Interview with Tom Livingston

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, February 16, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm in the presidential library today talking to Tom Livingston. Good morning.

Livingston: Good morning.

DePue: I'm looking forward to this interview because you had a close seat to the Edgar administration, had the distinction of being his traveling aide, I believe?

Livingston: Yes, his first traveling aide. About a week before he was sworn in, I began traveling with him, then up through the presidential campaign of 1992. For about two years, since the first moments in the early years of the governorship, I got a front-row seat on that.

DePue: We're going to spend a lot of time talking about that, but we always start with the beginning and get quite a bit of your background as well. So tell us where and when you were born.

Livingston: I was born on August 14, 1967, at the Carle Hospital in Urbana, Illinois.

DePue: Did you grow up in Champaign?

Livingston: I didn't. My parents were married seniors at the University of Illinois, and then I was raised in the Chicago suburb of La Grange and went to Lyons Township High School, class of 1985.

DePue: Tell me something about your parents, and I know when we talked before, there's a story about your grandparents as well, isn't there?

Livingston: My grandfather, Park Livingston, was a statewide elected official with the board of trustees at the University of Illinois for twenty-four years. Served as chairman for ten years, from about '46 to '56. So he was active politically; he was a Republican. My other grandfather was in broadcasting. He was on WLS in Chicago before it went to rock 'n' roll; he was in farm broadcasting, then went on to write for the *Prairie Farmer* and syndicate the show.[1] And they were both living in La Grange. My parents met in high school and dated throughout high school then both went to the University of Illinois.

DePue: High school sweethearts.

Livingston: Yes, that's right. And then I went to the same high school.

DePue: You had given me a name before of your grandfather's radio name, his call name.

Livingston: His radio name was Captain Stubby; Captain Stubby and the Buccaneers were on the WLS *National Barn Dance*, which was a very popular radio show in the forties, wartime. So that was his band.

DePue: Big band music, I think?

Livingston: Big band music. They did the "Go-Go White Sox"—that's his voice when they play that song at the stadium. And radio, kind of early broadcasting in Illinois and the Midwest.

DePue: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

[1] Park Livingston (1906-June 4, 1999; R-LaGrange), a former University of Illinois class president and vice president of the Dean Milk Company, served for twenty-four years as a state university trustee, including stints as board president from 1943-1958, 1951-1954, and 1957-1959. He also ran an insurgent campaign in the 1952 gubernatorial primary, taking second place behind William Stratton, and lost his 1954 primary bid for U.S. Senate to Joseph T. Meek. *Chicago Tribune*, April 10, 1952; April 14, 1954; March 13, 1959; June 9, 1999. Edgar's first chief counsel remembers Livingston as the one Republican his father supported every election. Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 17, 2009, 4. 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.

Livingston: I have a sister, Pam. She is a little younger, forty-one years old. Lives in Chicago, married, and works in the social service field, not-for-profit.

DePue: What did your parents do for a living?

Livingston: My mother was a physical fitness trainer—is still—and she was a cheerleader at the University of Illinois, so she's always been very active. My dad has been in commercial finance, the same company for thirty-five years, in Chicago. He gets on the train every day and journeys in. No signs of retirement at this point. They were Jim Edgar's age exactly, and Brad was about my age, his son.[2]

DePue: You had one grandfather who was a little bit into the politics. Did you grow up in kind of a political environment?

Livingston: Yes, to a certain extent, although I was not in college politics or identified heavily in that sort of interest. I would carry brochures for candidates in the Republican Party out there in western Cook County in my little wagon, (laughter) handing them out. I didn't know who I was passing them out for or what I was doing. That would have been in Lyons Township precinct. And my grandfather was involved in that. He did run statewide for governor against Bill Stratton in the primary and lost. So it was there. Kind of the University of Illinois GOP orbit was there, but not in my face really.

DePue: How old were you when you were out there with your little red wagon?

Livingston: Probably from the time I was about six years old to about ten years old. You know, just would follow my mom around the neighborhood.

DePue: You thought that was a pretty cool thing to be doing?

Livingston: Yes. I was the truck. I could sort out the brochures. I found it interesting—the colors, I would read the brochures and see what people would say about themselves. I thought that was interesting.

DePue: Was the family religious?

Livingston: Presbyterian. Went to Sunday school every Sunday. Kind of garden variety Presbyterians, I would say. (laughter) I don't even know what I mean by that.

DePue: How about high school, then? Tell me what your interests were, what you got involved in once you got to high school.

Livingston: I was involved in sports. I was a gymnast—captain of the team, MVP, went to state a couple of times. So that was my main sport. I was in soccer, and then I

[2] Edgar was born July 22, 1946.

was in radio. We had a very strong radio station, and I was going to go into broadcasting.[3] That's what I thought I was going to do, like my grandfather. But that kept me busy. And just other activities, government stuff, student government occasionally.

DePue: What was it about broadcasting that drew your attention?

Livingston: I saw my grandfather having a rewarding career. He was able to build a nice house in the country. He had a lot of fun, he made it look fun, and that was appealing to me. I felt that he could help me open doors at the time if that was necessary. So that's about it.

DePue: Was it worth something to some of your buddies to say "Hey, my grandfather's Captain Stubby"?

Livingston: Not really. (DePue laughs) Not really. It was worth more when I started working for the governor because he knew Captain Stubby. He said he used to listen to Captain Stubby while he was in college at Eastern, and that would have been about the time. Of course, Orion Samuelson, Paul Harvey. When Jim Edgar went to visit Paul Harvey, I mentioned the connection. He had worked very closely with my grandfather and would call him late in life. So it was interesting and fun.

DePue: Orion Samuelson's one of the people we've had the opportunity to interview for this.[4]

Livingston: Very good. He knows Captain Stubby well.

DePue: (laughs) I'll have to ask him. How about politics? Was that even on the radar at all when you were in high school?

Livingston: No, not really. Not out of aversion, it was just not something I was oriented towards.

DePue: You said you graduated in 1985?

Livingston: Yes.

DePue: So these years would have been the early Reagan years.

Livingston: Yes.

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[3] Edgar's Department of Transportation director, Kirk Brown, also had early dreams of a career in radio. Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009. 13-15.

[4] Samuelson (WGN) and Harvey (WENR/WLS) were well-known broadcasters. Orion Samuelson, interview by Mark DePue, February 2, 2009, Agriculture in Illinois Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

DePue: Would your parents have been Reagan Republicans, you think?

Livingston: Yes. I did note, as a youngster, that my parents were very dissatisfied with Jimmy Carter. Reagan was elected when I was in eighth grade, and he left office when I was in college. So I would say he had a profound impact on what I thought the presidency would be, in terms of just kind of the bigness of the office, the way he conducted himself. I admit that had an impact.

DePue: But what did you think you wanted to do upon graduating from high school?

Livingston: I was going to either go to West Point or the University of Illinois. I got into both.

DePue: Was West Point pursuing you?

Livingston: Yes, for some gymnastics. They wanted me to do gymnastics. I was a little burned out, and I kind of wanted to go up and get lost at a Big Ten school and go down from Chicago. I just went to the University of Illinois because it was four years and done; West Point was a larger commitment.

DePue: So the idea of a military career didn't appeal to you?

Livingston: Not really. The curfews—I was used to staying up late and studying. The idea of four years of service afterwards was a daunting concept to me at that age. University of Illinois, I was going to just go there, keep my head down, and get good grades. I felt I was overcommitted in high school.

DePue: Your major once you got there?

Livingston: Communications. I was in Liberal Arts and Sciences, but then junior and senior year you opt into School of Journalism, which I did do. I graduated still thinking I would do communications, media, PR sort of stuff. My first job was assistant communications director with the Prairie State Games in Champaign. I worked with the broadcaster, Steve Kelly; he was the director, and we had a good time. That's the point, though, that I left from that to go work for Jim Edgar.

DePue: We're a little bit ahead of the story because there were some things that happened in college, too, that we don't want to overlook at all. You did not do gymnastics in college, though.

Livingston: No, I did not. The University of Illinois, while I was in college, won the national championship. They had people from all over the world coming to the university. I would not have made it. It wouldn't have been something I could have been successful. So I got involved in Illini Union Board, the student union, as a freshman, as a volunteer—real low-grade stuff. But by

1988 I ended up being president of the Illini Union Board. It just kind of caught up with me.

DePue: What does the Illini Union Board do?

Livingston: They govern the programming of the main student union, so lecture series, programs, facilities usage, that sort of thing—kind of the central collecting point for the university. It's a great experience. I chaired a board with faculty and staff and other students. At the same time I was doing that, I was president of my fraternity. The thing I most sought to do was to duck, and I again was successful, but then everything kind of hit at the same time.

DePue: What fraternity?

Livingston: Alpha Delta Phi. It's a great experience. Founded in 1832, Hamilton College.

DePue: What particular distinction does Alpha Delta Phi have?

Livingston: It's the first fraternity. Both Roosevelts were Alpha Delts. Salmon P. Chase. There were a lot of distinguished people in government. The Dartmouth College chapter of Alpha Delts was the model for *Animal House*, (laughter) so it's a—

DePue: That's a lot to live up to.

Livingston: It's a mixed bag. So we were the *Animal House*, but not at the University of Illinois.

They had a crisis in student government and wanted somebody to come in and sit for a year and be the stabilizer, and they plucked me out of seclusion. After I had done my activities, I had a fifth year, senior year, just to finish stuff up, and I wanted to just finish. But it was good to serve.

DePue: "They" being your fellow fraternity brothers?

Livingston: No, student government people, campus leaders that were maybe a year or two younger than I was.

DePue: But they were concerned about what was going on in the fraternity?

Livingston: No, no, I'm sorry, in the broader campus. This is at the University of Illinois Student Government Association. So I actually did a stint on that—which I never thought I would do, and it worked out well—just for a year.

Early on, I was at a reception at the president's house with my grandfather, and I saw Chief Illiniwek perform. I sat next to a senior a little bit later on at the event and I said, "Wow, you're a little late. You missed Chief Illiniwek. That was the most interesting thing I've ever seen, and wonderful."

I really hadn't been exposed to it (laughs) as a youngster too much. I didn't come down to the campus. You just didn't do that. And he said, "Well, I didn't miss it; I was the chief." His name's William Forsyth, Bill Forsyth, from Springfield, Illinois—Forsyth Insurance is his dad—still lives here. We got to talking, and I tried out my freshman year. I was the youngest in the brood, and I made the final four out of about seventy-five; didn't make it, but got close.

DePue: What was involved with the tryouts?

Livingston: You start in January and you get picked in April, so there was a series of workshops in the stadium where you learned portions of the dance; it's kind of a cut, cut, cut. Then you get down to four finalists, and you are interviewed, because there's a public-facing, -speaking component to the chief, or there was at the time. The next year, the assistant chief graduated—there were two—and I was the assistant. I was selected as the assistant chief, which was just a wonderful experience. Then the following year, in 1988, in April, they had the full-blown tryouts for the chief. The assistant did not automatically graduate to the chief; it was whoever was the best at the performance. So you would try out against sons and cousins of chiefs, but you had to be able to run a hundred yards to the beginning of the dance, to get through the band, and then be able to go the distance in the twenty-pound regalia. I got picked in April of 1988.The governor and I often talked about Chief Illiniwek. It strangely intersected us later on in a policy way, which I could have never imagined.

