday, but it was one of those days. He showed up. We had a tent, with some bales of hay for them to sit, and they were going to meet with these guys before we go. We were going to do a parade through the fairgrounds and go to the coliseum and give the speech. He walks in there, didn't have any—but Barbara's with him. He meets those farmers, and she's, of course, her usual very gracious, friendly self, and he's fine. So we have the farmers make the pitch on ethanol. Before he could say anything, she said, "I think it sure makes a lot of sense." (laughter) I thought, Right on—because she's the politician. She said, "I think you got a good point there." And the president—"Well, you know…" and kind of, "Can I think about it?" But she (laughs) just couldn't have been more positive. I thought, boy, I'm glad he brought her, not one of his oil advisers.

So they had a nice conversation. We got done. He did not make a commitment. He said, "I'm going to look at this. I know we need to come up with a position." Then they were all saying, "Hey, we're all for you, Mr. President, but this would sure make it a lot easier." It's the head of the Farm Bureau, and various people there who are basically Republicans. Anyway, she just couldn't have been more positive; I got a kick out of that. I didn't say anything. I introduced the people and turned the meeting over to them. When we got done, we walked through the fairgrounds, and he got a good reception. We went in the coliseum, and he gave his talk. It must have been 120 degrees in that place. He mentioned he had met with the Ag leaders and that they had a good talk about ethanol, he appreciated how important it was, he was going to confer and see if they could resolve this, blah-blah-blah, and got off the hook a little bit. He still hadn't taken a position definitely, but at least we got through the state fair. Everything went fine. The Ag leaders felt good, and the press didn't say he dodged the issue completely. It wasn't a 100 percent positive story, but it was far better than it was going to be.

This was in August. I remember in late September, I got a call that said, "The president wants you to come to the White House; he's going to announce his support of ethanol." I said, "Thank heaven!" (laughs) Ed Madigan was secretary of agriculture. He was a congressman from central Illinois, a good friend of mine, before he became secretary of agriculture. They said, "They want you at the White House with the president when he says this." I said, "Fine. Is Ed Madigan…" No,

they're going to have Ed Madigan back here in Illinois, moving around, talking about it. I said okay.

I'm having pains in my chest about then, and I'm going to go see my heart doctor, but the day I'm supposed to go see him and get checked, I'm supposed to be in Washington. So I canceled my doctor's appointment. I go to Washington, and I go in the Oval Office, and there's three of us: Bob Dole, me, and the president; that's who it's going to be out there announcing this. Of course, Dole's happy. He's big ethanol guy, Midwest, he's close to ADM too. So we go out, they have me speak, and I get up and say, "We need ethanol because we shouldn't have to rely on some oil sheikh in the Mideast." Bush just cringed. (laughs) I just remember seeing him cringing when I was saying this, because he didn't want to get into that. That's the line we used about why ethanol was important for America and not just corn farmers.

So he said it. I think, unfortunately, it was too late. I think a lot of the votes and a lot of the minds, at least in the agriculture community, had been already made up. I think they liked his position, but they'd already rationalized they were going to vote for Bill Clinton—a lot of them. So he did not run as well in the agricultural areas of Illinois and other places as I think he might have if he had been a little stronger about three months before, because the Democrats were for ethanol. Bill Clinton was for ethanol; he didn't make any bones about it. Again, it was just too late. But for me, it was a big deal. I mean, just the three of us—Bob Dole, George Bush, and me; that's pretty heady company—on ethanol. I had kind of become one of the spokesmen in the country for ethanol. At that point, I might have been the chairman of the governors' coalition on ethanol.[65]

DePue: It makes sense either Iowa or Illinois would represent that.

Edgar: We'd rotate back and forth, yes. But there's about eight governors in it. Other than that, Bush hardly came to Illinois at all. He came one other time. He came into Chicago, and they said, "The president's coming in; he wants you to meet him." I said, "Okay, what's the game plan?" They said, "We're going to the University of Chicago." I said, "The University of Chicago? What for?" "He's going to announce some energy plan," or something like that. I said, "What else are we going to do?" "We got a fundraiser that evening." I said, "Are we going to go to the suburbs?" "Well, we hadn't planned on it." I said, "You got to go to the suburbs. He has not been in the suburbs. That's our only hope. There's not three votes for him at the University of Chicago. (DePue laughs) We've got to go to the suburbs." I think we finally talked him into flying out and doing something at Motorola, too, just made a quick appearance.

I'll never forget, we drove from Meigs Airfield to the University of Chicago. That took a half hour. We got there; he gave a talk. There were probably two

[65] In 1993, Edgar became the second chairman of the Governors' Ethanol Coalition, succeeding Nebraska governor Ben Nelson. The group changed its name in 2009 to Governors' BioFuels Coalition. Governors' BioFuels Coalition, "History," http://www.governorsbiofuelscoalition.org/page.php?pgID=2.

hundred people.[66] As I said, there might have been five votes in that audience for him. We then got in the automobile and drove another half hour back to downtown, where we had down time while he prepared for the fundraiser that evening. I think maybe before, he went out to Motorola; he took a helicopter out just one stop and back. I'm just beside myself. I'm thinking, (laughs) we've spent three hours, at least, of this schedule and maybe got five votes at the University of Chicago. We spent ten minutes at Motorola; we should have made about three stops out in the suburbs.

But they'd pretty well written Illinois off; they were just coming in to raise money, and maybe it was a photo op. He had a fundraiser that night. I already had something scheduled, because this had come up late. I'd promised a legislator I'd come out, so I had to split my time, and left. I was trying to think if he came back any more. I think that was it; this was sometime probably in early September. Later on they thought maybe Illinois was getting close again, but they never gave us any money, never spent any time in the state, and we lost it. I ended up going in the hospital, having my—

DePue: Yeah, we'll talk about that in a little bit.

Edgar: Yes, but I remember getting out and going to a couple rallies; you could just tell there was no real spark at all.

DePue: By that time, Perot was definitely a drag on the Republican ticket.

Edgar: Yes. The other thing, too, about that election—remember, Bush's people had thought that Mayor Daley would help them. Sam Skinner, who had been chief of staff for Bush—and originally secretary of transportation—from Illinois, thought that Daley would be helpful. I kept trying to say, "He is not going to help you. Now, he might like you, but he is a Democrat." Then Bill Daley gets named chairman of Clinton's campaign in Illinois. I just said, "If you have any doubts now, guys…" They thought up to the end… After one of the debates, Daley came over and said to the president, "You did a good job." Well, yes, that's fine, (DePue laughs) but you know… You had Bill Daley heading up the Clinton thing, so the mayor—who doesn't always get that involved in campaigns other than his own—you knew they were going to pull out all the stops because they wanted Bill Daley to look good. Later he got a cabinet post.[67] But no, it was not a good… And the Senate race wasn't going well.

DePue: That's the other thing I wanted to ask you about. What were the dynamics in that Senate race?

[66] Bush visited Motorola and the University of Chicago on September 25, 1992. George H. W. Bush, "Remarks to Motorola Employees in Schaumburg, Illinois," *Public Papers*, George Bush Presidential Library, College Station, TX, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=4839.
[67] Clinton named Daley secretary of commerce in 1997.

Edgar: I think Carol Moseley Braun started off with a pretty big lead. Then, Tom Hardy at the *Chicago Tribune* wrote a story about her mother being on Medicaid and moving money around in the family so she could qualify for Medicaid.[68] She wasn't the strongest candidate either, and her lead began to dwindle. Rich was out working and was a very knowledgeable guy. Again, I don't think he was the best candidate possible. He was making some inroads. It was getting closer, but still she had the lead.

I think Hardy wrote the story about Medicaid after the election; if he'd have written that two weeks before, she would have got beat. It was tightening up, and it still didn't look like we were going to win it, but it wasn't going to be a blowout. It'd probably be closer than the presidential race. So Rich got a little help from the national senatorial [committee]; I don't think he got the full load. I went out with him some. He wasn't a natural campaigner; it just wasn't something that came natural to him, whereas Carol is a very friendly person. But some of her personal problems and maybe her lack of knowing the issues began to show a little bit, whereas Rich knew issues pretty well from his time in Washington. He was a very bright guy. Again, we just didn't think we were probably going to win that, but at least it was getting closer. But overall it was not a great year.

Now, the Senate Republicans did get control of the Illinois Senate. They ran pretty good campaigns. They'd won the draw, too; that's the other thing. The amazing thing was that the House Republicans didn't win control even though the Republicans had won the draw and drawn the map.

DePue: I did want to ask you about the redistricting, so is there a story to be told there?

Edgar: The story there was that, contrary to what happened in 1981, when then–secretary of state Jim Edgar—being the honest, good person he was—drew the Democrat name out of the hat, showing that there wasn't any partisanship in this hat, George Ryan drew the Republican name of out of the hat in 1991 because they couldn't agree and went to the draw. So the Republicans had control of redistricting. They drew maps. The Senate Republicans were able to take advantage of that and got control of the Senate, but the House Republicans did not; Madigan retained control. So you did have the Republicans get control of the Senate, which changed dynamics considerably in Springfield because it meant both parties had a say. It wasn't quite as important, since we had the governorship, but it did mean that everybody knew you're going to have to compromise a little more, probably. But the main emphasis, I think, statewide was on the presidential race and the Senate race, and those didn't turn out well. I forget how much Bush lost, but he lost by a margin. Rich Williamson didn't lose by as much but still lost. It was not a cheerful night, election night, in 1992.

[68] Moseley Braun's mother did not report a $28,750 windfall to the Illinois Department of Public Aid, which would have taken most of the money to offset the publicly-subsidized cost of her nursing-home care. Instead, she gave the check to Moseley Braun, who deposited it and distributed it to her siblings. NBC's Chicago television affiliate, WMAQ, broke the story September 28. Hardy was the *Tribune*'s primary follower of the story during the next month. *Chicago Tribune*, September 30, 1992.

DePue: Any significance in Carol Moseley Braun winning as a female, as a black, maybe in the Democratic circles more than Republican?

Edgar: I think it was more significant she was black than a woman. You had women in Congress, but she was the first black senator since [Edward] Brooke, who was a Republican from Massachusetts. I think they might have been the only two up to that point probably since Reconstruction.[69] So that was significant. She's a woman, too. There's no doubt—you put those two together, she'd been the darling of the Democrats, particularly the liberal wing, in the campaign, and raised a lot of money and things. That began to come unraveled for her. Right after the election a story came out about this Medicaid question; after that she never recovered. She went off to Nigeria with her boyfriend, and with this dictator… Unfortunately for her, her personal reputation, rightly or wrongly, deteriorated quickly.[70] Throughout her time in the Senate she never could recover from that, and in 1998 it made her a very easy person to run against—whoever ran against her—and she lost.

But after the primary in '92, she looked like the golden girl; by two weeks after the general election in Illinois, there began to be real serious doubts about whether she could hold on. Of course, she had six years, and we didn't know what would happen.

DePue: Let's pick up a couple other loose ends for 1992; you've already alluded to a couple of these. April 13 was a different kind of flood for the city of Chicago, because they punched a hole in a tunnel that flooded the basements in the financial district in Chicago.

Edgar: Um-hm, and Marshall Fields. In fact, it was the day of the White Sox opener, because I was out at the White Sox opener. Daley, who is a rabid White Sox fan, wasn't there. I'd flown up from Springfield. Somebody came and said, "They're having problems; they're having flooding." Apparently something was wrong with the sewers, or water was flowing all over. So I was sitting there, then I got another call, and they said, "City Hall would like you to come down and do a press conference with the mayor to reassure everybody everything's okay." I thought, This must be getting serious if they want me to… At that point, Daley and I had a very cordial relationship. I said, "Fine. I'll be down." Then I thought, first, I'd better go find out what's going on.

So the Department of Transportation was dealing with… There's a tunnel that goes under the expressway. I forget what they call that—there's a term for that.

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[69] Brooke (R-MA) had been elected in 1966 and was the first black senator to have been chosen by popular vote; two black senators had been elected in the nineteenth century, before the Seventeenth Amendment provided for the direct election of U.S. senators.

[70] The Medicaid story returned to the headlines for a few days in October 1993. *Chicago Tribune*, October 29, 1993. The dictator Edgar refers to was Sani Abacha, whose leadership of Nigeria was marked by corruption and the murder of political opponents. Braun and her ex-fiancé, Kgosie Matthews (who had formerly been a lobbyist for the Nigerian government) visited Nigeria and met with Abacha in August 1996, without the Clinton administration's knowledge. *Chicago Tribune*, August 21, 1996.

That one had flooded; we had to get the water out of there. We had to close off the expressway, the Kennedy. Kirk Brown was up, and I knew he would have a pretty good sense, so I went and talked with him; he told me what he thought was going on.[71] Kenny Brothers Construction were the people they had brought in to try to deal with the overall [problem]. I knew Jim Kenny, one of the brothers, who later was ambassador to Ireland for George W. Bush and had been real supportive in my campaign. So I knew him; I didn't know all the brothers that well.

I then went over and talked to them, and they showed me what was going on. It looked like things were holding; they just had to get this water out. But they also had the fear: just how bad is this whole system, how antiquated, and is there a possibility the thing could fall in? Later we found out that apparently the city had received reports before on the problems, and they had discarded them. We didn't know how widespread the problem was, but at least we knew that they were pretty vulnerable if this thing falls apart.

It seemed, after talking to both Kirk Brown and the Kennys, that the thing was stabilized at that point, so I went over to the city hall. I felt pretty comfortable. I remember going in, and you could tell this was the first crisis the mayor had. I think they knew—we didn't know, but they knew—they had these reports and hadn't paid attention to them, so they knew if this thing went, they could be in big trouble.

DePue: This could be their snowstorm.

Edgar: Right, right, exactly. The mayor was pretty shaken, I could tell. So we talked a while. I said, "I'm happy to go out and tell them that from what I can tell talking to folks, I think the situation is under control. We'll have to wait and see how this goes, but everything that can be done is being done." I felt comfortable then. So we went out. Daley didn't say much; I did most the talking. I remember John Kass, who I didn't know at that time—he never has been a fan of the mayor—was just going nuts. That's the first time I can remember John Kass. He didn't give me a hard time, but you could tell he was going after the mayor, and the mayor just didn't want to talk.

DePue: What was his position?

Edgar: He now writes a column for the *Tribune*. He was just a reporter, I think, at city hall, and one of the first reporters to ever be really anti-Daley. The media has pretty well given Daley kind of a pass over the years, at least up to maybe a few years ago. But he was different. Daley just wasn't used to that. But again, I think the mayor was just—you could tell he was shaken on all of it. So I did that, and everything was fine. I left. Of course, this went on and on and on. Then it dawned on him at some point, you got to pay for this damage, and how much the liability is going to be. You don't know for sure what the cost is going to be, but the city could be liable because there's a good question about whether they had done the right maintenance;

[71] Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 97-104.

they had known some of this and ignored it. So the time came, the city said to me. "We need state help. Historically the state's always paid half." I said, (DePue laughs) "Well, I'm broke." (laughs) "I can't do anything. First of all, I can't just tell you; I'd have to talk to the legislature. But I don't see any way we can do half."

DePue: This is April.

Edgar: Yes. This is probably a few weeks later, after I'd—

DePue: But in the midst of this huge budget crisis you've got yourself.

Edgar: Oh, yes. So I call the four leaders in. They're saying, Thompson—there's this policy where the state, if there was a tornado or something like that… There was kind of a policy which Thompson had always done. If a school district, a building, got hit by a tornado, the state would come up with half the money to fix it. Well, that might be a million dollars, two million dollars. We didn't know what this cost could be—in the billions, for all we knew. We didn't know for sure. We didn't know for sure if they had stopped the leaks, or if the whole thing was going to fall in any moment, half the Loop was going to be flooded, and you're going to have billions of dollars in cost.

DePue: Tornadoes are an act of God, it's not a mistake.

Edgar: Yes, right. I had the four leaders in, one day, and I said, "Guys, you were leaders when Thompson was here. Was there a state law? Have you guys ever approved something on this?" I remember Phil Rock looked at me and said, "No, and you shouldn't have to feel like you've got to bail them out." I don't know if he said those exact words. Both Madigan and Rock were very clear to me they didn't think the state ought to come up with 50 percent to do this. So I sent the word back. They wanted us to sign something because they were trying to get help from the federal government. I said, "I can't sign that. I can't commit the state. First of all, it's a blank check; we don't know how much it's going to cost. I've talked to the four legislative leaders; I don't have the support nor do I think it's the right thing to do for us to sign this." At that point, the honeymoon began to end with Daley.

Also, there's another thing dealing with his treasurer, who he wanted to strip of power; he'd snuck a bill through the legislature. Her name was Miriam Santos, a Hispanic woman who wouldn't go along with them on some issues. I had vetoed that bill. He had asked me at lunch one day, "I've got this bill…" I said, "Yes, I read about it in the paper the other day. You've never talked to me about this bill." He said, "I'd really like you to sign it." I said, "You've basically taken the only Hispanic elected official in the state and you're stripping her of her power." She had power on some of these investment boards and things. Apparently she wouldn't go along with what some of his staff wanted to do, so they were mad at her. They had passed this bill to take this power away from her. The Hispanic community was up in arms about their one… I said, "I think you'd have been a lot better off never to have introduced this bill, because you're just getting beat up by the Hispanic

community. I don't think I agree with it. I don't know what I'm going to do. I'll let you know, but I just think this is a mistake."

I was in Chicago. I flew back to Springfield, and all the Hispanic leaders in the state wanted to meet with me on that. I talked to them about it. You could just tell this was building momentum. This happened about the same time. So I called him that afternoon. "Mayor," I said, "I can't sign this bill; I'm going to have to veto it. I think it's in your best interest too. I just think we ought to get this thing over with." So I vetoed it. Aw, he was just livid. (DePue laughs) If anything got him mad at me, it was that, because he called a lot of different people muttering about that, that day. Then this comes up almost the same time, and I just say, "I can't do it." So all of a sudden columns and things start appearing about how Edgar's anti-Chicago, he hates Chicago, he won't help Chicago, blah-blah-blah. That was being orchestrated, we found out, from city hall. So from then on, relations had… Also, about a month later, of course the airport thing falls apart too. So things had all started deteriorating about then.

But on the flood, I always felt I did the right thing, because there's no way I could get the state committed to that, particularly when it wasn't our fault and we didn't have the money. I always had trouble sometimes with the mayor understanding the fact that I didn't have the money; I couldn't make those kind of commitments. When I could, I'd be more than willing to do what we could, but I wasn't going to spend money we didn't have, particularly on problems we didn't cause.

DePue: Maybe he was looking to have the state of Illinois bail him out from the Chicago electorate in the next election for him.

Edgar: At that point, the big fear was subsided a little bit, but still nobody knew what the cost factors were going to be. Skinner had come in for Bush, I remember, and assured all the federal help, but they only did so much. It turned out in the end, the bill wasn't that huge. Still more than we could afford—probably 50 percent. I don't even know if it was two hundred million or what. It was far less than what we thought it might be. Fortunately, nothing else got damaged; everything held. But that went from helping them out to being the bad guy. That happens sometimes.

DePue: Let's change the subject, then. Project Success, an innovative approach to face up to some of Illinois' problems. This was launched in six communities—a comprehensive system to deliver various support packages and use schools to do that. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Edgar: That's something that came up from the campaign. In the campaign, I remember going to a corporate school they had up in Chicago. They wanted to show that with the same amount of money, without all the regulations, you could do a better job. One of the things I learned there: one of their prize students was a fourth-grader who had become their best student. When they got him as a third-grader, he was one of their worst students, but they found out he couldn't see. They gave him a

vision check and found out he needed glasses. They went back and checked the public schools. The two times they had checked vision when he was in first and second grade, he was absent from school, but nobody followed up to make sure that he got his eyes checked. Here, they did. They insisted on attending, and he was there.

What dawned on me was we've got a lot of services for children in this state, but they're not necessarily getting delivered to the children. The schools pay the price because the kids come to school unprepared to learn; they've got vision problems, or maybe hunger, or a whole host of issues at home that don't get dealt with. So they come to school, and teachers all of a sudden have to play all these different roles—other than just being a teacher—with kids who have all these other problems. I thought, we have to figure out a way to make sure state services are getting delivered, so we created what's called Project Success.

The idea was, a teacher would see a student, know something wrong with the student, and get in contact with somebody in the school who would then get the appropriate state agency or local agency to help that student. I put the lieutenant governor, Bob Kustra—education was kind of his background—to head that up. He fleshed that out into [something] more comprehensive. One of the things they set up was this council made of community people, to advise the school, work with the school, on Project Success.

I remember in one of these initial—I think Freeport—there was a retired dentist on the group; he started giving free dental checkups to all the students. You had stories like that all around, where the community started getting really involved with the children at school. We began to see positive results of these pilot projects. These first six schools were all over the state. In fact, in 1996, we had Bob Dole in. I wanted to take him and show him something, so we took him to the one on the South Side, which had completely turned that school around. The neighborhood was so bad, the Chicago Police told the Secret Service, who was doing the advance for Dole, not to go there at night; they had to wait till daytime to do the advance work. The school became an oasis. The community was involved. They also were working with the parents because often the parents didn't have the basic skills, whether the educational skills or just skills about cooking food and fixing clothes and things like that.

So we expanded Project Success, and we kept expanding around the state over the years. It didn't cost very much; I think at most maybe we might have put in four or five million dollars. All the directors of state agencies knew this was a priority to me. We talked about this nationally with groups. A lot of places said the problem was these other agencies, education was not their responsibility, so they're going to worry about their field first; they didn't get told from the top. But in Illinois, these directors knew this was my pet project. If their people got a call from schools about something, they responded to it. As a result, Project Success was extremely successful.

As I said, Bob Kustra worked on it to start with, coordinated it, and I think did a great job of taking a concept that came out of the campaign, putting together a program, and implementing a program that was very good. We had a full-time person on the governor's staff who was the coordinator of Project Success. Again, that helped with all the directors, because there was somebody from the governor's office that was watching them. The directors did a good job. I think it worked in Illinois because it was a top-down project, as far as direction came. They knew the top wanted it done. We saw it expand to several hundreds of schools throughout the state. The key, I think, was the local volunteers and people getting involved with their school and community, and providing these services.

I remember one story of this student who had been a pretty good student, started having all these problems, and just became a bad student. They checked, and he was having problems at home. The problem at home was his dad apparently hadn't paid his taxes and was having trouble with the IRS and just caused… So they got his family connected with some tax expert; they worked with him and began to get that straightened out. So things at home got a lot better and this kid went back to being a good student. A lot of little things that you wouldn't think necessarily impact the student's ability to learn, but they do. We can't expect teachers to raise children, as I always said. That's not their job; their job is to teach. But if they have children coming into school from homes that have problems, whatever they might be, and those kids aren't ready to learn, it doesn't matter how good the teacher is, they're not going to be successful. Again, we thought that was a very successful program. It had good results. It was viewed nationwide as very positive, very innovative. After I left the governorship, the next governor did away with it.

DePue: Did you have to add staff to some of these agencies to be able to put those people in the schools?

