Interview with Theodore (Ted) Hild
HP-A-L-2009-020

Interview: June 2, 2009
Interviewer: Newlyn Hosea, ALPL Volunteer

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Hosea: It is June the 2nd 2009 and this is an interview by Newlyn Hosea with Ted Hild in his home in Springfield, Illinois as part of the Historic Preservation Agency Legacy Project. Ted, as we begin, can you just give us a brief overview of your life before the Preservation Agency?

Hild: Well, there really wasn't much life before the Preservation Agency for me because I started working in the Historic Preservation program right out of graduate school. In fact, I was finishing up in graduate school at Northern Illinois University when I took a job as a field surveyor. At that time the Historic Preservation program was housed in the Department of Conservation in the Historic Sites Division. So, I worked there from 1972 until 1975. In 1976 I moved to Springfield and the program became a real part of state government at that time. It wasn't just a project that became part of state government.

Hosea: When you say you worked there, what kinds of things did you do?

Hild: Before I came to Springfield?

Hosea: When you were working under the Conservation Department?

Hild: Oh, well, our job at that time was to survey the entire state looking for properties with historical and architectural and even archeological significance. I was just looking for the properties with historical significance. So, that program looked at every building in the state and then in 1975 it was institutionalized in the Department of Conservation and then I moved down here in '76 and took it up

there. Where, now having completed the survey, we had all this stuff. Now we had to figure out what to do with it.

There were a variety of programs all required by the federal government for participation in their funding and that included the continuation of the survey work. It included the National Register of Historic Places program and a program called Review and Compliance that the federal, and then later state law, made it a requirement that agencies had. Before you spent any federal money, before you could participate in any kind of federal undertaking, like licensing or permitting or direct work paid for by federal money, you had to take into account the effect of that undertaking on any historic or architectural or archeological significant property. I'm going into detail about this now because as the program develops, it accounts for about half of the resources of everybody working in historic preservation in Illinois state government.

Hosea: Now are you still doing this as a college student or are you now in a full position?

Hild: I'm full time. Before I moved to Springfield I worked contractually as a full time employee but working out of my home in DeKalb. That was convenient because I was doing northern Illinois and didn't have to commute from Springfield. But then when the time came in Springfield, we had programs that needed to be administered from a central location. So when I moved to Springfield, there were three of us in the program. I was the third person.

Hosea: Who else was there?

Hild: Bill Ferreara was my boss. He had been my boss all along and he, in fact, was the one who hired me in 1972. And then we had a secretary, Linda Beck; she moved on after a bit. Then I came in July – no, I came in, gracious, May of 1976. We picked up another person in December 1976. That was Keith Scully.

Hosea: And all of these programs that you mentioned, essentially the four of you were handling all of those?

Hild: Yes, yes. Of course as time passed those programs matured; they became more complex as far as the review and compliance is concerned. You know, our first job was trying to convince other state and federal agencies that yes, this is the law, you really do have to do this. So there was some of that involved in it. And as well you know, the work expanded to fill our time.

Hosea: Was this a federally driven program? Are these programs you were doing your work because of what the federal government was requiring?

Hild: Yes. In 1966, Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act and what that did was make money available to the states to create state government-based historic preservation programs. Up until that time there had been very, very little involvement in preservation by state governments. Most of it was by local governments. So, in response to urban renewal and in response to federal highways

coming into the cities and demolishing entire neighborhoods with expressways, interest groups and the liberals in Congress got together and said we've got to control federal government here. And this is how we'll do it for the cultural resources. With very few amendments, that law is still in effect today.

Hosea: So, you are still working under Conservation at this point. Just in general, not a job description but in general, what kind of physical things was this involving for you?

Hild: People would contact us and say, "I'd like my property put on the National Register of Historic Places." So we administered that program. We made sure that they met the documentation requirements. We scheduled these public hearings around the state quarterly. There was a state review board that met quarterly to decide on these things. We would contact state and federal agencies about their work programs to make sure that they weren't going to destroy any historic sites. We, at that time, also had some grants – very, very tiny grant program; that money would go to important buildings that were falling down and we tried to patch them up.

Hosea: Now was this a pretty—for want of a better phrase—cut and dried things, or did this involve a lot of negotiations and talking with various federal and local and state groups?

Hild: No, um-hm. In so many ways we were making it up as we went along. In 1976, you know, the program, even though the federal statute was passed in 1966, it didn't get going in Illinois until 1970-71 and that was just a survey part. The actual administration of a comprehensive, or attempting to have a comprehensive historic preservation program, on the level of state government, didn't get under way until 1976 so we were making it up as we went along. I said earlier that sometimes we'd have to convince other bureaucrats that yes, you must comply with these statutes. Some of them would just say. "Well, what do you mean?" "We mean that you have to let us review your project and if you're going to have an adverse affect on some historic sites we're going to stop your project and we're going to talk about that." Imagine their surprise. (laughter)

Hosea: Now, I guess the next step is, when did you begin to hear, or how did you begin to hear rumblings of a change to become a separate agency.

Hild: Well, actually, very early, when Richard Olgivie was governor he had caused to be produced, a document called Beyond Bureaucracy. I'd heard of it. I'd never actually laid eyes on it as a document. But as early as 1973 our state review board was meeting and we were discussing where things could go. What direction it could take. Whether there should be a separate agency. Whether the preservation program should have a larger institutional presence within state government or in Conservation or a stand alone agency. Well, that never went anywhere.

Then during the Walker administration there was a somewhat continuation of that kind of talk and what are we going to do with this preservation program. We sort of caught the appearance of Conservation's poor, poor relations. Um-hm, well

in 1976 there was preparation of a statute. The Illinois Historic Preservation Act went into effect in 1977. This codified a lot of the things that we had been doing all along under federal guidelines. The feds say. "Do this or we won't pay you." So we wanted to get paid to do these things so we did them and then we got paid. Um-hm, so things like state review boards and state historic preservation officer, all of these things were like federal titles, federal designations. So, people thought it would be better to have an Illinois government based thing, so the Illinois Historic Preservation Act was intended to be the statutory framework for the historic preservation program. And I guess it was. It created the Illinois Register of Historic Places. It turned out that wasn't such a good idea.

Hosea: Why is that?

Hild: Well, maybe we can get in to that later but for now it was essentially the wrong tool to do a certain job.

Hosea: Okay.

Hild: It was way more complicated than it needed to be. So, as the discussions were being carried on for this bill, the discourse was, should there be a separate agency or shouldn't there be. Well, so it was settled in 1976 and 1977 that there would not be a separate historic preservation agency; there would just be the preservation program housed in the Department of Conservation. And, of course, I'm sure part of the reason for that was, that bureaucracy being what it is, that people in charge at the Department of Conservation didn't want to lose a program unit, because they also had the historic sites as well as the state parks; there were people there who didn't want to relinquish them, and I don't blame them.