DePue: For those who may be encountering this thirty or forty years down the road, I've got a couple questions here. One, what is it that drew you to wanting to be Chief Illiniwek? And then tell us more about exactly what Chief Illiniwek does at the games, and which games.

Livingston: Chief Illiniwek was the official symbol of the University of Illinois from 1926 to 2007. It was crafted in the early days out of the scouting discipline to honor the heritage and the history, the state of Illinois, the rivers, and everything else. They wanted to do something that was not a mascot. They didn't want something to run along the sideline with a hatchet and cheer on the crowd. There was a great deal of mystique and tradition and connectivity to tribal communities that was cultivated, so it was almost like you were an ambassador. The imagery is that you would have a lone individual selected as chief, after a highly competitive process, who would appear at major university athletic functions—all home football games, all home basketball games, occasionally on the road. At Ohio State, I performed. If the marching band went, I would go. They would go away once a year: Mom's Day events, things at the president's house… So there were probably about 125 or 130 events a year that I would have to do, speaking or dancing.

The imagery of the chief would be that, from a hidden position, the chief in Lakota Sioux regalia would burst forth out of the band onto the field and go eighty yards alone to generate the rush and the mystique and the majesty of a world-class setting. You had to exude the power. It was to invoke those emotions. I think for many people, it did. The outfit that I wore was provided to me by the chief medicine man of the Lakota Sioux, the Oglala Lakota, Frank Fools Crow. He was their supreme leader and came to the campus and made the presentation a few years before I was chief, in 1982. We would pass the outfit on. Actually, in 2008, a group of us arranged to have it returned to tribal lands—that outfit in the picture.

DePue: What was the chief's feeling about handing over those tribal garbs?

Livingston: Bittersweet, bittersweet. We were the ones who arranged it, because the regalia had been balled up in a desk drawer. We're all historians; it's in their history room at the Oglala Lakota College. We felt that was appropriate. If it wasn't going to be used at the university…

DePue: Well, I meant when he initially gave it to you.

Livingston: Oh, the statement he made at the time was, "We go on together. This is a journey we go on together." He saw it, he was comfortable with what we were doing, and he liked the way we were handling it. The earlier wave of [Native American] mascots at Stanford and Dartmouth and other places were long gone in the late sixties, so we had outlived all that wave and were often kind of written up in magazines as "the way to do it." We often kind of glanced an askance eye to the Atlanta Braves and these other people; they don't know how to do it, yet they're still in business. (DePue laughs)

So it was wonderful. The friendships formed—a couple times a week I'll have somebody reach out and say, "Gosh, I was just thinking about college," and I don't even really necessarily know them. So it continues on,

and you respond. You're kind of still an ambassador, and you try to be positive.

DePue: What was the crowd's reaction when Chief Illiniwek showed up?

Livingston: It was thunderous. It was like soaring over a cliff and hitting a thundercloud. I mean, it was amazing. You'd get sixty thousand people to provide that energy, and of course they feel the same way the chief does. So it was a wonderful experience. And I was there at a good time. We had a winning football program and winning basketball program.

DePue: Was that the draw for you, the response you got from the audience?

Livingston: I came to chief through instinct. I don't want to sound too corny—it was almost a religious—it just **felt** like I should have been **the person**. It was instinct. It tied things together. I felt that I had these talents from gymnastics, but also a tradition and history with the university, an appreciation of the place that I could give back to the university. So I thought of it as public service in that sense.

DePue: Again, for the people who might not know the history of Chief Illiniwek, tell us the end of that whole process in a thumbnail sketch, if you will.

Livingston: Paul Simon signed a petition in 1990, right in the heart of his campaign with Lynn Martin, to do many things for the Native American community, but tucked in the text was the elimination of Chief Illiniwek. If you talk to their press people, they didn't know it was in there, but Simon wasn't the type of guy who would back away from that. He was friends with my grandfather. He wrote the letter to get me into West Point. (DePue laughs) So it was a very strange confluence. The NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] stepped in, in 2005, and imposed sanctions at NCAA events; they wouldn't allow us to host tournaments. You'd have waves of students [protesting], and then Emil Jones got involved with the Illinois legislature. It was Emil Jones, plus the politicization of the board of trustees under Governor Blagojevich, plus the NCAA—that was a one-two punch. There was turbulence at the university; I think we were willing—we had already begun a discussion to change the chief, dial it down, maybe; just walk out, and take out some of the movements. I think we would have gotten cooperation from our tribal communities, which would have gotten the NCAA. But Emil Jones was pushing hard.

DePue: One of the groups, though, that you haven't mentioned, Tom, that were pushing hard against it were Native American groups.

Livingston: Yes and no. We would meet with the Peoria tribe, and up until 2003 they were supportive of the—

DePue: Was the Peoria tribe in Peoria, Illinois?

Livingston: No, they are in Miami, Oklahoma. And that's the thing. Their take on it was—and still is today—Look, we're not particularly offended by this, but it's eight hundred miles away and it's really not our fight. They were starting to get pulled in, and they've got enough things to work on. We have maintained great friendships with the Peoria tribe. I'm going to have them in, in October; we're going to go to a football game together. Great folks. That did not push the chief overboard, the Lakota or Peoria. They were kind of on the side. It was really the on-campus pressure. It became kind of a cottage industry to either be for the chief or against the chief, (laughs) as so many things become. There were certainly Native Americans in that group on campus, but I wouldn't say it was led by that.[5]

DePue: What were your feelings, then, when that tradition finally died?

Livingston: I thought it was a lost opportunity more than anything else, because I think a compromise is manageable in that situation where you can do good things. They went too severe in the other direction, and for the wrong reason. At that point, that was the nadir of the Blagojevich appointees, and they were kind of taking a drop-everything approach. The same group eventually got pushed out.

DePue: You think without Rod Blagojevich's involvement it still would be continuing today?

Livingston: I think without Emil Jones's involvement it still would have been modified, but in place at an appropriate setting—doing good things and…

DePue: Of course, he was Senate president at the time and really about the only ally that Blagojevich had in the legislature.

Livingston: Right. And Blagojevich had largely turned over the appointment process to Emil Jones in terms of who was going on the board. He did not have a care in the world about that, as compared to Jim Edgar, who was very (laughs) involved. So it was strange for me—again, another confluence of Illinois government and politics—Chief Illiniwek and the whole University of Illinois thing. I remember thinking, Boy, this is an interesting intersection for me.

DePue: Let's talk about another intersection. Let's get you back to college, 1989–1990. You're Chief Illiniwek, you're involved with the fraternity, and you're involved with the Illinois Union Board.

[5] This was not the only controversy over Native American culture. In 1992, Edgar responded to pressure from Native Americans by agreeing to eliminate a display of skeletons at the Dickson Mounds settlement site. Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, July 23, 2009, 31-34; Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 23, 2010, 592-93.

Livingston: Yeah, too much. (laughs)

DePue: And now you've got to figure out what you're going to do with the rest of your life.

Livingston: Right. I started interviewing for media jobs. I had an internship at Continental Cablevision in Elmhurst, Illinois, which is where I met Jim Edgar. This was the summer before my fifth year, senior year, so the summer of 1989. I met Jim Edgar in July of 1989. It was a drunk driving show we were doing; we had victims of drunk driving—their kids had been injured or killed—and we had Jim Edgar, who had really cultivated that as an issue of public safety.

DePue: As the secretary—

Livingston: As the secretary of state. This was also about a month before Jim Thompson had made up his mind—or he hadn't announced whether he was going to retire or not. I called Gary Mack, who was the press secretary under Mike Lawrence; he was Mike's deputy. He was with the governor when he was secretary of state, and more on the broadcast side. Gary would get Jim Edgar to do the broadcast stuff. So I knew him. I called Gary, and I was persistent—he later commented, "Boy, you really were on me"—and we finally got there.

It was a good experience for the secretary of state. It was a good show. I handled him, provided clear direction. I was an associate producer, and then there was a host. This was in the suburbs. I got to know Gary and those folks. I think Edgar, being a historian and a bit of an Illini sports fan, made the mental connection on Chief Illiniwek, Park Livingston, and my experiences, and that was it. We had a great show. The guests were very emotional towards Jim Edgar. They held him in very high esteem and got very emotional about it. I remember thinking, Boy, this is very powerful.

DePue: Were some of these guests people who had suffered the consequences of drunk driving?

Livingston: Lost loved ones, children. AAIM was a group—I think Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists. And other groups—MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. This is a guy who put them on the map. So it was a good show.

While I was interviewing, I also sent a note to Julie Aplington, who was an intern on Jim Edgar's secretary of state staff, saying, Hey, I'm looking out there. She was a Pi Phi at the University of Illinois. She was friendly. She was on staff, kind of underneath Gary, and a whole year later, after my fifth year, Julie and Gary said, Gee, we need help on the campaign staff, and they reached out to me. At that time I was interviewing at Proctor and Gamble. There was a former chief that was recruiting me. It was a great job. I was sending out résumés to radio stations. And I was currently employed with the Prairie State Games, working with Steve Kelly, who was a broadcaster. But I liked this guy Edgar, and I thought, You know, maybe I'll do this to get

experience. This seemed to offer the widest range of experience. I think my parents were concerned, or people were concerned because it was a very heated campaign at that point.

DePue: This would have been mid-1990?

Livingston: Correct. So we are neck-and-neck, and I'm going to forsake a pretty good deal in the private sector—with benefits, which I didn't "get" when I was twenty-one; I didn't understand the importance of that. And I went with the Edgar position. I was to assist Mike Belletire in the campaign staff on Cook Street. I was to be the responder for people who had issues: Where does he stand on hunting permits in Rock Cut State Park? He's going to close my bar down? I was the next step beyond the front-door secretary to handle these and type out a response and look in the playbook, the policy book. I was also there to receive assignments from Mike Belletire, which I have no better word for, candidly, than it was opposition research. So one assignment was to figure out how much Neil Hartigan was in Springfield.

DePue: Neil Hartigan was his opponent.

Livingston: His opponent, the sitting attorney general. You could really get a sense at that point that you had a nine-year secretary of state and a nine-year attorney general on a collision course for an open seat which had been sat in for fourteen years. These were two legits going at it. So we were doing this kind of research. One of the knocks on Hartigan was that he was a Chicago politician and would base his power structure among the Chicago pols, and Edgar was just going to be this statewide governor. It was really selling the geography of the whole ticket—Greg Baise and [Bob] Kustra and Sue Suter and Edgar.[6] They had an actual map, and they would put this out. We all thought it was a little bit esoteric for… (laughs) But he really sold balance on the ticket, and there was a lot of party discipline on setting that up. I remember having a real "oh my goodness" moment, because I generated the numbers. We did travel records, and we were able to drill down on the facts pretty closely and trail where he was—as they could have for us—and I remember providing the input back into Mike's office.

DePue: Mike Belletire?