Edgar: No, not really. The one commitment, and where we provided some money: each school had to have a part-time, if not a full-time, coordinator so teachers had somebody to go to. A teacher didn't have time to call Public Health up and say… This coordinator would know their area and the state, but particularly in the Chicago area, state departments have offices in the city. They could get a hold of the local office, or maybe sometimes there's a county office. That little [amount of] money allowed the school district to designate somebody to be the Project Success coordinator, usually in a school building; you might have two or three school buildings. It wouldn't be the whole school district, though in a small school district—some of the ones in southern Illinois—one person for the whole school district. I think the most it ever cost was maybe six million dollars at the end, when we had several hundred, if not thousand, schools involved.

I remember going to Decatur; the superintendent of Decatur—who later became the head of the superintendents' association or school board association—said later, "That was the most successful state program we had to deal with, and it was one of the smallest in cost. But it just really helped galvanize the community. It really got the state to provide the help we needed in a lot of these areas that we

couldn't get before." That all came about because of something that happened during the campaign. I always say campaigns are grueling, and I'm not sure sometimes the public learns a lot in a campaign, but I think the candidate learns a lot. It's probably as important that the candidate goes through the campaign, so he or she can learn about his or her district and what's on people's minds, as it is for the people to learn about a candidate. If I hadn't gone through that campaign and gone through that school, I don't think that would have ever clicked in my mind. I'm just disappointed they disbanded it—but again, it wasn't their initiative, so they didn't care.

DePue: I think that was Ryan who disbanded it, and Blagojevich actually—

Edgar: They did try to bring it back, yes.

DePue: A different subject altogether, maybe on the negative side of the ledger: the ACLU, in August 1992, has a class action suit against the state's mental health facilities. Remember much about that?

Edgar: Oh, we were always having suits against us for this and that. Most all of them we resolved, and in the end they were happy with how we resolved it. They probably thought we were institutionalizing too long. You remember? I can't remember. We got sued so many times, it was hard to keep track. Illinois had been very slow in deinstitutionalizing. In hindsight I don't think that's all bad, because in some states they put them out on the streets, as it turned out, too soon.

DePue: This is the same timeframe that you increasingly see drug regimens that are replacing the facilities.

Edgar: Right, right. I can't remember the specifics; I just know in two years they were singing our praises.

DePue: The next one is something I do think you'll remember. I believe it's October 1992—you might remember more accurately—you had an angioplasty. You've alluded to some heart pains or chest pains. Flesh out that story.

Edgar: Sometime in the latter part of September or early part of October—it all happened in about a week cycle—I'm working out on a stationary bicycle. I feel these sharp pains or pinches in my chest, which I'd never noticed before. I can't figure it out. I remember one night, I had some Mexican food, then I got on the bike, and I had them again. I thought, maybe it's from the food. Then I'd notice when we were out at the cabin, I'd be walking up a little hill we had out there, and I felt it then, too, but I didn't feel it when I was walking level. I thought, maybe I better check. Brenda, of course, definitely thought I ought to check. So I called our physician. We were in an HMO, but he was part of this practice. He said, "You got to go see one of the cardiologists at Memorial."[72]

[72] Memorial Medical Center, Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: In Springfield.

Edgar: Yes, in Springfield. So I went in to see this doctor. The first time I was supposed to go see him turned out to be the day I was supposed to be in Washington to do the thing with Bush on ethanol, so I canceled. It wasn't until the next week I went in to see him; he was a little nervous because I'd had these things and hadn't been in. I went in there, and he asked me about my family history. Nobody's had heart problems, I don't smoke, drink, I look like I'm in relatively decent shape. He told me later, he thought in his mind, "Probably not in his heart, maybe some other…" But he got me on the treadmill, and within five minutes he knew it was my heart. Then they admitted me to do the angiogram. In five minutes the local radio stations were calling the office, wanting to know about the governor being admitted to the hospital. This was supposed to be done kind of quietly, but five minutes it took.

They did the angiogram and saw I had blockage. Today, they do that. In fact, I had it two weeks ago: I had a stent put in. I went over, and I was having chest pains again. They didn't get me on a treadmill; they just sent me straight in to do an angiogram. The understanding is if you need a stent, they'll just go ahead and do it. Well, in this case, they didn't; they stopped. Of course, I was the governor and this was a brand-new doctor. This guy was just out of residency, so it probably wasn't (laughs) the right guy for them to send me to.

It did raise a lot of eyebrows in Springfield when it all came out. Also, if you know anything about heart stuff, in Springfield, the Prairie Institute at St. John's is considered one of the best cardiologist set-ups in the Midwest. I later learned, throughout the whole Heart Association in Illinois there was all this buzz about, how'd he end up there? This kid just… (laughter) But to this guy's credit, he knew that he had the governor. I had the angiogram, and then they decided I needed to have angioplasty. They didn't have stents back then, or stents maybe had just started to come out but they weren't using them hardly at all, so he got another guy to go in with him. The next day they did the angioplasty. I just remember that it was headlines throughout the state; every newspaper had a story about angioplasty and all this and that.

DePue: Did the news media find out about this despite the efforts that your office had put out to keep it a secret?

Edgar: We didn't tell them not to; we just said kind of low-key till we know what we're doing here—because when I got admitted to the hospital, five minutes later it was on the local radio station. We weren't not going to tell them, but we wanted to make sure we knew what we were telling them. We had a press conference—my staff did—and they explained it all to them after it happened. You like to get your story out first, before they get some spin. The same thing would happen later when I had the open-heart surgery, though we had much better control of it then.

I always laughed. It also was probably one of the reasons I went and did it in the suburbs the next time, just because if you do anything in Springfield, it's going

to be in the news in five minutes. There are some things you'd like to have maybe an hour's time to plan how you're going to handle it. But this one went quickly. It was a shock to me, because the last thing I ever thought was I'd have heart problems. I thought maybe cancer. My family had had cancer, we'd had TB, but I didn't know anybody that's ever had heart problems, and I was basically in pretty decent shape. Now, I found out I didn't eat very well, and my DNA is such that I have a certain cholesterol problem that you really can't do much with; you just have to hope you stay ahead of it. But that was all coming out later.

So I'm in the hospital. I guess I'm in two nights. I get a call from the president, because I'd just been with him the week before. He was flying around; he said, "What happened to you?" I said, "Well…" I didn't want to say, "Well, you did it to me." No.

DePue: (laughs) It was all that ethanol.

Edgar: I remember going home. I was home for a couple of days, then got back to work. Then tried to change my diet. In the early days, people didn't know exactly what to do.

DePue: How much exercising were you doing at the time?

Edgar: I was doing some. I wasn't doing a regular amount. I'd try to exercise. I'd play tennis, which isn't the greatest aerobic. I found out I needed to do aerobics. I probably still didn't do enough. That was in October. I got a letter a couple weeks later from the president or CEO of Quaker Oats, and Quaker Oats at that time owned Pritikin, which was an institute in California. They had been the pioneer of trying to reverse heart disease, and exercise and diets. They were known for a spartan diet. The food that they usually had was terrible. But they had this facility in LA … It's the beach right out from LA.

DePue: You talking about Long Beach?

Edgar: No, Long Beach is south. That's what came to my mind first. They have the long boardwalk there. It's right next to Venice.

DePue: We'll figure it out.

Edgar: Yes. But whatever that is, it's well-known. Anyway, they had a place there. Bill Smithburg, who was head of Quaker Oats, said, "We would like you and Brenda to be our guests, because we know you have some questions about your heart." Brenda happened to see the letter before I did; she said, "We're going to do this." I said, "Two weeks?" She said, "You need to do this." So I said, "Okay." We went out. It was during the inauguration in January. Clinton was getting inaugurated, and I'm out at Pritikin doing this. This story is longer than it needs to be. I remember flying out to Pritikin, and I had visions we were going to a health spa. Well, that was all right—sit around and eat grapes, you know, (DePue laughs) just take life easy. We're on the plane and Brenda says, "Now, Jim, I need to tell you, you're not going

to like this place. They're going to make you do things you don't want to do, they're going to make you eat things you have never eaten in your life, and they won't let you eat what you usually eat. But you need to do it, and so you're just going to have to do it." I'm thinking, oh, great.

DePue: You don't have control of this part of your schedule now.

Edgar: No, no. But I thought I was going off for a two-week vacation, (DePue laughs) and then, oh, shoot. But I thought, I'm into this. So we get there, check in, and the first thing they do is take you off caffeine. Well, I don't drink coffee. Brenda does. We actually get fed a little fish the first night, so it wasn't terrible. We exercise—that's the first time I was ever on a treadmill—you get in a routine and realize that tennis is fine, but it's not aerobic enough, and I've got to do…

But the diet! I had never eaten vegetables outside of corn on the cob, and I had so much butter and salt on it that if there was any good thing about that corn, it was well lost. So I'm starting to eat vegetables. After about three days, Brenda is **climbing the wall** because she can't get caffeine. Finally, I look at her and say, "Brenda, just face it. This is good for you; you're just going to have to put up with it." (DePue laughs) I kind of got into it. Of course, the exercise made you hungry, so you'd eat anything. I learned to eat vegetables out there, and I now try to always have a vegetable every meal; I look forward to it. I used to use a lot of salt.

So that was in January, and I think after that I had a better sense about eating and also exercising. We got the treadmill, and every morning… I was in pretty good shape when I was in the mansion, because I controlled my schedule. Today I barely got in twenty minutes, because you were coming at ten o'clock and I was tired. I was up at board meetings this week; they meet at eight o'clock in the morning. There's no way I'm getting up at 6:00 to do that. So I was in a lot better shape (laughs) when I was governor, with all the rigors of being governor. I had a cook that cooked us healthy food, I exercised every day, and I scheduled everything around it. If I went out to eat, everybody in the state knew the governor had a heart problem, and every maitre d' in Chicago made sure I got fish at lunch when everybody else was eating roast beef. It was just automatic. To this day, there are still a few maitre d's left after twelve years, who see me and say, "Oh, you need some fish or fruit, don't you?"

That had a huge impact on my personal life because all of a sudden you realize you're mortal, and you also realize that you've got to take time to exercise and eat. Of course, everybody in the state knew it too, because it's part of being in this fishbowl. Everything about you is known throughout the state. The next time I traveled around the state, everybody knew and asked me about my heart. I can remember—it was probably about four years after I'd left the governorship—I had gone over to Springfield for something. I was dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, and I looked about as gubernatorial as a guy on the street.

DePue: You might have looked like Jim Thompson at the time.

Edgar: No, no. He was always tall. Anyway, I stop by Steak 'n' Shake because one of my great weaknesses was Steak 'n' Shake. I'm just getting ready to eat this cheeseburger—and I've been out of the governorship at least four years—and this lady turns and says, "You're not supposed to be eating that." (DePue laughs) It's been ten years since this was all in the paper and stuff, but it stuck with people because it's personal.

The other interesting thing going through that—we of course continued to monitor polls during the time I was governor, just to see how I was doing. Periodically we'd do a poll, and somebody would do a poll. My job approval rating was always good. Even in those bad budget things, my job approval rating had stayed up pretty decently and had gone up at the end of that session in '91. Then in '92 it just began to slip a little bit—still well above 50 percent, which is kind of the danger mark. You know, the anti-Chicago things by the mayor, and it just wasn't a good Republican year in general, with the general election and everything. You could just see it begin to go down. When I had that angioplasty, it started back (laughs) up again. People had sympathy for you, they related to you. It started back up and it never went down again; it just kept going up. It probably took a little bit of a jump even two years later, when I had open-heart surgery. Other things jumped, too. The low point was right before, when Bush was doing terrible, I'd had kind of a so-so year, and Daley was on my case that I was anti-Chicago, all the time. A lot of politicians would be happy with those numbers, but it wasn't what it had been. Then it started back up right after I had the angioplasty. So I always figured, well, there is some good in this.

DePue: I want to take a break from our chronological progression and talk about economic development in more of a broad, abstract way. Then we can get into some of the particulars as well. Now you've been fighting these budget battles, and you've got one or two more pretty tough battles coming up. The flip side of that is: if we could just get some economic development in the state, we'd be better off in the long term. So let's start with your philosophy for how you might be able to affect and improve Illinois' economic climate.

Edgar: I guess I went into the governorship with a little bit of a bias that the state has to be careful when it starts playing favorites in the private sector, giving out tax subsidies and grants and things. Maybe we touched on it before, but—

DePue: We did, and I talked with others about some of the smokestack chasing.[73]

Edgar: Yes. After the Mitsubishi plant in Bloomington… In the campaign, in '90, I'd picked up a lot of negative feelings among business folks saying, hey, we've been good citizens, we paid our taxes, but we didn't get subsidized, and here's somebody new who came in. I always thought you have to be a little careful on how you do that. There's no doubt we wanted to see the economy get stronger, but there's limits on what a governor can do to turn the economy around. The economy, I think, is

[73] Gene Reineke, interview by Mark DePue, 27-42.

more national-driven than it is state-driven. Now, there's no doubt in some states—maybe if you're in gaming in Las Vegas—state policy has a huge impact. But we were a manufacturing state. It wasn't just Illinois; all manufacturing was suffering. So you needed to look for electronics, and we needed to develop Motorola and stuff.

DePue: But taxes and fees always factor into that equation.

Edgar: It does, to some extent, but not to the extent that some people will argue. Again, what I picked up from talking with corporate folks… I was reading something I think the local paper talked about: New Jersey's in a mess just like we are, and then it talked about how they haven't raised taxes because they're the number-one tax state. But we're not the number-one tax state. Illinois is not a high taxing state; it wasn't then. Now, we had gotten out of kilter on some business taxes, which had come back a little bit. You had to be careful you didn't pick on business and didn't think, just let the business pay for it, as some people have done over the years. I remember they wanted to put a chicken processing plant or something in Marion, Illinois, and they wanted a special tax policy on that. Well, it turned out that company was very questionable. I didn't go for that. I'm not sure that's the way you build the economy.

I don't know if I knew it so much in '91—I definitely believed it when I left in '98—the most important thing I could do as governor, for economic development, was make sure the quality of life in Illinois was good. That meant good schools, which was the number-one issue that most of the business people talked to me about. It wasn't about tax credit. They wanted a climate that was conducive for job creation. They said that one of their major concerns was having employees who could do the job—what it took in the 1990s, not what it took in the 1940s. That's one of the problems we were having: our workforce wasn't being upgraded enough to handle those jobs.

DePue: For schools, you mean secondary, or higher education as well?

Edgar: Elementary and secondary probably got the most attention. Higher education in Illinois was viewed as good. A couple years after I left the governorship, a study came out that evaluated higher education in the nation; Illinois was ranked number one. Now, we've fallen since then, but higher education in Illinois was pretty good. It wasn't perfect, but it was pretty good. Community colleges were viewed as a very positive part of that. I had more compliments from business folks about community colleges and their job training. The other thing they often said they really needed from the state was job training and infrastructure. They needed that, really, more than they did tax credits and this cash giveaway. Those, I thought, were legitimate things for the state to do.

When I first became governor, United Airlines was going to build a new maintenance facility someplace east of the Rockies. So all these states were competing. We got knocked out. I was told by the United folks that the chance was

pretty slim Illinois would get it, for a variety of reasons. We got knocked out, but in the end what happened was—I think Colorado, Indiana, maybe another state, were the finalists—they got them in a motel room in Indianapolis. They had one state on one floor, and they'd run back and forth to see if they'd get a better deal. So the guys that didn't get it really resented it; I think Colorado is one that didn't. I think it ended up in Indianapolis. So that kind of spurred a feeling at the governors' conference, we ought to look at this whole smokestack-chasing stuff. I co-chaired that. It was interesting—most of the northern states thought we shouldn't do that, but the southern states thought we should. It was a different attitude.

First of all, I thought, we can't turn the economy around; it's more of a national thing. What we can do, though, is try to make our states conducive to job creation and quality of life. Talking to the business folks, they not only wanted basic skills, they wanted a place where they could attract key people to come and live. I'll never forget, toward the end of my governorship, people from John Deere came in to see me. John Deere is a huge factor in the Quad Cities. It's one of the best corporations we have in Illinois. So whenever they wanted to talk, I always took the time to listen to them. They came in, and the presentation was about this new golf course in the Quad Cities. They went on and on. I don't play golf. It bored me to death. Finally I said, "Tell me why John Deere cares about a golf course." They said, "Because it's important. We'll be able to get on the PGA tournament with this golf course, and you don't understand how difficult it is to recruit key people to come to live in the Quad Cities when they have a choice to live in the Chicago suburbs or in Denver, Colorado, or LA or wherever. We've got to work to make the Quad Cities a place where people want to live. Quality of life is very important, and a lot of folks like to play golf and want to be around that. It also helps us become the official maintenance person for the PGA, but it's also very important because there is a lot of enthusiasm among our workers and our employees, because they're going to get this golf course." It all made sense, and it all kind of tied together what I'd picked up from other business folks—quality of life is extremely important.[74]

When I worked for Thompson, Illinois was in the running for a truck—I think Toyota or somebody was going to build a new truck plant in the United States. Of course, I am convinced that years ago in Japan, they got a dartboard or map, (DePue laughs) threw darts, and decided where each one of the Japanese auto companies would go in the United States, to take the heat off them for selling too many cars. They had to build over here, but they spread it out so every state… I don't think it was our turn to get Toyota, but we were in the finalists. Thompson had gone to Japan to try to get them; the former ambassador from the United States to Japan was from Illinois, and he'd talked to them and worked hard on this.

We didn't get it; Tennessee got it. So they checked with somebody who seemed to know why, in the end, Tennessee got picked over Illinois. They said it came down to who the plant manager was going to be, somebody out of the Big

[74] TPC Deere Run was built in Silvis, Illinois, in 1999. It hosts a PGA Tour event, the John Deere Classic.

Three they had recruited to head up this plant. He loved to fish—this spot in Tennessee, there was a lot better fishing than in the spot they were looking at in Illinois. Now, I don't know if that's true or if that's all… But I can believe, after dealing with enough corporate folks, that's part of the factor. Again, that quality of life: good schools, safe streets, infrastructure.[75]

So how I went about it, I said, "Job training, infrastructure, we'll do. I'm not in favor of giving you tax incentives or cash or these kinds of things. I want something that if you decide to walk, we're going to be able to keep, and infrastructure we keep and a better workforce we keep." So that was kind of my philosophy. But I also didn't think we could do enough of that to solve our budget woes short-term—maybe long-term, but not short-term. We had to deal with the budget. Some people say, we're going to grow our way out of this. I think we had to deal with it quicker because by the time we grew out of that, we'd be a generation behind in a lot of things.

DePue: How much of this emphasis on building the economic base had to do with your pledge not to raise any new taxes, especially on corporations?

Edgar: That was really more toward the individual taxpayer. I think they got more. It's like today. You hear a lot of the corporate leaders say we need to raise the income tax to deal with our debt. Now, they don't—

DePue: Personal income tax, not corporate income tax.

Edgar: It'd be both. You can't raise the personal without raising the corporate. It's prorated, so you've got to keep that proration there. They don't want you to say, "We're just going to tax business," meaning we're going to put taxes on new machinery or things, like Blagojevich did. They don't want that, and I agree with them. I think if you have it across the board, it's not as much of a negative impact. If you just single out a couple industries and say, "We're going to tax you guys," then I think that is a problem. I think that would have been counterproductive, and I think today it'd be counterproductive.

Also, to be very truthful, if you raise the income tax in Illinois a percent or something, contrary to what people say, that's not going to slow down recovery. In fact, if you could do something about the state budget and make sure money got out to pay for some of these bills we have, that would generate some dollars. Now, if we're the federal government, where you're talking about maybe a tax increase of 3 or 4 percent or something—much more at the higher brackets—then that would, I think, have an impact on economic recovery, and it's not the time to do it.

My feeling was that we just needed to create an environment where people wanted to live, where they wanted to create jobs. Also, as governor, I thought my

[75] This was not Edgar's first experience with this sort of decision making; Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 29, 209, 63. For the importance of quality of life to the corporate executives who make location decisions, see Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 92-94.

door had to be open to the business community. They had to know they could talk to me, know who I was and feel comfortable that I was not some crazy guy, and that the state had a stable government, which was important; they wanted to be in a stable community.

You know, the *Tribune*, or some place I've read, keeps writing about how we've had a twenty-year decline in jobs. We might, but I think the whole nation must have, because in the mid-nineties, Illinois had job growth, one of the best in the country. One, I think it's the nature of Illinois; this state has a lot of things going for it. But I also think the overall quality of life in Illinois and the overall improvement in the state government improved and helped that. Again, I just don't think some of these tax incentives, giveaway programs, are the way to go, and I didn't then. I had a lot of folks who thought otherwise, and I had resistance from the legislature, which was always trying to do things; I was always saying no.

DePue: The infrastructure comment—is that primarily transportation?

Edgar: No, it's a whole host of things. For a business, like if a new plant was coming in, we'd maybe agree to do a road and help them with sewers, even railroads or something like that, but it was something that was going to stay if they left. I felt better about that. In most cases, it didn't matter if they stayed or left, it usually helped the entire community. So that's what I mean by infrastructure.

DePue: Going back to the airport discussion, so much of that was driven by Daley, but is the third airport in Chicago part of this equation, or is that kind of ancillary to this discussion?

Edgar: No, I think that's very important. I don't think there's any doubt O'Hare Airport, along with McCormick Place, are two of the big sparkplugs of the economy in Illinois, particularly in the metropolitan area. Both of those have been subsidized by government, and I think rightfully so. They improved the infrastructure, and in the case of McCormick Place, there's no doubt—that was a civic center that made sense. Now, we got carried away in the eighties, and I had to stop it in the nineties, when every little community in the state was coming to the state to build some building that in most cases they didn't know what to do with once they had it. You never could justify the expenditures. I think the convention center in Springfield made some sense because it's the state capital, even though it loses money. The one in the Quad Cities, Deere put a lot of things into and they got a hockey team; it probably made some money. But most of them have not made money. But McCormick Place makes a lot of sense, because you do draw a lot of folks in.

But with the third airport, there was the fear that if we didn't do something with O'Hare, we're going to lose flight capacity. People didn't want to come into Chicago; they didn't want to come into O'Hare. To this day people try to avoid O'Hare because of congestion and everything like that. That's not good. You look at that whole northwestern part of the Chicago metropolitan area—what built that was O'Hare Airport. If you look down in the south suburbs, it's been pretty slow to

develop compared to the northwest, and I think they didn't have an airport. Later on—that fall or the next spring—we proposed that the third airport be down near Peotone because that would be a good economic boost for that area.

Again, infrastructure, to me, is very important.[76] Most of the business leaders I dealt with—I'd say 80 percent of them—talked to me about education, infrastructure; they never came in and said, "Would you give my company a break?" or, "You're taxing me too much." Never had that.

DePue: Did they have discussions about tort reform?

Edgar: Oh yes. I don't think as much as it developed even more, later.

DePue: Was there something that your administration was trying to do early on in tort reform?

Edgar: Not really, because we had a Democratic legislature. Now, when we got a Republican legislature, we were able to do something about it.

DePue: So after '94.

Edgar: Yes, but unfortunately we didn't have the Supreme Court. Yes, it was a factor; there's no doubt out there. But in a lot of ways Illinois was not a lot different on tort reform. Now, on medical malpractice we were a little different, but we may not have been as different on tort reform as a lot of other industrial states. But they did talk about that, and I thought they had a valid point. Later we were able to do something about it. But I think I've talked before—early on, we tried to prioritize: What can you do with a Democratic legislature? What can you do with a split legislature? What do you do with a Republican legislature? What can you do today because you did something yesterday, or what can't you do today because you haven't done something else? Like when it came to school funding, we had to do something about Chicago schools, which we'll talk about later.