Then the next time I heard about it was, you know, in the mid-80's when Jim Thompson was talking about it. I didn't really know the background and no one I knew was included in that but I learned from some people farther down the line exactly what had happened. Well, not exactly what had happened, but by working with some people who were instrumental in the creation of the new agency, they told me some idea that I get the feeling that the whole idea was pretty much Governor Thompson's. We need a separate agency and apparently one of the reasons for this I had heard. David Kenny had been the Director of the Department of Conservation and he'd been there for nine years and everybody knows and especially David Kenny, who was a college professor who taught political science, knew that nine years was an extremely long time to have a position like that in state government. You've got a lot of interests to balance and you're not always going to make everybody happy. So, the day he started work, as I said, he had a constituency of one and that was the Governor. And the day he started work he knew that he wasn't going to be working there the rest of his life. Well, at any rate, Jim Thompson really liked David Kenny. The reason for that I gather is that David Kenny held the very first fundraiser for Jim Thompson to run for Governor so he felt personally attached to Kenny, plus, you know, gratitude for really giving him a boost in, my god, somebody from downstate, southern Illinois, is going to sponsor a

Chicago Republican for Governor. (laughs) Yeah, you're going to owe him one. So, it was time for Kenny to leave the Department of Conservation, but now Thompson had a place to put him. So he made David Kenny the very first Director of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Hosea: Now, during this time, this leads up 10-15 years before it became an agency itself, now is this a time, as with most areas, of gradually expanding budgets, responsibilities, numbers of people, this kind of thing?

Hild: Yes, it seemed like we would add a person a year. So by the time, I think in 1985, I think we had 15, maybe 16 people. It would change from year to year. You know funds would become available for a special project. One year we had like three people working on the grants program, two years later we had one. At one time we had four archeologists and then we had one. It would go back and forth like that. That seemed sort of appropriate, I guess, as the tasks would come and go. But, yeah, there was a steady increase. I think the most people we ever had on board at one time, including contractual employees—we always had a couple of contractual people—was 22. We had 22 people. And, that was before the creation of the Historic Preservation Agency. That was back when we were in Conservation. Plus some of our personnel did double duty with other programs in the Department of Conservation, like our grants people.

Hosea: So, then, I believe it's in '85 that the agency was actually born with David Kenny as its first Director.

Hild: Yes.

Hosea: Was there anyone else besides Conservation that went into this new agency?

Hild: Yes, yes. It was the Governor's office notion, I presume or assume, that all the cultural agencies dealing with history should all be in the same place. So that meant the state-owned historic sites, the historic preservation program – that is what I did. The State Historical Library which meant that would also bring in the State Historical Society.

Hosea: Now can you explain just what the State Historical Society's relationship to the State Historical Library is?

Hild: Just barely [laugh]. Just barely, because in 1889 the State Historical Library was created by law. I may be off on some of these years but it was way back then. In 1894, the State Historical Society was created. And then by law the State Historical Society, and this is, quote "a department of the historical library." And to this day no one was exactly sure what that meant. But from an administrative point of view what it meant was that the State Historical Library had three trustees and the state historian. The State Historical Society had a board of directors that appointed an executive director of the State Historical Society. By law, they were the same person. So, you can imagine what kind of peril that individual would have encountered. As it turned out, and my understanding is there has only been one time

maybe in like the 40's or 50's where there was some contention over where the trustees, the three trustees and the Historical Society directors didn't see eye-to-eye on who the state historian would be. Not in my lifetime, literally I think.

So, when the agency was created this had to be straightened out and the historical society was cut loose, legally made it a separate entity. The historical library became one division of the new agency. The Preservation Services Division became one separate division of the new agency as did the historic sites division. After the dust had settled and we were up and running, the new agency had like 200 employees and about 100 of them were based in the historic sites and spread out all over the state. That included the staff of the historical library. It included like the 15 or so people in my division, and the other personnel in administration and education and publications. That kind of thing.

Hosea: And it also included this concept of trustees then carried forward from the library to the new agency.

Hild: Yes, yes. That's very curious. My understanding is that the only agencies in state government with trustees controlling them would be the Historic Preservation Agency and the Capitol Development Board. I'm guessing the Capitol Development Board has an institutional history that begins, I think, something called the Illinois Building Authority that starts in the 1960's. Everything used to be like the Department of Public Works and that spun off public construction into the Capitol Development Board for doing things like building all the dormitories for all the baby boomers at the colleges and that kind of thing and state office buildings and so on and so forth. So there is an institutional history that could not be severed I guess, you know, when the Capitol Development Board was created and I think a similar situation obtained with the Historic Preservation Agency and, of course, I don't think you can talk about the Preservation Agency without talking about some of the personalities involved either. And, of course, I'm talking about Julie Cellini, who had been a trustee for the historical library for a long time and really, really enjoyed doing that.

Hosea: Was she the chairman when it was the historical library?

Hild: Yes, she was the chairman and she's always been the chairman. There has been no other chairman. [laugh] But she and her husband were close to Governor Thompson, so apparently it was okay with him because that's the way things wound up. So, um-hm, that did lead to some straining of relations between the Historical Society and what is now the Historical Preservation Agency. The agency gave a lot of support to the Historical Society, about five headcount, doing various things – editing the journal and that kind of stuff that takes a lot of time and money and skill. Um-hm, I can't remember exactly when, but as time passed there was a falling out. The State Historical Society was like, well, you're fired; no, you can't fire me, I quit. There was that kind of thing, so now the State Historical Society for Illinois, you know, an industrial state with 12 million people, um-hm, gross state product, more than a lot of countries on earth, works out of a storefront downtown here.

Hosea: Can you describe and did this change: I'm interested in the relationship of the trustees to the director to the personnel. Did it operate as an overview kind of function or a day-to-day kind of direction or how hands-on, hands-off was this?

Hild: Okay. It took a while to get that straightened out; there were opposing forces there, and it started out when David Kenny came over. He was to be the director of the department and, well, being a scholar who studied state government, he thought, Okay, I'm the agency director. I'm going to be in charge of the agency. Then when the Executive Order and then the statute came out, it said that the trustees would hire the director. And I think … I worked a little bit with Kenny on this and his attitude seemed to be, I don't care who makes me the director, I'm the director. [laughs] On the other hand, he must have known now he had a constituency of three. Well, the board of trustees was expanded to, I think, five or six or seven – something like that. It was disputed; there was a small war and David Kenny lost his job. He took his pension and went back to Carbondale where he had been a college professor for all his life outside of the nine years he was in Springfield.

That meant that Julie Cellini was in charge. She was the chair of the board of trustees. So, they had a guy that they had just hired to run the library and be the Executive Director of the State Historical Society. You know, the two hats and one person. That was a person named Michael Devine; he became the director but he had a clear understanding that the people who hire you are also the people who fire you. Therefore, they are the ones who really run the agency. In the beginning I know the trustees were a little more hands on. Well, when Julie Cellini was the chair of the trustees for the Historical Library, when it was only the Historical Library, she insisted on signing all the vouchers which came to maybe, oh, five, ten a week. When it became this agency with 200 people and sites all over the state, it became several dozen a day [laugh]. So she learned that there wasn't going to be any micro-managing. It's just not possible to do, because now overnight it become like a real agency. So, plus a lot of those programs are just beyond their experience. They're trustees like any other appointed state body, most of them don't know hardly anything about what it is they're suppose to be overseeing.

Hosea: These are unpaid positions?

Hild: Yes, citizens volunteers doing their civic duty. Blah, blah, blah. Um-hm, most of our programs, I'm sure, just befuddled them and most of the trustees I never even met.

Hosea: So your day-to-day direction was in the traditional mode of reporting to your division manager or the director?

Hild: Yes, that's correct. That was the chain of command. But I was concerned about something we were about to do.

Hosea: Now as the agency then begins and starts doing these programs, it sounds as if there may have been a lot of federal government involved because many are grants. You

have, obviously, a state legislation that's supporting your dealing with local governments and I assume various historic pressure groups and so on. Does this get to be a problem balancing all these influences?