Livingston: Mike Belletire. I remember watching a campaign commercial a week later, and it was about "And Neil Hartigan has a fancy home on the lake in Springfield, and he rarely ever spends time down. He's out of touch. He's out of touch with the rest of the state—Chicago pol." I went, "Oh my goodness, that's it; that's the statistic." It listed state aviation records and everything else that I had looked at, candidly.

[6] Baise, Kustra, and Suter were the Republican nominees for treasurer, lieutenant governor, and comptroller, respectively.

DePue: Just gave you a little bit of a heady feeling?

Livingston: It was a sobering feeling, and it was heady and exciting. Jim Edgar was very good at imbuing ethics across the organization, so it made me want to do this right. I was glad we sweated the details, because Mike Belletire and Mike Lawrence and Carter Hendren double-checked—we really scrubbed it. And it was a crowd that tended not to want to overstate, which as a youngster I didn't appreciate until later in the campaign. I thought, These guys are honest, and you could tell that Edgar—with whom I had very little contact; he was the star out there—was doing it.

The other one is, I had to assemble figures for school districts. Each time the governor would go to Peoria or Dixon or Danville, I would have to crunch the numbers for Mike using state board of education records and other things to say how much this school district would lose if the temporary income surcharge was not continued.

DePue: That being the main issue of the campaign?

Livingston: One of the major ones, because here we are, drifting towards recession, the party in power, everything historically wrong with why we should be going there, and he's campaigning on continuing a tax, a Jim Thompson tax. Try explaining that in thirty seconds. But he said, "It's just not honest"—that was in one of his advertisements—"I'm going to give it to you straight. It's just not honest. I think we need to do this to invest in education." And Neil Hartigan's running around the state saying, "Two percent. Just two. DECCA, that's a Jim Thompson bloat."[7] I don't know that you would see that in a blog-infested campaign environment, but Jim Edgar broke through the noise on that issue, sold his record, and sold the integrity. Not very easy to do, and I was very impressed by that.

DePue: How would you describe your own personal politics at the time?

Livingston: Moderate Republican. To be quite honest with you, Mark, (pause) I wasn't used to being political. These people were aggressive, they'd been in it. They were used to lobbing the bombs, and I was used to university, Chief Illiniwek, ecumenical stuff. So it was an adjustment for me—a quick one, though. I learn fast. A statewide campaign, especially that one, was a real crucible for me. It formed, I guess, my opinions about how hard those are and what a candidate goes through, how important they are, and how much goes into it. And how it is you got to just stick with your principles. I mean, those campaign messages that Jim Edgar was putting out there were tough to explain to people on the phone. I was doing the explaining. A lot of this was to the right wing of the party, because he's pro-choice, going to continue the Thompson tax. I'm

[7] At the end of Thompson's administration, the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs came under fire for opening several additional trade offices around the world. Jim Edgar, April 23, 2010, 656-657.

graduating from college, and I'm used to, again, all hail and well fellow at the tavern. (laughs) So it was an adjustment.

DePue: What was the specific position that Mike Belletire had?

Livingston: He was the director of policy or issues; he was the issues czar. Mike Lawrence was press, Mike Belletire was issues, and Carter was the campaign manager. Those were the three heavies, and then the music man out there in the field, Bob Hickman, was the money guy. He had a bit of a mystique because you'd never see him. You'd hear about this mythical Bob Hickman. I was in the downstate campaign office in Springfield, on West Cook Street, sitting next to Jim Skilbeck, who was a Thompson advance man. So I was up there with the field guys—Sam Owen, who was a longtime Eastern Illinois compatriot. But literally, I would call Mike Belletire, Mike Lawrence, and Carter kind of the big three, and Hickman was his own category.

DePue: Do you know those three well enough to flesh out their personalities a little bit for us?

Livingston: Yes. First of all, Carter smoked cigarettes, Mike Belletire smoked a cigar, and Mike Lawrence smoked a pipe, so if I didn't get… (DePue laughs) You walked into that office and your eyes came out, they were like catcher's mitts. But anyway, Mike Lawrence, I'll start with. He was the anti-groupthink. If everybody started nodding their heads and ending up in a direction, Mike's like, Well, wait a minute, let's think this through. He was the contrarian, the devil's advocate, the ethics czar—"We can't do this." It was like being at the desk of the curmudgeonly daily news editor. You couldn't even hesitate because he was compressed for time, so you had to have your act together to go in to Mike—and that's everybody, and it really funneled through. I think that was of great service to Edgar.

Carter Hendren—and I mean this positively—is kind of cagey. He would be the snickering—he had this high-pitched laugh—smoking… He'd shake your hand. He was kind of a cat. He had nine lives in terms of campaign ideas. He came out of [James] Pate Philip's organization, so he was very helpful in knowing the precincts. He was our, for lack of a better word, Karl Rove or James Carville, for sure.[8] That was a good role for Carter. Oftentimes, throughout the governor's governorship, when Carter went back to the Senate, at key moments Jim Edgar would call upon Carter for advice or as a conduit. It was very strange. It was unique, because when Edgar then began to govern, Carter went back over to Pate and was running the Senate caucus. We weren't always in alignment with those guys, so we always kind of felt a little strange, like Oh gosh, is Carter—are we getting the bag of tricks

[8] Before working for Philip, and while still a student at Eastern Illinois University, Hendren worked on Edgar's first campaign for state representative in 1974. Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, 8-10. Karl Rove and James Carville were key political strategists for presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, respectively.

back at us? There was never any animosity, but it was just kind of interesting. But he [Edgar] would reach out, because I was in the backseat on that, placing phone calls, when he was governor.

Belletire. Mike Lawrence and Mike Belletire would go at it. This was not a bunch of corporate yes-men delivering the good news up through the channel to Edgar. These guys would hammer… (laughs) Mike Lawrence used to say that Mike Belletire could find nine problems for every solution or something. (DePue laughs) And those guys would really go at it, because Mike Belletire was very rooted in the policy, circuit breakers—he had opinions, he was strong-willed. You put Mike Lawrence in there with him, and sometimes I think Mike Belletire was more aggressive in wanting to get stuff out and would kind of fancy himself as a campaign guy. Lawrence would kind of keep everybody in their box and say, "Now, I just want this analysis," or they would challenge each other. But it was healthy. It was healthy. It was not dysfunctional, but it was healthy tension for sure.

DePue: Edgar himself has described this as a "classic gubernatorial campaign." What does that say about Edgar's personality and his character, that he's got these kinds of people around him?

Livingston: I think Edgar fashioned that group—well, I don't want to speak for him. I think what it says about his personality was that he was comfortable with his own management style, that he could control that, and that he needed it. He struck me at that time almost instantly as intellectually curious, extremely honest, and stubborn. So I think he could out-stubborn Lawrence, and he was comfortable with that, and then pull away from that with the relationship intact. I don't think he was stubborn. He was principled, too, which added to the stubbornness; they were linked. I just think that he was comfortable in overriding it when he thought he needed to, in terms of when he thought his instincts were best, but he wanted the information. He did not suffer boosterism well, in my observations of him. He did not want to get the Chamber of Commerce speech. Now, he wanted respect. He'll tell you he would have an ego like all politicians do. So he respected the office of secretary of state and office of governor. I never heard him swear, they're always wearing ties… I think he also—being a student of Lincoln, the whole council of rivals—had his little pack of rivals there. I think it all fit into his mindset.

DePue: I know that later on you became a travel aide. Was that during the campaign itself?

Livingston: No. That was after; when he was governor-elect, I accompanied him to the Hall of Fame Bowl in Tampa, Florida.

DePue: Any memories about the election night itself before we get there?

Livingston: Yes. I was literally the last one out of the Springfield campaign office. Everybody had shifted to Chicago to the Hyatt Hotel. Me and another guy that was kind of Brad Edgar's friend were to meet and drive up. I drove up about six o'clock; it was after dark. The early election polls started hitting when I was at about Joliet on election night. Of course they're always terrible because they start with Chicago. I'm not used to this, so I'm concerned. But I remember looking at that office on Cook Street—that was an epic battle—and just to look at those empty desks and see… Of course the smoke smell was still hanging in there. Those people smoked.

Election night, I got up to Chicago, and I remember seeing the governor at about nine o'clock, and he was in a good mood. I was concerned, because I did not have the same information. The governor relied on Carter and Steve Schnorf on election nights, for the rest of his governorship, on how things were going out there. Every election, midterm or his own, Steve was like this oracle, and he would be able to… Steve is kind of a Karl Rove type, too, between Steve and Carter. He [Edgar] later told me mid-evening that things were looking pretty good. I remember him walking by me and turning to me and saying, "Hello," and he got the name out, "Tom," which was a big deal for me. Because, you know, you work hard. I hadn't really seen him. I really was better friends with Brad; I was kind of the first to be old enough to be his son, because he's forty-four years old at the time.

DePue: Edgar was.

Livingston: Edgar.

DePue: And you were roughly Brad's age?

Livingston: I was about twenty-two, and so was Brad, about the same age. I remember then being pulled aside by the campaign staff—I think it was Arnie Kanter. He pulled a guy named Frank Cortese and myself, and he said, "You've got to go over to the county building, and you have to stand by these ballots."[9] So I go from this super suite setting at the Hyatt—on the top floor with the co-chair of the campaign, Bill Weiss, who was with Ameritech, and the governor who just said my name—and I've now got to do the glamorous job of sitting in a drafty, cavernous room at the county building, looking at ballot boxes. Just to prevent malfeasance. For Frank and me, it was a strange thing. I don't know what I would have done. No cell phones, no nothing at that point. I sat there; we were looking at the Hartigan guys and they were looking at us, and it was quiet, and we were in a blackout. So that's my image of…

Then I was able to go back over, and I remember seeing the confetti drop down and hearing late that we'd won. At that point, I was going to go back to grad school and start looking for broadcasting jobs, because while I was on the campaign staff, for money on the weekends, I worked at a radio station, WRVI, in Virden, Illinois, doing sports. I used my contacts with the

[9] On the importance of Edgar's ballot security effort, see Kanter, December 17, 2009, 53-55 and 59.

University of Illinois to get these A-list sports people on. I didn't have a clue what was going to happen. I didn't know if he was going to win. I wanted to keep my FCC license active. So in any case, that was a wonderful night. Exhausting.

DePue: Now let's get to the point of being a traveling aide, how you ended up with that position.

Livingston: Ken Zehnder had been his travel aide; Ken had been with him for many years as secretary of state. He's about fifteen or so years older than I am—I think fifteen years. Ken had a conflict or wanted to get out of the business of being travel aide—he was probably exhausted—and I get a call saying, "Jim said it would be okay if you wanted to come along and kind of help him out at this bowl game." I thought, Oh my gosh, the Jim? They all called him Jim at the time. So I get Mrs. Edgar's stuff, and I'm going to be the travel assistant for this trip. I didn't know I was being checked out, tried out here. We went down, and of course it's a U of I event, so I knew a lot of people. I introduced the governor to a lot of people he didn't know, who I thought could be helpful to him. I wasn't restricted by knowing I was being tried out.