DePue: What's the role that the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA) played in this whole process?

Edgar: That was Bill Redmond's name for it, and that was a compromise. I remember sitting in a committee, working out the compromise on that. But it was the economic development agency in state government. They were the ones who went out and tried to get businesses to come to Illinois, worked with businesses to stay, and promoted Illinois businesses. One of their sections deals with tourism and things like that. They're the ones that administered the trade offices we had around the world. I don't know how many we have now. I had to close some down; we had too many. Every time Thompson would make a trade mission, (laughs) it seemed like he'd open a new trade office.

[76] Kirk Brown, December 22, 2009, 62-65.

DePue: I did want to ask you about that, because that's a difference in focus between the two of you.

Edgar: Well, it's not a difference in focus on trade, it's just how do you go about trade? I thought trade was very important. I spent a lot of time supporting NAFTA and going to Washington. I spent a lot of time with diplomats coming through Chicago—much more than anybody else ever has—trying to make them feel Illinois was a very friendly state. I think some of the trade offices were very good; others were just there because that was something to do when you had a trade mission—announce you're going to do a trade office. You had to look at what it cost and what the results were. Most of the original trade offices, we kept. The new ones in the last few years of the Thompson administration, we cut them loose because we just didn't think they were justifiable.

DePue: Were there portions of the world that were more successful for these trade offices than others?

Edgar: There are areas where there's more potential trade. I mean, you need one in Europe, you need one in Asia, and I think you need one in South America. I'm not sure we could afford two in China, as we had when I came in. I'm not sure we needed the one in Barcelona that we were putting in.

DePue: How about Japan or Korea, for the agricultural commodities?

Edgar: We had one in Japan, and we had one in China—Hong Kong. We had one in Beijing that never made sense; Hong Kong really dealt with that. And there was a difference between Hong Kong and Japan. I'm not sure you need one in Korea if you've got one in Japan. I'm not sure why we have one in South Africa; I'm not sure there's a whole lot of potential there. In South America, you could probably make the argument today for one in Mexico and one in Brazil, but back then I'd say one. We had one in São Paulo, and we had one in Mexico City; we kept Mexico City. Mexico was our second-largest trading partner when I was governor. It was third when I first came in; it was second when I left. NAFTA and our office—I think all those things made a difference, but you could have one all over Latin America. We didn't think we could afford it or justify it. We worked with some states about doing some joint offices, and we tried a joint thing in Canada a little bit.

DePue: With what states?

Edgar: I think it was other Great Lakes states, if I remember right. We went in and thought we could try to see if we could share some office space; you might have your own person or you might have a person to look out for two states, or something like that. But trade was very important to me. I spent a lot of time. I didn't so much the first term, because I just thought I had to stay home and worry about the state; the second term, I was able to travel a little more. But even the first term, we had a very

close relationship with the consul corps, much more than anybody's ever had before or ever had since.

DePue: With whom again?

Edgar: The consul corps. The consuls general. We have more consuls-general in Chicago than anyplace outside of New York City, and we had a good working relationship. In a lot of these countries, the business decisions are made by government, they're not made by the private sector. We tried to make sure they had a warm feeling about Illinois. DCCA worked on that, and I think we had good results.

DePue: How important was having Chicago institutions like the Chicago Board of Trade and the Mercantile Exchange?

(pause in recording)

Edgar: They're important, very important. I didn't think they were going to leave Illinois while I was governor. I don't think they thought they would leave Illinois while I was governor. We had a good working relationship. I was close to both of them, spent time on the floor, spent time with their leaders, and things like that. Sometimes I think they were worried about federal legislation a lot more than they were ever worried about things in Illinois. We made sure we didn't threaten them with any legislation in Illinois.

DePue: We have to draw this thing to a close pretty quickly, but I want to ask you about just a couple particular cases, some new groups coming into Illinois. There was some competition over Motorola. I don't think they ended up in Illinois, did they?

Edgar: Yes, they did. They did.

DePue: The competition with Wisconsin?

Edgar: Yes, 1994, if we're up to '94, or at least talking about this. They were going to build a big new plant for cell phones. It was going to be one of the biggest new expansions in the United States that year. Motorola headquartered here. I knew Bob Galvin, the chairman, somewhat from various meetings over the years, and I actually played tennis with him in a tennis tournament out in Arizona about the time this decision was being. We won; we were doubles partners. What we talked to Motorola about was job training and infrastructure, and in the end they picked Illinois. Virginia wanted it, Wisconsin wanted it. It wasn't even guaranteed it'd stay in the United States, but most thought they'd stay in the United States. We lobbied, and Harvard is where it went, close to the [Wisconsin] state line. One of the big hang-ups was the utility cost. Commonwealth Edison's pretty expensive, they thought. That was the biggest hassle we had with them in the end; it wasn't the tax rates in Illinois, though taxes are lower in Illinois than they are in Wisconsin. Dawn Clark Netsch had talked in the campaign about raising income tax and lowering property taxes. Even if they had done that, we would have still been lower than Wisconsin.

DePue: The next one here is Maytag. I believe that discussion is over.

Edgar: Oh, Maytag closed down. They just closed. (laughs) It wasn't we so much lost it; they just have disintegrated as a company. Did that happen on my watch? If they closed down in Galesburg—they did keep the one open down in…

DePue: I think they kept it open for a while during your administration. Maybe it closed late in the administration or later than that.[77]

Edgar: They closed that one, but they kept the one open down near Marion. They won the state basketball championship, that town. They just closed that down about four years ago. It wasn't so much Maytag was moving them places; they were just closing down.

DePue: But was that part of the emphasis, to keep what you've got, to encourage people to stay?

Edgar: Yes. You didn't want them to move someplace else, but the trouble with Maytag was they weren't moving someplace else; they were closing. It was consolidation. They ended up moving some of the stuff from Galesburg over to their corporate headquarters in Iowa, if I remember right. Then they kept the one down between Marion and this town until about three years ago. We worked on that. I actually thought if we could just keep what we had, and they'd expand in Illinois, that's probably as good as getting new businesses in, because we had so much here. We had lost some, and some had moved to the South during the twenty, thirty years when you began to see some of that movement.

You really don't build the economy by these big companies, but Motorola was huge. That was five thousand jobs, and that was just probably the biggest thing in the country that year. Again, they stayed in Illinois. Then we did infrastructure and we did job training. But it was also that personal contact, a little bit. I remember right when we were doing that ceremony, they were hitting me up. They wanted to make sure the tollway didn't open up their exit right outside their corporate office in the north suburbs, because it was going to ruin the view of the CEO or something like that. I mean, this was serious. We checked the tollway. We could move it down a little bit, so we moved it down a little bit to keep Motorola happy. It had nothing to do with the decision to stay. I didn't know Bob's son that well, but I knew him. In fact, they let me film a commercial in Motorola when I was running for governor in 1990, which was pretty unusual. So I think those personal ties and that connection helped. That's important. A governor's got to be accessible, has got to be somebody that the corporate folks feel is a competent, rational person to deal with.

[77] Maytag closed its Galesburg plant in 2004 and shifted production to Mexico, eliminating 1,600 jobs. Motorola closed its state-subsidized plant in Harvard, Illinois, in 2003. *Chicago Tribune*, May 3, 2003, and September 14, 2004.

DePue: The last one, then, in terms of economic development would be the relationship with some of our legislators in Washington, DC. Maybe this is and maybe this isn't a related question—but BRAC, because BRAC was very much a part of the discussion at that time.

Edgar: Oh, base closure?

DePue: Base Realignment and Closure.

Edgar: That didn't have much to do with the congressional delegation; you just had to get lucky on the commission. Very important. This was, again, '94; we'd lost Chanute, here in Rantoul, the year before I became governor. I can't remember if we lost Fort Sheridan in '94 or if we'd already lost it.

DePue: About the same timeframe.

Edgar: The same time they did Great Lakes?

DePue: Yeah, and Glenview.

Edgar: Yes, Glenview was before I was governor. There's two big ones, Great Lakes and…

DePue: Scott?

Edgar: Scott. Those are the two huge ones. Those really are the key—Rock Island Arsenal to some extent—with Great Lakes being the biggest by far, though in some ways it didn't get the attention because you had so many other things around there. But when they were looking at Great Lakes, we did put a pretty much full-court effort on presentation. We worked with the folks there, and we came up with a video that has a penguin in it. I forget exactly what the penguin—it's not that cold at Great Lakes as they were making the argument, because I think the fight was between us and San Diego. Worked with the local folks, and very much involved. I testified at the closing hearings. I'm not sure what impact that had.

In the end we not only kept it, I think we doubled the size because they closed the other one and moved those people to Great Lakes. That and Motorola, in one year, were huge as far as jobs in Illinois. Again, we didn't have to give anything away. What we had to do with Great Lakes, to a large extent, was just make sure they understood this facility had a lot to offer, the proximity to Chicago, and it's a good place for people to be trained. Motorola—there's no doubt we had to do the job training and some of those things. I don't remember as much what we had to do on Great Lakes, but we were very active in both of those.

DePue: Did you have a successful relationship with the congressional delegation, getting other earmarks?

Edgar: Pretty much. Illinois doesn't get a whole lot of money from the federal government. A lot of it is driven by formulas and things. We don't have national parks; we're a wealthy state. We needed to make sure we got things for Fermilab. That was always important. We did very well on transportation.

DePue: Was there a go-to guy out there for you?

Edgar: There were two guys. Danny Rostenkowski was key on taxes, and he was super to me. Alan Dixon—he was in the Senate—was very good at that stuff. Also, for transportation—I didn't deal with him much; Kirk Brown spent a lot of time with him—Lipinski, the congressman. His son is now a congressman, completely different than he was, on the southwest side of Chicago. Part of Madigan's kind of organization. But he was one of the ranking guys. You needed guys that were in ranking positions on committees. Rosty was good when I had problems on Medicaid and things like that, and so was Dixon. I spent a lot of time with those guys in '91 and '92, and was very disappointed when Alan lost, from that perspective, because he was really… Paul Simon is a great guy, but that just wasn't his kind of thing—to go get things put into bills for money and things like that. Rosty was very good with anything that came through the House—

DePue: Head of the Ways and Means Committee.

Edgar: Yes, he had helped a lot on Medicaid and things like that. I often went to him. He was very, very helpful. In fact, I did everything I could in the '94 primary to make sure he got the nomination. Unfortunately I couldn't do much for him in the general election when he lost that. Of course, he got indicted in the meantime. But those were the two main go-to guys. Then at the end, [Dennis] Hastert got to be deputy whip in the House, and that was helpful. I got to have a personal relationship with [Newt] Gingrich, and I could talk with him too.[78] But I would say, early on, especially when we were going through money problems, those two guys. And Lipinski was very important on transportation matters. Thompson had done well with them too on transportation matters. He didn't have to deal with the Medicaid, and probably didn't have to deal with some of the stuff that I had to deal with, with Rostenkowski, that affected the state. But those guys were very helpful. They were all Democrats, but it didn't really matter to them. They were very good to work with. Unfortunately, when Republicans got control, they were in a position to help more, but when they were in the minority, they weren't able to do quite as much. Just running through my mind…

DePue: Henry Hyde?

Edgar: Henry Hyde was not in a position on money stuff. He was always kind of the highfalutin'—in fact, I had to call him to help the Republican leadership on welfare reform. I got a call from Gingrich. He said, "Can you talk to Hyde?" (DePue laughs) He said, "We can't…" So I remember talking to Henry on welfare reform,

[78] One of Edgar's advisors, Carter Hendren, also had a personal relationship with Gingrich; Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, 57-66.

and he went along. Henry was always very good when I'd call him, it was just there weren't many money things that Henry had control over, and I wasn't into foreign policy. He was on Judiciary in the House, and then later he became chairman of the foreign relations committee, but we didn't really have much I could go to him for.

DePue: We are about out of time because I know you've got a meeting to get to, but this has been great. We've got a lot more to talk about. One of the subjects next time we get together, as a teaser here, is the '93 flood.

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: After that, we get to talk about another election year.

Edgar: Election, yes. You'd think all we do is do elections.

DePue: Thanks, Governor.

Edgar: Thank you.

(end of interview 14)

Interview with Jim Edgar

ISG-A-L-2009-019.15

Interview # 15: May 28, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Friday, May 28, 2010. My name is Mark DePue; I'm director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I believe it is our fifteenth session with Gov. Jim Edgar.

Edgar: Oh, good heavens! (laughter)

DePue: Good morning, Governor.

Edgar: Good morning.

DePue: The governor and Brenda are fresh back from an invigorating trip to the Mediterranean.

Edgar: Yes. We spent about two weeks. I still get up early, which is unusual for me. I got up at six o'clock today, which anybody who knows me knows is very unusual. So if I run out of gas here, it's because I need my afternoon siesta about ten o'clock in the morning.

DePue: We got up to the point of early 1993, so that's where we will pick it up. As always, we spent an awful lot of time last time talking about the budget fight the previous year; that was a brutal budget fight by everybody's account. A little bit different equation this time around, wasn't it?

Edgar: The budget, to me, always was the primary issue with the legislature. We had to do the State of the State address, which is usually a bunch of platitudes, and you have to come up with some things. But the budget speech was always the main speech, because we were still trying to get out of the hole we had found ourselves in when I came in as governor in January of '91. This year, though, I think everybody felt like they'd proved their point, and they had to come in and redo some things in the veto session—as I'd told them they were going to have to do. So there was a lot more acceptance, I think, of what we proposed. People didn't want to get into fights any more than they had to. There also was a realization on our part about what you could do and couldn't do. Things were getting a little better. We weren't out of the woods, that was for sure. We still had to keep the discipline on the budget, but at least we weren't watching revenue numbers go down midyear. We were beginning to see a little bit of a comeback—not huge, but enough that at least we weren't going the wrong direction.

Maybe we were all just tired. We'd been through two years of pretty heavy budget issues and battles and revisions, so this year, the budget probably didn't dominate as much overall as perhaps child welfare did. That was kind of an outgrowth, a little bit. We'd had the battle with the appropriation for Children and Family Services the year before, in which they cut more than I thought they should have, and they ended up having to put it back in, in the veto session. It wasn't so much a money problem; it was more philosophical problems—how that agency's being administered. We went through a change in directors; that was probably more traumatic—as I look back, almost twenty years ago—in my mind than the budget that session.[79]

DePue: The child welfare issue that I'm sure you're referring to happened on April 19, 1993. Three-year-old Joseph Wallace was hung by his mother, up in the Chicago

[79] Feeling squeezed between a 1991 federal consent decree to reduce DCFS caseloads and budgetary pressure to make staff cuts, Sue Suter resigned from DCFS on August 5, 1992. Her last day of work, August 31, 1992, was the same day Edgar appointed executive deputy director and general counsel Sterling "Mac" Ryder acting director. On February 1, 1993, Edgar made Ryder director. *Chicago Tribune*, August 6, 1992 and February 6, 1993.

area; it highlighted the problem that the DCFS agency had been having all along, and it became a cause célèbre.

Edgar: We also had another issue about the same—in fact, I think it was a little earlier. There was a story out about four or five neglected children they found in this apartment on the West Side of Chicago. The reason that stuck in my mind: I was at the presidential prayer breakfast in Washington. Bill Clinton, who was president then, got up and made this talk about how things like this are terrible, and he talked about this incident in Chicago. It was the first I'd heard about it; you feel kind of foolish. You're sitting in the—

DePue: All eyes come looking for you then.

Edgar: Yes, like, What's going on? So that got **huge** attention. That was the story around the country. I remember, as soon as I got back from Washington that afternoon, I went to the office in Chicago, and we had the children put in custody. What was interesting about that whole thing—I mean, it was huge. This was before the story about the mother that hung the baby. This story was just all kinds of pressure and everything. It turned out in the end, those four or five kids were in pretty good shape. Yes, they were in filth and all that, but apparently they'd been fed. When all was said and done, about two weeks later, after everybody had done the analysis—nothing wrong with those kids. I mean, a bad environment—their parents were dealing with drugs and things like that—but they probably weren't the only ones in that neighborhood. What I always remember about that is, how are we going to handle this terrible story? As it turned out, that was a pretty mild story; we had a lot worse stories than that, though that got played huge.

The worst story was the one in April, when the mother who should not have had custody of the child—had not had custody for a while and got custody back—it turned out she had mental problems, and she hung the child. It was a terrible thing. That's very much where it wasn't just a breakdown in Children and Family Services. It was obvious that what Department of Mental Health knew and what the department of Children and Family Services knew, they didn't share; there just was a lack of communication. Also in this case, and a lot of the other cases, we had far too many caseloads for a caseworker. There was no way they could get around and check all these things. Sometimes those checks are somewhat superficial, and in this case, we think that is part of what happened. Children and Family Services did not know all the Mental Health Department information that they should have known, which led to… Years later, we finally combined all those agencies together.

DePue: We'll talk a lot about that later.

Edgar: That was one of the things that came out of it. That was happening along with the story about the children in squalor that President Clinton talked about. I'm sure the *Tribune*, maybe this is what they were running that year for their Pulitzer Prize, as they always had some issue going for that Pulitzer Prize. They ran a series on this, and maybe the *Sun-Times* did too. They ran a series on the breakdown in Children

and Family Services.[80] What was ironic: when I would travel out of state and go in other states that year, the same story was being run in every state. I think what had happened was there were so many children in the system now—we were coming out of a recession—that there were a lot of programs we thought were working which weren't working that well. I don't know if they all went to some news convention and training thing and said, "Hey, here's an issue you ought to look at," because you [could] go to every state and think that state has the worst child welfare agency going. But it was just because there was so much pressure throughout the country. I don't know if it was breakdown of the family structure, whatever.

Our problems in Illinois were not unique. Every state was going through them. That doesn't do any good. It's kind of like taxes: nobody cares what the other states' people pay in taxes, they just don't want to pay any more than they… In Illinois, it didn't matter what was going on around the country, it was just, hey, you got this problem and you better deal with it. You're dealing with children, which is an extremely emotional issue; these were terrible stories about some of these children just being abused. Most of them didn't lose their lives, but they were living in terrible conditions. Children and Family Services was not providing the check that people thought they should, or had hoped they would. It was ironic: this agency, twenty years before in its infancy, was considered the best agency in state government, back in the Ogilvie years. I think, unfortunately, for a variety of reasons—some personnel, philosophy, and just the growth…

DePue: Part of it would have to be this demographic trend throughout the United States, where you look at the percentage of children who were born out of wedlock: in the sixties, 25 or 30 percent. By the time you got to the early nineties, it had doubled or tripled.[81]

Edgar: I don't know if it was that much. I know I read a statistic just the other day—we're talking in 2010—41 percent of all babies born in America are born to a non-married mother. But it had escalated, and that put a lot of pressure on. You have the fact we're coming out of a recession; a lot of people did not have resources. That was part of the dilemma. I think also, people expected the state to deal with this problem more than maybe they used to. The other dilemma we had as we worked through

[80] The *Tribune* ran two series: "Killing Our Children" in April 1993 and "Saving Our Children" in 1994. "Killing Our Children" was a finalist for a 1994 Pulitzer Prize in public service reporting, while R. Bruce Dold's series of editorials on the death of Joseph Wallace garnered him the 1994 Pulitzer for editorial writing. *Chicago Tribune*, April 13, 1994.

[81] Between 1965 and 1975, out-of-wedlock births ranged between 8 and 14 percent of all births in the United States. By 1993, their share had increased to 31 percent. This figure varied widely by demographic group, however. For example, between 1965 and 1969, the average percentage of births to unmarried women among blacks was 34.9 percent; in 1993, that figure reached 68.7 percent. So while DePue is correct about the magnitude of the shift, his specific figures seem to be mixing up a group with the nation. In 2008, 40.6 percent of births were to unmarried women. George A. Akerlof, Janet L. Yellen, and Michael L. Katz, "An Analysis of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing in the United States," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (May 1996): 277-317; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Stats, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm.

this, we needed more money for caseworkers. We needed more caseworkers, because we knew we had too many cases for the people doing the caseloads.

Also, there was just the whole running of the department. Sue Suter had been the first director. I can't remember exactly when she left. Then we had an acting [director], a guy who was in the agency and we put in there. He was kind of a troubleshooter in the human services area. He did not have maybe the best PR. The *Tribune* was really on the case. Eventually we got Jess McDonald, who had been the director just for a brief period under Thompson; he'd been on his staff. We had him at Mental Health; he'd been at Mental Health for about a year or so, so we brought him back over.[82] Jess was very knowledgeable in this area. Not taking away from his ability, but one of his great attributes was he was very good with the media. The *Tribune*, to this day, still loves Jess McDonald. So Jess was able to [succeed], I think, because he had a history of being pretty good in this area and was a good administrator, but he also had a rapport with the media, and they felt much better about him.

Another thing we did at that point to deal with that, we created—I can't remember the exact title. Anne Burke is who did it. It was kind of like an inspector general or an ombudsman to put into that agency and not be part of that agency; she's more part of the governor's staff. This was a huge deal. It might have been later in '93 when she came on, because I remember she said that Dawn Clark Netsch just jumped all over her husband because she'd come to work for me.[83] So it might have been a little later, because at that point, Netsch wasn't the clear choice or going to be the… [Democratic nominee for governor] Jess McDonald coming in helped soothe the waters a lot. And we did get more money for more caseworkers so we could reduce the caseload.

The biggest issue we had to deal with: in the eighties when Thompson was governor, they had come up with this plan—which I don't think was unique to Illinois, and at the time made sense—that the family comes first; you got to hold the family structure together. So Children and Family Services' whole philosophy was: you hold that family together. The last resort, you take children away from their parents. Any way you can help keep that family unit together, you should do. That was the emphasis. It became obvious to us as we looked at these cases that there was too much of this, "Well, this is the mother, give them the benefit of the doubt; we want to keep that family together." That's when we began to change to the philosophy of the best interest of the child, which to me made a huge difference.

[82] McDonald had also worked for the House Budget Committee from 1973 to 1974, before moving into the upper management of DCFS under Gov. Dan Walker from 1974 to 1976. He then served Governors Walker and Thompson as a budget analyst (1976-1983), advised Thompson on human service policy (1983-1990), and was Thompson's DCFS director for the last six months of his administration. Edgar appointed him director of the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities in 1992. Following Ryder's resignation May 17, 1994, Edgar appointed McDonald director two weeks later. *Chicago Tribune*, June 2, 1994.

[83] Edgar made two significant appointments: April 29, 1993, Edgar announced he would create the post of inspector general at DCFS and appointed Denise Kane to the position the following week. One year later, Edgar appointed Burke special counsel on DCFS Cook County operations. Burke is the wife of Ed Burke, Chicago's powerful 14th Ward alderman. *Chicago Tribune*, May 7, 1993 and May 18, 1994.

But we also had to convince the bureaucracy who had been trained for almost a decade or longer to do everything they could to keep that family unit together; we had to get them to think differently and say, "Hey, pull that child out of that family unit if that family unit's not functioning, because you got to do what's best for the child." That sounds simple, but that took a **lot** of time. That was one of Jess's main projects when he went over there, to get that philosophy changed. Not only that—you had to change a lot of things in the courts and other places, too.

DePue: Yes, that's what I was thinking, and it's harder even to effect a change in the court system.

