

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Charles Hartke

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
& Illinois State Museum's  
*Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project

Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-068

Charles Hartke, a life-long farmer and former Director of Agriculture for Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and IL State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: September 23, 2008      Location: Chuck Hartke farm, rural Teutopolis, IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): Tony Bateman and Greg Lipe, IL Information Service

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Jeanine Benanti, ALPL Volunteer and Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 60    Total Time: 58 min + 1 hr 8 min + 1 hr = 3 hrs 6 min / 3.1 hr

Session 1: Hartke's early life on the family farm

Session 2: Effingham County politics & service as an IL state representative

Session 3: Director of Agriculture & reflections on agriculture in 2008

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 12/09/2008.

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

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## Abstract

## Charles Hartke, *Oral History of IL Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2008-068

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Charles ‘Chuck’ Hartke was born on May 7th, 1944 in Effingham, and grew up on the Hartke family farm in rural Teutopolis, Illinois. Chuck grew up in a large family with five sisters and four brothers. He attended a one room school through fifth grade, then attended school in nearby Teutopolis. He married Kathryn, his high school sweetheart, in 1963, and also began farming on land his father gave him as a wedding present. Drafted in 1966, he was an Army medic for two years, including a month in Vietnam. He returned to Teutopolis to farm and raise a family.

In the 1960s, Chuck attended a zoning meeting, and soon found himself involved with community politics. Over time, his involvement in politics steadily increased. He served on the Effingham County Board from 1970 to 1974, became the Effingham County Democratic Party Chairman in 1978, and in 1985 ran for the 108th district in the Illinois House. He served in the House for the next eighteen and a half years, focusing much of his effort on agricultural issues. For most of those years he was the vice chair of the Agricultural Committee, and one of its most influential members.

In the fall of 2002 he advised the Blagojevich campaign on agricultural issues; following the election, he served as Director of Agriculture until the spring of 2008. He discussed the impact of change on the farm during his lifetime, and many issues he faced while Director, including continuing budgetary challenges, an outbreak of Monkey Pox, soybean rust, Asian longhorn beetle and emerald ash borer. He was disappointed when he was unable to travel overseas to promote the state’s agricultural products. He expressed optimism about the future of various bio-energy sources including ethanol, bio-diesel and bio-mass.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** growing up on the farm in central Illinois; Effingham County Board; Effingham County Democratic Party Chairman; representative in the Illinois House of Representatives; Agriculture Committee in Illinois House of Representatives; ethanol; bio-diesel; bio-mass; Monkey Pox; soybean rust; Asian longhorn beetle; emerald ash borer; Representative Lou Lang; Speaker of the House Michael Madigan; Senate President Emil Jones; Governor Rod Blagojevich

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