It was on the grounds at the bowl game, before the game, at the picnic, and we'd had a nice time—I had helped Mrs. Edgar through a tough travel weather event to get there—he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "I want you to be my travel aide when we get back." I thought, Oh, well, that's great. Maybe I'll get to go to a bowl game next year, or… You know, I didn't know what that meant. I later told him it must have been the most unappreciative reaction (DePue laughs) because I did not "get it." It wasn't until I got all the way back to Springfield when I spoke to Governor Thompson's scheduler, who was still in place, Rhonda Miner, who was the scheduler the first two years Edgar was in. I said, "What's this travel aide situation? Do I need to fill out paperwork? What is that?" And she said, "You're the travel aide? You're going to be with him first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Kiss your social life goodbye." It was otherwise known as the Bag Boy under Jim Thompson. I had no orientation or history of what that was.

I remember sitting in the backseat of the car and listening to him, and he said, "Boy, I'm really relieved. I'm forty-four years old, and if I'd lost this one, I really would have had to scramble for this second career." I remember chuckling, thinking, Here's a guy who's just been elected the governor of the state of Illinois, and he was doing like career planning, like basic stuff that you heard your dad talking about. That kind of put it in perspective. Then we went back, and the challenges began. It was tough.

DePue: Give us a little bit more insight into what a traveling aide actually does.

Livingston: In 1991 when I did it, to November of '92, this is pre-BlackBerry, early cell phone. One of the principle jobs was to keep records of "I need to call so-and-so." You were the communication. You were the BlackBerry. So I didn't have

a device. I had to have notes, home numbers for supporters or other constitutional officers. I can't lose it. I can't drop it on the street. (laughs) It's a valuable asset. There were kind of the basic functions. So part of it was to just be the connecting point, to be his BlackBerry, for lack of a better word.

I was also the collector of résumés. We were getting faxes down there in Tampa for people that were going to be the budget director, maybe; the police director. He was forming his cabinet.

DePue: He was in Tampa after the election?

Livingston: Yeah, and then on the way up back to Springfield. There were a flurry of press conferences early on—the Kirk Browns. I didn't know these people on the campaign; these were not campaign people. My charge was to keep that organized and get it to the right people, and he would look at them and he'd make these phone calls. He had a pretty good sense of how he wanted to form that, I think. He always felt, I need to be ready to govern early, so he went through the mental exercises.

But the travel aide basically got him lunch. He needed to eat; he needed to be in touch with people. When he was out at events, somebody would hand him an envelope or "I'm concerned about this," and I would be the receptacle of that and had to know how to properly handle that.

DePue: We're talking about Illinois, we're talking about politics, so I want to be careful here. I know what you mean when you say "Somebody would hand him an envelope."

Livingston: Right. Well, I'll tell you, Mark, 99 percent of the time it was a letter saying, "I'm having trouble with my flood plain in New Valmeyer" or whatever. (laughs) But occasionally it would be a campaign check. You knew that if you failed on the campaign side with Edgar, he would cut you loose. I felt he was a compassionate guy, but he did not tolerate any lapse in ethics. Even friends he'd had for decades were marginalized if he thought there was some shadiness—or in Bob Hickman's case, he wanted sympathy, "Can you kind of ride it out?"—boom. That was a very instructive thing to the rest of the…

DePue: Now, this was several years later that Bob Hickman got in trouble.[10]

Livingston: Yeah. You just knew with Edgar that this was not tolerated. He would say it in his presentations. It was just the clearest thing I remember about that early on, and he really set the tone. It was reinforced by Mike Lawrence and a woman named Donna Fitts, who was our Chicago office director. I would put her—and I love Donna, she is a great person—she was somewhere between the Catholic schoolmarm and Attila the Hun. (DePue laughs) I mean, you couldn't order a paper clip without going through Donna, because Edgar didn't want anything in the newspapers about somebody buying a rack of cue

[10] Andy Foster, interview by Mark DePue, July 12, 2010, 37-38. Brown, 66-67.

balls for the governor's mansion or whatever. He didn't like his advance men out there glad-handing, buying people drinks, because that was what was happening under Thompson. He never liked the look of that, and you could tell that. So it was a pretty sobering time.

When I first sat in that car, the economy was bad, and everybody was like, "Gee, Jim Thompson didn't do it this way." They were used to a different style, and Edgar had to fight that, especially that first six months. It was hard on him, and he was moody about it. I'll just say that candidly. He knew he was going to have to give tough love. He had the choice between being a booster and saying, "Hey, we can work our way out of this recession, and we're going to be okay, we just got to bring the talents…" That was not the message he chose. It was, "Tear up the credit cards; we've got to live within our means"—that whole stuff.

DePue: Was there anything that really surprised you when you got to that job as traveling aide and were that close and personal with him?

Livingston: Yes. I thought the governor had every right to be more secure than he was about himself. I thought he was a little bit insecure about himself, in a humble sort of way. He'd just won the governorship, and yet I couldn't help but think he felt—he was pushing staff: We got to do a better job. We're not getting our message out there. We're not running a good shop. We're getting beat here in the court of public opinion. It wasn't a fun time for him. I was surprised when you get the opportunity to live in a mansion and be the governor, and you saw Thompson—at least in the later years—being gregarious about it. People were used to that; I was used to that. I didn't expect that out of Jim Edgar because he was wired differently, but I didn't expect it to bother him. He was very uptight the first six months. I'd never fault him for it. I was kind of a shock absorber for that, you know. He would get uptight. But I felt that was my role.

My relationship with the governor, from the first years to the last, I kind of treated it as Switzerland. I wasn't going to get way up, I wasn't going to get way down—I was going to try to just flow the facts to him. I felt that promoted me through the process and that we gained a mutual trust. We knew how to react. He was always first. It's just very basic stuff. I never liked it when aides got out there ahead of their principal and created these own spheres for themselves in the media. I'd see it in the Reagan administration—whatever it was. So I was determined to be the solid shock absorber. And I took a few shocks. He would yell. He would get frustrated about lunch. He's human.

DePue: Any particular examples of that? How would you know he was upset with you or upset with things?

Livingston: Oh, he would just lay it out front. He would say, "We never get these things right." It would be stuff like on the note cards or the logistics of getting to an event, or he would be concerned about the setup of an event, and were we able

to go to the organization and tell them that he wanted a square setup rather than theater-style seating. That's the other thing, Mark. In the beginning, I thought he was delving more into a chief of staff role than a governor role, but as it turns out, that was the right thing to do, because he was reorienting the office of governor. I think he felt he needed to do that—I didn't appreciate that at the time—all the while fighting his first legislative session on property tax caps and everything else. So it was a lot of work, a lot of stress.

I had another interesting glimpse. We went over to Charleston for the Boys' State events. I got him into the event and we all went over to his home, and his mother was there. I sat with his mother; she and I spoke, and she was very reserved. I saw a lot of Jim Edgar in her. She was very neutral, but she said to me—and I thought this was funny—"You know, I always hoped he would have gotten a law degree because that way if this politics stuff doesn't work out, he'd have something to fall back on." I'm looking around, and I see a landed helicopter two hundred yards away, troopers, people on the front porch looking. He's the governor of the fifth-largest state in the country, and his mother was concerned about the back-up plan. But not in a mean way. I took it as homespun, feet-on-the-ground practical, extremely practical. She was a very practical woman, and I could tell that he got a lot of that no-nonsense right from her.

DePue: Not many people have used the term "yell" with Governor Edgar. Did you have occasions where he would get that animated?

Livingston: It would be a notch under yell, and I don't know what the expression is. It would be kind of a rant. I got rants. I never got yelled at; I got rants. A lot of times I knew they weren't directed at me, but I was the shock absorber. He was about process improvement. He wanted perfection in the movement of his troops to the dissemination of—he was a student of government, I could tell that, so he wanted process improvement. The thing that torqued him off the most is if we made a mistake again after he was pretty clear on what he wanted. I never thought that any of it was unreasonable. I worried about him occasionally being too hard on himself and focusing on some of the governor's office stuff. I was afraid that was going to overtake what… I felt we weren't doing our job early on so that he could then go out there and govern. But I think in some ways that was the way he would release tension. He wanted to focus. It was a process improvement exercise.

DePue: There are also stories, legend, about how he would express himself. So what kind of language would he use when he was doing these rants?

Livingston: Oh, he would say like "gosh dang it" or "dagnabbit" or… I don't even remember. My language, at that point especially, was just a little bit more salty than that. But I never heard him swear, not once in the eight years. I probably was on hundreds of planes with him, in the backseat of the car. Not once. And I don't remember seeing him in the office in casual attire. I'm

drifting a little bit. He would get uptight, you know. But I never felt it was out of balance, and I always felt it was to do better. But it didn't make it any funner.

DePue: How did you know that he thought you were doing a good job?

Livingston: He didn't fire me. (DePue laughs) Mrs. Edgar was a big help on that. She was the guiding hand. She's about my mother's age, had a kid about the same time my mother did, Brad and me. Both continued college later on in life; my mom was doing it at the same time Brenda was doing it. So there was a kinship. She was reassuring. And I also saw we were getting better. I could tell with each month in the early part of 1991, we were getting to a point where we had established ourselves. We were establishing the brand, and that was sometimes imposed on us by others: "Edgar Scissorhands," "Governor No," you name it—that was kind of what was starting to stick as we were heading into that overtime session that first record overtime session.

The ultimate was at the end of a two-year travel aide stint, he made me his director of scheduling for an important part of his tenure, his reelection campaign. So now I was overseeing the very advance teams that we were grinding on (laughs) before. I took that as, So far so good. I never sought approval. We never had a conversation: "Gee, Governor, I'm kind of wondering, am I doing okay?" That was not in my wiring. I didn't feel that that was… He was the governor. I was at his will, and I was Switzerland. And I could tell…

DePue: So he wasn't the kind of person who would offer up those kinds of comments?

Livingston: No. No, not really. He did later. He did in the second term a bit more. But I didn't need it. I just had such respect for him. He was more of a guy of action. If you did well, he would promote you. He took me on a trip to India. He didn't say, "It's because you're doing a good job," it's, "I trust you, this is a reward." The late-night talks on the plane, when we'd be flying back from somewhere, that was reward enough, just a casual conversation. Now, if he sat there stone-cold silent, I guess I would have been concerned.

DePue: What were the conversations about?

Livingston: Oftentimes, "How come the Illini didn't go for it on fourth and one?" (laughter) Those heartbreaking Illini. We still have those conversations. A lot of it was scheduling. I got pretty good at showing up uninvited, both as the director of scheduling but also as a travel aide; sometimes I didn't need to be with him, but I would show up and say, "I kind of need to go over these things with you." I was able to gauge when the time was right to hit him and get information out of him, because it took a lot to get a decision out of the governor on scheduling events. But once he made the decision, he stuck with it. He never did the, Yes, yes, I'll do it, and then we had to go back later and

say, "Gee, sorry, something else came up." Anyway, I'm delving off. We would have casual conversations about sports, politics.

DePue: Who was controlling the schedule when you were actually the traveling aide?

Livingston: There were four people: Jim Edgar, (laughs) me, Rhonda Miner, and Sherry Struck, his personal assistant. Jim Edgar's personal time was very important to him. He wanted to not lose the ability to walk into a bookstore or a stamp store or dog stuff or you name it.

DePue: Or horseracing?