Hild: Um-hm, only the review and compliance. As I explained, I said I wanted to talk about that in detail earlier because it's very important later. Um-hm, this would be just the kind of program where somebody might come up to the chairman of the board of trustees at some kind of cocktail party or function in Chicago and be button-holed by some big developer and asked, "Why is your agency stopping my project? So [laugh] that's where the politics came in. If you have a government sponsored project that has certain environmental responsibilities and then you have all these cultural environmentalists over here, um-hm, and things don't go the way the people in power want, then there's pressure. And sometimes you prevail and sometimes they crush you like a bug. And that's life.

Hosea: If I own a very old building, or at what point might what I want to do come under Historic Preservation's venue? At what point would you be in my life?

Hild: The instant you apply for any kind of state or federal assistance. Other than that, nothing.

Hosea: As long as I'm doing myself, just not asking for aid or in a program there isn't any….?

Hild: I tell people if you do it on your own nickel, you can paint it pink, pick it up and spin it around and take it somewhere else. It doesn't make a bit of difference. We have no business telling you what to do beyond that.

Hosea: If it's okay, I'm going to go down a list of some of these programs; if you [will], give us kind of a view either now or how it developed or what. The National Registry of Historic Places. That's a federal program, is that right?

Hild: Yes, that's a federal program and that's sort of the keystone in the whole arch of these federal programs because none of these programs affect properties that do not have historical significance. The National Register is the thing that bestows historical significance on them. So, in other words, there's all these projects going on over here. There's all these buildings that people are doing things to. The only things we are going to be concerned with is this set of buildings identified on a list in black and white, the National Register of Historic Places.

Hosea: Do you have input in to what goes on there?

Hild: Absolutely, it's all done on the state level. The staff is the first one to deal with the public. Anybody can nominate any property, but the staff is the first one to deal with that. Make sure the documentation is appropriate, schedule of the public meeting and, um-hm, send it on to Washington. The National Register is run by the National Park Service and they have a title there called the Keeper of the National Register. The Keeper of the National Register is the person who actually puts the

property on the National Register. What the state does is recommend or nominate properties, but in practice, 99% of the decisions are made on a state level.

Hosea: Now being on this, is this something that people want to be or does that put you under regulations that you'd rather not be on that list sometimes?

Hild: Um-hm, people want to be on it. Of course, with the individual properties, you know, the property owner themselves will come forward with the documentation. There are a number of economic benefits, like tax breaks or whatnot, so like developers will come and say I want my apartment building put on the National Register because it's going to save me like $5 million if you do. So, sometimes people get mad at us because we don't put things on the National Register and then sometimes people get mad because we do put things on the National Register.

Hosea: What happens to me if I have a building that's on the National Register?

Hild: Let's say you're in a historic district. Okay that's a good example because there you are, you own a building, um-hmm, people in town; it could be the Mayor's office, it could be the local preservationists, could be anybody. They create a historic district, your property is included in the historic district; you're told about it, of course, every step of the way and you're given a chance to give your opinion. If your opinion is, I don't want to do it, well, you're going to do it anyway. It's a majority kind of thing. Um-hm. Then when that historic district that includes your property is put on the National Register, nothing will happen to you, unless you want federal or state money or you need the federal or state government to do something with your property. In fact, there are benefits in that your property could be helped; as I said, you could be eligible for a certain tax breaks. If the Department of Transportation wanted to rebuild the street in front of your building, we'd be reviewing the design to make sure there was no adverse affect on your building.

Hosea: That's part of the review and compliance part of it?

Hild: Yes.

Hosea: You mentioned, tax credits. There is a whole section in the reporting of the preservation division about this. What kind of tax credits are we talking about?

Hild: In 1981, when Dan Rostenkowski was Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee in Washington, he was so impressed by what restoration and rehabilitation had done in his neighborhood, he took an existing tax incentive program and enlarged it so much that it overnight changed the whole face of historic preservation nationwide. What he did was insert a provision in the tax code, in the federal tax code, that says if you have a property that's on the National Register of Historic Places and if you do a rehabilitation project on that property that's worth equal to or greater than the basis of the building. In other words, if it's a million dollar building, if you spend a million dollars on it, and if the State Historic Preservation Office or if the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office working together approved the design of the project, then you

get a 20 percent tax credit on your income tax. And that's, good grief, when you're talking projects up in Chicago, uh-hm, 10, 15, 20, 30 million dollar projects were a daily occurrence in the early and mid '80's; so this wasn't a give-away program. These guys, these developers, had to give something back. You know, they had to comply with the design standards. So, it wasn't a give- away program but it really helped fuel the construction boom. Nationwide like in the first few years of the program, I think there is something like 3 billion dollars worth of projects nationwide and in Chicago in the first several years of the program it was like, I don't know, somewhere between 3-- and 700 million dollars.

Hosea: And what was the function of the preservation group in this?

Hild: Well, absolutely critical because we were the ones who decided whether your building was historic or not to make you eligible in the first place. And then we were also the ones who reviewed your (documentation); we looked at your blueprints to decide whether or not you met the design standards. So out of the three criteria, we controlled two of them. That's why at one point we had four architects on the staff.

Hosea: And another kind of good thing that people got theirs, you discuss a property tax assessment freeze. Is that also…?

Hild: Yes, that's a popular program. Not as big as the other one. The first one we've been talking about was a federal program that dealt with your federal income taxes. The other one exists only in state law and what it does is provide some tax relief for property taxpayers and also for homeowners. The other one, the federal one, doesn't apply to private homeowners. It only applies to commercial and industrial buildings. But commercial can be rental residential so, you know, a condominium could easily take the federal tax credits but if you just had a little individual house, you know like this one, there is no program available to you. So, this was seen as a deficiency. Then in the late '70's the preservation community and our office worked together for a couple of years to come up with this program in the early '80's and what we got was a program that says if your property is on the National Register, and there's some other details too but, if basically it's on the National Register, and if you spend an amount equal to 25 percent of the fair cash value as determined by the assessor, and if the State Historic Preservation office approves your project, then your real estate assessment is frozen for eight years. At the end of the eight year period, it steps back up so you get a tax break for like, a 12 year long tax break, that started out slowly but it, you know, it still moves along. And, you know, you could see it ideally to help revitalize neighborhoods where somebody would say well, if I put $50,000 into my house, then my taxes are going to go up 500 percent so there is a disincentive to do that there. But with this program it removed that disincentive. Of course, if you look at who is actually taking advantage of this program, people in Lake Forest and the North Shore, condominium developers, [laugh]…

Hosea: So again, you were in a review function to be sure they met criteria and this kind of thing?

Hild: Yes. We had some control over what some people wanted.

Hosea: And through all this process in general, you discussed this a little bit before, but in general did you feel that you were able to make decisions based on your own judgments and not get into a political situation or a power situation?

Hild: Much to our surprise, yes. You know I remember, good grief it wasn't our first day in town. David Kenny was the (director). This is going back, you know, before the agency, in early days of the program. We're all big boys and girls. We understood that sometimes we weren't allowed to do what we saw was the right thing to do because competing interests had more clout. And we always kind of figured that was going to happen when David Kenny might just like basically tell us to go away. He said I'll handle this in the front office. Well, okay [laugh]. But what he was doing was really protecting us from that kind of stuff. He wasn't trying to convince us that, you know, we were too stupid to know what to do here, which is what other people later on, I think, thought. But he understood, in fact, when new staff came on, that's what I would try to indicate to people. I said our job is to give our best professional opinion about what needs to be done. I always said, I drilled this into the staff, our job is to tell the truth. If the guy above you doesn't want to do that, okay, that's the way it is. That's the way it is. In house I would refer to that as politics, and I'd say the same thing when I'd go out in the public and talk. I'd say you know we're going to do this but I understand that sometimes, I wouldn't say politics prevails, I'd say you know the other constraints of public policy prevail [laugh]. And, same thing, says the same thing [laugh].