Edgar: Oh, yes. That's why when Anne Burke came on board, she helped a lot, because she came out of that Democratic background in Chicago and knew a lot of the judges. At that point, she was out of law school but had not been a judge yet. She had a specific interest in children issues. They had adopted some children. Very well thought of in Chicago; she was in the media a lot. For a Republican governor kind of under fire by the Chicago media, and an issue like that, it was ideal to get her—someone who was on the Democratic side, though she herself wasn't maybe as Democratic as her husband; someone who was well thought of, and this was her field. It was a big plus for our administration to be able to get her to come on. It was also a big plus to get Jess to come on, though he wanted to be director. He wanted to be director when I became governor, but I had had this policy that we were going to make changes and bring in new directors.[84] He eventually went over to Mental Health early on when we had some problems over there, and he did a very good job. He was a little reluctant, because things were going pretty well at Mental Health, and he was still working on that.

That took a lot of time, not only governmentally; it was also a lot of media attention, so you spent a lot of time—how do you handle this? It seemed like every other day there was another case; not as gruesome as the one about the mother when she hanged her child, but still, it seemed like every day they were finding a story in the papers you had to deal with, then you had to react to that. Some of those things, you really had very little control over, but the core of the problem was what we could deal with: we needed to have more caseworkers so they could reduce their caseload; they had to do a better job when they were assessing; and begin to change the philosophy, pull that child sooner rather than later. I think in the past the thought was we'll kind of give them the benefit of the doubt. Well, in some cases that was too late.

But then we also had to work on: if we take these children away from their parents, where are we going to put them? A Catholic charity? You had the—and

[84] During the 1990 campaign, this policy was part of the way Edgar distinguished himself from Governor Thompson, who had been in power for fourteen years. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, November 17, 2009, 9-10; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, July 23, 2009, 29-30. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

I'm blank right now. A Catholic priest had a children's home out in the north suburbs. A very good friend with Phil Rock, good guy.[85]

DePue: We can find that out for you.

Edgar: He was a guy who at that point could do no wrong, so he was a help to us because that's where we sent the children found living in squalor that the president talked about. He was a guy that would take these children. Catholic Charities would take these children. Also, you'd look for foster parents; that was always a mixed bag. You had some good, and you had some who were just in it for the money. You had to keep a check on those because you'd see abuses sometimes with the foster care. So there was a whole host of issues you had to deal with on that. I would say, in '93 that was the most taxing thing I had to deal with.

DePue: In an emotional way as well?

Edgar: Yes, any time something terrible happens to a child, I think people react much more than if it's to an adult or a senior or something like that.

DePue: Was this one of the issues that Brenda took an interest in as well?

Edgar: She had been involved in adoption, which is kind of tied into this to some extent. She did not get too involved in this, per se. She did do things with them. The one thing that I think we all became a lot more sensitive to is just, when you take a child from the family, that is disrupting that child, and where are you going to put that child?

She came up with the idea about the teddy bear, which became her trademark later when the Oklahoma City bombing occurred and made national news.[86] The thought was that a teddy bear apparently is something that you give a child—it's something they can hold onto. She came up with the idea that we'd have these teddy bears, and every child who was taken into custody of the state would get a teddy bear.

There's a great letter we got later from some worker in Children and Family Services, a veteran—had been there for many years. She wrote a letter to Brenda. It was toward the end of my term, and she wanted her to know she was in that first teddy bear thing. P.J. Huggabee—was that his name? It was made in Korea, because when we went to Korea a couple years later, she went to the plant to see where they made them. It was a deal she got with Marshall Fields. Every bear that somebody would buy at Marshall Fields, they would give a free bear to Children and Family Services, and those bears would go to these children. Anyway, this

[85] Rev. John Smyth was director of Maryville City of Youth—later known as Maryville Academy—in suburban Des Plaines, until he stepped down under fire in 2003. *Chicago Tribune*, December 14, 2003.

[86] Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols bombed the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. Brenda Edgar arranged with Cathy Keating, the First Lady of Oklahoma, to send several hundred P.J. Huggabee bears to the memorial service held in the wake of the bombing. Brenda Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 14, 2010, 65-68.

letter from this one caseworker was that she had thought this was the hokiest thing and just a PR political thing. She said that in no time at all, she had a few cases. She had one, a teenage girl, and that teenage girl told her how much that bear meant to her, that that was the first thing she really… She said that after a few months and going through some cases, she just did a 180-degree turn on it. So it did work; it did have that impact. That's what Brenda was involved in.

I can't remember the exact timetable, but sometime along in this is when they got the idea to do the bear thing. It's kind of like the budget. That was a crisis throughout my administration; I worried about the budget. I still worry about the budget even though I've been out for twelve years. Sometimes I think I'm the only one worrying about the budget. But there's no doubt we were much more sensitive after '93 to child welfare issues, and what can you do and how can you help these children? P.J. Huggabee was one of those outgrowths, and other things along the way.

DePue: Let's change directions a little bit. In early '93 you've given the State of the State address, you've done the budget address, but let's get some specifics on it. We don't need to talk about this too much, but again on the table is this discussion about the permanent one-fourth percent surcharge. Also this is a year when you've got this discussion about the granny tax, $6.30 per day for nursing home residents as a way to kind of fill the hole and respond to the demands of the growing Medicaid program.

Edgar: Well, we'd had that in place. That is what we put in place the year before. There was a huge controversy. In fact, we put it in place a little bit the first year to get the budget.[87] Then the second year, we had to do it in both hospitals and nursing homes. Hospitals never did like it. Nursing homes liked it because we used that to get a [federal] match, so they got a lot more money for it. The hospitals never were too crazy about it; eventually it kind of faded out for the hospitals but stayed for the nursing homes. I remember in '92 a huge battle getting that put in. I can't remember in '93, except I think the hospitals maybe got out of it in '93, and we left it on the nursing homes. At some point the hospitals got out of it. It affected the nursing homes' rates, which they worried about. I'll never forget one of the nursing home guys. I said, "Wouldn't you rather us give you lower rates but pay you on time?" and he said, "No, I'd rather have you keep my rates high, because that's how my loans are based. If you cut my rates, then they're going to call my notes because we're not going to have the cash flow coming in." (laughs) It was an interesting education for me on that.

The granny tax, again, was a tough thing. It was the lesser of two evils: those taxes you put on the beds versus if you didn't do it, then you'd lose a lot of money and they'd be in even worse shape.

[87] On the granny tax and hospital assessment program to raise more federal funds for Medicaid, see Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009, 37-41.

DePue: What was the political divide on the hospital tax?

Edgar: Suburban hospitals were very much opposed to it because they didn't have Medicaid patients, per se, and they had a lot of money.

DePue: So in other words, Republicans from the suburbs.

Edgar: Republicans, yes. In fact, in '92 my big battle was with Lee Daniels on that. Pate Philip kind of came along easier than Lee did, but I think Lee was on a hospital board out in one of the suburban hospitals. They were very much opposed to it because they had pretty deep pockets; they didn't really like that tax and they didn't care about the Medicaid rate as much as hospitals in Chicago. Some, like Mount Sinai, were almost 100 percent Medicaid, so they were much more supportive. It wasn't so much the Illinois Hospital Association, because they couldn't agree on anything; it was more those suburban hospitals, and they had a lot of clout with their legislators. So there were a lot of problems there.

But at some point—it might have been '93—we made a deal: the hospitals we could let go, but the nursing homes needed to stay. Most all the nursing homes wanted to leave it on. Now, they'd fight over how you were going to distribute the money. I'd always have battles. I think I talked before about the nursing homes in the Chicago area and the downstate nursing homes; they fought all the time. So I had a lot of the Republican legislators from downstate always opposed to what the Chicago nursing homes wanted, and the Democrats would be more sympathetic to the Chicago nursing homes. I'd sit there and try to broker some compromise, though I have to say the downstate nursing homes were a lot more difficult to deal with than the Chicago nursing homes were.

DePue: Because?

Edgar: Just the personalities. Personalities are a huge thing in government. (DePue laughs) I cannot stress enough—personalities, egos, often determine public policy.

DePue: That's probably a perfect segue to what I wanted to get into next anyway. The budget battle in '92 for fiscal year '93 was brutal, as you characterized yourself. This is not quite as brutal, but you still manage to get to July 11—

Edgar: Without a budget, yes.

DePue: —(laughs) before you have a budget. And you mentioned personalities. So let's take a step back and look at the personalities of the four party leaders in the legislature. I think the logical place to start then, and today as well, would be Mike Madigan.

Edgar: I always said Mike Madigan's the smartest guy in Springfield, and he was the smartest guy when I was there, so I'm saying he was a smart guy. You never (laughs) knew for sure where he might be, but once he said he was okay on something, you could take it to the bank. I mean, it was the most refreshing thing

you could hear when he said, "Yes, I agree with you"; then you knew you had the votes locked up in the House, at least.

DePue: Is that because he managed to control the House? Was he one of those guys who always knew the vote count?

Edgar: Oh, Mike Madigan knew the vote count better than anybody, yes.[88] And he could deliver. Now, some would say, "Well, did he control?" I'm sure a lot of his members probably didn't like voting the way they did, but they were more afraid of him than maybe people back home on some of those issues. He was always calculating; he was always thinking. Now, Lee Daniels was pretty good, too, but Madigan was a little better. Madigan had pretty good control, and he knew the issues, but you never knew for sure just exactly what moved him, outside of he wanted to keep control of the House. He was more conservative than I was on a lot of social issues. On fiscal matters, he was pretty conservative, though he was not going to be the leader on making cuts, because as he said, most of his members like to spend money.

He was a white ethnic member of the House caucus, which was getting to be more and more of a minority. You had a lot of women; you had a lot of minorities, particularly African Americans and some more Hispanics; you had downstaters. His type of legislator was not in the majority in the House caucus, so the fact he's held on as long, I think underscores his ability to figure out how to deal with all these different factions. He never was easy to get to agree. In fact, one time I told him, "You know, it seems like if I say black, you say white." He said, "Well, yes. I'm a Democrat, you're a Republican; I feel that's my responsibility," which kind of surprised me. You had to work to get him, but once you got him there he'd sit down; in the end he was a pretty reasonable guy to deal with, I always found.

Fast-forward: the last '94 election, they lose control and he's in a minority. I don't see him hardly for two years because he's just not a factor and he doesn't really care. They got back in control the last two years, and he made the comment to the press—then he told me too—he said, "I fought Edgar for four years and I lost. I can't beat him. I've learned that the governor has more of a bully pulpit and everything, so I'm going to work with him."[89] And the last two years, he worked with me. In fact, in many ways, he worked with me better than the two Republican leaders did and was a joy (laughs) to work with. There were some things we couldn't agree on, but most things we could. Once he was there, he was there; he didn't nickel and dime you and things like that.

DePue: We'll have an opportunity to talk much more about this later, but obviously the economy in the last few years you were governor was completely different from what you inherited to begin with.

[88] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 36-40.
[89] Madigan pledged to "run a very fair chamber" as part of a "new era of cooperation" between the parties. *Chicago Tribune*, November 7, 1996.

Edgar: Yes, but what was good about him… Often, though, I still had to keep the discipline. They wanted to go spend. Madigan, of the four leaders, was my best supporter on holding the line on spending.

DePue: Do you think Madigan was more motivated by his political philosophy, or was it more about the politics?

Edgar: Well, I don't know of anybody that I'd call political philosophy the leading thing. It's hard to divide those two. Politics and philosophy are intertwined.

DePue: But the thing you always hear about Madigan is that he manages to control that caucus. You've already said yourself, that's a pretty diverse caucus.

Edgar: Yes, but he has certain things. There's no doubt he's very sympathetic to the plaintiffs' bar, unions. There were some things you could not get him on, but there were other things that he would be… It was interesting—this was later on—they did a rewrite of the public utility laws in Illinois. It was something that really came from Commonwealth Edison, the biggest utility, but the legislators like to say it came from them. It didn't come from us; it came from the legislature and had been given to them by the lobbyists from Commonwealth Edison. But interesting—Madigan really got into this one, and he had no politics, because he was against what Commonwealth Edison wanted; they usually used to be pretty much allied with city hall in Chicago. But when he was just out of college, his first job he worked at the Commerce Commission, so he had an interest and he had an understanding. He read the bills and all that. It amazed me, because I don't remember any issue where I remember him—there was no politics in this, there was no this is going to help the Democrats win seats or whatever; it was just he had personal feelings about public utility regulation because he had worked at the Commerce Commission. That was unusual for any of them, really, because usually it would be, I've got to look at what my members need and what's it take to… The major thing they all cared about was, how can we get control or keep control of our chamber? I mean, that's a hundred miles before political philosophy.

DePue: That's been the criticism lately. With every year the new budget fight is, we don't want to make a commitment that would be too drastic in this particular year because my members have to get reelected; let's wait and see how that works out.

Edgar: Yes, but you could do that if the two parties would work together. You'd make what they call a structured roll call. You'd figure out the guys in both parties that don't come from… You only got a few members in each party that comes from the swing districts, the targeted districts. If you get the two parties to agree, then you put together a structured roll call, and the guys who really have the tough races don't have to make the tough votes. **But** you got to get both parties in. Unfortunately what's happened, which did not happen in the nineties when I was governor, is that the parties won't get together. They'd rather fight it out. We haven't talked about the other three leaders, but all four of the leaders that I dealt with—at least particularly in the first two years, and Emil Jones, when he came

on—they all kind of knew that in the end of the day, we had to come to some consensus, some agreement; we had to pass something that looked like a balanced budget, we had to deal with these issues.

DePue: But isn't that the role of the governor, to finally get to that point and bring them together?

Edgar: Well, the governor's the guy who's going to be left holding the bag if they don't do it, so he's got to broker that, to some extent. But all four of those guys—Pate Philip, who could be (laughs) just difficult as could be; Lee Daniels, who was very smart and could be somewhat devious; Madigan, who often was devious (laughs) and very smart; and whether it was Phil Rock, who was very committed, or even Emil Jones, who was much more political—they all knew in the end they had to work out something; they couldn't just stonewall it. Now, there's no doubt as governor I kept the pressure on them. I knew I had to have them. We always, except for two years, had split government, so we knew everybody had to be part of the solution. But you could make the tough choices. Actually you could raise a tax if you had to, but you had to have both parties in agreement, because you had to have that structured roll call.

Only one time I can think of—Mike Madigan passed the temporary increase in the income tax in 1989 with just Democratic votes, but that's the only time any kind of major tax increase has ever passed, in my time in Springfield, that hasn't been bipartisan. We're not here to talk about 2010's problems, but there's absolutely no way, absolutely no way, one party's going to get us out of this mess; it's going to have to be bipartisan, and that's what's lacked the last few years. I blame a lot of that on the majority. That's also one-party rule, but they ignored the minority. All of a sudden last session they wanted to raise taxes. The Republicans said, wait a minute. We haven't been part of this. We're not going to raise taxes. Madigan realized, well, I don't want to do it; even though the Senate Democrats had passed a tax bill, he realized he didn't want to pass it without Republicans because it'd just be a Democrat thing.

All four of the leaders thought about control of their chamber and all that. They did have different… There's no doubt Pate Philip, probably of the four leaders I dealt with, had more personal philosophical positions than the others. I'll never forget my first session. I think maybe we talked about this. We're in the overtime session, and we're trying to make the temporary tax permanent, and Pate Philip is up making a speech on the Senate floor about how we need to make this permanent because teachers need decent pay. I wanted to get a tape of that because he doesn't believe any of that; he did it because that was our position. He was going along with me because I had the reapportionment, redistricting bill on my desk, (laughs) and he didn't know if I was going to sign it or veto it. (DePue laughs) I'm being a little facetious here. Philosophically, he'd have liked to have that tax go away, and he didn't really care about teachers; he thought they were overpaid, if you listen to Pate. I had a brother who was a teacher who used to beat on him a lot, but it didn't matter. On welfare stuff, he was terrible, but in the end he'd vote for the budget. He

always was against taxes—he fought me later on on the income tax increase—but he'd spend money if it was good for his district or some of his key members. Even Pate Philip, who I would say—of all the leaders I deal with—probably had more personal or philosophical instincts and followed those; even he, in the end, would have [said] to keep control or get control of the Senate was the most important thing.

DePue: Since we're talking about Pate Philip, part of the line on him that I've heard is that once you get to a particular point in the year, Pate's getting anxious to get out of the vicinity.

Edgar: Yes. At the end of the session, Madigan always knew that if he could draw it long enough, Pate wanted to go home and would make a deal. He'd get out of there because he wanted to go up to Wisconsin where he had a place. We always had to worry about Pate at the end of the session. Sometimes it was good because we wanted to get an agreement, but sometimes he'd go make bad agreements because he just wanted to leave. Madigan knew that. In '92, why he got Pate on board when they gave me a hard time was because Pate wanted to go up to Wisconsin; he'd been stuck in July and part of August the year before and he didn't want to do it again. Those kinds of things would motivate Pate more than anybody else. I mean, there's no doubt.

Pate was a very good leader for his members; he really cared about his members. It was really hard to pull Senate Republicans away from the caucus position because they didn't want to make Pate mad. Pate would go out of his way to protect his members. He would agree to things he didn't like; we'll talk a few sessions later about when we did get tax increases in 1997 for education. We didn't get the income tax, but we got a lot of other taxes that Pate was against; in the end he did it because he knew it would help his targeted districts, so he wanted to work out a compromise. That was not because Pate wanted to give money to poor school districts—because they're not in DuPage County, (DePue laughs) that's all he cared about—but because he had members who came from targeted districts that he wanted to protect. He wanted to help, and they were getting a lot of pressure. So I think if I was a member I would say, "Gee, Pate's pretty good because he looks out for our interest." But he sometimes could be difficult when you were just trying to get basic things you had to get done in government; he would not want to do it from a philosophical point of view.

Lee Daniels, on the other hand, understood those things you had to do.

DePue: Okay, now we're going back to Republicans in the House.

Edgar: Yes, Lee Daniels. One of the things, you got to think a little bit of their backgrounds. Pate Philip had worked for—oh, they always used to call him a bread man—he'd delivered bread originally. But it was—what's the expensive kind of bread? Aw, shoot. But he'd come out of that background. He was not a lawyer; he had not spent time in downtown Chicago working. Lee Daniels was a lawyer; he

worked at a law firm downtown in Chicago. So though he was from the suburbs and espoused all the points of view of a suburbanite, he still spent a lot of his time downtown dealing with the Chicago community and understood some of those things had to be done. And also wanted to do some of those things because it was important that folks downtown thought highly of him—as opposed to Pate, who could care less, because he's out in the suburbs.

There would be issues like the airport, a big battle. In fact, that started in '92 and continued. Pate, really all he cared about—he was just mad at O'Hare. Pate and Lee both came from the same district, which made that relationship a little difficult, and it gave an awful lot of emphasis to certain issues that were very parochial.[90] One of them was the airport, O'Hare. They were always mad at O'Hare, and the third airport just consumed Pate. Now, Lee, on the other hand, was always willing to make a deal on it because he understood O'Hare had to function. But he also understood his district and some of the people in his district felt otherwise, so he'd never be out front, but he was always a much easier guy to talk to about airport issues than Pate was. I think part of that had to do with just their backgrounds and where they spent time when they weren't in Springfield.

But Lee, I always said I thought he was a very intelligent person. He probably just wasn't quite as good as Madigan, which is unfortunate for Lee because any other time, he'd (laughs) have probably been top dog. He always had to be in the shadow of Madigan, and I think that always bothered him, I think bothered him to a point where—too much. I always used to think, don't worry about Madigan so much, and maybe he'd get uptight about that. Like in leaders' meetings a lot of times, he wouldn't talk a lot because he didn't want to say anything in front of Madigan. Now, Pate—

DePue: Give anything away to Madigan.

Edgar: Yes, where Pate would just babble all the time. Now, then, when Rock was there, Phil—

DePue: Phil Rock.

Edgar: Phil Rock was a very good government kind of guy, but he had troops that didn't necessarily always follow, so he wasn't as able as Madigan or as Lee. If you finally got Lee's word he was going to do something, he did it.

DePue: Does that mean that for a while he could be a little bit slipperier?

Edgar: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Even though he's a Republican and I'm a Republican, didn't mean he was going to agree with me. No, these guys all—you had to

[90] Philip represented the 23rd Senatorial District, which contains the 45th and Daniels's 46th Representative Districts. Brown, Edgar. On the politics around a planned third airport south of Chicago, and Philip's opposition even to this, see Kanter, December 29, 2009, 49-56. Also see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 23, 2010, 42-50; Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 109-119.

(laughs) deal with them. Now, at times, it was to their advantage to be with me because if I looked good, it helped them because we were Republicans. Just because they were Republicans didn't mean that they were always going to be on board, and I'd probably spent as much time worrying about them as I did the Democrats.

DePue: We should mention here—we're getting to Phil Rock. The first two years, he's the Senate president. Now we're into '93, Pate Philip is president, and so he's minority leader in the Senate.

Edgar: Well, Rock's gone.

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: Emil Jones is now the leader. Emil was kind of completely different. I mean, he's African American. I don't think anybody, when he first came to the legislature, ever thought he'd be one of the leaders, but he'd been there a long time and he was kind of a compromise. If I remember right, there was a bunch of the senators that wanted it and nobody wanted these senators, so Emil was kind of a compromise that some of them got behind.

DePue: Because he had the black caucus behind him?

Edgar: He had blacks, and that helped, but he also had some whites who would rather have him than one of the other whites. If they couldn't be leader then they'd rather have Emil because they all thought they could control Emil. I had my difficulties with Emil. Of all the four leaders, he was the one I was the least able to deal with. I will say Emil probably turned out to be a lot shrewder than a lot of those guys who voted for him thinking they could control him. I think Emil had his own game plan, and no matter what those guys who voted for him thought that they controlled him, I don't think they did. But I never had a good feel for just how that worked.

Now, even though Pate would agree to things down in the governor's office, sometimes that didn't mean that happened up in the Senate. Always with Pate, it was like who were the last guys that talked to him. Madigan and Daniels, once they agreed, that was it; I didn't have to renegotiate with them. But many a times, I'd have to go up to Pate's caucus because he'd have gone back to his caucus and they didn't like what the deal was. He'd disavow the deal (laughter) and make me come up and explain it, and he'd sit over in a corner like, well, I didn't know anything about that.

Fortunately, what helped with Pate—his chief of staff was Carter Hendren. Carter Hendren had worked on my first campaign when I lost back in 1974, and had been my campaign manager when I first got elected secretary of state, then my first race for governor. He is political, but he's also a good government guy. He understands certain things have to happen. The Senate Republicans, I have to say, worry about that [political] stuff more than maybe the House Republicans to some extent; sometimes that gets them in trouble because they get off on tangents. We see Senate Republicans sometimes get off on these tangents, and it's just not practical.

Carter helped a lot with Pate because Pate liked Carter. Pate was one of these guys, he liked people, he was loyal to people, and his staff liked him—more so than maybe Lee's staff liked him. I don't think there was quite the bond between some of Lee's staff and him than between some of his members and him. I think there was a lot more of a bond toward Pate, for all of his (laughs) difficulties—

DePue: I've interviewed Carter, and he had high praise for Senator Philip.