Livingston: Horseracing. Any of that had to be protected. Plus, Sherry would call the family accountant; she kind of was the keeper of the personal stuff. How's Tom Edgar doing, you know. She was going to set up the holiday, when the kids were coming. They were neighbors on Sarah Avenue, I believe, out there when he was secretary of state. So I would say me, Sherry, and the governor were the three.

DePue: But you didn't mention the chief of staff.

Livingston: No.

DePue: That was Kirk Dillard at the time.

Livingston: Yeah, I thought that was going to be a checkpoint, but Kirk really focused on the agency work: DNR [Department of Natural Resources] and reorganizing government and really negotiating, like the third airport deals. That was a big issue right then. Navy Pier. That was kind of Kirk's orbit. I think he was on Thompson's staff; I don't know that he wanted to get back into the legislative, scheduling… I think Edgar was very protective of that. He didn't want Kirk and those guys—they had enough to do, I think. That's how I read it, and that's how it evolved.

DePue: You mentioned Mrs. Edgar—your impressions of her.

Livingston: Oh, just a warm, wonderful, kind person. I mean, look out, Mother Teresa. There were tough days early on in the Edgar administration, and there was crisis with his health. I never saw her get out of sorts. She would be concerned. She would express concern if she thought somebody else wasn't treated right, maybe a foreign dignitary—"Gee, I'd like to do more for them." They were living at the mansion, so they were using that as an asset. She was involved. People sometimes over the years have assigned her as the wet blanket in terms of him wanting to run for office. I didn't see that. She wasn't the crazed (laughs) first lady either. I think she was like, Whatever you want to do. I always heard her say, "Jim, it's what you want to do. It's up to you."

The kids were in college or emerging from college, so that was important. I'm sure she's very happy to be a grandmother, because I think that was an aspiration.

DePue: Did you know Elizabeth as well?

Livingston: A little bit, yeah. Elizabeth was on that India trip. She was a little younger, and I didn't know her as well as Brad, but well enough to have a few laughs and great… Gosh, how hard can it be if your dad's the secretary of state, and you're out in high school, wanting to be a high school student?

DePue: You saw him pretty close, especially those first couple years. Being the governor of a state like Illinois oftentimes means that you at least start thinking about what comes after that. Maybe the presidency or a Senate position. Did you see any of that from the governor?

Livingston: Not those first two years. The first two years was surviving the withering attacks of Mike Madigan. George Bush was in office. Sam Skinner was running the show, Ed Madigan was the agricultural secretary, Lynn Martin was labor—there was a whole orbit of national figures in Illinois politics, and Edgar was kind of the local guy at that point. I did notice by the time he was reelected, when Bob Dole was running [for president], there were frequent mentions of more prominent roles. I always felt that Edgar wanted to go two terms as governor. He never told me that, but I always kind of thought that was it. When he was going through the tortuous exercise of deciding whether to run for a third term, it was outside of his—well, he'd be able to tell you—we had been shooting for two terms, and I think he thought, Gee, this is a pretty good thing—

DePue: We had a long conversation about that decision in '97.

Livingston: Yeah, I'm sure, so I'll stop. I can only give you my on-the-ground staff perspective. It didn't come up the first two years. Let me just check the time.

DePue: We're right at eleven o'clock here.

Livingston: I'm having too much fun; let's keep going.

DePue: Okay, excellent. Is there any other story—one story in particular, one trip in particular—that you remember from being his traveling aide?

Livingston: From his travel aide… Just flashes here and there. I remember being at a consular corps reception at Chicago and having to go in and tell him that the Iraq War invasion had begun, and that set off a series of National Guard things. I don't want to over-put my role in that. Again, I would often have to come in and tell him stuff in the middle of an event.

DePue: That would have been right at the beginning of his administration, too.

Livingston: That's right. It was the Fairmont Hotel in the big Onyx Room there. I remember walking in there, in this splendidly decorated room, and saying, Well, this is what's up.

The other one I remember when I was (laughs) travel aide was, we were at the opening day of White Sox Park, the new stadium. Dick Cheney was there and Dan Quayle was there, and he was pretty uptight because—I'm going to be candid: I don't know what he thought of Dan Quayle. I never got the sense it was elevated. Sorry; hope I'm not making news, but history is history. I remember we were at the game, and the contractors were working on the project there at the Kinzie Bridge and drove the pilings through the bottom of the Chicago River; it began raining into the subterranean tunnels. So I remember scribbling out a note, and as I was writing, it made no sense to me. It was basically, "The Chicago River is leaking. Please come now." (laughter) I handed it to him, and he looked at me like, what ear is on your forehead? That was one of those where I had to do a travel aide veto. I said, "You just got to come now. I'll explain later." In fact, Dan Quayle then followed us back to the office. He was going to help out with the situation room. So I remember that.

That's about it. I had the neat experience of going back when he cast the winning vote for Jim Stukel to be the chancellor at UIC, at the board of trustees.[11] I think it was six months after I was in college. I remember landing in a helicopter with the governor of the state of Illinois at the University of Illinois campus, and there's the president, [Stanley] Ikenberry, and all these other people I knew. And I'm out of the helicopter with the governor. I said, "Boy, this is quite a moment. I can't believe this has happened. It was a strange… So that was fun. I remember his mom. We'd go to the hospital when she was sick and things like that. He was a good son.

DePue: Let's move on to the next position, then. You'd already mentioned that you became the director of scheduling. How did that come about?

Livingston: I was bringing him dinner in his apartment at Columbus Plaza in November of 1992, after the election, and he said, "I'd like you to be my scheduler effective December 1, 1992, and we're going to put Andy Foster in" in my spot. Andy I kind of knew from the campaign side, the Republican Party, but not well. We ended up becoming very close and still are very close to this day. I hit the ground running on scheduling, and that was a good experience for him and me, because I knew what he liked. I'd been through the fire of those first two sessions and him in the shadow of Jim Thompson. And remember, all of the troopers were kind of the same; they would grumble, "Gee, Thompson used to go to…" There's always that, and we would get it. Of course they wouldn't say that to the governor, they'd say it to me, and I'd have to say, "Guys, we're

[11] University of Illinois at Chicago.

moving in a different direction here." Photographers, stuff like that—"I wish he'd smile more"; we'd get some of that.

As scheduler I would show up uninvited on planes and say, "We have to make some decisions." I would always schedule a month out, so if it's this morning, it's February the sixteenth, we would be scheduling March the sixteenth or seventeenth. He was very good because he was disciplined. So I was able, by that point, to know what things he absolutely would do through the year, what he absolutely wanted to be at: Holocaust Memorial, National Governors Association, prayer breakfast. There was kind of a skeleton you could put together which he really didn't have when he first came in, so that was part of the growing pains in the travel aide job. But I was able to take that skeleton, and by that time the culture was established with the advance teams and what he liked and what he didn't like in terms of being not too flashy.

DePue: Does that mean you get to be the person who says no a lot?

Livingston: Yes, and I learned that—

DePue: Before you even asked the governor if he wants to go.

Livingston: Here's what I would do. I didn't want to become the bureaucratic, haughty gatekeeper, so I would filter it; I would say, "I'm prepared to say no to these, and it's okay with the rest of the staff." Because I'm not just putting this together in a vacuum. I had had the relationships with the agency directors. Just the meetings alone: "I want to meet with the governor. I'm Kirk Brown." We would have to put that together, let alone the Rotary in Effingham or whatever. You had to gauge all that. That was my job. What I would do is I would set it aside, because on occasion, he would say, "Oh, I went to college with this person and I saw them out, and I said I would do that." I would pull it out of that. When I was selling something, I never said, "Gee, I really…" I was Switzerland again; I was the **facts**.

We never had an argument. I was never in the position where I said, "Governor, I really think you ought to do this," with the exception of maybe ten times, where I didn't think he was getting that there was a whole other constituency out there. The letter did not accurately convey what was happening in the field and what was being reported by our agency directors. So sometimes I would proactively say, "We're going to go to this part of the world. We're going to go to Rochelle." I would reach out to the press guys before I would talk to the governor and say, "We ought to think about sitting down with the editorial board out there," and not get it too far out, and then go to the governor. Again, I wouldn't freelance. I kind of knew what he liked. A lot of it was guessing. I did that all the way through his campaign and stopped in December of 1994, after the election.

DePue: How much of the job, then, really dealt with the critical goal that he had of getting reelected?

Livingston: It was a sliding scale. In the beginning, not so much. It was governing after the first couple of sessions. Then in the middle of '93, Andy Foster went over to start running the campaign, and we had another kid, Matt Goldberg, come in. Matt is now the CEO of Lonely Planet, lives in Australia. (laughs) Matt is a good guy; we get together occasionally.

That was a unique situation, because I was about ready to really go full-time on the scheduling side with the campaign, and he went to the carpenters' union. In July of 1994, I had set up a hotel room for Mrs. Edgar next door to Good Samaritan Hospital Downers Grove, because he was going to go in for an evening checkup after his last event. He had had an angioplasty in '92. He didn't want the press, in the middle of the campaign, to know he was going in for a checkup. It wasn't that he didn't want them to know; it was his personal health, and he didn't think anything of it. So he went in for a scope. I remember calling the troopers and saying, "You're not going to go back to the apartment, you're going to go to Good Samaritan Hospital, and he's going to get a checkup." I had a bit of a reputation with the troopers for joking, so they didn't believe me at first (DePue laughs) because I didn't put it on any of the schedules.

DePue: Because the governor didn't want it on the schedule.

Livingston: He didn't want it on the schedule. And we had a full schedule the next day, basically. Maybe the morning off, but we were in a campaign, and there were events.

DePue: This was July of—

Livingston: July of '94. I remember Mrs. Edgar calling me—I might have been the first guy to get a call—and she was emotional. She said, "Tom, they're going to need to do open-heart surgery on Jim, and I don't have much more to say other than can you let the right people know?" That was the instruction.

DePue: Boy, that's a packed message—"the right people." You'd better get that job correct.

Livingston: Yeah. I didn't feel threatened by it, but she was so distraught, because this was not supposed to happen. My first reaction was, "Well, how am I going to keep this a secret?" You're in campaign mode; that's what you think. Obviously that was a fleeting thought, for about five seconds. (laughs) I lived at 437 West Cook in Springfield, in a house, and I remember sitting there alone going, "Well, now what?" So I called Mike Lawrence and Andy Foster. I think I got Andy at a bar, and I think he left the phone dangling. I don't remember if I called Andy and got him first or if Sherry Struck did, but it was one of us. Sherry and I were kind of the first to know. Then we called Mike Lawrence, then everything from there—I had to call key agency directors and just say, "Hey, this is occurring. We don't know much more of this. These

things can be routine." The thing went into pause mode. This is the same time that Bob Kustra has gone to radioland, so we are operating in a unique situation.[12] I believe Jim Reilly is the chief of staff by this point.

DePue: Right, he is.

Livingston: I called Jim as well. It was a culture shock from Kirk Dillard to Jim, and I'm the scheduler for both, so I had to get used to that too.

DePue: How was Jim Reilly different?