Hosea: But to a remarkable extent you really felt you were able to function as you wanted to function.

Hild: Yes, yeah. There were some times, well you know, you lose a few, you win most of them. Not bad, not bad. I'm sure that happens in every agency if it's, you know. Even agencies where you think things are cut and dried according to statute, there is always something in the statute that provides somebody with a loophole.

Hosea: Can you go over a little bit the transition from Michael Devine to the next Director?

Hild: Uh-hm, not really. There was a lot of disappointment with Michael Devine. Dismay even. He looked really good on paper but everybody was disappointed with the way he did things. He seemed to make more people angry than mollified. And according to Tom Schwartz, it finally got to the point where Governor Thompson himself had to intervene and tell Julie Cellini to get rid of him. That's what I've heard. I have no direct knowledge of that but that's what I heard.

Hosea: And who replaced him?

Hild: Who did replace him? Susan Mogerman. Susan Mogerman knew Julie Cellini, had worked on Jim Thompson's press office, worked there. So, you know, she'd been in town a long time. So she came over to be the Deputy Director and everybody knew that she and Julie Cellini were pretty close so everybody just assumed that she was going to be Julie's—I don't know—agent, mole, whatever, you know. Eyes and ears. Help keep her eye on things the way, because things were starting to go downhill with the administration, the agency's administration. So, when she stepped in when Devine left. And she was Director for like nine years, something like that. Again, like David Kenny, it was an amazing tenure for anybody in state government at that level, at senior management level. And, uh-hm, you know if there is always a question when you get a new Director, like you know, what are they going to do to our program. Well, we hoped they screw those people over there but we hope we get the benefits we so richly deserved all these years. And, I don't know, same thing. We were satisfied on balance; you know we were satisfied with Susan Mogerman.

Hosea: You mentioned something that I noticed in looking at the organizational charts and so on. It seems that in the Historic Preservation Agency, that there are remarkably long tenures for people at the top. Compared to, is there something that makes that happen or is there ….?

Hild: I couldn't say. It might be the fact that, because it's an agency whose program depends to a large extent on professional skills, like architects and archeologists and what not. There's not too many places for those people to go or historians, you know. I'm an historian, there's no way in hell anybody's going to give me a job in a university but I can do this and I can do history. Uh-hm, on the management level, I couldn't say. I know that Julie Cellini has been interested in the job clearly and she's been the only one because she wants to be. You'll have to ask her why.

Hosea: You mention architects. There's also a section in preservation called architectural review. What does that review?

Hild: Uh-hm. Well they review the tax projects and on occasion when in review and compliance, let's say there is a federal grant to rehab a building, they'll look at those rehabilitation plans to check on the designs standards.

Hosea: And now a couple of programs I bumped into just … the certified local government program. What was that about?

Hild: That was something that started again as a federal initiative that started in 1980. There is a long history of that. I'll try to summarize it. In 1966, one of the big supporters of the National Historic Preservation Act was the United States Council of Mayors because it was their towns that were getting chewed up and damaged by urban renewal and highway projects, that kind of thing. As the program was constituted and as things developed there was no role for local government. So, in 1980 this deficiency was to have been remedied by giving local governments a larger role in the National Register program in particular. And even if they wanted

it, they wanted to do review and compliance, so the immediate cause for that was that some local governments were getting like surprises in their mail. The Mayor would get a letter saying oh, you know, your entire downtown has just been on the National Register of Historic Places [laugh]. Nobody asked us what we thought of that, although it was all perfectly legal to do it that way. Uh-hm, local government thought it should have a bigger say in the program. Like, okay, seems fair to me. Since, you know, everybody in the whole country lives under a local government and so the deal, the way it was set up in statute in 1980 was that you could play as a local government; we'd let you play if, uh-hm, if your local preservation program met certain criteria. And that was, the overarching idea was, do you have a reasonable preservation program? Do you have a commission? Is it constituted with good authority? Does it have any clearly defined powers and roles and that kind of stuff?

Hosea: By play, you mean have a seat at the table when these things are discussed?

Hild: Yeah.

Hosea: So again your agency's role was a review whether they met these criteria or not?

Hild: Yes. And then when you got this designation, a couple of things happened. In local government you got an early review of National Register proposals. Before it went to the state review board, it went to the local government. So that resolved one of those problems. Not that it was ever a huge problem. And the other one is that it made you eligible for funding. The federal appropriation had a set-aside for local governments: ten percent. It's great; it could be terrible if you have low appropriations. It could be wonderful if you had large appropriations. And, of course, they've always been low. Nonetheless, even if it's very tiny, the states are required to give ten percent of what they get from the feds to pass it through to the local governments.

That's been done and it's funded a lot of projects for things like educational seminars, local government sponsored programs. I remember things like an education center for grade school children on architecture and preservation in a local library. Continuing surveys of communities to find the historic sites and so on. It's nice. Uh-hm, the local government program, you know because bureaucrats were also people, there's a part of the certified local government . . . the local government program also helps local governments build local preservation programs. So, like they would call in the head of the local committee in charge of drafting a local preservation ordinance, would call our office and say how do I do this. And then we would tell them. Well, you know these are the ten points. We would send them materials. We would give names of other organizations who could help with them. You know. . .

Hosea: So sort of a support agency in that way?

Hild: Yes, yes.

Hosea: So, if I'm a local, if I'm a town and I say I think we should have some Lincoln stuff, I could call you and you would tell me what all stuff I have to do and should do?

Hild: Well, we'd probably refer you to the Lincoln Library for Lincoln stuff but if you wanted to preserve, you know, the old drug store in town, yeah, we could help you do that.

Hosea: Take me through the time as you mentioned. It was at least in two different blue books, you're listed as the Acting Division Manager over Preservation. What was it like to go to a more administrative post?

Hild: Uh-hm, well, my boss, the guy who hired me in 1972, we stayed together. In 1985 the agency was created, he had been the division head for the, well this is the first time we had ever had a separate division. We'd always been like part of another division, but we now had a real administrative entity called a division. You know, in state government that's a big deal, so. This guy was in charge of it; one of the trustees from Chicago just despised the guy and devoted much of his energy on the Board of Trustees to getting rid of him and took him about two years to do that. Well, maybe not even two years. But any rate, Bill Farrat got fired, and the guy who I think is a despicable person for that and other reasons, said, oh yes, we're going to have a big nationwide search to get the best candidate. And I'm thinking, you know, you're a damn liar, you're not going to pay any attention to this. All you care . . . you just wanted to get rid of Bill.

So, I was the obvious choice to fill in after Bill, at least on a temporary basis, and I was very well qualified for the job because I had worked in every single program we had had. I had written half of the administrative rules that we worked under. I was present at the creation for all these things. I knew exactly how everything worked. I knew the corporate history. No one would have been a more likely candidate. So, I took over and I was running the thing. Uh-hm, not too many people liked me. The people in charge I don't think cared for me because . . . well, it was like Bill Farrat told me one time, you know in reference to the Board of Trustees, Trustees are like dogs, they can sense it when they don't like them. [laughs] And, uh-hm, you know I wasn't their boy. You know, it was that simple. I wasn't their boy but yet I hung on for two years because I would go around the state and I would try to drum up my own support groups. Obviously, I didn't succeed in that because, you know, I didn't wind up as the division head.