Edgar: Yes, he worked for him for a long time. They both retired about the same time. But Pate, from a governor's point of view in trying to do things in a state that's not all Republican, can be very frustrating. To Thompson, he was extremely frustrating; to me he was frustrating. It was always interesting: he and Thompson got to be good buddies. He'd travel with Thompson a lot. He fought me, but after I left and Ryan came in, he put my picture up on the wall, talking about I was the best governor. It was (DePue laughs) once you're out. But because I was fiscally conservative, Pate actually always said that philosophically, he probably agreed with me as much as any Republican governor he'd dealt with. But on social issues we weren't necessarily in lockstep.

I didn't have the best of relations with Emil. It started out—I remember it was in '93. Emil was new. I think it was right about the time I had my gallbladder out.[91] I had Emil over for lunch, and I thought we pretty much had an outline of agreement—I'd talked with the Republicans—on a budget. Madigan was okay on it. I'd talked to Emil about it, there were certain things, and finally we had this lunch and kind of worked out. I said, "I can't say 100 percent, but I think this is going to be the agreement." This was before July one. So Emil went back and told his members this is what the deal was going to be. Well, then the Republicans went south on me, which was not the first time or the last time. (laughs) We didn't have a thing, but what we thought they'd agreed to, they changed their mind. Well, it wasn't me; it was the Senate Republicans, in fact, who had done it. I think it was probably one of these where Pate went back to his caucus and they wouldn't buy it. So Emil always thought I had lied to him. That was our first session, and I think from then on we just never hitched very well. He was much more of an old-time—he was looking for jobs and that.

DePue: You mentioned early on, when you first mentioned Emil Jones, that he had a game plan. What would you say that game plan was?

Edgar: He had a game plan. I mean, there were certain things he cared about; he had certain constituents he worried about. Up till when he left, he was always trying to get a casino license for some buddy of his down there. There were certain things he cared about. The Chicago Teachers Union: a major part of that were African Americans and people on the South Side who were part of his political apparatus, so he was always very sympathetic to teachers' issues. Probably of all the four leaders he was by far the most sympathetic to teachers' union. Madigan would go hot and

[91] Edgar underwent surgery June 18, 1993. *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1993.

cold on the teacher stuff, but Emil would—anything for the teachers, kind of. So, he had certain things like that. It never struck me that he would deviate from those, because some of these guys who had elected him thought they could control him. I was as frustrated with him as I was with Pate, but I always felt like in the end, he made his decision; nobody was telling him, his membership, and that was different than what a lot of folks thought was going to happen when he came in as leader.

DePue: The public perception of Emil Jones then, I would suspect—and it certainly is today, based on listening to him speak—was he's not the most articulate person out there.

Edgar: No, no. He's much smarter than he sounds, there's no doubt about that. One of the reasons he didn't get along with me: I didn't trade a lot on jobs and things like that. He got along with George Ryan very well because they traded. And he was the only guy that got along with Blagojevich, because he got a lot of things. So that was kind of that old… That wasn't necessarily the way the other three worked as much at all, and it wasn't necessarily my style, so we just weren't that close.

DePue: Talking about Emil Jones and talking about Madigan—those are both Chicago Democrats. Their relationship with Daley? You mentioned patronage. That's very much part of what that machine was and still is, in many respects, about.

Edgar: Well, getting their own patronage out of the state is what they wanted; they didn't have to go to the mayor to get things. That's why they wanted to get things out of Springfield. I didn't do much of that; George did a lot more of that than I did, with Emil particularly. I don't know what Emil's relationship with Daley was, necessarily.

Madigan, it was more of an equal relationship. This wasn't the old man; this was the kid that he had roomed with at Con-Con and kind of looked out for and got mad at over something that happened during the Thompson administration with the sales tax repeal bill.[92] I remember Madigan was just furious with Daley because Daley came into Madigan's ward to try to get people to put pressure on Madigan.

DePue: This is Ritchie Junior.

Edgar: Yes. So, now, they get along—I mean, Madigan will work with Daley—but I think Daley knows that he's dealing with an equal more than just somebody under it. That's such a change from the way it was when his dad was the mayor. There was nobody in Springfield who was even close to being an equal; they all took their orders. Madigan does not take orders. He'll listen and he'll go along a lot of times, but you have to convince him, as far as Daley has to.

[92] Con-Con refers to the Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1970, which a number of future Illinois political leaders attended. For Madigan rooming with Richard M. Daley at the convention, and his later anger at Daley over a sales tax measure, see Jim Edgar, June 10, 2009, 40-42.

DePue: Talking about these Four Tops, which is what they're oftentimes termed, there are some very important, fundamental things (laughs) to understand. We had talked about why these four gentlemen are so powerful before, when we were talking about the Cutback Amendment and cumulative voting and things like that, but I think it's worth bringing it up again from the perspective of the nineties when you were there.[93] Why did they seem to have so much power versus the other members?

Edgar: Because they controlled the staff; they had the campaign money—they raised the money. Those are two very important things. They made assignments for committees. But the campaign money is probably the most important thing.

DePue: When you say they controlled the staff, does each member of the House and the Senate have their own staff?

Edgar: No. They might have somebody back in the district, but that's a clerical kind of person.

DePue: How big a staff would the Four Tops have?

Edgar: All the staff in their caucus. I don't know what they're up to now, but you're probably talking fifty, sixty people, and all the committee staff—all those people are controlled by whoever the chief of staff is under that leader. So that staff and that information and that assistance are very important. A lot of that assistance doesn't have anything to do with government; it has a lot to do with politics. You don't want to get crossway with your leader.

DePue: How much does that have to do with what Arrington had established during the timeframe you were with him?

Edgar: That was the first staffing; to some extent that was part of Arrington's strength too—the staff. We did not do as political things as probably have been done since, or we had to take a leave. We did some political stuff during my administration, but much more of that went on in the legislature than ever went on in the executive branch of government.

DePue: The other thing that you oftentimes hear, in terms of why the Four Tops are so powerful, is because that's where the money for campaigns comes.

Edgar: Yes, as I said earlier, campaign money. That's probably the main thing. They're going to put money in particularly targeted districts. But it's not just the targeted-district people; it's the guys that come out of safe districts who are also very

[93] For Edgar's views on cumulative voting and the passage and impact of the Cutback Amendment, see his interviews with Mark DePue for May 28, 2009, 52-56; June 9, 2009, 66-74; and June 10, 2009, 93-94. Other members of his administration also shared their opinion of this important development in Illinois governance: Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, March 4, 2009, 38-41; Mike McCormick, interview by Mark DePue, July 8, 2010, 22 and 43-52; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, June 4, 2009, 20-26; Kirk Dillard, interview by Mark DePue, September 29, 2009, 61-63; Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 10, 2009, 41-43; Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, August 18, 2009, 32-32.

beholden to the leader, because of committee assignments, maybe they get put in leadership because that helps their pay and their pension. Not that anybody in leadership has any real say; it's more of the prestige, but it also helps their pension. You got to understand, that's always been a major priority for the legislators: their pension.

DePue: From the perspective of a governor who has to work with the legislature, is the power that's concentrated in the Four Tops a good thing or a bad thing?

Edgar: Some days it's a good thing, and some days it's a bad thing. (DePue laughs) If you're going to do something really tough, like it's really going to raise taxes, if you can get the four leaders to agree, you can get it done. If you had to deal with each member individually, I think it'd make it very hard to do—I don't think you would ever do it. Even back when Ogilvie got the income tax passed, when Arrington did in the Senate, it was the leaders—of course, back then, the Democrats pretty much did what Daley told them to do. You needed to have some control, because if you had to deal with 177 individuals on tough issues, it'd be almost impossible.

Now there are times, though, when one of those four leaders can just say, "No, I'm not going to do it," especially a presiding officer. Something that's developed—it wasn't as true when I first came to Springfield—is you won't call a bill. I mean, bills automatically got called; maybe you called them at midnight, but still they got called. Today, unless the leader wants to call a bill, they won't call a bill. The same thing when I was governor. I had that problem with Pate Philip on the income tax. He didn't want to call it. I had the votes; I could have passed it. He wouldn't call the motion to discharge a committee. I had the votes to discharge the committee; he wouldn't call it. They finally worked out something for horse racing, give them slots at the tracks. John Cullerton just didn't want to do it and said he wouldn't call it, so nothing happened on it. That wasn't true back when I first came to Springfield. That's something that's evolved, and that puts even more power in the leader's hand, the presiding officer, particularly. You can have the votes, but if the guy won't call the bill, you can't pass it. And they won't call bills. So that's part of the leader's power, too.

DePue: When you first got to town in the late sixties—we had great conversations about the role that Arrington had to professionalize the legislature—legislators did that part-time and had their own job and their own careers to pursue as well. They weren't in Springfield all the time.[94] By the nineties, I would suspect that had changed a lot as well. How did that change working with the legislature?

Edgar: They were much more conscious about reelection because that was their job in many cases. When I first came, a lot of the Democrats, particularly in Chicago, all had jobs with city hall or county, so they were called "double dippers." If they lost the election, they still were going to have a job. Downstaters weren't quite that—

[94] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 22, 2009, 79-80.

though they usually had jobs back home, a lot of them came out of banking or insurance, or some were with labor unions.

DePue: A couple farmers.

Edgar: You had a few farmers. They were getting to be fewer and fewer, or they were pretty well-off farmers. These weren't dirt farmers; these were almost gentleman farmers at this point. A lot of the downstate guys had money, especially in the Senate. There were a lot of pretty well-off guys there. So again, this wasn't their whole life; they didn't need this. Today, this is kind of their whole life, so they're much more concerned about reelection.

Also, when you had those double-dippers, if Mayor Daley said, "You're for this bill," you're for that bill. And party discipline meant more. The downstaters—there's patronage and things like that that they could get from the governor, so you had a lot more things to work with. But that had all changed by the nineties; very little of that was left. What you had to work with was, I'm a Republican, you're a Republican; if my numbers are good enough that you want me to come campaign for you, you occasionally have got to help me out. Or, you want me to look good—because we still had straight party voting for most of the time I was governor—that helps the rest of the ticket. Because if the governor screws up, the whole ticket's going to be penalized, or the whole party.

So that's a little bit of what a governor had working for him, but not as much as back when I first came to Springfield. The four leaders—kind of the new patronage, as I said, was campaign money, it was calling bills, doing these things that a leader could do or not do, and members were dependent on them. When I first came, especially in the House where you had cumulative voting, you had very few partisan roll calls. Downstate Democrats were always cutting deals with the Republicans. You had the West Side bloc in the House—the Republicans who were reputed to represent the mob and were all Democrats, they were put in by Democrats because there weren't enough Republicans even in the primaries to matter.[95] You had all these factions, so it was a lot harder for the leaders to have the control they had.

DePue: But talking to people, especially the people that are part of this particular project, the Jim Edgar oral history project, those cumulative voting days were the good old days, and "Boy, I wish we still had those days around."

Edgar: Well, it's like people wishing I was still governor; it's the good old days. In the past, it always looks better. I wasn't a big fan of the cumulative voting; I really thought I would much rather be in single-member district. I would have to say

[95] See Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 28, 2009, 45 and 57-59, for his discussion of the West Side Bloc. Until the Cutback Amendment restructured the system of legislative districts in Illinois in 1982, cumulative voting guaranteed minority party representation in the state legislature. Thus, well before the term "Republican-in-name-only" was popularized by conservative activists in the 2010 election, the Chicago Democratic machine would slate candidates to run as Republicans in the city's West Side districts.

overall I think cumulative voting probably worked a little better, but it wasn't perfect. It had its pitfalls, but we kind of only remember the good.

The whole problem, the big difference, is leadership and responsibility. As I said, the four leaders I dealt with—I don't think we necessarily liked each other, we wouldn't want to live by each other, but we all knew in the end we had to come to some consensus, we had to agree to something. The governor's got to be the driving force, there's no doubt of that. That doesn't happen today. I just don't see that. It's all like, I don't have to do anything, let me just hold out. Back then, I don't know if it was, I like to think because everybody was responsible. I'm not sure, maybe they were afraid if they didn't, they would get really in trouble politically. Today, there's no concern about, we got to do something responsible. But again, even with the frustrations and problems I had with the four leaders sometimes, and members of my own party, everybody knew in the end we had to reach some agreement. It might take us an extra month, and we'd say nasty things about each other, but in the end we had to agree to something, and that was the process. That scene has gone away, which is unfortunate.

DePue: It's almost impossible to talk about without mentioning or referencing what's going on today. Blagojevich had, and Quinn certainly has, a legislature that is dominated by the Democrats, both House and Senate. You didn't have that except for two years; you had a split legislature. Talk about the implications of that.

Edgar: Oh, I think you get the best government with a split government, because to make the tough decisions, at least in Illinois, you got to have both parties. One party doesn't have enough votes or enough courage. Particularly today, the mess we're in, it's (laughs) going to take a lot of courage. I'm not sure if both parties have enough courage. The other thing about a split government is everybody knows you got to compromise; you can't pass something, because the other party's got a check on you someplace. So everybody goes into the discussions knowing they've got to compromise and also knowing they can go back to their members and say, "Hey, we didn't have an alternative. I don't like this, but I've got to deal with Madigan," or, "I've got to deal with Philip. We can't go home until we get this worked out, and I've got to deal with these guys." So when you have a split government, I think it's much easier to get a compromise or consensus. It's also much easier to do the difficult things when you can put together that structured roll call, as we used to do.

But if it's one party, one party doesn't want to take the blame for it, and the minority party's usually left out, so they're going to say, "Why should I come in and rescue you guys? You're in charge." You could have one-party rule, one party have control of everything, if that one party would reach out all the time with the other party, but that just doesn't happen. It doesn't happen nationally—we watched it with Bush, we're now watching with Obama—and it doesn't happen in Springfield, unfortunately. Now, back when you had cumulative voting in the House, even if you had control of the House, you didn't have control of the House. I remember Ogilvie had control of the House and the Senate and the governorship. Well, he didn't have control of the House. He could pass things out of the Senate,

but he couldn't pass any major things out of the House because the Democrats could always pull off some votes. That meant you had to compromise. Today, unfortunately, with one party in control, almost overwhelming control—just one or two votes in the House of having the three fifths they need to pass a lot—I think it creates an atmosphere where it's really hard to get a consensus between the two parties. As I said, to do the tough things, the real meaningful things, it takes usually a bipartisan roll call.

DePue: Just as an example, in the newspaper today you read about why the legislature wasn't able to reach an agreement on pension payments, which is always this albatross that's hanging out there. The headline—I can't remember if it was Quinn or somebody—blamed the Republicans for not being able to do that. I'm thinking, the Democrats have a majority!

Edgar: Yes. Of course, that takes a three-fifths vote, to borrow. But yes. You know, this really all goes back to last year. I think the Democrats made a strategic mistake—particularly in the House. The Senate—Cullerton was working pretty good with…

DePue: Radogno?

Edgar: Radogno. But in the House, Madigan just wouldn't have anything to do with Cross.[96] Then it came time to do taxes, and he wanted a bipartisan vote. Cross had been treated like a stepchild, so he wasn't about ready to go in there and help Madigan. Unfortunately, I think that's why you need a strong governor: to maybe overcome the ego or the personality conflicts or just the conflicts you're going to have between the legislative leaders. You got a Speaker and you got a minority leader in the House. They both want to be Speaker, so there's going to be times when you need some neutral, some other person to come down and say, "Guys, we got to get together," whether it's the mayor of Chicago or it's the governor of the state. Now, this mayor doesn't get involved; it's not like his dad. The governor's got to be the person. Unfortunately, the last two governors—I mean, Ryan would get involved, but it wasn't too tough; what he wanted to do is spend money. But these last two guys, even if they wanted to, they haven't shown an inclination; they wanted to get in there and get things. Quinn might try, but he hasn't been elected, and I just don't think he's made out to be governor. I think he's a better bomb thrower than he's a bomb catcher.

DePue: You had plenty of opportunities where you would have to sit down with the Four Tops. I'm wondering how the geography of the thing played out. Was it better for them to come to the governor's mansion or the governor's office in the capitol building, or you to go to them?

Edgar: They always came to me; the four leaders would come down and meet with the governor. When I had been legislative liaison, we didn't do that. I'd go and meet with the four leaders, and we'd meet in different offices. The governor didn't get

[96] At the time of this interview, Christine Radogno (R-Lemont) was the Senate Republican leader, and Tom Cross (R-Oswego) was the House Republican leader.

involved. He might meet with them individually, but that wasn't the way it was done then. That changed after I left the legislative office in the eighties, where the governor had them in and everything had to be done that way. Before, it was done more by shuttle diplomacy. Occasionally you'd have the four leaders down. I think back to Ogilvie's time, occasionally you'd have them down, but most everything was done kind of one-on-one. I can't think of any time that I ever went to the leaders and met all the leaders at their place. Sometimes I'd have them over to the mansion; usually we had them at the office.

DePue: But it's the power of the office, and you can at least to a certain extent say, "This is nonpartisan; this is the people's office."

Edgar: Well, it's also—the House would say, "Why do we have to go the Senate?" and then the Senate minority might say, "Why do we have to go to the majority office?" It was just the governor's office was where it had always been. There would be times I might go see an individual member. Madigan always was pretty good. He always says, "No, no, you never come to see me; I'll come to see you." Now, (laughs) sometimes he wouldn't come to see me when I wanted him. (DePue laughs) Occasionally I'd go see Daniels, I'd go see Pate. I don't think I was ever up to see Emil. I can't remember. I don't know if I ever went to Rock, either; he'd come down. Rock didn't get hung up on that stuff. One time I had Rock down, we watched horse racing when we were in the overtime. I had my staff running bets for him out at the OTB. Unfortunately he lost on the bets, and it didn't help any (laughs) on getting things done.

DePue: That brings up the differences in personality between somebody like Governor Thompson and yourself in the way you guys conducted business.

Edgar: Oh, yes. That was part of the reason I had Rock down to watch the races, because the story is always how Rock would come down, they'd open a bottle of whatever they would be drinking, and they'd work things out. Well, nobody could open a bottle with me; a Pepsi doesn't usually do that for you. (DePue laughs) Madigan and I, though, probably got along more because he's not that way. In some ways Madigan and I, probably personality-wise, were much more alike than any of the other leaders. In fact, he'd come down and have lunch with me. He was an easy guy to have lunch. He'd have an apple; that's about all he'd eat.

DePue: It's all part of the discipline the man has.

Edgar: Yes. But there's no doubt, even though Pate would get mad at Thompson, Thompson was pretty good at wining and dining him, and that just wasn't my forte. I never did encourage the leaders to go with me on my foreign trips. I did not want (laughter) to be trapped someplace. Yes, there was no doubt. George Ryan was much more to their liking in that regard. Of course, he came out of the legislature; that was his forte. That just was not mine. That was an obstacle, there's no doubt about that. But in the end, we got things done pretty well. As far as them looking at me, if my poll numbers were good enough, they'd get along with me. And George

Ryan is a classic example. Oh, they were so glad to get George in; he was one of them and he was going to give them jobs, and he did all this stuff for them. Once his numbers went down, they distanced themselves. The key to that place still is, if they think you're politically stronger than they are, then that gives you a big… But the personality thing is important. The other thing—they need to think, one, you know what you're talking about; two, you're leveling with them. If you ever lie—that's what really destroyed Blagojevich, I think, particularly with Madigan, because he lied to him, and you don't lie to Madigan.

DePue: That happened very early in his administration.

Edgar: Yes. And if they think they can trust you. Madigan and I always had a feeling that we could trust each other. We didn't agree, but if somebody said something, we knew we could take that to the bank. I think that helped a lot.

DePue: We've spent an awful lot of time talking about this, but this is (laughs) a fascinating subject.

Edgar: To me, this is. As I look back, I was probably fortunate, because in the end they all knew we had to come to some agreement, even though we didn't like it. The governor has to be the driving force to get that done. A lot of that's done staff-to-staff, but it's also in the end figuring out how you move that leader. A big help to us with Pate was Carter. Daniels was more just dealing with Daniels. Madigan probably came to trust my staff as much as his staff at the end, on budget stuff and things. The Senate Democrats were always a little different. We'll talk about later in '94 when Madigan had to take Emil Jones into another room and convince him they had to agree on the budget. Sometimes they would be kind of the odd duck out. But for most all the time I was governor, except for the first two years, they were in the minority, so they weren't in a position where they could block something that much.

DePue: Let's change gears here a little bit and talk about the gallbladder surgery.

Edgar: I'd had the heart problems in September, October of '92; as a result I went on a diet and lost a lot of weight. Well, come to find out, if you lose a lot of weight quick, you can cause your gallbladder (laughs) to act up. I'd been out traveling, I came home, and the next morning I felt like I had the flu. I didn't have the pains of the gallstones or anything; I just felt like I had the flu. So I went to see a doctor. The doctor ran some tests and said, "It could be your gallbladder." I said, "My gallbladder? That doesn't make any sense at all." He said, "No, sometimes…" So they ran me over to the hospital, they checked me—it was my gallbladder. We were a little conscious of—I'd had the heart problem, now I'm going to have this—people are going to think, this guy's falling apart. Fortunately we were about two years just right on gallbladder surgery. They changed the way the surgery was done. My brother had gallbladder surgery. The old way was they'd cut you open, and you'd just be miserable for two or three weeks. Now they have the arthroscopic or whatever—

DePue: Arthroscopic surgery?

Edgar: Yes. And I was in and out in a day, so it really wasn't a huge thing. The only drawback was they do put you under, so that means you get tired, and it takes you a while to get over that. I remember we had the press (laughs)—they worked on the press conference. They even had my heart surgeon over saying, this has nothing to do with the heart, and there's no problem, and all this and that. It was pretty routine. If I hadn't been governor, I'm sure I'd have been an outpatient, but (laughs) since I was the governor they kept me overnight. The reason I remember the time was the Bulls were in the playoffs. It wasn't the finals; it was the preliminary playoffs. They came from behind and Jordan made some phenomenal—I remember just jumping up; I think I was actually sitting up in my room.[97] Everything held, so I figured I was in pretty good shape, because if there'd have been any problem down there in my… (DePue laughs)

I went home, but I was still—every time they put me under, it takes me a while to… Usually I'll get tired in the afternoon for about a week or so after that, so they just told me to hang out at the mansion for a few days. I had the leaders over and had a meeting. This leads into the Emy story. I remember it was a beautiful day; I think I might have even met outside with them. When the weather was nice, sometimes I'd have people over and we'd have dinner on the patio at the mansion; it was a nice place just to be outside. They all left. Of course, the press corps was all over at the gate because they knew the leaders were in to see me, and they're all there. So they all were trying to get at me, and I said, "Oh, come on in." I'm dressed casual, I'm on the driveway of the mansion, and they all rush in. I have my two dogs. One was pretty much a Golden. The other was half-Golden and half-Samoyed; she was a white dog. Her name was Emy, and she was known as First Dog because she was the first one I had. These dogs are around people all the time, but she loved me. I said, "It's the only blonde female that ever felt that way about me." (DePue laughs) She was <u>my</u> dog. Well, these reporters all came up, and this one reporter was dressed in all black. I think I told the incident about when we had the demonstrators in the end of '91 and early '92, when we were cutting the budget for the third time and had all the welfare recipients who were… Somebody had grabbed Emy and had lipstick around her and all that.[98]

DePue: Yes.