Livingston: Jim Reilly wanted the trains to run, and I think he felt that there were control sticks—and he was right. He's a brilliant guy. He had to get used to Edgar when Edgar didn't want to do the events. Jim Reilly was very much in the Chicago civic and cultural and social inner circles, and I think it was important to him that Jim Edgar do a better job of doing the Chicago thing.

DePue: Could Jim Reilly be a little bit more animated than Kirk Dillard?

Livingston: Yes, yes, yes. I remember we were opening the United Center and the dedication, and Jim [Reilly] was going to be up there. He had had a nice evening planned out, and we had to tell him that the governor was going to delay his departure. He was [already] on the plane. I remember Jim not being very happy about that. Mike Lawrence and I were on the call. Jim was upset, angry, and let us know about it: **click.** And this is classic Mike Lawrence: "I guess he's going to come along on the plane and everything's going to be just fine."

DePue: (laughs) A little bit of understatement?

Livingston: Yeah. May I pause to call my appointment here?

(pause in recording)

DePue: Okay, that was a quick break; we're back at it again. Go ahead.

Livingston: The other person that was very important as I sat in the backseat—we were talking about different chiefs of staff—was Joan Walters. Donna Fitts, Joan

[12] On July 7-8, 1994, Governor Edgar, then 47, had emergency quadruple-bypass surgery at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Illinois. *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1994. Prior to Edgar's surgery, Kustra had told Edgar he planned to leave government and take a job with WLS radio as a talk show host. For Edgar's description of his surgery and recovery, especially the influence it had on the course of his political career, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 18, 2010, 748-760. Also see, Andy Foster, interview by Mark DePue, July 12, 2010, 41-44; Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 2, 2009, 24-27; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, October 22, 2009, 41-43; Sherry Struck, interview by Mark DePue November 3, 2010, 38-41; Bob Kustra, interview by Mike Czaplicki, January 28, 2011, 17-22, and February 1, 2011, 23-27; Brenda Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 14, 2010, 48-50.

Walters, and Mike Lawrence—if you could get through that wing, you were going to be the national football champion, because they were the anchors of ethics and let's get it right. They didn't care if they offended people sometimes, because they felt that people were too used to self-gratification in terms of how things were in state government and the budgets, and were kidding themselves.

DePue: And I know Joan Walters had the unenviable position of being the budget director in the midst of a budget crisis.

Livingston: Yes. The reason I bring Joan up is that we went out to Wall Street, to the bond houses, in the early nineties with Joan and the governor, and I got to sit in on that, which was unusual for me. Usually I'd be out in the hall, calling, but somehow I got pulled into this. I was struck at how these financial people who I deemed to be fairly—I had this view that they were conservative and spend-within-your-means—to a person, they wanted the governor to raise taxes; "Raise the income tax, or else you're going to get downgraded." We did get downgraded a few times. But it struck me as kind of kinky, because these guys had lavish offices, and one guy had a ponytail. Here we were from the Midwest, trying to change the culture, live within our means, and these guys were blowing that off. I remember we all came away from that with a negative impression, at least I did. And Joan—you know, she was tough. I got to know her better in the second term when I was doing higher ed budgets and stuff.

DePue: We were talking about being the director of scheduling, and we're getting through the timeframe when he's running for governor again, but I want to take a step back and ask you this. Here's my assumption: director of scheduling means you get to stay in Springfield most the time; you're not traveling all the time.

Livingston: Right.

DePue: Does this mean you have a social life?

Livingston: Yes. This means I now had a girlfriend, Casey Engleman, who worked with Steve Schnorf at CMS [Central Management Services] and was in the Bureau of Benefits. She was in charge of employee volunteerism, and she came over to take a picture with the governor early in '91 when I was a travel aide. So I actually met her. She was this cute, short, five-foot little thing, and—

DePue: Was it true what they said, that as a travel aide you wouldn't have a social life?

Livingston: I didn't, because she'll still give me a hard time. We kind of went out on a date or were at a bar, and then I kind of disappeared (laughs) for six months to a year, and she's like, "What the heck?" So she often talks about that year that

I "blew her off." Which I didn't; I just couldn't even tie my shoes. Then when I got to be scheduler, we kind of hung out more, and that turned into much more. We got engaged in December of 1994, after the reelection campaign, and married in 1995, in September, in Chicago. She is Casey Livingston, and we have three kids.

DePue: Great. How did your job change after the election?

Livingston: I felt that I needed to think about after the governorship at that point. It's all good and well to be a good tactician, scheduler, a logistics type, but I felt I needed to develop on the policy side a little bit and settle down. Two years of travel aide and two years of scheduler in a campaign, that's some journeys. So I thought, Let's get my Master's degree, that Master's degree I was going to pursue after a year of working in a campaign. I went out here to UI Springfield, Sangamon State at the time, and got my Master's in public administration part-time from '95 to '97. When I went upstairs, I was given office space in two and a half; I was the last to go upstairs. Everyone else had picked out their coveted agency roles. And again, being Switzerland, I took the approach, Just put me where you need me; this is going to be a good experience.

DePue: I think we need another geography lesson, though—two and a half?

Livingston: Originally the second-floor offices of the executive branch of government were these—

DePue: In the state capitol building.

Livingston: —in the state capitol, thank you. They were these cavernous, ornate offices which had decorative ceiling molds, gold and maroon paint, and everything you would imagine. At some point—I do not know when—the floor was bifurcated. We had the second floor, which is the scheduling, press office; it had some policy people and backdoor access to the governor's private office. Then upstairs, two and a half, is what I would call the middle-management policy people who were liaisons to the agencies and that sort of thing. So I went upstairs to two and a half, per plan, and all these interesting—more high-profile, I'll call them—agencies were taken. Didn't bother me. What was left was transportation and higher education and infrastructure, like the Capital Development Board. So I was made the assistant to the governor for higher education and infrastructure, which is an odd marriage, but it turned out to be a great area of responsibility in the second term of the administration.

DePue: Were you the one who wanted to make the move, or was it Edgar, or kind of a mutual…

Livingston: No, I wanted to. Two years as a scheduler is enough, and I felt that my currency was high, so I asked. I said, "I think we've cultivated some good people; let's keep this moving." So no, Edgar didn't say, "It's time." He saw it as a reward, and I took it as such. It was more money and that sort of thing. Again, I wanted to think about after, and I didn't know what I wanted to do after this point. Broadcasting has now kind of been—my eggs have been scrambled, but I don't know for what purpose. So I go upstairs.

At this point, the Republicans have swept through and won the legislature. And on these many evening flights that I'd had with him, I could tell the governor had long-felt opinions about university governance. We saw a window of opportunity to change the old Board of Regents, which controlled about four universities, and the Board of Governors. It was a system that Edgar, I think, thought put strange bedfellows together. He didn't think the same board should be observing Governor's State and Western. It was odd. He wanted campus-driven stuff. I think also it bugged him that Eastern and Western had the same board.[13]

DePue: I want to reiterate something you mentioned here. I think this is the only two-year window, basically '95 to January '97, that the Republicans controlled both the House and the Senate.

Livingston: That is correct. So there was this period of what was called fast-track legislation in February of 1995; this was going to be the quick strike of things that had been bottled up. The three main bills were the repeal of the Structural Work Act, which was a long-held pursuit by the chambers of commerce and the Illinois manufacturers and such. I don't completely understand it, but it was a big deal when it happened, and it was historic. It had to do with buildings and labor and stuff.

The other was this university governance matter. At that point, about five minutes after I went upstairs to policyland, I got a knock on the door from Ted Sanders, who was the president of SIU, and he wanted to make a move on Sangamon State. He wanted to have that part of the SIU system, dovetailing on the Springfield medical campus and such. And that got us a pretty good head of steam up. I would say those talks began in '94 but were stunted by the campaign. Ted, the governor respected. I don't know how he knew Ted, but Ted was kind of a luminary in higher education. I think he ran a couple of national higher ed organizations. He was recruited in, and Ted and the governor hit it off real well. Stan Ikenberry found out about this. My doorbell rings because I'm the higher ed guy, so I've got the president of the University of Illinois saying, "We want to make this the University of Illinois at Springfield."

[13] Prior to higher education reform, the University of Illinois and Southern Illinois University had their own elected governing boards; the Board of Regents oversaw Illinois State, Northern Illinois, and Sangamon State; and the Board of Governors had Chicago State, Eastern Illinois, Governor's State, Northeastern Illinois, and Western Illinois. For higher ed reform, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, August 30, 2010, 779-790; Kustra, February 1, 2011, 28-32.

DePue: I take it you knew him personally because you were the chief.

Livingston: I did; I knew him personally. This was a strange intersection, again, because it was in a room about this size on two and a half, a windowless room, and I'm sitting there with the government affairs person of the University of Illinois and the president of the university. At that point, Ikenberry is late in his tenure, so he was really respected. After that, he chaired our various things with education, the swap and stuff.[14] He really put the hammer on that. There were some issues—he didn't want the faculty to be able to unionize; he wanted the same rules for Springfield as they had at Urbana and Chicago at the time—and there was a lot of that trouble. I would say that Ikenberry won. They had more resources. Ted's problem was they didn't have the money and the horsepower to gobble it up like University of Illinois did. And I think the board of trustees at Illinois, once they thought they wanted to do this—the board at Southern, and the political establishment down there, weren't behind Ted as much as the University of Illinois community.

January 1, 1996, is when it became effective. My job was to then go out and pick pools of people that were interested in serving on these governing boards, because the other two governing boards, Regents and Governors, were disbanded. They were going to set up staggered terms for each public university. So I had a lot of face time with the governor that year. I thought I wouldn't. I thought I was kind of retiring. He was very good. He really had specific thoughts; he was very engaged in geographic diversity. I mean, it was hard. He would run a left-handed baseball player from—name your place. Chemistry was very important to him, temperament, and we came up with a product which I think he felt very good about.

Of course, this also involved the University of Illinois Board of Trustees. The original bill was to take out the entire board at once and replace it with a new board. Ikenberry had felt that the board over time was getting more politicized. You could get a web page and an issue and get on the U of I board, because by that point, web pages in elective politics were changing. You weren't getting the senior kind of statewide people that had some name recognition and could get elected. So he was a big proponent of that. He was a hard sell. People sued. We didn't get that done. We ended up going to appointed [trustees], but in staggered terms, which was fine with us.

We went through trustee orientation. Jim Edgar's instruction to me was, "Tell them nose in, fingers out. I don't want them meeting with faculty, staff. I don't want them at that level of the university; I want them governing."

DePue: "Nose in, fingers out"?

[14] Reference to Ikenberry's role as chair of a task force appointed by Edgar to investigate school finance reform. The Ikenberry Commission's report provided political cover for Edgar's desire to guarantee a baseline level of per-pupil funding through an increase in state taxes, an increase that would also allow localities to reduce their property tax burden. For Edgar's discussion of this proposal, which he viewed as one of the most significant during his administration, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 2, 2010, 852-880.

Livingston: By the boards. That was his instruction.

DePue: Well, I'm slow on this one. What's the analogy here?