But for two years, I pretty much did whatever I could to hold the place together, because Michael Devine didn't. Michael Define didn't want me as the division head either and he told me so. So, one of the things he did to me was, after a few months, he took away my secretary and made her his secretary. I never got a secretary. So, I was the division head for two years without a secretary. So, I'd come to work at the . . . 6:30, 7:00 in the morning and I'd go home somewhere, anywhere between 5:00 and 6:00, just trying to keep my head above water doing my own typing. Not a lot of things got filed [laughs].

Hosea: Did you enjoy that kind of administrative level or were you just as happy then to go down to the . . . ?

Hild: No, no I wanted that job and what I wasn't willing to do to keep it was make the kind of compromises I assumed they expected me to make. As I said, I wasn't their boy.

Hosea: Now, physically where was the agency during this period? What years are we in now?

Hild: 1985, 1987, we were in a storefront downtown. 210 South Sixth Street. Ironically, it's where the State Historical Society is located now.

Hosea: And the whole agency was there?

Hild: No, no, just our division. The agency, oh my, where was the agency? We had in the Old State Capitol downstairs, that was the director's office there, and then there was the Preservation Services Division on South Sixth Street. Then after a little while the agency acquired the old Journal Register building on South Sixth Street and put a lot of money into that and fixed that up and that became the headquarters for the historic sites division.

Hosea: So the agency was pretty well spread out in terms of . . . ?

Hild: Yeah, yeah and that seemed to work. It worked for me.

Hosea: And so then, just a couple of other programs, Illinois Main Street program?

Hild: Uh-hm, okay. That may or may not be defunct as we speak. It was defunct under George Ryan. It's a small town economic redevelopment program that focuses on the historical resources of the community. There are other kinds of programs like, you know, tax increment financing or industrial revenue bonds to go build a corporate business park on the outside of town. But this is rehabilitation, revitalization scheme that deals with the downtown in small towns. It involves marketing, it involves building rehabilitation. So that's how we got involved in it. The idea was created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Trust is a nationwide advocacy group and they started it in the late '70s. In fact, in 1977, Illinois had the town of Galesburg selected as one of three demonstration communities or guinea pigs.

Hosea: For this program?

Hild: Yes for the Main Street program.

Hosea: In general, how did that work out?

Hild: Uh-hm, once it got going in the Lt. Governor's office, there was a woman who was interested in downtown revitalization. She was one of these high energy Type A personalities and she pitched this to Jim Edgar's Lt. Governor whose name is . . .?

Hosea I don't know either. (laughter)

Hild: He seemed like a decent sort of guy. So he put it in the Rural Affairs Counsel and she just took it and ran with it and created over, I think there is something like, I don't know, a couple of dozen Main Street communities now and it's a really good program. It's probably one of the best revitalization programs like ever. Not just a good historic preservation program but a good revitalization program. It's only for small towns and it works. But for some political reasons, like well, George Ryan got mad at his Lt. Governor so that diminished the program and Blagovich, you know, who knows what went on in the Governor's office for that. But that pretty almost like ended the Main Street program. It wound up in the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs which is not the best place to put anything a lot of the time. Commerce and Community Affairs.

Hosea: Commerce and Community Affairs. An odd program I bumped into, a Downstairs Upstairs program?

Hild: Oh, I think that's a project. The architecture session does a lot of self promoting and this upstairs downstairs thing; if you go in to a small town you'll notice that the second floors are almost entirely vacant and this is an unused asset. So, uh-hm, the upstairs downstairs program helps coordinate resources and educate people about like how you can use . . . you know, you have a store front, you have a store downstairs, what do you do upstairs? Nothing. Well, you know, you could probably fix it up and make it into an apartment and rent it. Oh really, how could I do that? So they help with that kind of thing. All good stuff. Small town revitalization oriented. It works.

Hosea: In kind of more broad strokes, you took us through '85 and the beginning of the agency and your part in it between then and let's say the end of the directorship of Mogerman; What things changed or how was the agency changing during that decade?

Hild: There was no . . . I didn't see much change. There was . . . I guess you could call it natural growth.

Hosea: Did programs come and go?

Hild: Well, you know, I talked about the historic preservation tax credit under Dan Rostenkowski. That was amended in the later '80's. It changed… Well, Rostenkowski created, then he pulled the rug out from under it when he changed . . he didn't change the terms or conditions but what he did change was the number of eligible investors, and that just pulled the rug out from under it. It's still there and it still does a really, really good job of saving buildings. It's enough to keep people

busy but it's not like it was. It's not like the boom days of the '80's when we were the new heroes of the real estate industry.

Hosea: At some point the agency then, or at least part of the agency, went into the train station across from what is now the museum?

Hild: Yeah, yeah. When was that, 1988, I guess. Everybody moved in there. The train station sat there for… I guess, the last train rolled out in like with the creation of Amtrak in 1970 or '71. A local investor with some imagination thought she could rehab it and make it into a little mini-mall and she did but it didn't take. So the thing lay empty for a couple of years and then the state picked it up dirt cheap. I don't know exactly what the price was. We just kind of jammed ourselves in there. We hardly did any restoration or anything in the building [laugh]. We just, like, lay wires on top of things, buy some partitions; that was about it. We didn't make any real changes to the building. So they jammed us all into there, including the director's office; so that was the director's office and education and publications and preservation services. Historic sites stayed down the street on south sixth and, of course, the library stayed in the library; then we were there for, good grief, what was it, ten, twelve years, something like that.

Hosea: And who took over then from Susan Mogerman? The director after she left?

Hild: Maynard Crossland.

Hosea: Who had been with the agency for a while?

Hild: He'd been . . . He started out with the historical library in the late '70s, I think. He was a friend of a friend of a friend of people in the Thompson administration. And apparently Ryan liked him. Mrs. Ryan liked him a lot. He knew how to joke with her and that kind of thing. And he knew how to run the agency. So he did.

Hosea: I'm interested in when in some ways the big elephant came in the room, when you first started hearing about the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. I know that's not under your division so much.

Hild: Right. Uh-hm, you know there are a lot of predecessors, that this just didn't come out of the blue. I remember hearing about conversations going back just decades and decades and decades. These aren't the first people who realized that this is Lincoln's hometown, maybe there should be some special Lincoln thing besides his home here. I had read one proposal—this was in the '70's—a local developer even used words like shrine. It should be a requirement of law schools that law students come here and I guess, absorb the spirit the Lincoln. The guy was serious and he had enough money and clout that people had to listen to him. Yikes. Mercifully that didn't happen, so now we got this library and I guess it's a great thing. Here, I'll tell you exactly what my role in it has been – nothing. I haven't been there yet and when the thing started up, you know I'd been around a long time and so I sent a memo to the people in charge and I said I'd be more than happy to do whatever I can help you with this. I never even got a response. So in a childish fit of peak, I

said fine, build your library. I have yet to be; I have been in the library of course, but I've never been in the museum. I understand it's a great place. I'm sure it is. I'm just . . . and I don't object to going, I just haven't been over there.