Edgar: We're not sure who it was or whatever, but we do know that anybody who was an African American or dressed in black, Emy did not care for. We always wondered if it was one of those [demonstrators], because they were 99 percent African American—it might have been. Because she always had a tendency, anybody in black. So this one reporter who was with public radio came up, and she had a black turtleneck and black leotards. Even though it was spring, (laughs) she was still

[97] The night of Edgar's surgery, the Bulls lost the fifth game of their NBA championship series against the Phoenix Suns. Two nights later, Michael Jordan led a fourth-quarter comeback as the Bulls won their third consecutive title. *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, 1993.
[98] Jim Edgar, April 23, 2010, 29-30.

dressed kind of… She had a microphone, radio, and she thrust the microphone at me. There was a ledge; Emy was sitting on the ledge, and she was fine. Emy lunged for this girl's throat, and I just grabbed her at the last minute. I said, "No, Emy!" She had never done that, never done it since, but she was convinced this person in black was trying to hurt me, and she was going to get this person. And she went right for the throat.

Anyway, I got her off. (laughs) About two, three days later—I knew it was late in the session because we had a night session—Brenda brings the dogs over. It was a late session, and they're bringing dinner over, so Brenda just brings the dogs over to my office. The press corps is all sitting outside the door, and here come the dogs. Brenda said she had never seen the press corps move as fast as they spread. Nobody wanted to get around Emy. (laughter) They tell me the story, too, about this. That night, the public radio feed throughout the state was—no introduction—all of a sudden you hear a voice that sounds like the governor of the state of Illinois yelling, "No, Emy. No, no, don't do that!" (DePue laughs) This girl—I forget her name, she went on to St. Louis—sent Emy over a Christmas gift, and got to be good friends with Emy. She came over, but she never wore black. (laughter)

That's what I remember the most about the gallbladder: I was at the mansion that day and after those leaders' meeting. And as I said, the press… Emil Jones, who wasn't big on dogs either—I remember it was that same session—was over one night. We're in a meeting, four leaders meeting in my office, and he says, "I need to make a call." I say, "Go use my private office." Well, Brenda was back there with the dogs. She said Emil walked in, saw the dogs, (laughs) and just turned around and took off; I guess he didn't care for dogs, big dogs at least.

Anyway, that's the gallbladder, and the gallbladder thing is over. They said what caused the gallbladder was I had lost that weight quickly, and that will sometimes mess up your gallbladder.

DePue: Easier to deal with the gallbladder concerns than the angioplasty?

Edgar: Yes. I think for most people, a gallbladder's a gallbladder; that's not a big deal. Though they did begin (laughs) to wonder what all my health… Then the next year—we'll get into that a little later—I go through the bypass surgery. People are beginning to wonder about just how healthy I am. But the gallbladder was kind of nice because I had no real pains. I didn't have that pain that people passing a gallstone or whatever, a lot of… I just had a flu one day, and the next day my gallbladder was gone. You don't really need it. Fortunately it was an easy surgery, so that wasn't all bad.

DePue: Since we're in the neighborhood of the dogs, what was the other dog's name?

Edgar: Daisy. We got Daisy at the pound. I always wanted a Golden Retriever. I grew up in Charleston, near the campus of Eastern Illinois University. The mascot at Eastern at that time was a Golden Retriever named Napoleon. This was in the fifties.

Napoleon wandered all over town. He didn't belong to anybody. He was originally a stray dog, and the campus finally adopted him. Well, he used to come to our house a lot. He'd stay at our house. He was scared to death of thunder. When it would thunder he would run in our bedroom and stuff. He used to come over, so I always thought, gee, a Golden Retriever. When I got elected governor, we had this big yard, fenced in, so I said, "I'm getting a Golden Retriever." George Fleischli, who worked for me, said, "I've got a Golden Retriever for you that somebody's going to give you." I said fine. He brought it over, and it's white as snow. I said, "George, this dog's white." (laughs) "Ah, it'll change. It has little golden ears. It'll change, it'll be just like that." Well, the dog never changed. I don't have the picture.[99]

DePue: There's a picture right over here.

Edgar: Yes, of Emy.

DePue: Of you and Brenda with the dog. Oh, maybe that's Elizabeth.

Edgar: Elizabeth, yes. That's when I went to fathers' weekend at her school. I took Emy with me. Emy—her tail curled and she had slanted eyes.

DePue: Now, is this Emy or Daisy?

Edgar: Yes, Emy. Fleischli had papers saying she was a full-blooded Golden Retriever; for two years I told everybody she was a full-blooded Golden Retriever. She looked like a wolf. We were out in Colorado in '94—took Emy. There's a million Golden Retrievers in Colorado, but every so often I would run into a dog that looked just like Emy. I'd say, "What kind of dog is that?" "Half-Golden and half-Samoyed." Then it made sense; she was half-Samoyed.

We got Emy first. We had Emy for about nine months, and we thought maybe she wanted another dog. Well, she didn't really, we found out later; she just wanted us. She just wanted to be around people. Brenda had gone to the dog pound and gotten a little beagle. I've never been to a dog pound. It's by the airport. I'm flying back, and they say that's where she is, so I run by. She's got this little beagle out, and I say, "All right, if you want it, I'll go in and sign the papers." So I went inside and said, "I've never been in a dog pound. What else you got?" I walked around, and here's this Golden Retriever, young—probably about six, seven months old; it was a Golden Retriever. I said, "This is a beautiful dog." They said, "Probably somebody's dog just got away. Undoubtedly the owner will come." I said, "What happens if the owner doesn't come?" He said, "Well, after ten days we exterminate them," gas them or whatever they do. I said, "If you don't hear anything, let me know."

About five days later I'm thinking, I'm going to check, so I called. They said, "No, we haven't heard anything. We're about ready to…" And I said, "We'll take

[99] Jim Edgar, November 17, 2009, 44.

her." So that's how I got Daisy. I always say Daisy went from the pound to the mansion, and Daisy knew it, and she loved it. She was just so happy to be fed. She was huge. She had to have something other than Golden Retriever. But Emy hated this beagle pup Brenda got. Finally we had to get rid of that beagle pup because Emy was going to kill it. (laughs) I mean, they just did not… But Daisy was pretty smart; even though she was bigger than Emy, she acquiesced and let Emy be alpha dog. They lived forever—I mean, they lived to be fifteen and thirteen.

Dogs were a big deal to me because I always wanted to have a Golden Retriever, but also it was an outlet. I mean, you go home at night, and… I told Obama, when he was trying to decide what kind of dog to get—when I saw him at the Lincoln thing—I'd written him a letter because his daughter wanted to get a Goldendoodle. That's what we have now, Buddy. I said, "You know, you think you're going to get this dog for your kids. There are going to be nights you're going to come back to the family quarters and you're going to think the only living being that likes you is this dog." Emy and Daisy were just my… I'd go hiking with them. We had the cabin out north of town, and I'd go walking with them. It was just a good source of getaway with the dogs. They loved the mansion; they grew up in the mansion. We moved over to Champaign, they kept looking for the elevator. (DePue laughs) People would get in the mansion, they'd get on the elevator, and here would be these two dogs on the elevator. They were going up and down.

DePue: Just for the lark of it, huh?

Edgar: Well, no, they were probably going someplace, but if they wanted to go up, and the elevator door would open, they'd get on it. And the gardener: Emy loved the gardener. When I wasn't around she'd go out there and just lay and watch him work. He used to kind of complain about Daisy, but then he had trouble with rabbits in the mansion grounds, and Daisy got rid of them. (laughter) He said Daisy was all right. It was just like having kids, but they're not quite as difficult as kids. They were a good kind of a relief for me to have around.

DePue: Did you have either of the children around in the mansion?

Edgar: Elizabeth, no. I don't know if I told this story before, but Thompson said the reason he ran for the fourth term, one of the reasons, was Brenda Edgar said, "We're not ready yet." In fact, he told the Rockford paper that. They ran a story about that. They said something about, why didn't you let Edgar in and get… "Well, Brenda Edgar said they weren't ready yet because Elizabeth was still in school." Brenda had always argued that she didn't want me to run for governor when the kids were still going to be at home. She didn't think that was a good place to raise kids. So Thompson said that's why he ran the fourth term. Before he decided whether he was going to run again at the end of his third term, I said, "Brenda, will you go tell Thompson, Elizabeth's going to graduate from high school; it's time? Because if we don't, I'm going to be too old here pretty soon." (DePue laughs)

The other thing we thought on Thompson—he had an Irish Setter and a Collie, and he had a Cocker Spaniel, but the Collie and the Irish Setter were getting old. I said, "I think he'll keep running for governor as long as those dogs are alive, because he doesn't have anyplace to put those dogs." Sure enough, those dogs died, and he left the governor's mansion. (laughs) I don't think he's had a dog since, either. The dogs liked the mansion.

Back to the kids. Bradley had gone off to college in about '86 and finally graduated in '90, so he was out of the house. Elizabeth, when we went into the mansion, was in her last semester of high school, so she got to enjoy this nice room she had at the mansion, and she had her prom party there. She didn't really care for the state troopers going with her when she went out at night. She worked out a deal with them: they'd drop her off at a party, then pick her up; they wouldn't stay there. Now, we never knew for sure if she stayed at that party (DePue laughs) in the meantime. She couldn't wait to get out of state to go to college to get away from that. Both kids—I don't think they ever felt comfortable in the mansion because that wasn't their home. We had the log cabin north of town and had our furniture, and they'd much rather go to the log cabin. That was just more us; we didn't have waiters and people hanging around and things like that.

DePue: I know that Thompson spent a lot of time in the mansion, but as the years in his administration went on, he spent more and more time up in Chicago.

Edgar: The first four or five years, he lived there. Then they moved to Chicago when Samantha was getting ready to go to school. He would come back and stay overnight some, but they didn't spend as much time then because their official residency was Chicago.

We spent all our time. That was our home. Now, we got the log cabin, and sometimes on weekends or sometimes maybe in a spring we might go out there for an evening. We had an apartment in Chicago; if I had to be there overnight, I'd stay there. But all things equal, if I could get on a plane and get back to Springfield, I'd be back in Springfield.

DePue: This is getting too far out of the range of the chronology here, but I'm dying to ask you your thoughts, then, when Blagojevich decided not to live in the mansion.

Edgar: I can understand with young children why you may not want to live in the mansion. I think that's part of why you don't run for governor, maybe. If you're not going to live in the mansion—like Thompson didn't, but Thompson was still in Springfield a lot. He stayed overnight in the mansion; they'd come down on weekends and stay in the mansion. And even though they weren't there a majority of the time, they were there a lot. Blagojevich (laughs) never made any effort to be there. It's like we always used to accuse: "You don't want to vote for those Chicago Democrats; they're going to ignore downstate." I never believed that because I always figured if you're a Chicago Democrat, you better spend more time worrying about downstate because you're not from there, just like I had to spend more time worrying about

Chicago because I'm not from there. Blagojevich made me believe it. (laughs) I mean, he just had no care or understanding of downstate Illinois. The mansion thing's a symbolic thing, but it's very important to folks downstate. Also I think it's important, because if you're not there, then state government's not there. I think state government needs to be in Springfield. There's a balance there. You can get in Chicago and just get lost.

DePue: How much of that is driven by the statehouse reporters? They're hanging around Springfield to report on state politics, and the governor's not there.

Edgar: I think part of the reason he wasn't there—he didn't want to deal with those reporters because they knew more about state government than he did. Even George Ryan to some extent did that, too. They didn't want to deal with… Because those reporters in Springfield, I always said, were by far the most knowledgeable reporters on state government. They should be; it's hard to bluff them. You could get by up north, or you could get by out in the hinterlands with the bluff. Up north, they didn't really care about you that much. Blagojevich could hang out in Chicago. Until he got arrested, he wasn't the front-page story; it was Daley. But just for a whole host of reasons, I think if you're going to run for governor, you need to plan on spending an awful lot of time in that mansion.

I'm not sure that if you got young children, you ought to be governor. I just think young children and politics is a tough combination. I think being a legislator with young children is very… I refused to help them recruit anybody that had young children to be in the legislature, because I went through that and just don't think that's a good thing. But the governor's thing is even worse because you're in a fishbowl. (laughs) I remember, they always said one of the reasons they moved out of the mansion was Samantha was a five-year-old; she knew she could call on the phone and get whatever she wanted to eat whenever she wanted it. Those aren't natural things to grow up around; it's bad enough for adults. I remember when we were trying to decide, do we stay as governor, or do I get out? One of the pluses we looked at—there were all the perks. (laughter) We thought, we better get out while we can still take care of ourselves. But it's a tough place, I think, to raise children. I've said politics on a family is tough, and the higher up you go, the tougher it is.

DePue: We've been at this for a while, and it's about time for lunch. When we come back—

Edgar: We're going to finally do the flood! (laughs)

DePue: —we're going to do the flood and do it in a serious way.

Edgar: All right.

(end of interview 15)

Interview with Jim Edgar

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Interview # 16: May 28, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Friday, May 28, 2010. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Governor, this is our sixteenth session. I'm here with Gov. Jim Edgar, in the afternoon. You probably have my spiel memorized, having heard it so many times by now. We had a great session this morning, and some really interesting insights into the legislative and governing process. This afternoon, we're going to be talking about the flood of '93.

Just to set things up, an interesting series of events led up to that. It was a good snowfall in the winter—I think the ground was pretty well saturated going into the fall of '92, and then a lot of snowfall. We're not just talking about Illinois, but the entire Mississippi and Missouri River basin, basically, and the Illinois River basin. So come springtime when you get a lot more rainfall in the upper Midwest, it all comes down those rivers. I think the real beginning of it was April 24; you toured the flooded areas of the Des Plaines and Fox Rivers and declared Lake, McHenry, and Kane Counties disaster areas for the state. That's right at the beginning of this whole process. Does that ring a bell for you?

Edgar: Well, those were pretty annual; you would get flooding up there. I forget the name of the one stream up in DuPage County that seemed to flood every year.

DePue: The Fox River?

Edgar: Not the Fox River, it's something else. I drive by it occasionally now, and I think back. But spring flooding in the suburban area was not unusual. The flood on the Illinois and the Mississippi really was partly that, but it was also more what came down from Minnesota—then we had a lot of rain. A lot of it was backing up as opposed to coming down. Those spring rains in the suburbs and the problem they have with flooding is not uncommon. What happened later on the Mississippi and Illinois was very uncommon.

DePue: I know that you had some very helpful advice before you even got to office about how to deal with emergencies.

Edgar: Yes. You talked to Mike Lawrence. The new governors' conference I attended was in Lexington, Kentucky, and Mike Lawrence and a couple other staff guys went with me.[100] It was like a week after the election; we were still trying to recover from the election. But I remember the first thing they told us was, "If you have a disaster, an emergency, drop everything else you're doing and deal with that, because if you don't, it doesn't matter how well you're doing all those other things—you won't be back." I had never really thought too much about it because I had never been in a position to deal with emergencies or disaster; that was always the governor or somebody else. Mike Lawrence was there, and he remembers that too. We chatted later that perhaps when George W. Bush was a first-time governor, maybe they didn't teach him that you got to react quickly.

DePue: You're talking about his response to [Hurricane] Katrina later on?

Edgar: Yes. Also, the governor of Missouri who came in two years later, Mel Carnahan: apparently they didn't teach it that year, because he did not respond. I'll talk about it in a little bit. But they went for a long time, and that was the first topic we talked about. I have to say, I listened to it; I don't know how much of an impression it made. But it made an impression on Lawrence particularly, because over the July Fourth holiday in '93, Mike called me and said he had gotten a call from the state rep from Quincy, who said, "You know, this flooding's getting really bad."[101] Now, we had heard about the flooding coming out of Minnesota. It had worked its way down; maybe there was a little bit in the Quad Cities—nothing yet to get too alarmed about. He said to Lawrence, "You might want to talk to the governor. You might want to think about calling up the Guard because it's getting pretty bad here."

So Lawrence made a couple calls, called me—I don't know where I was. We still didn't have a budget, of course, (laughs) but I think I was doing parades or something. Seems like I remember I was at the mansion, though, when I got the call from him. He said, "You know, I got a call from Art Tenhouse". He's a Republican state rep from over there. Mike said, "You think we ought to call the Guard?" I said, "I guess better be safe than sorry." And he said, "Remember what they told us at that new governors' conference? We got to…" So we went ahead and called the Guard out over there, and from there it just got worse. That was July Fourth. Probably for the next two months, that was the top priority of the administration, a long time.

DePue: July 5, you activated 150 National Guard members, and that's just the beginning. About that same timeframe there's evacuations from East Dubuque, Oquawka,

[100] Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, April 1, 2009, 39. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

[101] Located in Adams County, Quincy was part of the 96th Representative District and 48th Senatorial District. In 1993, the two seats were held by Sen. Laura Kent Donahue (R) and Rep. Art Tenhouse (R).

Grafton, Mozier, Hamburg—obviously all along the Mississippi. What kind of a political calculation does it take to get to the point of calling out the Guard? Are there political implications?

Edgar: No. I think it's a governmental… I mean, it's political if you don't do it and you should have; you could get flak. But I think the key is you also don't want to call out, because of the expense. Every time the Bulls won the NBA in the nineties—they won six while I was governor—they'd tear up the West Side of Chicago, and I'd have to call out the National Guard. Usually we'd have them already in the armories waiting; if the Bulls didn't win as quickly as we thought they were going to win, we had to keep paying these guys. There's a cost factor, so you don't just call them out without a good reason. But at the same time, you don't want to wait too long, and you should have had them out. So that conversation probably didn't take more than three minutes. I didn't have any qualms. Mike had made a couple calls and had a feel, and we thought better safe than sorry. I guess the politics of it would be, you'd rather be safe than sorry.

DePue: We spent this morning talking about the legislative process and how to work with the legislature to get things done. This conversation is going to be about being an executive and taking charge.

Edgar: It's a lot more fun than working with the legislature, (DePue laughs) let me tell you.

DePue: Let's start with putting together the team. Who needs to be involved with this, and how do you put that team together?

Edgar: I have to tell you, when we called out the Guard, we did not have any sense of how bad a disaster this was going to be; we just thought it could be excess flooding along the Mississippi. I don't think any of us thought about it being the greatest natural disaster the state had ever faced and that tens of thousands of people would be out of their homes and it would be months, and… That just didn't really cross our mind. It didn't take too long, though, after that—I don't remember the date.

I remember when I went down to Alton to fill sandbags, one of the places early on that I did sandbags. That was something else as governor I had to get used to. I used to always think I didn't want to grandstand, I didn't want to get in the way of the professionals doing their job. When I was running for governor in 1990, a tornado had gone through a community south of Joliet and torn up a school, torn up a town there—very heavy damage.[102] I was very near that; in fact, I had just been in Joliet about an hour before that tornado hit, and I had stayed overnight someplace near there. Somebody said, "Maybe you ought to go there." I said, "Well, I'm not the governor, I'm the secretary of state; they've got emergency crews there and all

[102] August 28, 1990, the only F5 tornado to ever strike the Chicago area touched down near Oswego and traveled sixteen miles through Plainfield, Crest Hill, and Joliet, killing twenty nine people, injuring 350, and causing $165 million in damage. National Weather Service, "A Study of Chicago's Significant Tornadoes," http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lot/?n=SigChiTorn. Also see, "Plainfield, 20 Years After the Tornado," *Chicago Tribune*, August 26, 2010.

that. I just don't feel comfortable going there because it's purely political." So I didn't. It wasn't my place to go.

Initially I was a little hesitant about whether I ought to go in when there had been a tornado or something like that. But what I learned quickly—before this, but this reinforced it—as the governor, as the chief of state, you need to be there. Not that you personally are going to… I mean, me filling a sandbag isn't going to make a difference, but it's symbolic; it shows that you care and that the state cares. When people are in desperate situation and they've lost everything they own, they like to at least know that other people know and care. So it's very important from a symbolic point of view that you are physically there. When the Katrina thing happened, when I heard the president first flew over instead of landing, I thought, what a mistake. For a president it's worse than a governor coming—you've got all this Secret Service and all that—but how important it is for the president to come, as it is for a governor to come, and just be visible, just walk around. It'll be in the media that you're there; people who have been affected will see that. I think it has a very positive impact.

So a lot of what I did personally along the rivers, the Illinois and the Mississippi, was symbolic, but it was very important, I think, for people to see the governor there. As it turned out, I think the whole state felt that I was over there and in charge. We were in charge, but I wasn't calling the day-to-day shots; that was the emergency service or the National Guard or whatever. The reason I emphasize this, and emphasized earlier what we learned in the new governors' conference, when I went down to Alton—this was in the early stages of the flooding and it was getting bad down there—I'm down filling sandbags. Of course Alton is right across from St. Louis, and all the television is in St. Louis. They're all over covering me, and they're all saying, "Where's the Missouri governor?" Well, he was a new governor, and he had a family vacation scheduled in Italy.

DePue: That was Mel Carnahan?

Edgar: Mel Carnahan. They had gone a few days before this, sometime around the Fourth, when I'm sure there wasn't anything like it turned out to be. But they'd gone to Italy, and they were still in Italy. This kind of adds insult to injury: here I am, the governor of Illinois, down filling sandbags, and that's what they can cover because their governor is in Italy on a family vacation. They really get on him. Now, Carnahan came back very quickly. In fact, [President] Clinton, about a week later, comes out and holds kind of this summit with all the governors. He held it in St. Louis so Carnahan could get the credit for the president coming and all that, and kind of got him off the hot seat. But for two or three days, he was just getting beat up pretty bad by the media.

Again, it reemphasizes the point that as the chief of state, if there's an emergency or a disaster, you need to be seen and be there. Even though you maybe are more in the way than you are doing any good, psychologically, you do a lot of good. I spent a lot of personal time every day flying over to the Mississippi, the

Illinois, and just being visible in communities and being out. There's a picture in this book we have of me filling a sandbag. Now, it didn't look like I was doing a whole lot; I had a tie on and a white shirt. (DePue laughs) Finally I started coming over just in a polo shirt.

I'd rush, because we still had the legislature in session without a budget. I remember I'd gone down, made one of my river stops, and came back and sat down with the legislature. I said, "Now, guys, I've got about two hours. I'm heading back; we have a little thing called a disaster going on down there." As we talked earlier, the budget that year didn't cause the animosity (laughs) that the two before had. We got it worked out, and we pretty well had it set; almost from the Fourth of July on, we knew we were going to get it worked out.

DePue: I wanted to ask you about the thought process you and the administration went through to get to the point of saying, "We want to declare this a disaster area."

Edgar: Again, that's not too tough. Your emergency service people and all, they'll do a survey to determine just how much damage it is. For the state to declare an emergency, it doesn't give you anything; it's more of a psychological thing. There's no funds or anything that comes with that.

DePue: It says, I care.

Edgar: Yes. We'd got burned on one in Chicago where we hadn't declared as quick as some people thought we should have, even though my people said it's not that much of a problem. We finally figured out—again, definitely better err on the—let's do it quickly than wait around and get burned because we hadn't done it. So that wasn't difficult. The tougher thing is, if you have to go to the feds, you got to have it documented. There was one in Chicago one time when we did not go to the feds because our people just said, "There's no way this meets the federal criteria." Well, we got criticized by Mayor Daley because we didn't care about Chicago.[103] So somewhat in the future we just said, "We'll let the feds say no." But to go get a federal declaration is a lot more of a difficult process—a lot more information—because if the federal [authorities] declared it, then there's money that becomes available. So that was not difficult, to say it's a state emergency.