Livingston: He wanted the boards of trustees to be guardians of their institutions, to govern them in terms of policy direction, strategy, hiring good executive leaders as presidents; but at the end of the day, it is the president that is running the university. So we don't want you mingling with the Coca-Cola contract or the mascot, (DePue laughs)—which would later come back to haunt me—or any of that. He felt that there was a role, and it was a line. We had an orientation at the state library just as they were beginning their service, I think late in '95, before service in '96—

DePue: This is something that the governor is very personally interested in, and it's an important piece of legislation that you're working on. And how old are you?

Livingston: I'm shy of thirty. Ninety-five, so I'm about twenty-eight years old. Yeah. But with the hair loss and the stress, you can't tell. Again, back to Switzerland. The worst thing a staff person can do is start cutting their own deals or feathering their own bed, and you do see that. I treated it as though I was an extension of the governor, so when somebody spoke to me about wanting to be on a board, I made it sound like the governor was in the next room genteelly and respectfully taking their information—and he was, eventually—and taking it seriously. The process was the same for everybody, and that was a long process. It was most of 1995.

The other thing we really got heavily involved in was the development of the south campus at the University of Illinois in Chicago. This doesn't sound like much, but at the time this was a big deal. This was the old Maxwell Street, and it had gone downhill. The University of Illinois—by this time, Jim Stukel comes in, and he really wanted it. What he wanted to do is create a special zone where they could act as developer and not go through the Central Management Service to do this. The governor was concerned about this; he was concerned that the Chicago tricksters would get in there and bypass the code. The chancellor at the time was a guy named David Brodsky, who ultimately became president of Bradley University. I think the feeling was that maybe they would do end runs around Brodsky, and there would be corruption. He was concerned that the developers of the world, who he liked, but saw they were pretty slick, would end up giving us problems. So there was a pretty good element on staff that wanted to veto the bill, which bypassed the code.

This is the one time I would say I intervened; I went over to the governor's mansion the day it dropped. I had already typed the message to veto it, but as I typed it, I thought, This does not make sense. This is going to be a bad area for decades to come unless we put the right safeguards in place. I think we ended up AV-ing it and putting safeguards in.[15] It was very

[15] Amendatory veto.

important to Jim Stukel. It was kind of a landmark. He had just been chancellor and done great cities(??) work at the Chicago campus. It was very important to him. Had he not gotten this, I think it would have been a loss for him; it would have been a shaking sort of thing. So I remember talking through the dot points with him [Edgar] at the mansion, in his basement office there.

DePue: The dot points?

Livingston: My talking points on why I thought he should sign the bill or AV the bill. He listened, he looked at me, he said, "Okay," and he signed the bill. I did a duck walk across the lawn to the secretary of state's index department, and I don't think I even used the sidewalks. I had to hide out for a day or two because the rest of the staff—I had done an end run. But as it turned out, that was the right decision because the safeguards were in place; that changed that part of Chicago and then had a bigger impact beyond that. As it turned out, the corruption and things like that did not occur. So I offer that.

The other was the making of Sangamon State into the University of Illinois. That happened at the stroke of midnight on January 1, 1996, as a result of the fast track.

DePue: So it becomes University of Illinois Springfield.

Livingston: In Springfield. All along, over the shouts of concerns by John Maitland, who was the senator from Bloomington. The Illinois State University folks were very concerned that you were going to have a marching band and a football program there. At that point it was only upper division, but Bob Kustra was a champion for making it a four-year university. Bob and John Maitland really went to battle over that. I was the staff person to make that happen, which was a little weird, because I'm a night student at Sangamon State, (DePue laughs) sitting in the middle of the classroom taking notes from the professor and looking around at the walls saying, God, you know, I'm involved in this. This is going to be a change. And that was a little weird, too. I never really announced that; it was just something I thought about.

DePue: What else, then?

Livingston: Transportation. That's when I got to know the freight railroads, which I now work for. The big transportation issues at that point were rebuilding the Kennedy.[16] That's when those reverse lanes—

DePue: Kennedy Expressway.

Livingston: [Dan] Rostenkowski was a big part of that. I was involved in the development of the road plan. But let me back up. Kirk Brown was a super cabinet member.

[16] Brown, 27-28 and 59.

I would not pick one over the other—they were all good—but Kirk was one of the stars.

DePue: He was secretary of the Department of Transportation.

Livingston: Correct, for the full eight years. My job, in my opinion, was to get out of the way and arrange for Kirk and his leadership team—Linda Wheeler and others—to get in to the governor. They were top-notch professionals, and my job was just to get them to things that Kirk wanted to do in the transportation sector. The worst thing I could have been is some other layer.

So big dot points or milestones of that time period. Third airport. I was in the plane with the governor when we got hit by lightning. We were announcing the five-year road program in 1996, and we made the emergency landing in Bloomington and thought we were going to die. Kirk Brown and I were on that flight.[17] We unfortunately had a terrible tragedy when the Fox River Grove Metra train hit a school bus that was over the tracks, killed kids and people. So we looked at policies there. My other assignment was the Capital Development Board. Basically my job was to work with the Bureau of the Budget to release bonds when they were ready—I was more of an administrator there—that the general assembly and the governor had approved.

DePue: Is that part of Thompson's Build Illinois?

Livingston: Yes, or whatever bonding authority. My job was to go in to the governor for the universities and say, "Okay, here's a list of sixty that the Board of Higher Education recommends." The governor himself would go in and arrange the list. If he thought, Gee, I want more community colleges. He felt it was his pick, but that the Board of Higher Education…

DePue: The reason I ask about the bonding authorities—I could be dead wrong on this—I had understood that there were no new bonding initiatives under the Edgar administration.

Livingston: No, there were not. We had capital programs, but they were part of revenues within either the old Build Illinois or what we could do under just regular year-to-year. Which wasn't a lot, I don't think. Joan would know more. But no, we did not have an Illinois FIRST or a Build Illinois. There were some complaints about that. In fact, in the middle part of the decade, '95 or '96, we put a capital freeze on. We didn't do any projects—not for budget reasons, but we were in an argument with the legislature, so we didn't pass that. We couldn't come to agreement. The net product of that was, you look at all the graphs, the state's debt remained in check. So there was never a real push to do that. You had people who would grumble about it, but we felt we could do enough in any given year.

[17] Brown, 66-69.

DePue: Tell us about Meigs Field.

Livingston: Yeah, that was an interesting situation.

DePue: Let me preface this as far as I can. Doing a little bit of research here, Mayor Richard M. Daley announced in 1994 he intended to close Meigs Field, which is the airport right downtown.

Livingston: Northerly Island now. Yeah. That's right. We had been on a sequence of things with the mayor that led to conflict. The mayor wanted to put a casino in Grant Park—which I don't think he'd even propose now—early in the nineties. Edgar hesitated—just hesitated; let's hear more. Daley flipped out and said he's anti-Chicago. Daley wanted to put what was called the circulator in the central city, kind of a light rail overhead cable. Hugely expensive. And the governor killed the project. Third airport, the governor signed on with Evan Bayh to do a project, but it took power away from O'Hare.[18] Daley didn't like that, and that went away. In fact, they were going to close Midway Airport.

DePue: Was that the Peotone discussion at the time?

Livingston: That was the Lake Calumet discussion. The Lake Calumet Airport would have forced the closure of Midway, and that was a viable, serious—they were like, "What's the big deal?" So Meigs Field was the end of that string of conflict that was building. People don't realize this: when they first came in, they were buddies. Daley was the state's attorney, Edgar was secretary of state; they were both friends of law enforcement. They're about the same age. They got along. They were coming into power at the same time. The one thing I've heard since that drove Daley nuts about Edgar was, How can you negotiate with somebody who doesn't want anything? That was what Daley said of Edgar. It drove him nuts. Now, I'm not quoting Daley, but it's more people around him that have since (laughs) said it just drove him crazy.

Meigs was very convenient for us. I'll take it at a personal level. We would have meetings at the State of Illinois Center, be able to fly out, and be in Springfield, on the ground, in an hour. It was about an hour flight on a King Air. We would have regular shuttle service to connect Chicago and Springfield, so these planes were full, and it was fairly cost-effective at the time because they were fully seated and there was a process. It just kept things going. It was good.

There were also—as it turns out, more than people ever realized—numbers of businesspeople that would fly into the city and conduct their business, first responder landing or helicopter rescue teams. You name it. It was a good piece of infrastructure in our minds. And the mayor said, "We're

[18] Evan Bayh was governor of Indiana at the time. For the politics around airport development in Chicago, see Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, April 23, 2010, 611-615; August 30, 3010, 822-825; September 9, 2010, 933-937; Brown, 60-66; Kanter, December 29, 2009, 49-56.

going to close it." There was never a meeting, we just kind of read about it in the paper. That did not sit well. At first, there was a discussion of what the options were with a guy named Ed Gower, who was the attorney for Kirk Brown; Kirk Brown and myself and the governor; and I'm sure Mike Lawrence or somebody was involved. There were all of these pro-aviation groups that said, If you go on the aviation training site for the United States, this is the first site, Meigs Field. It's an important landmark, iconic thing. There are cities across this country that have been working fifteen years to get what you've got here. Don't tear it out; it generates money, et cetera. To us, Daley seemed really irrational. He was just throwing out numbers. It was personal.

We got into a meeting, and there were options. We got down to basically the bottom of the lakefront was the state's sovereignty, and Northerly Island was fill, so it was kind of a municipal entity. It was an FAA tower, but it rested on the bottom. At first there wasn't a lot of interest in fighting the fight, but it was just kind of, what is this all about? Kirk and Ed went through the options, and they, I think, weren't sure that the governor would pursue a suit. So in a case of reverse psychology, if you will, I said, "Well, Governor, suing is an option, but it doesn't sound like you want to sue." I'm truncating a little bit. He said, "I never said that. I never said I wouldn't bring this to suit." Ed Gower said, "Then let's back up," because we'd already kind of zipped over that option.

That's when that really started. It was a meeting in his Springfield office, big, long board table, and that's when I became the conduit, the liaison, to all the pro-aviation groups—Steve Whitney from Friends of Meigs Field. I was kind of the campaign director, if you will, inside the governor's office, to fight the fight. I still have a picture that they gave me of Meigs Field in all its glory. And we **won!** I remember being given this picture of the first flight into Meigs Field. It had closed. The mayor closed it for about six months, over and out, Meigs, front page, three-inch headlines, and the governor's like, No, we're going to fight this. We had begun, and we ended up winning. I remember thinking, Oh, boy, this might be a little over the top. It was almost kind of like MacArthur landing. (DePue laughs) We come in on this King Air. It's Kirk Brown, Ed Gower, myself, and the governor, and probably the travel aide. We're in the plane, and they gave me this picture—Ed did—that I still have, and there's all the media. We all kind of sit in the plane, the stairs come down, Edgar walks out, and we're looking through the windows. I mean, it's one of these bigger media frenzies. It was just a big story.

I thought, Oh, boy, this is not going to go over well on the fifth floor, but it was the right thing to do. I think Edgar felt that Daley didn't appreciate the fact that Daley was always sending these endless lists, and maybe he had a blind eye to reality, and it was going to be on Edgar's back. It was going to hurt Edgar politically, and he was going to always have to be the bad guy. I think that created tension. They were just culturally different in terms of how they received information.

DePue: You mentioned the fifth floor. I assume you're talking about the—

Livingston: The mayor's office, I'm sorry; city hall in Chicago.