Hosea: The main reason of asking that, I was wondering with all the publicity, all the money, all the attention and everything going along, was there any feeling with the rest of historic preservation agency, a kind of, hey, we're here too, kind of thing?

Hild: oh, absolutely, absolutely. In fact, we just assumed all of the money and attention would go to the new thing. But, those of us who had been around a while figured that perhaps they had a silk purse be made out of this. That we can, you know, if they ignore us, hey, that ain't all bad [laugh]. As it turned out, I think that maybe the worst thing that the new library and museum did was stunt any natural growth that the rest of the agency might have had. For example, if there was to be any new headcount, you knew automatically that it was going to the museum and the library. It wasn't going to go to . . . You know headcount's hard to come by in state government, even when times are flush. So, it's like oh boy, the bureau of the budget says we can get three new people. We know where they're going. Not here, but down there. Well, you know, as I said there's a childish personal reason why I don't want to participate but I think a lot of people were really disappointed when they took away the identity of the State Historical Library. The State Historical Library is a world class research facility. It's really good to have a really good collection of stuff there. Uh-hm, it's right up there with like Wisconsin and Minnesota and even New York. It's a really good place to do research. The Lincoln papers, you know the actual Lincoln papers, they all fit in one filing drawer. There's a lot of Lincoln related stuff but as far as Lincoln stuff is concerned, yeah, if you're going to do . . . and that's fine. People come here from all over the country and the world to study. Honest to God Lincoln scholars come here, and they should because there's good stuff over there. But, now, you know the history of Illinois. Where's it going, I don't know.

Hosea: Towards the end, I guess, was this purely as you . . . when did you begin to think that maybe you were going to retire or leave the agency?

Hild: Oh, uh-hm, well. Actually, I had always planned to retire at age 60. And I retired at age 61 because, I don't know, I liked my job. You know, I'm glad I was able to leave when I did but it wouldn't have mattered who was governor.

Hosea: When was that?

Hild: Oh, I'm sorry, October 2007. It wouldn't have mattered who was governor. My son could have been governor and I would have retired, or could have been the worse governor ever, and it turned out it was the worst governor ever, but that really had nothing to do with it. I feel really bad about the people who left behind though because I'm concerned about the future of that program as well as the future of state government. It'll take years to recover from the damage that Blagovich did to the state government. Decades maybe.

Hosea: As you look back, a much more general question. As you look back over your years with the agency, in general, did at least your part of it work the way you would like to have seen it, or are there major regrets of opportunities lost or whatever?

Hild: I think one of the big blows to our program came when Bill Farret got fired, because he was always looking for new ground and new territory to conquer. Most of the things that we did were, a lot of it was his ideas. You know, the newsletter, the calendar, stuff like that, promotional things. He was always the guy who was there explaining to the higher ups that if we had additional headcount we could do this. And then if we did get the additional headcount, we'd do it. And, you know, and when we came into the new agency, I don't think the trustees really had much of an interest in seeing our program—I don't know, what's the word—blossom.

Hosea: Now, you mentioned something that Bill Farret was interested in and there is a publications and outreach section you talked about going around it, doing some public discussion. At least your part of the agency is public education, outreach, this sort of thing. Is that considered an important thing?

Hild: Well, that division publishes the Journal of Illinois History. Well there's a little bit of a turf, that's sort of the result of a turf war; the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society goes back kind of to the nineteenth century, or maybe 1903, something like that. And, the State Historical Society always published it, but because the way everything was structured, it was really the Historical Library that had all the manpower and wherewithal and signed the contracts with the printers and hired the editors, that kind of thing. So when there was this falling out and the Historical Society was quit / fired and moved down the street, uh-hm, they weren't allowed to take their Journal with them. [laughs] So they changed the name of the journal; instead of the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, it became the Illinois History Journal or the Journal of Illinois History. And now the historical society tried to continue publishing their journal. All state historical societies have to publish a journal. It's like, it's the law. What good are you if you can't publish a journal. And, their first couple of numbers, I guess, were Xeroxes and I don't know if they even met their obligation to come up with all their numbers. I don't know, but they are publishing now. But I haven't seen a copy of it in, it's been a couple of years.

Hosea: But, as you saw your job and the division was communication with the public a big deal?

Hild: Well, yes. We had to, it was, we had to go out to communities and explain what we did in order for them to want us to come back. So there was a lot of public education as we went along. Good grief, in 1972 when I started, you know I'd tell people what I did and they'd say, what are you talking about, what do you mean, what's that. And now it's completely different. Now, it's like it's kind of cool. Everybody knows. It's become mainstream now but it always wasn't. We have always had that kind of obligation to go out there and teach everybody what we're

doing, explain it, allay their fears, dash their dreams, whatever it took. But as far as say an agency function of having newsletters and whatnot, we didn't do journals, but we had a newsletter that some people even called it a magazine. What is it, 16 pages?

Hosea: And did you or the agency above you, did you recommend legislature either federal or local or state?

Hild: Yes, in fact one of my jobs like in the 80's was not legislative liaison but I would be the person to call for legislation. And I worked on a number of bills. Tracked a number of bills. They never let me do the liaison work though. They never let me do any kind of… I never gave testimony. I've given some testimony in congressional stuff because, you know how Illinois government works, they don't really care what happens in Washington [laugh]. You don't want to mess with anybody in the state house. Go make the congressman mad, but don't make the state legislator mad.

Hosea: So you actually did appear before Congress but [not] before the state legislator?

Hild: Right, because they didn't trust me. I guess.

Hosea: Okay. Again, we had talked earlier about the review and compliance program and you promised to give us some more details about that. What was it trying to do and how did it fail?

Hild: And it succeeded as well. This was philosophically review and compliance is government policing itself. It's government telling government don't louse up the environment, don't destroy the cultural environment. Any agency that's considering any kind of undertaking, whether it be licensing, permitting or spending money on, it has to take into account the effect of that undertaking on cultural resources, historical resources. And again, it's limited by that step of what's on the National Register or what's eligible for the National Register. So, if you're a community activist, this is a very good thing because it's going to prevent the federal government from coming in and giving money to the local government to demolish ten blocks of downtown. On the other hand, if you're the Mayor, you want the ten blocks demolished. And if you're the federal government, you just want the money spent before the end of the fiscal year. You don't really care [laugh] one way or the other. So, that sets the stage for competing interests. And that puts the state preservation office often times right in the middle. Now sometimes we've been able to convince the people who want to demolish things that there is a better way to do it. And over the years, like say the development community and architects, even highway designers become more familiar with preservation, they also become aware of ways of incorporating preservation principles and practices in to their programs. I noticed there was an article in the paper recently on restoration of Route 66. Thirty years ago, restoration of Route 66 would have meant tearing it out and putting in new underlayment and repaving the whole thing according to modern standards instead of old standards. Then because

the government is so big and gets involved in so many things, there is a lot of review and compliance to do.

Hosea: Was their specific legislation that talked about this, state legislation or federal legislation?

Hild: Yes. All the way in 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act there was Section 106 in there, just lays it out. This is it. It's one paragraph. And then in 1989, there is an Illinois State Agency Preservation Act that pretty much said the same thing and applied it to state government. So, at one point that was half the work of the State Historic Preservation office. Just doing review and compliance. Reviewing about, I think at one . . . we counted one year 24,000 different reviews. Now, most of those reviews, like 23,900 of those reviews were like okay fine, we have no interest. There are no historic sites involved. Of the remaining 100, maybe 70 or 80 involved maybe doing a conditional sign off. No, they would, they did involve historic sites but there was no effect and there might be another 20 or 30 where we'd have to talk to the people involved to mitigate the adverse affect. Well, instead of replacing with this kind of window, why don't you do this? Instead of demolishing this building, move it over here. And then there were maybe three or four or five a year where it sometimes it just would be bloody [laugh]. Just knock-down drag-out, uh-hm, you know, getting local governments and senators and everybody and newspapers and everybody involved. The governor's office and so on. And those, sometimes you win them and sometimes you don't.