What we did do, that I think was extremely important: early on we realized this is developing into a major problem, because the Quad Cities first were hit, then it was moving on down to the St. Louis area.

DePue: And was getting worse—higher flood levels as it went down farther.

[103] In April 1992, part of a freight tunnel under the Chicago River collapsed after workers unwittingly drove pilings too close to the tunnel. Basements throughout the Loop flooded, shutting business down for several days and causing millions of dollars in damage. For the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) role in dealing with this flood, see Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 97-103. For Daley's criticism of Edgar, see *Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 1992, and the editorial "Sloughing off Chicago" that ran the following day.

Edgar: Yes, and it was raining, too. The weather wasn't really cooperating, and we could tell we were going to break all records. Actually, up in the Quad Cities, in some ways they were getting the brunt of it because we had more levees on our side than Iowa did. Early on, it was on a Saturday, I convened a cabinet. You just never had cabinet meetings. I mean, that doesn't exist at the state level very often; you don't have too many. But I called in key cabinet directors that I thought were going…and met with them. I think I met with them in 212, if I remember right, over in the capitol building.

DePue: Who would that be?

Edgar: Oh, there were probably ten or twelve directors of major state agencies, like head of the state police, Natural Resources, Transportation, of course emergency services, the National Guard, probably Public Aid—all the agencies we thought might have some involvement in helping people. The state has the initial responsibility to deal with disasters; it's not the federal government's responsibility. The federal government helps you with supplies, then they come in with money later. It is the state's responsibility to deal with the initial disasters as occurring; it's the state that provides the leadership. We knew we had to deal with the flooding—try to help people get out of their homes, try to keep roads open and things like that—but we also knew that that's the easy part. The worst part's going to be trying to get people back in their homes, and taking care of all the damage.

One of the things I was told earlier, which became very apparent—the worst disaster you can have is a flood. Hurricane, tornado, something like that—it happens, it's over, you go in the next day and clean up. Flood goes on and on for weeks and months. You can't clean up, because you can't clean up until it's gone. In some cases we thought the water had gone down, then we had more rains and it came back. So we knew we had to make sure we had all the state agencies realizing that this was the top priority. We said, "Even if you're dealing with the legislature right now, that's no longer the priority; the priority is dealing with this flood. If you've got to bring people from other parts of the state, bring them in; this is where we want to put our emphasis." I think that allowed us to deal with the crisis in a very positive manner. We got high marks by the folks being flooded and by other people who were watching, that we reacted quickly and effectively.

DePue: By the press?

Edgar: The press. I don't think we had any criticism I can think of from the press. I'm not sure we had a lot of praises, just that was the coverage. Chicago television, which very seldom comes downstate, unless there's some scandal—or if the mayor comes down to Springfield, they might come—they were down all the time. So every night, people in Chicago were seeing the flood, and also every night in Chicago, they were seeing the governor was out dealing with the flood problem. I can remember from a purely political point of view, my approval rating jumped up about ten points during the flood.

DePue: Recall what neighborhood it was in?

Edgar: It wasn't bad. My approval rating had always been above 50 percent. It hovered—in 1992 when we were getting ready to get wiped out of the White House, right before I went in and had my first heart go-round, my numbers were probably the lowest they ever were, and it was someplace around 50. They jumped a little bit after I had my angioplasty, and I think they jumped again—they probably went up to 65 percent—when I was dealing with this or something like it. They took a little bit of a jump. I remember people who were critics saying, "We just wish he would deal with the legislature like he deals with this flood." I laughed and said, "Well, dealing with this flood's a lot easier than dealing with the legislature, you know. Water doesn't talk back to you." (laughter) I think it's why heads of state go to war when times are tough at home—everybody kind of rallies around you.

I think from a political point of view, everybody rallied around. In fact, Brenda headed up the volunteer effort to get people, and we did a lot of media availability in the Chicago area, asking for help. There were probably more folks from Chicago who drove south of I-80 for the first time in their life than any other time in the history of the state. We had a lot of folks driving down to volunteer to fill sandbags. It was the thing to do—go down and fill sandbags. So we had thousands of people who came down from the Chicago area, and I know they'd never been south of I-80. We had people from all over the state going over to the Illinois and the Mississippi River to help out. So I thought we did a good job of trying to make sure everybody in the state realized—and of course they were seeing it every night on the evening news; that was the lead story.

I was over there every day—maybe not all day—but I'd go over, do something, come back, do some other business in Springfield. But more importantly, all the state agencies were very much focused in on that, and all the heads of agencies knew this was the number-one priority. At that cabinet meeting, I designated that Al Grosboll would be the coordinator from the governor's office; he would be the person everything would clear through. He would liaison with the federal government when eventually we brought them in. The main thing on the federal government was money, because we knew it was going to cost a lot of money, and it was going to cost these people a lot of money. The thing we feared—not so much handling the disaster, but the bureaucratic nightmare and red tape to get help; we worried about that. Even though most of that would be the federal, we could get the blame, so we wanted to make sure that worked.

DePue: Did you have to make a decision yourself to—I don't know if this is the right way of saying this—activate the emergency operation center, which is what IEMA [Illinois Emergency Management Administration] would be running at the time?

Edgar: I think IEMA probably came and said, hey, we need to do this, and they did it. I remember going over to the center.

DePue: That's just about a block away from the capitol building.

Edgar: Yes. I remember going over there, in fact, two or three times. Most of the time I was heading out to the river during the day. Of course, Al was over a lot at that place. Brenda and I remember we went over and did a news conference over there one time when we were trying to get volunteers. We had several days and weeks where the flooding kept getting worse. I mean, it knocked the bridges out for the railroads; you could not get goods across the country. I learned at that point how much fresh fruit goes every day; you couldn't get it across, so it had to detour way down to the south, which was a huge cost factor. And again, you had to convince folks to get out of their homes, because it kept coming up.

Now, the big battle was—on the Illinois side particularly, and particularly in Iowa—we had the levees. On the Iowa side, they didn't have the levees, so there was a lot more flooding in Iowa in the Quad Cities than there was in the Illinois side. Missouri had levees as we had levees. Levees turned out to be probably more of a cause than it was a solution to this problem.

DePue: Well, part of the dynamics of the levee—it's a different equation if you don't have a levee but it's nothing but agricultural floodplain, versus homes or small communities in there.

Edgar: It is, but in the Quad Cities, it was cities that didn't have levees (DePue laughs) in the Iowa side. They hadn't built them. So Illinois's side didn't get as much flooded in the Quad Cities as the Iowa side did. You get down to Missouri, we had levees on both sides. We actually caught people trying to sneak across and blow the levee up on the other side, because if the levee went on the other side, that took the pressure off your levee, and it flooded over there and didn't flood your side.

DePue: But the levees nicely canalize the river so that those—

Edgar: In hindsight, the levees probably caused more damage than they did good, because that forced that river to become much more of a roaring force than just moving out all over the farmland. The other thing that was interesting: in most cases, none of the levees held. All the sandbagging, to the great extent, was for naught, because in most cases, the water ended up going over it, especially around Quincy. I remember down in Hull, in that area, they had the sandbags. I remember going out there a couple times. They kept making it higher; finally it broke through the sandbags and flooded the area anyway. I'm sure there's some areas where the sandbags actually help keep the water back, but for the most part there was so much water that the sandbags did not—

DePue: I recall there were some places the levee would look like it's holding, and then up pops a nice little gusher in the middle of the field behind the levee.

Edgar: Yes, or all you needed was one little hole someplace—and it wouldn't be on top; it'd be down below in the levee. The levee up top might be holding, but down below springs a leak, and then the levee falls apart. Of course, it kept getting rain, too, which just added to the aggravations. Then I forget—the sun didn't help either.

I mean, (laughs) we were kind of getting hit from both ways. As I said, I thought the state agencies did a very good job of working together and dealing with that and getting people out. We also were trying to help wildlife that were getting flooded out of their habitats.

DePue: What led to the decision to call out Department of Corrections to get inmates?

Edgar: We needed more people; that was not uncommon in other states, in other disasters. We called out work camps; we didn't call out prisons, per se. We didn't take people from Menard.[104] (laughs) We'd started the boot camps a year or two before, so we had the boot campers and we had the work camps. One of the things I learned very quickly: boot camps work. Those guys did a super job. The guys from the work camp didn't do a very good job. Night and day between their attitudes, because at the boot camps, they'd been trained. Part of a boot camp was that discipline and working together and the team effort. The work camp was just low-risk inmates; they just weren't as effective at all as the boot camp people were.

One of my favorite stories was when we first called them out, there was a lot of resistance along the river. Particularly the farther south you went, the more they resisted having inmates, who were about 99 percent black; the communities they were going in were probably 100 percent white. They're inmates. In Calhoun County—they were really a small little county between the Illinois and the Mississippi—there were a lot of complaints about us sending the boot campers down. I forget which town it was, but they had complained, and about two weeks later they were all calling me up and saying, "You got to pardon these people; they're great guys." Because these boot campers came down there and did a super job—worked hard and…

I was down in one of the small communities in Calhoun County, on the Illinois River. I was down there one afternoon helping on sandbags, and I just remember going up, and here you had a lineup—you had the bank president, you had a boot camper, you had the superintendent of schools, you had another boot camper, you had an insurance guy, and you had a boot camper—and they're all there. Somebody told me who they were; one was white and one was black, but they were all doing the same thing, and they were standing there shoulder-to-shoulder. If there was anything positive out of that whole thing, it was that; that here are these boot campers and these pillars of the community just working… It was pretty common that people in these communities would have the boot campers come to their houses for dinner at night, because they stayed there—I mean, they didn't take them away someplace—but they just got to have that much respect for them.

In fact, there was a movie made a few years later, a TV movie NBC had, about a guy who had been a boot camper, who went back to Chicago after he got

[104] Menard Correctional Center is a maximum security prison in Illinois. On the use of prisoners, and community reception of them, see Howard Peters, January 21, 2010, 4-8; Al Grosboll, October 22, 2009, 6 and 23. Both interviews by Mark DePue.

out of his boot camp and couldn't find a job and was getting hassled by the parole officer. I remember he said, "Well, I got this certificate from Governor Edgar saying that I did a good…" because we sent certificates to all the boot campers. I was amazed they actually had the certificate that had my name on it.

That is probably one of the few times I've ever seen this state really pull together as a state. The only other time was maybe when Illinois went to the final pair in the basketball tournament. You saw people in Chicago all excited about something going on downstate. But the only time I can remember all these people in the Chicago area driving down to volunteer, people really providing donations—because we raised money to help people and things like that. It was the one time the state—because this state has a tendency not to be a state. You got the folks in the Chicago area—and not just the city, but the suburbs—and they think this is hicks or the sticks down here, and people down here think they're all mafia up there. I mean, it's just—

DePue: And I-80 is the dividing line.

Edgar: Well, maybe a little north of I-80, actually, but that's kind of what we always say, south of I-80. Over in the western part, north of I-80 is not a whole lot different than south of I-80. This is the one time the state really, I thought, pulled together. The Chicago media—because for the most part, Chicago, particularly television, ignores downstate Illinois—were down there every day, so every night they had a story on what was going on on the Illinois or the Mississippi River. All their stories were pretty much on Illinois. They didn't go across the river too much. So again, with the power of media, everybody's attention was focused on the flood because that's what they saw on the evening news.

As the flood went along, more and more people just kept losing their homes. If you get floodwaters in your house, it's totaled. You don't go in and clean up a house after a flood, because it leaves mud and everything. Everything's ruined. You just don't salvage anything. But you can't do any of that until the water leaves, and you've got to make sure it's really gone. We had some instances around Hull and places like that, where we'd go and come back based off new rains or whatever. Psychologically, that was terrible on people because they'd think maybe they were going to get back in their homes and get a chance to clean up, and here comes more water. So we had to find housing for these people.

We had to also begin the plan for the long-term cleanup. One of the things that was obvious: we had some towns that were built where they shouldn't have been built. Grafton was one. The other one was on down south of St. Louis, and if you'd tell me, I'd remember it; I'm just blank.[105] Grafton flooded every year. I went down every year as governor to see the flood in Grafton. I swear these people had the

[105] August 2, 1993, the day after Alton was overrun, the Mississippi broke through a levee in Monroe County, Illinois, flooding seventy thousand acres of farmland and covering the entire town of Valmeyer with fifteen feet of water. Valmeyer had nine hundred residents at the time. *Chicago Tribune*, August 3, 1993; September 17, 1993; and June 19, 2008. On the relocation of Grafton and Valmeyer, see Grosboll, 13-15.

whole system figured out, how they could get money from the government for their flooding.

DePue: It was a good livelihood (laughs) for them.

Edgar: Yes. Let me talk first about the federal government. I was not a great fan of the Clinton administration. The Clinton administration could not have been better working with on this flood. The guy that was head of emergency service, a guy that Clinton had brought from Arkansas—

DePue: James Lee Witt?

Edgar: Yes. He was super to work with. I think every governor, Republican or Democrat, would tell you that Witt particularly was very good to work with. We didn't get hassled and we didn't get red tape. It didn't matter if you were a Republican or Democrat, that I could tell—outside of he did go down to St. Louis to help Carnahan get out of that jam he was in. (DePue laughs) They were very good to work with in trying to cut through red tape and all. We knew we had to deal with the federal government and how we were going to reimburse these people. They weren't real excited about giving money to folks just to go back on the floodplains again. So one of the deals was they'd give them money, but they had to move the towns. We had to move Grafton and [Valmeyer]. This is kind of down the road, but we finally got the mayors of both places agreed, and they built new communities up on the hills. Now, the one in Grafton did not work—in fact, I think the mayor lost his reelection the next time—he'd been mayor forever. The other one did work; people did move up. I don't know what the total cost finally was to the state. The federal government was again pretty generous coming in and helping us, offsetting some of our cost as well as individual.

DePue: I have some specific questions here as we get into this a little bit farther. Before you do that, though, were you involved in any kind of a strategy meeting in terms of, okay, here's where the water is now, here's what we project is going to be happening in the future, here's where we need to stage the troops and where we need to stage the prisoners? Were you directly involved in that?

Edgar: I was not so much directly involved. I was involved in, this is where we think we're going to have more problems, this is where we need to have the emphasis or where we can put in people. I did not necessarily say you put prisoners here versus here. I did say, "Do we need new prisoners? We'll bring in more people. Do we need more Guard?" And I went and looked at the spots.

DePue: So who was handling that side? Was it IEMA?

Edgar: Grosboll, and coordinating with the various agencies. What they were moving would be the National Guard, or it'd be moving the state police people and Natural Resources. Grosboll was being the day-to-day coordinator on a lot of that stuff.[106]

DePue: If you were a mayor and afraid that your city's going to be flooded out here in the next two or three days, who are you picking up the phone and calling?

Edgar: Call me and I'd have Grosboll talk to you on specifics. Al spent a lot of time talking to mayors. Also, Plunk, the guy that headed up emergency services, was very good. He was a professional. Usually that's a political spot you can put somebody in.

DePue: This is John Plunk, head of IEMA?

Edgar: Yes. He had been the number-two guy there; the number-one guy had left, and we put him in. He was really, I think, officially temporary, otherwise he could not get paid a higher salary, which he'd been paid before. He was very good. He was a pro at it. He knew the federal people to deal with; he knew the procedures.

DePue: You'd mentioned Katrina, and President Bush getting burned on that deal, in part because of the person he had in charge of FEMA at the time—a political appointee.[107]

Edgar: Yes, part of it. But the other part was the media blamed him, and they blamed him for something that was the state's responsibility. The initial reaction is the state's responsibility. The state **blew it** in Louisiana, just big-time. Now, I think locally they knew that, but nationally they blamed it on the president. I think he made a bad strategy call—he should have landed and spent a lot of time there—but at that initial stage, the state's in charge; the state's the one that calls and asks for help. And the state, from all I could tell reading about it, really blew that. But the president takes the blame, and I think unjustly in some cases. Now, I think from a strategy point of view, just thinking things through, they didn't work very well. I'm sure he wasn't maybe the most qualified guy, but I think that Bush got blamed for a lot more than was his responsibility. I think the governor's the one who really messed up on that one.

DePue: You mentioned John Plunk was an assistant, and because of some personnel moves that had happened, he was there?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: But it sounds like you thought he was the right guy to have in place at the time.

Edgar: Oh, yes. You always like to have a guy that has the experience; he was definitely the right guy to have there. Now, we had guys later—we had disasters later—and

[106] For a detailed account of his role in the flood, see Grosboll, October 22, 2009, 1-26.
[107] Michael Brown was director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and resigned under heavy criticism of his response to Hurricane Katrina.

they were fine, but they needed to have the staff there, and they needed to listen to the staff. In this case, we had the staff guy in the top job. After going through that, you spend a lot more time thinking about that job. Now, we did put people in who were political, but people who had experience in the emergency area too, and who would take that salary. We did get the salary up a little bit after that, but it still was never what Plunk made in his number-two position. (laughs) He was very important; Grosboll was very important.

All the directors, secretaries, did a very good job of understanding. They understood when I said, "This is a priority." They made it their priority. For some of those agencies, they had other things to worry about, but they understood this was the priority. I think the state reacted well to a disaster. Dealing with a disaster is a lot easier than dealing with the legislature, from the point of view that the disaster doesn't argue back, (laughs) and everybody kind of rallies around you. I mean, I spent a lot of time with the mayor of Quincy, who was a Democrat. Shoot, I think he almost endorsed me the next election. A lot of the mayors along that river did endorse me in the next election. The Republican/Democrat thing didn't matter at that point; people just wanted to deal with the crisis because you had a common enemy—it was the flood.

DePue: I think the mayor of Quincy was Chuck Scholz?

Edgar: Yes. Quincy itself never got much flooding. It was kind of ironic—a lot of visibility there—but Quincy sits up on a hill, so Quincy was fine; it was all the little communities around it where all the flooding occurred. You'd fly into Quincy, and they did sandbagging at Quincy. But along Grafton, and then on down… Of course, it just moved down the state. Early on we spent a lot of time at the Quad Cities and north of Quincy; then we spent a lot of time Quincy to St. Louis.

DePue: And all this is focused on the Mississippi, but then the Illinois River becomes a problem.

Edgar: The Illinois, because it's backing up. The Illinois can't empty into the Mississippi because the Mississippi's too high. So it's not so much you had flooding coming from the northern part of Illinois on the Illinois; it was backing up from the Mississippi. It was greater at the southern part of the Illinois than the northern part of the Illinois. But like Calhoun County, down in the western part of Macoupin [County], down along there, they had flooding. There, it was mainly farmland and some little towns. What was interesting—one of the legislators told me, "You don't see anybody from our county down there doing sandbags." I said, "I don't know, but I'll take your word for it. Why is that?" He said, "Because that land's all owned by absentee big landowners, and folks in the rest of the county don't care about them. Those people you got volunteering are those folks that drove down from Chicago and other parts of the state." (DePue laughs) That was an interesting thing to find out about, because this flat land along the river—apparently a lot of people owned big tracts, but they weren't local farmers.

DePue: Calhoun County's an interesting county.

Edgar: This wasn't Calhoun County; this was over in Jersey and in—what's the other one, right below…Greene? Yes, Calhoun's an interesting county by itself. It was a different thing in Calhoun. There weren't absentees; it was just a different thing in Calhoun. They got hit by both sides; they got hit on the Mississippi and the Illinois, so Calhoun was almost isolated. There were a few days they were isolated from the rest of the state.

DePue: I want to read the flood levels for some of these communities to help paint the story that we've been talking about here. Rock Island: flood stage is fifteen feet, and the new record—this did set a new record—is 22.6 feet, so that's seven and a half feet over the old flood stage. That's significant. You get down to—

Edgar: What's Alton? Do you have Alton?

DePue: Yeah. Let's go with Quincy next, and you mentioned that wasn't nearly as much of—

Edgar: The town of Quincy itself sits up on a hill.

DePue: Right. So Quincy, the flood stage was seventeen feet; the new record was 32.2, and yet, as you mentioned, most of the city is well above that.

Edgar: Most of the city was above it, yes.

DePue: Grafton: flood stage is eighteen feet. The old record was thirty-three feet; (laughs) the new record was 38.2 feet. So from eighteen to thirty-eight—that's twenty feet above the flood stage for Grafton.

Edgar: But Grafton usually had that every year, above the flood stage—not that high, though.

DePue: And then Chester: twenty-seven feet for the flood stage; 49.7, so twenty-two and a half feet higher than the flood stage. All of these are records. Every single one of these is a record.

Edgar: Alton—of course, that was a much bigger city. I don't know if they show Alton there, but I remember down there they showed where—

DePue: Would that be close to Grafton here?

Edgar: It's south of Grafton, yes. There's a mark on a bank building where the waters had gone up in the thirties. This went well above that, I know.[108]

[108] At Alton Lock and Dam 26, the flood level reached a record 42.7 feet on August 1, 1993. National Weather Service, "Historical Crests for Mississippi River at Alton Lock and Dam 26," http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/crests.php?wfo=lsx&gage=alni2.

DePue: That's close to the confluence where the Missouri River's coming into this as well.

Edgar: Yes. But Alton's a pretty good-sized city compared to some of these other places. So as I said, I spent time there. But the levees would break every so often, and then it would just create even more havoc. Hull, near Quincy, I know we spent a lot of time in. It sat back probably a mile or two from the river, but it's all flat farmland, so when it flooded, it just… You'd fly over that area and you'd think this wasn't rivers, this was the lakes, like the Great Lakes. You'd see water for miles and miles; it wasn't just a little stream.

DePue: Because rightfully it should have been the classic floodplain for the Mississippi River in that area.

Edgar: Yes. People had built on it, and they'd paid the price.

DePue: This is probably about the early part of July—this is your quote: "With continued pressure on the levees, and with more water coming down the river and the possibility of heavy rains in the area, many of those levees"—levees you've just been talking about—"are in jeopardy of breaking." So that was before a lot of this stuff started to break, and of course it's also about the same timeframe that you're declaring a lot of these county disaster areas. Was that sequence of events declared a state disaster area and then immediately going to have a request to declare it a federal?

Edgar: Pretty much. You could declare a state disaster area very easily—just declare it—but you had to put together statistical information to go to the feds and ask them to declare. Now in this case, I think because of the magnitude of the disaster, which was not just Illinois—it was all the upper Midwest—the White House was much more on top of it and probably rushed much quicker to declare it a federal disaster area, as well as just being a state (phone rings) disaster area. Excuse me.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Let me ask you this question, then, Governor: the logistics of the fight. You've got the National Guard—there's obviously logistics there—but you're going into all of these communities and there's sandbagging, and there's people coming from all over the state, and there's prisoners who are working here—you said the boot camp people were working here—

Edgar: Boot camp and the work camps. There were two different—yes.

DePue: So you've got to house them. You've got to feed them. You've got to provide medical care for them. You've got to have all these transportation challenges. How is that all coming together?

Edgar: Well, DOT was there.[109] That was a priority of them, to make sure the road's kept open and such things. You had Red Cross, groups like that, as well, a lot of not-for-profits. Boot campers and all that, we took care of. Mainly they camped out, a lot of them. The people who came in and volunteered had to find their own housing. A lot of people would come down for the day and then go back. But again, it was a logistic… You had to coordinate all the various efforts of the state as well as work with local governments. There was a lot of working together between the state and the local governments on coordinating efforts and having mayors tell us what their concerns were, county board chairmen and things like that. So that all went pretty smoothly, I thought. I got very little complaints.