Hosea: Now there's a requirement with some public works involving an archeological review of . . . is that under you folks at all? Or do you have anything to do with that?

Hild: Yes, there are . . . well, archeological sites are incorporated in to the whole thing with adverse affects with the national and state preservation laws. There are also separate laws dealing only with archeology and most of those . . . a lot of archeology in Illinois has been as result of certain statutes that deal with the Historic Preservation Agency and the archeology section there. As you can imagine identification and treatment of archeological sites is completely different from ordinary historic sites. For one thing, when you investigate an archeological site you destroy it [laugh]. It doesn't exist when you're done. So, you know, how do you preserve something by, you know, well we can't identify this thing unless we destroy it and we can't preserve it if it doesn't exist. So, but that was all worked out decades and decades ago.

Hosea: But that was under the Historic Preservation Agency or was this a different agency?

Hild: It's just the laws in general – archeology and preservation laws in general. The federal government actually has a whole bunch of different ones and I don't feel confident to discuss all the ins and outs of those. But on a state level there are two laws that gives the agency considerable, considerable role. One is dealing with graves, like unmarked graves.

Hosea: Is that the burial section that was listed?

Hild: Yes, and it says that if you run across any human remains in an unregistered cemetery… There's thousands of unregistered cemeteries as well as just, you know; when you're out, you're a farmer and you're laying some new tile like you start digging up bones, then, oh my, you've got something there. If you dig up any human remains in an unregistered cemetery, you have to stop. You have to get the Historic Preservation Agency to come out and help you discuss where you're going to put those. What you're going to do about it. And it's really open-ended. The interesting thing about that is that it involves private as well as public property.

You may recall that when I was talking about these various laws how its government, like you know protecting you from the government. All the other preservation stuff involves public acts. This is the only one that involves a private individual doing things on private property. And, that's very interesting. The reason I think it got passed in the first place because about the time it was being discussed in Springfield here, there was a nationwide scandal over large and systematic excavation of unregistered burials in a place in Kentucky. It turned out it was like an artifact farm. [Laugh] There are like hundreds of people or scores of people were just taking just tons and tons of grave goods and all kinds of stuff out of the ground in Kentucky, and the Native Americans were all just up in arms, as they always are anyway, and everybody was, like, this is a terrible thing. So, we had that going for us and then, you know, we'd say things like "well you know under current law, you can go like dig up a Civil War veteran and take the buttons off his coat and sell them." Really? Nobody was doing that. You could. It was perfectly legal to do that. First of all you had to find a Civil War veteran and see if he was still buried in his uniform.

Hosea: Now we had our own issues in Illinois, as I remember, about the bones at one of ours, in southern Illinois – Native American bones and whether they could be displayed or not. Was the Historic Preservation Agency in on that discussion?

Hild: A little bit but not directly because that's a Federal law, okay. It's called NAGRA, the Native American Graves Repatriation Act and there's a role for state governments in there. Basically what it says is, if you find any Indian remains you have to return them to the tribe; the tribe decides what you're going to do with them and whether or not it's even their tribe. So you don't have much to say about it. That's kind of tricky. That's very unpopular with a lot of archeologists because it gives a lot of authority to non-archeologists.

Hosea: Bill Ferreara, I know, is evidently someone in the Agency who over the years you had a lot of respect for. Are there others, heroes, other people in the Agency that you felt over the years made significant contributions or that you very much looked up to. I know you can't name them all but are there any that you particularly want to mention?

Hild: I can go back and talk about the very early days of the program, some individuals who were responsible for bringing it here. In the first place, one of them is Edmond Thornton.

Hosea: And what was his role?

Hild: He went to a nationwide preservation meeting once because . . . he's from Ottawa. In fact, at one time he owned the Ottawa Silica Company.

Hosea: Ottawa, Illinois?

Hild: Yes, he was a wealthy Republican. Very wealthy, very Republican. And very much interested in preservation. So he went to a meeting someplace and found out about a 1966 Act, and called Richard Ogilvie and said we need to do something about this. And, uh-hm, as independent as Ogilvie could be, he thought, well, he'd better listen to Edmond Thornton. And it was because of Ed that our program got going.

Hosea: By our program you mean what?

Hild: I mean the Illinois State Historic Preservation office. The thing that hired me in 1972 and let me go in 2007.

Hosea: Was there anyone else?

Hild: Uh-hm. Yeah. Thornton was kind of like the George Washington of the program. One of the things that George Washington did was like give dignity to the office of the President. Thornton did that too. Thornton also for years and years, he was the Chairman of our state review board.

Hosea: Now what's the state review board?

Hild: That's the committee that passes on National Register stuff and supposedly gives advice to state government on matters pertaining to historic preservation. They meet quarterly.

Hosea: And he was the Chair of that for a long period of time?

Hild: Yes, and he was very dignified, very capable. Almost august. [Laugh] But politically we never talked about politics. Also from that early period would have been, I think, Dan Malkovich. Malkovich was from southern Illinois and yes, he is related to John Malkovich. He's his father. Dan Malkovich was from Benton. He was a newspaper publisher and interested in environmental issues. Uh-hm, he had been Acting Director of the Department of Conservation in 1970 about the time that Thornton was calling Ogilvie and asking him to get the program going, so Dan was, well he left the job and went back to Benton to publish the magazine. He also worked contractually to set up the thing . . . He hired Bill Ferreara. Bill Ferreara hired me, Dan Malkovich hired Bill to run the program. So, those are the two guys

mostly responsible I think for setting up what turned out to be the Illinois' state government preservation program.

Hosea: Did you do a lot of interaction? I know in this area of historical preservation there are an awful lot; you mentioned this man who was interested as a private individual at first. Are there an awful lot of little groups and individuals who are interested in one of the other things. Was there a lot of interaction between your group and these kinds of people?

Hild: Well, interestingly, although the title of what we do is called historic preservation, there are darn few historians involved in it. On the academic level, we've always been hard pressed to find PhD's in history to serve on our state review boards. They may know a lot about history. Most of them know absolutely nothing about historic preservation. That's not always true; the people who have served on our state review board were, especially in more recent years, very competent and they know what they're doing. The same idea applies to local historical societies. Most of the contacts we have outside of state government, among the public, are not local historical societies. They'll be things like, well like, local activists who, you know, want to stop the demolition of their favorite building downtown. There are a few communities that actually have what they call a preservation society. It's very, very few in the state. There are hundreds of local historical societies but very, very few – I count them on one hand maybe – preservation societies. And the reason those little tiny preservation societies were founded, was because you know they go to the local historical society who tell them like, that's not our thing.

Hosea: And I guess on the other side of the coin, you talked about one trustee and that was a frustrating situation for you. What were the main frustrations of your job?

Hild: Uh-hm [long pause]. Well nothing extraordinary. I think probably anybody who has a profession or a career, similar kind of frustrations that I know I'm doing the right thing, why are you trying to prevent me from doing it? So, but that's the general thing, but uh-hm, what I would have liked to have seen would be like more state money put into promotional stuff. I think that if we had marketed preservation more fully in the early years, it would have made it a lot easier. I mean like millions of dollars, not just like let's print some brochures. I mean let's have an advertising campaign. Let's place some articles. That kind of stuff. It would be foolish to think that we could do it on a par with tourism money but there's lots of public service announcements on television dealing with all kinds of programs and it would have been nice if we could have done that. The frustrating part was that finding that a lot of people who could have helped us didn't want to have anything to do with us. It was, like in the Department of Conservation, these are people who deal with state parks and trees and fish and hunting and that kind of stuff. Why would they give a darn about us? Well, they didn't. So, that was really frustrating. In fact at one time in the early '80s, we did have some friends who went to Government Thompson and got us a huge infusion of money. We got like $500,000 put in and we're going to get five headcount in addition. Five headcount. Just for our preservation program. There are people in the Department of

Conservation who were so mad about that we only got three. But the Governor wants us to have five. Well, go tell the Governor we're not doing it, so.

Hosea: So, I guess in 2009 when we are recording this, the big issue is the reuniting of those I would gather that you don't consider that a natural marriage between National Resources and historic society?

Hild: Well, you know, I was talking with a guy who currently works in Natural Resources and you know he understands that's a fear. He'll be involved in this transition too. And his position is that all those people are gone. It's what I said earlier, preservation is mainstream now. So it can't be ignored the way it could at one time in the past. So there's that. I don't like the idea that they're being pulled out of downtown and sent out there to the edge of nowhere. I think it's very nice that a preservation program has its headquarters like in the historic downtown of a community.

Hosea: And, finally, is there any question you wish I had asked that I hadn't? Any area that we haven't gone over that you'd like to mention?

Hild: [long pause] Well, there are. I don't like what the great accomplishments are I guess.

Hosea: Okay, what do you feel is your . . .

Hild: Uh-hm, well, professionally I think I've alluded to it as you know, since I got in early and stuck it out for all those years, I really did get to see preservation become an acceptable and even like an ordinary part of things to consider in American society. The idea of rehabilitation is something people now stop and think about. They may not do it. They may say like, well, I could rehabilitate this house or I could demolish it and build a new one. They may indeed demolish the house and build a new one but 35 years ago they wouldn't have even asked the question. They just would have knocked it down. And, you know, I've also seen as a result of that increased demand, I've also seen supply go up too. It's much easier to, like, you know, you can go to like fairs and exhibitions and restoration techniques and technology and the things that you need. Thirty years ago if you wanted to restore something you might not have been able to find the things to do it with. You might not have been able to find the windows or the roofing material or woodwork, that kind of thing. But now you can. There's all kinds of magazines. It's historical rehabilitation. Uh-hm, I can't take any credit for that but I was present when this happened. I think that's the big accomplishment. Even developers who are . . .

Hosea: Can you take trips and see specific buildings or areas where you'll say Oh I stopped that?

Hild: Well, I was going to say then, personally though, what it did for me was, it didn't take me, it still provided an intellectual content that I might have left behind in graduate school but I didn't have to. I was able to come to work for the state. I was able to do historical research. I was able to publish stuff. I was able to write and

publish in a legitimate way, not just, you know, memos or in-house newsletters, that kind of thing. But I write, I've written stuff for referee journals. I've been on panels.

Hosea: What's a referee journal?

Hild: Oh, uh-hm, it's an academic journal where you send it in to the editor and the editor sends it out to other people in the field to review it. Or peer review journal. Uh-hm, yeah, I got to travel to different cities all over the country by getting involved with it on a national level too. You know how bureaucrats are, as soon as they find out there's more than one of them, they have to form an association. So, since the federal government set up a program for all 50 states, all 50 states would get together and we formed an organization and, you know, try to influence public policy or try to understand public policy. I was involved with that for like twenty years. And in the course of that I got to travel all over the U.S. and see other cities. And you know what travel does for you, it makes you a better person.

Hosea: If I were to ask you, if I wanted to go somewhere in Illinois where, in your opinion, they did preservation right, where would you send me?

Hild: [long pause] That's a very good question. [long pause] Well, let's discuss the criteria first.

Hosea: Okay.

Hild: Alright, uh-hm, I think the best preservation is where you do the least. In other words, if a town has been left alone but because it never got changed much, then that's good. There are a few places like that in, you know, we call it unconscious preservation or conservation. So that would be one criterion. Another might be, and I can think of some little towns, small towns around Illinois where people just kept what they had and they didn't change it much. Then, there'd be like the Galena kind of preservation where, let's take all these old buildings and clean them up and sell t-shirts and fudge out of them where it's tourist oriented. Turn your town in to a theme park. I understand that that can work. It puts me off though. There are towns then that kind of fall in between.

I'm thinking of a place like Quincy that has this really, really rich collection of architectural property over there. It was a wealthy industrial small city in Illinois and all the factory owners built this great neighborhood. There was all this German craftsmanship in the apartment buildings and that kind of thing. Uh-hm, much of it is still there. The downtown is failing a little bit and, you know, I would say go to Quincy to look and see what happens, maybe, with a city on the edge.

Another criterion would involve, I think, like downtown preservation. Do you keep your downtown functioning. And, boy I don't know, maybe Chicago would be the only place, but like Springfield, we still have a relative vibrant downtown but all the old buildings are gone. There's nothing there anymore.

So, I would look for a place that had… I'd say go to Bloomington and go to the downtown square there and see a town that's still pretty much alive with its old

buildings. Quincy is like too. Uh-hm, I'm opposed to—the frustrating part is—sometimes you have to destroy the place in order to save it. Like Galena. If those people hadn't taken the opportunity to do what they did in Galena, what would it look like today? I don't know. But I remember going to Galena in my capacity with the state, going to Galena in the early '70's when they still had like real stores on the main street. There was a hardware store in downtown Galena. Not there anymore. So, uh-hm, I don't know. Maybe I would have to send you to another state to find the perfect place. I don't know.

Hosea: Do you have off the top of your head the example of the first type you were talking, where it essentially just stayed the same?

Hild: Well, it used to be Galena until like the mid-'70's. No, nothing comes to mind. I remember Woodstock up in McHenry County had a town square that was like that and they did some fiddling around with it but I don't know. It's been a long time since I've been there.

Hosea: And, uh-hm, final question, at least for me. Is there a division in Illinois—we were talking about the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum—when the subject is Lincoln or Lincoln type site or something associated with Lincoln, does that essentially send it to a different group of people that are working with it that are the other kinds of historic sites?

Hild: Well, if the question involves say property that's on the National Register and has a Lincoln association, then yes, it falls in that set of buildings that we would deal with ordinarily. Well here in Springfield, we have the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. And the 1966 Act says that anything, any federal undertaking that affects a historic property has to take that in to account and you have to talk to the state office. Well, everything they do at the Lincoln Home Historic Site is a federal undertaking. So, technically we review everything they do there. Uh-hm, very seldom have we ever stopped them because we wanted to correct them. There are periodic meetings when I'd say, well, here's our maintenance schedule, here's our work program, you want to sign off on it. Okay, we sign off on it. When, what was that twenty some years ago when they did the big restoration there?

Hosea: Yes.

Hild: We actually sat in on the committee. It was like an oversight committee and we were represented on that just to keep the paperwork down.

Hosea: Well, thank you very much Ted. I appreciate the time.

Hild: Glad to do it.

(End of interview)