Mayors would call up and want help; we'd try to help them, and in most cases we could. I think they all got to know Al pretty well because they dealt with him a lot. The various agencies, I thought, worked very well together. It was a very well-coordinated effort. I'm sure there were some mistakes made or something fell between the cracks, but very little of that. As I said, I thought helping people get out of their homes and avoid any loss of—very few lives lost at all, I think, in this disaster. I guess one of the consolations of a flood, if there's any consolation, is it comes kind of slowly. Maybe you get a break in a levee, you could have a huge amount of water instantly coming in, but in most cases you get a little bit of lead time.

DePue: You mentioned a lot of the time you're flying around to these various areas. Was this a National Guard helicopter you used?

Edgar: No, it was the state helicopter.

DePue: Is that part of the governor's personal fleet?

Edgar: There isn't a governor's personal fleet; they were the state airplanes. The governor has first priority, and—

DePue: So secretary of state controls the aircraft?

Edgar: No, the governor does. I mean, the Department of Aeronautics, which was part of Department of Transportation. Legislators use them—not helicopters. You got to have a unique kind of—because it's a Sikorsky, it's a big helicopter. But that's what we used because you could get in and out. A plane, you'd only be able to go to maybe Quincy or near Alton; you couldn't get right in on where some of these problems were.

DePue: One of the things you'd already mentioned is the problem with getting across the Mississippi River. July 16, the levee at West Quincy, Missouri, burst, so there's a stretch of 212 miles where there's nothing that's going across the Mississippi River.

[109] For IDOT's responsibilities during the 1993 flood and its aftermath, as well as more general commentary on the state's response, see Brown, December 22, 2009, 80-94.

Edgar: Uh-huh. And again, the thing that I learned at that point is just how much train traffic, how much goods… I mean, people on the East Coast rely on all the vegetables coming from the West Coast every day. I don't know how many trains a day carry that kind of stuff. That basically got shut down for a few days.

DePue: And there's places that rely on coal that's coming from the western coal fields as well.

Edgar: Yes. Maybe the only consolation is you didn't need quite as much coal in July as you do (DePue laughs) in December.

DePue: Unless it's a hot July, maybe. You've talked quite a bit about President Clinton's response. You also talked about what was called by the press "the flood summit" in St. Louis. That was actually July 17. Who was there?

Edgar: The governors of the upper Midwest were there, and the president, and Witt was there. It was a PR thing, but that was all right. Again, the president's there. I think they handed out checks that day, and they're big checks, so we got pictures. I laughed. We did that all the time in our setup. But it was the first check. It was to be symbolic that the federal government was going to get money in to you quickly; it was not going to take months to get the money. But it was more of a psychological thing.

I think before that, a couple of us took Al Gore over by Grafton. I just remember that was the first time I'd ever met Gore. We talked to him in private, and he was as stiff in private (laughs) as he was in public, I thought. But we did that, I think in the morning, before the summit in the afternoon. John Danforth might have been there; I think he had been a senator in Missouri at that time. And Gore. But Gore just—it didn't seem like he had much of a sense of humor. You have to know the mayor of Grafton at that time; he was a character. He took us, and he'd try to liven things up, but Gore was just kind of stiff.

DePue: You talked about money. This is right at the beginning of the state's fiscal year. Is that an advantage, that you've got all these new bills you hadn't expected coming in at that time?

Edgar: No, I don't think we ever looked upon this as an advantage. (laughs) We worried, because financially, what's this going to cost us? In fact, dealing with the legislature, it helped a little bit to get things resolved. They had to listen to me a little more because, we don't know what this is going to cost, guys, so you can't spend more money on these other things. That might have helped as we finalized the budget, because I don't know what—what'd you say, the eleventh was when we—

DePue: The eleventh is when, and so you just barely made all of the paychecks?

Edgar: It was already becoming apparent that the flooding was going to be a problem, and I think that helped a little bit, but other than that, I don't remember that there was any

great silver lining in this cloud. If there was a silver lining, it was the people working together. I think that that was one of those times when the state did pull together. The other silver lining, no doubt—I was very impressed with the boot campers and that whole concept. That reinforced that this really works. We compared them to these [people] out of the work camps, and it was just night and day. The boot campers were so much better. The people who worked around them just said, "The work campers, they're okay, but the boot campers, we couldn't have had better people."

DePue: How about the response from the Guard that you got?

Edgar: I don't remember. I think they did fine. Everybody was happy with them. The Guardsmen, I think they felt like it was probably a worthwhile thing to do. It's not like being called up and sitting in a—like we had to in Chicago, and put them in the armory for a while waiting for the Bulls to finally win, to have the riot break out. But again, there wasn't anything unusual there. You're kind of used to it: Guard goes in and they do their thing. The thing that stuck in my mind was the boot campers, because nobody—

DePue: Because that was contrary to the expectations?

Edgar: Yes. Expectations weren't high, there was a lot of anxiety about them going in, and they were so much better than anybody. Also, the comparison to the work campers. They're all from prisons, but this boot camp, this special approach, it works.

DePue: This next one's on the federal side, but very much part of the fight: the Corps of Engineers. They are the ones responsible for maintaining the levees on a day-to-day basis, correct?

Edgar: I would think so, yes. I don't remember the Corps of Engineers because they didn't have anything to do with money, (laughs) and that's what my major concern was: making sure we got money and got it quick—besides dealing with whoever I had to deal with.

DePue: Well, I thought it was the Corps of Engineers in retrospect that got a lot of the criticism. It was always the debate about, did we have the levees in the right place? Why do we expect these towns to be flooded year in, year out?

Edgar: Yes, I never got too much into that and never paid a lot of attention to that. I think the question was more, do levees work or not? The levee part of it was more of a philosophical discussion. Most of our time we were just trying to keep water back. We didn't get into that too much. I think later that might have occurred more, but I was just more worried about making sure we got every penny we could out of the federal government yesterday and not wait till tomorrow. (DePue laughs) I just knew, all these folks that I had sitting out there—the quicker we could get them help, the better off we're all going to be.

DePue: I think this might have happened about the time that President Clinton was supposed to be going to Colorado and seeing Pope John Paul II. He made a stop in St. Louis, August 12, and signed a bill that was $6.3 billion dollars for all of the disaster states. Do you recall that?

Edgar: No. What I recall is I think initially they didn't have enough money. There was concern among states that there wasn't enough money. I can't remember if it was the Congress that did it or the White House. I remember we went to Washington, some of us governors, because I was on the Jim Lehrer show that night, to try to press the case that we needed more money. We ended up getting more than I…

DePue: Maybe this will help you here. August 26 and 27, there was some kind of a flood summit up in Des Moines. Somebody on the federal side was making some arguments that the state was to pay somewhere between 10 and 25 percent of the flood damage. I'll just read what I've got here: "Ten percent in cases of damage to public facilities in states where loss was greater than sixty-four dollars per person. None of the nine states damaged in the flooding qualified for this reduced rate." Here's a quote that Mike Lawrence had at the time in response to this, "We think it's grossly unfair. That means a small town in Illinois that's been devastated will receive 75 percent of its cost, and the town right across the river in Missouri will receive 90 percent of its cost. The logic escapes me."

Edgar: I remember there was a question over the funding part, but I think that all got resolved. In the end, we were happy with what the federal government provided. I can't remember the exact timetable, but initially we didn't think the total amount they were talking about was enough. That got up, so then maybe this formula problem, too.

DePue: Do you recall maybe the worst part of the flood for you? Was there a specific incident or a scenario that bothered you?

Edgar: I think you would go out and everybody would be working night and day to hold these levees. Maybe I'd been there, and the next day I'd get word that levee broke. So you knew all these people who had been working night and day for several days, all their efforts just were for naught. So you always felt bad about that. Like Hull: for a long time they hoped that maybe Hull wouldn't get flooded, and it got pretty well wiped out. You felt bad people lost their homes and all, but I also felt bad for all these people who made an effort and thought they had held it, then we get more rain or it'd spring a leak or something like that. I didn't lose my home. I think anybody that lost a home could not see anything positive about this.

The positive thing I saw was just the way people pulled together, and very little finger-pointing, very little complaining. There was some frustration at times, maybe, on the part of some local governments, but for the most part I thought the system worked pretty well. The federal government—again, who I was really worried about just not being there—I thought was there; I think other Republican governors all shared that. Clinton, I think, knew that Witt was probably the most

popular member of the cabinet he had in the Republican Party, because nobody could say anything bad about Witt; he was just very well thought of. I look back on it—it was a tragedy, particularly for the people who lost their homes, but it also was kind of reassuring that the state would pull together, and I thought the state agencies did a very good job in responding. I thought the public responded. Just overall I thought it's one of those you come through, and you hope you never have to do that again, but at least you know if you do have to go through it, you **can** handle it; you **can** deal with it.

Watching the Katrina thing, that's what I thought was so unfortunate; that you could tell if you're not prepared, particularly if you don't do some of the right things early on, then it really is a disaster, much greater than it needs to be. Not that maybe you could have saved a lot of those sections of New Orleans and other areas that got lost, but you could have, I think, minimized the anguish on people a lot more. Now, a little different than what we dealt with—they were dealing with a hurricane and flooding, and a hurricane doesn't leave you much time. The flooding leaves you a little more time to deal with. I think most people who went through that felt the system worked as well as it could work. There's only so much the system can do with a natural disaster. I'm sure the debate still goes on about the levees—what kind of levees, or should we have levees?

It was ironic. About that time, a little later, the book called *Rising Tide* came out, which I think is one of the great historical reads of all time.[110] It's about the great floods on the Mississippi in the 1920s; basically, the South got wiped out. After that, the South built levees because they had all the strong congressional leaders with seniority; that was part of the reason this flood didn't have much impact on them at all. But north of Cairo, where you don't have any of the levees to the extent you have them south of Cairo, it made a big difference. I remember Dick Durbin talking about that, that was pretty obvious, the difference. But I think those purists who make the argument you shouldn't have any levees, probably there's some truth to that too.

DePue: We've been talking about your response in '93. We've made several references to Katrina, which was quite a bit later. We haven't made reference to the very slow-moving disaster that President Barack Obama's facing right now with the massive oil leak in the gulf.

Edgar: The only thing is, if this had been George W. Bush, they would have probably tried, tarred and feathered, and run him out of town by now. There is a little bit of a double standard, I think, going on out there, and it's beginning to catch up a little bit with… I can't say that it struck me that the federal government reacted very quickly in this one, and this is probably a lot worse than Katrina. Now, they're beginning to, and maybe they're limited on what they can do, but when you see James Carville scream at the Democratic president, as I watched the other night—I thought, jiminy,

[110] John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

is George Bush still in the White House? Then I realized that he was for Clinton, not Obama, in the primary, but—

DePue: He did appear pretty animated.

Edgar: He did. My wife said, "Boy, he's losing it." I said, "Well, he's from New Orleans." You've got to understand, I'm sure people down there are just beside themselves, because this isn't like a hurricane where you can go ahead and rebuild; I mean, this is going to destroy the ecological system forever, at least in our lifetime. I'm sure there's a lot of frustration down there. It does seem there's a little bit of a double standard. A week ago, the guy that writes for *Newsweek*, the political guy—he said if this had been George Bush, the press would have just been howling and yelling. Obama, at least until the last few days, had kind of got a pass on this. He looked a little uptight yesterday at the press conference. He started out really uptight.

I remember when we went through the flood in Chicago. Daley realized, one, the whole city could go, and two, they were at fault because they hadn't done their job. I appreciate why people get very nervous. I have to say that during the great floods of '93, I never felt like the state was going to succumb or we were at fault. Again, I look back, and I'm very glad I had convened that cabinet meeting on that Saturday and given everybody their marching orders early; I'm very pleased they responded the way they did. Not just Al, but a lot of the other staffers were involved, though he was kind of the point guy. I thought they all responded well, making sure the agencies kept out there. I think the relationship, working between the state and the local communities, went well. And I think that helped us for the rest of our time in office, that the local governments felt comfortable working with us.

DePue: Do you remember any particular stories that really illustrate what was going on in the flood, or anecdotes that you'd like to share?

Edgar: My favorite story, though, is the one I already mentioned: those folks in Calhoun County who didn't want those boot campers there, then taking them over and giving them dinner at night, and then writing me and telling me how I have to pardon them all. (laughs) I mean, that was just, I thought, a great story. The other thing was just people from all over the state who didn't really have any vested interest in western Illinois, coming over and giving up days of their time to help out. I thought that was, again, one of those very positive things out of an unfortunate situation. I think I learned more little town names on the western part of the state than I could ever use the rest of my life. (laughs) A lot of these towns that got flooded were little towns right on the river; in a lot of them, once the water was there, it was all over town. I might have seen statistics—how many of the people who lost their homes actually got back in their homes or they built new homes or they went someplace else. But I think the state recovered. It did not have a long-term negative impact on the state.

DePue: I can give a tally here. October 28—this is obviously after the crest of the flood—the tally was sixteen thousand people were forced from their homes, eight hundred and seventy-two thousand acres of farmland flooded, one and a half billion dollars of damage and expenses; that's based on the *Tribune*'s numbers.

Edgar: Yes, but I wonder of those—how many did you say, sixteen thousand?

DePue: Sixteen thousand people forced from their homes.

Edgar: I wonder how many of them got back in their homes eventually.

DePue: Yeah, I don't know that.

Edgar: The thing didn't get over. The other thing that's so different about flooding, which I learned is the worst disaster because it just keeps going on and on—you just can't move in a couple of days and start the repairs. There was this real dramatic scene that they caught on tape. All the TV stations were showing a house, and here comes this water; this house just gets knocked over down the river. This family was down in one of the counties south of St. Louis, a farm. At the Illinois State Fair, which is in the second week of August, the grand marshal for the parade—we had the family that had the house; we had them, and they were pretty positive folks. But I remember how many people came up and talked to them. But that's halfway into August, and it's still going all the way down to—I remember going down near Carbondale, there were a couple places where the water broke through; there were some towns down there that flooded out.

DePue: There's some numbers here, just to put into context what you're talking about. For the town of Quincy, there were 152 days where water was above flood stage.

Edgar: Flood level, yes.

DePue: For Grafton, which you've talked about a lot, 195 days the water was above flood stage.

Edgar: Yes. It was just a long process, and you had winter coming too. But again, I thought the state handled it as well as anyone could have hoped for that magnitude of disaster. I would hope that if we ever have another disaster like that, the state can handle it in a similar manner; while it didn't alleviate all the miseries people went through, I think it did help to some extent. Again, I thought the state did a good job working with local government to streamline, to make sure that we got as much relief money from the federal government as quickly as we could. The federal government's pretty good, but I think we did a good job of doing what we had to do to make sure that became a reality. I think everything worked as well as could have been hoped.

DePue: We started by discussing Mike Lawrence's comment to you at the beginning of all this, that first conference you went to for governors, the importance of handling

these kinds of things right. At the tail end of it, obviously your poll ratings are up, and it's not bad timing, because you're going into (laughs) an election year.

Edgar: Again, it's much better to have an external foe than an internal foe; it's one where everybody could rally around. I think it did give a chance to see, okay, you are the chief executive; you have to administer—which to me is the key responsibility, to administer and deal with, in this case, a crisis. I think we did it well and I think we got good marks from the public from it. It's interesting. I always tell students, "Don't get too hung up on campaign rhetoric, what candidates talk about in the campaign, because a lot of that is they all look at the same polls." I say, "Look at their records, because you don't know how they're going to react; most of those issues they talk about disappear." I think back in the '90 election—none of us ever talked about, how do you handle a disaster? None of us had ever **handled** a disaster. So you're never sure just how that person might handle it until they go through it. I think we did it well, and I think folks felt much more comfortable about me as governor as a result. So from a political point of view, I think it turned out to be an extremely positive event, and one that gave my administration a chance to demonstrate how they would handle a crisis.

DePue: This isn't something you had mentioned explicitly, but a lot of how you handle a situation like this is determined by those key people in those positions early on, those decisions you make in the first month of your administration.

Edgar: There's no doubt the people are key, but equally as important is how do they all work together, and what's the atmosphere that they work in? One of the things in talking with folks over the years after I've been out of office, the feeling was that the people in my administration worked well together, and there was a loyalty toward me or wanted me to look good. But it wasn't just… It was that we're going to do the right job, and there was that sense that we're in this together. You didn't have people leaking stories about this guy or that guy; that just didn't happen during the eight years I was governor. They were part of a team. I think that team effort pays off, particularly when you're under pressure during a natural disaster like we faced. The folks all performed very well.

I think the coordination out of the governor's office by Al was extremely important, particularly liaison with the local officials; they had someone they felt like they could get to who was right next to the governor, as opposed to just dealing with somebody in one of the agencies. Plunk was very good, but I think if they'd have just been dealing with somebody who was an acting director of a state agency, that wasn't the same as knowing they could talk to somebody who was right there with the governor. Now, Plunk probably knew more how you handle this—I don't want to take anything away from him, because he was super through this—but I think the optics of the fact, here's a guy close to the governor who's the guy I'm talking to, so I'm about as close as you can be, I think that was very important for these mayors to feel comfortable and to head off any frustrations or animosity between state and local levels of government, which I think sometimes happened in these things in the past in other states.

DePue: Any final reflections on the flood before we turn to the Chicago schools strike?

Edgar: No, I have to say, though, that I was sure glad it didn't rain that much the next year. (DePue laughs) Every time they started having those floods on the Red River up in Minnesota, I'd think, well, here we go.

DePue: Well, that's all flowing north, at least for the Red River.

Edgar: But it flows into the Mississippi eventually, doesn't it?

DePue: I think it goes into Hudson Bay up there, at least from north—

Edgar: The Red River goes north? Okay. Well, someplace up in Minnesota, wherever that—

DePue: Oh, yeah, where that empties into the Mississippi flood basin, absolutely.

Edgar: The Red River's right on the border between North Dakota and Minnesota, isn't it? Isn't that the line?

DePue: I think so.

Edgar: Yes. It's up there someplace; that's where it all starts.[111]

DePue: We've had plenty of rain these last few years.

Edgar: Yes. I live right on the Sangamon River, so every day I look down and I see that; I just think, just stay down there, (DePue laughs) I don't want you in my house. I know how stinky you are.

DePue: So let's turn to the Chicago school strike.

Edgar: The reason I want to talk about this: this is one of the great frustrations, I guess, or problems for years. Chicago schools never had enough money, it seemed like. They would always come to a crisis where we were going to have a strike. They would always come to Springfield and want to be bailed out. When I worked for Thompson, this happened.[112] I remember it was a big issue. It happened for years. They'd get in a financial problem because they usually didn't have enough money to cover their contract with the teachers' union. In the fall of '93 it was coming to a head, another—this always happens right before school starts up—you get more pressure; you're getting the contracts in. They couldn't settle, and I think they knew, finally, we didn't have any money in Springfield. I think they knew with me, if I said no, I meant no, and they weren't going to change my mind. And we just didn't have any money.

[111] The Red River flows north into Lake Winnipeg, forming the border between Minnesota and North Dakota. The earliest flooding in 1993 occurred on Minnesota's Redwood River, in the southwestern part of the state.
[112] For Edgar's account of this important earlier showdown, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 71-82.

The teachers' union would not negotiate. The teachers' union was smart enough that they didn't want to go out on strike, because they knew there wasn't public support if they went out on strike. If they closed down the Chicago schools, that was just chaos in Chicago. So they didn't want to strike, but they also weren't going to give until they had to give. So they were going through all this stuff, and finally there's the deadline—you either strike or you're not going to strike. They came right up to that deadline, and they'd already sent the word, as soon as we get about another…we're going to sit down and negotiate, and we'll work it out. They kind of had a figure all figured out. Well, we had this federal judge in Chicago, who, to the shock of everybody, intervened and put a thirty-day stay on everything, saying basically you couldn't strike for thirty days. That took the pressure off the teacher's union; now they could bluff and puff for thirty more days because they didn't have to put up or shut up, as they were going to have to.

I had been invited—five governors from the United States and their wives had been invited by Helmut Kohl to come to Germany and have dinner with him and his wife. Then they were going to put us up at a resort in the Black Forest, in Baden-Baden or some exotic place like that.

DePue: A place you'd like to go visit.

Edgar: Right. Our daughter, who was going to Miami of Ohio, was that semester doing a semester abroad, and she was in Luxembourg. We'd already lined up that after we left Germany we were going to go to Luxembourg—the legislative session is out, and September, October is kind of a free time—and I was going to go and spend a week at the residency of the U.S. ambassador in Luxembourg and visit our daughter going to school there. It was just going to be a great week-and-a-half, two-week thing. We had everything lined up, then this judge came up with this idiotic ruling which didn't do anything except just put everything off for thirty more days. But I could not leave the state of Illinois when there was a potential Chicago school strike. There wasn't anything I could do because I didn't have any money to give them. I just told them they're not getting any money from us; you guys are going to have to make do with what you got. Everybody knew that, but this do-good judge thinking he was going to save a strike (DePue laughs)—there wasn't going to be a strike. Everybody who was in the know knew there wasn't going to be a strike—the union was going to finally negotiate; they had the figure all figured out. So I don't get to go to Germany and have dinner with Helmut Kohl, I don't get to go to Baden-Baden, and more importantly, I don't get to go see my daughter in Luxembourg.[113] Ah, I was furious. I said never again.

When the thirty-day period was up, exactly what happened, happened. This is going to happen. Teachers' unions would not negotiate, wouldn't give anything till right down to the wire. Day before they were going to have to go out on strike, they made an agreement that they could have made six months before. I just remember telling myself, we're not doing this again. (DePue laughs) This is it. All the years

[113] Something members of the press noted; "O'Malley & Collin INC.," *Chicago Tribune*, September 24, 1993.

I had been in Springfield, as a staffer and everything else, this has happened. That was a lot of my impetus a year and a half later to do Chicago school reform. That was what was going on in '93 right before we filed, getting ready for the campaign for 1994. The Chicago school strike, or the potential strike, to me just reinforced that we had to deal with the Chicago schools. We had to find some way that they could manage themselves so they didn't run down here every two years when they were threatening a strike and try to hold up the state to get more money just for the Chicago schools. It was obvious that they needed some management changes up there. That, at least from my perspective, had a lot to do with what followed a year and a half later with the Chicago school reform.

DePue: Yeah, I was going to say we're going to spend a lot of time, I'm sure, talking about both the Chicago and state school reform efforts. I think that pretty much wraps things up for today; at least I have run out of questions to ask you. We want to put off the '94 election campaign and some other events in '94 until the next time we meet, if that's okay with you.

Edgar: That'd be fine. I was trying to think if there's anything in '93 or anything else that relates to '93 that we didn't deal with. Sometime we have to talk about the people I've met, the international stuff, too.

DePue: I think that might work better for the second administration anyway.

Edgar: Yes, because we did a lot more traveling and things during the second administration than we did the first. The reason I said that, I was trying to think when Gorbachev came through Decatur.[114] Yes, that'd be fine.

DePue: Thank you, Governor.

Edgar: Thank you.

(end of interview 16)

[114] Edgar and Gorbachev toured Archer Daniels Midland's veggie-burger processing plant in Decatur. *Chicago Tribune*, May 7, 1992.