DePue: I also imagine that the draw for the media is, Here's a classic struggle between the two titans of Illinois politics.

Livingston: Yes, yes. You have just reopened a shuttered airport after a fairly public campaign with interest groups and court milestones. I remember watching the news and seeing the King Air coming in, and thinking, Oh, boy. But it was something that was easy for us to defend. It was an asset; it was infrastructure. We weren't in the habit of tearing out infrastructure; we were in the habit of enhancing it. And there was an economic benefit. We never got the real argument, you know. By that time, the original Daley guys, who we could kind of work with, were gone. The Gery Chicos, those types, we could work with. So that was quite a day.

DePue: Let's do a footnote on this as well. Well after the time that Edgar is out of office, Daley is still in office but just announced his retirement. It's a lively race for the new mayor of Chicago. But I'm trying to figure out exactly when it was, what year that was.

Livingston: When it was shuttered?

DePue: March of 2003, perhaps?

Livingston: That's right. There were two milestones in the end of Meigs Field. One was under the tenure of Gov. George Ryan. He wanted to be more friendly—he had a better relationship with Mayor Daley than we did. He cut a deal to keep the airport open, but at the end of a five-year period, it would likely be closed. That was big news. There was a lot of uproar, but it was felt that with the right elements, either George Ryan or Rich Daley may not be there, or something may be different. Then Blagojevich wins. He's sworn into office in January 2003, and in March 2003, now Daley's really got it. He's got the governor's mansion, same-party legislature—it's really shifted. They black out the security camera, bring on city municipal excavating equipment—with the guys standing in the FAA tower, watching; an active, live FAA runway—and X up Meigs Field with seventeen aircraft sitting parked on the taxiway.

DePue: What time of day was it?

Livingston: After hours. It might have been after mid—it was late.

DePue: I always heard middle of the night.

Livingston: Yeah, I think it was middle of the night. We were well out of office by then, but I shook my head on that one. It's now a park today. I'm not sure how much use it gets; it's kind of hit or miss in terms of uses.

DePue: What other things were you involved in, in this policy position?

Livingston: That triumvirate of infrastructure, higher ed, and transportation kept me plenty busy. I did that for four years. The development of the Orange Line; the extensions of Metra out to Antioch and places like that—they continued to grow. The Alton River Bridge was a big deal, across the Mississippi River. You think of those kinds of projects.

The other thing I didn't mention, which others can, was a big deal in 1993 and had transportation and infrastructure impacts later: the great Mississippi flood of 1993. I think that was a real situation where the governor could look like a governor and shine. Because he was such a precision-oriented guy, the response and execution to the flood was highly regarded by the public and the media. So by the time I was on transportation staff, we were having to rebuild things and levees. That was a monster flood. A tornado comes through—it's terrible, it knocks everything over, but next day it's sixty-five degrees and sunny. The hard part about the flood was this thing just hung out there, with mold and it didn't recede for months and months. Then it would rain again and go up.

DePue: Did you have any involvement with the issue of Medical District of Chicago?

Livingston: Yeah. When I left the governor's office, I was their executive director. I really didn't have that agency under my purview when I was in the governor's office. My history with the Medical District is that my grandfather wrote the bill, with Alderman Vito Marzullo on the West Side, to create the Medical District in 1941. It was very forward-reaching. It was kind of in the Robert Moses, New York, Port Authority sort of model. It basically gave the district overlay zoning and economic development powers above Chicago's. The city had to come to us to do things around the major medical centers on the Near West Side—UIC and Rush. So I didn't work with them. While he was in office, Edgar did give the Medical District 40 million dollars to completely transform what was a torn-up area. Now it's office buildings, and it's very nice—kind of a sister project to the UIC south campus, just further west. Of course, that area then completely gentrified, and it's diverse, but it's real nice now.

DePue: We're getting close to the end of the interview. I think both of us have places we need to go here. But just a couple of quick things. You had alluded earlier to the agonizing process that Edgar and his inner team went through in trying to decide what he wanted to do after that second term. Were you involved with that at all?

Livingston: No. By the time the *Meeting the Challenge* book was being put together and that decision, I was in policyland, I was doing his bidding, and I was looking to the next horizon. I was going to move on, even if he went for a third term, and try to, quite frankly, take advantage of knowing a governor, whether it was at the Medical District or in the private sector.

DePue: So you'd already decided not to be part of the third term if he did that?

Livingston: Yeah, I thought that was going to be healthy, just because I think sometimes you can stay on too long. You get a little older and they say, "Well, you've never had private sector experience." What I was involved with—after he announced—was with the beginning conversations for him to go to the University of Illinois to be at the Institute of Government and Political Affairs. That was kind of a dance in the beginning because we had our roles and responsibilities. I was with him a lot. I don't think he knew what he was going to do. He'd be the best to tell you, but he seemed—

DePue: And again, we had a long conversation with him and several others about that decision process.

Livingston: I can't add to that, other than after that point—another intersection with history—that bill comes up to make Chief Illiniwek the official mascot of the University of Illinois. I was on the team that said we can't. I'd love to do it; I'd love to do that; I'd love to make that the law of the land. I believe in it. But I work for Jim Edgar; he has a strict belief, which I have adhered to, about governance with the board of trustees. So we amendatorially vetoed it and watered it down, in essence. I'm sure that was a surprise to some people that were friendly, but anyway… That was just another trivia spot where life intersected. But then we began meeting with Sylvia and Sam to become part of the IGPA after the Governorship. The University of Illinois and Sam Gove and Chancellor Sylvia Manning. Sam Gove was the emeritus director of the institute; I believe the building's named after him.

DePue: He just passed away a couple of weeks ago.

Livingston: That's my understanding. He was critical. He was also one of those titans of the Edgar years, because both he and Kustra served as young men under Sam Gove. Kustra was an intern, and Edgar just knew him well.

DePue: Well, Sam Gove was part of that process when Edgar became an intern himself, then started working for Russ Arrington.

Livingston: Yeah. Sam was at that bowl party in Tampa when I first—you know, there were these intersections—and he was there at the end. I was happy for the governor that that worked out. I thought that was a good fit.

DePue: This is quite a change of discussion for us, but you knew the governor very well by virtue of traveling with him for two years and then being his scheduler for a couple more years. What did you think about the MSI scandal that swirled around the governor?

Livingston: It really never impacted the operations of the governor's office. I've seen the prosecutor's office since then, and once these things come in, everything seems to shut down, and maybe it should. But Edgar was Edgar, so the end result of MSI was that the guy six or seven levels below Edgar at the agency gets acquitted on all eleven counts. They don't even get the **first** guy in that. What was his name? I can't remember his name. I was with the governor in Hong Kong when the ruling came out, and I got a call from Gene Reineke saying that—

DePue: He was then the chief of staff.

Livingston: He was the chief of staff, and he said this guy—whose name escapes me in, Public Aid [Jim Berger, deputy director of Public Aid]—innocent on all eleven counts.[19] That meant in essence it was the end of it. Of course, even if he was guilty, they would have to go up through. It didn't hit the regular staffers, the regular joes like me, because we just knew that we did it right. We were never taken off of our agenda. We never lost our ability to go to the public. I don't think the public bought it, because Edgar… You could have people that didn't agree with him on issues, but they looked beyond that and looked at the character and the man.

DePue: Did you ever get the sense that Edgar himself was distracted by it, looking over his shoulder?

Livingston: Only when he had to go testify. I think he had to testify. You know, that was—but no, he never really. The second term, his polls were good, he was feeling good. I never saw it. I think who it affected was Andy Foster and Sherry Struck. I think they were concerned about the governor. And Gene. I credit those three for supporting the governor, personally and professionally, keeping the rest of us sleeping at night and doing our jobs.

DePue: Okay. Let's very briefly give you an opportunity to talk about what happened to you after you got out of the Edgar administration.

Livingston: After I literally helped the governor; I was at the mansion as he was shutting it down. I note I'm one of the few that went the full eight years. I said goodbye to him that morning. I didn't go to the inauguration. I drove up to Chicago and had a four o'clock meeting at the Illinois Medical District Commission, where I was the new executive director. The Medical District is a 560-acre commission appointed by the governor of Illinois, the mayor of Chicago, and the Cook County Board President. The board is seven members. So I was

[19] James Berger, former deputy director of the Department of Public Aid.

going into a whole other realm. As I mentioned, it was written by my grandfather. I was heading to another private sector job, and my predecessor, who was my uncle, David Livingston, had died of prostate cancer. There was a bit of a vacuum. I don't know if it was like a Kennedy thing or what. But they wanted somebody with a Master's degree, who knew state government. I was a little hesitant because it was like off and on we had been there, and I thought, Gee, I want to go out on my own. But this was a good opportunity to be a director of a manageable assignment. I did it for four and a half years. I loved it.

The opportunity at CSX came along, and I said, You know what? This is a good time to move. I'm still friendly with the commissioners that are still there. And now I'm with CSX Transportation. CSX is the largest East Coast U.S. freight railroad. I do their government affairs; I have assignments at different agencies and governments, and then in the company, other private sector sort of stuff.

DePue: A couple wrap-up questions for you, then, Tom. How much did your life change because of that fateful meeting where you were talking about drunk driving?

Livingston: Oh, I can't even… Yeah. (pause)

DePue: You proud about your involvement?

Livingston: Yeah.

DePue: What is it that you look with the most pride?

Livingston: Whoo, boy, you're good. I never lost my principles. I was consistent. I was consistent from the first backseat adventure in Tampa when he's governor-elect, to shaking hands, saying goodbye at the governor's mansion eight years later, having served. So I'm most proud of the consistency, the fact that I never lost a wink of sleep about anything I had to do or anything I did, and that I was able to then move on. I'm chairman of the Civic Federation of Chicago; in some ways, I consider my service now a reflection back on the Edgar administration. If I'm doing good things in my community and my public, that's what Jim Edgar would want. He wouldn't want it in a flashy way, but a meaningful, public service-oriented way. So I'm proud of that.

DePue: Thirteen years removed from the end of his administration, what's your assessment of Jim Edgar today?

Livingston: Now more than ever, I guess. I don't have a good read on it other than it's instructive of what's happened in state government since then, in terms of loose budgets, drifting away from the facts, keeping boundaries. I think Jim Edgar established important fiscal and philosophical boundaries in state government that made it an affordable but effective government. I think

Blagojevich turned left, put the foot on the gas, and drove through boundaries for personal reasons, and it damaged the institution of government and the governor's office. So I reflect with the arc of history that Edgar had those boundaries. He could be innovative, but that was important to do. He was a great governor.

DePue: A great governor. Not just a good governor, a great governor?

Livingston: Other people's words, not mine. I'm the repeater in there. I felt he was a great governor, but I'm not the best judge of that; I was too close to it. But there isn't a month that passes without people, if they know I worked for the governor, pulling me aside, and they're either mad he's not running or they say, "Boy, I really appreciate him." Some probably voted against him, but over time, I think, they appreciate his style and what he had to face and how he faced it.

DePue: Any final words then, Tom?

Livingston: Thank you. Edgar is a student of history, and he would appreciate this effort in terms of collecting the information. So I'm happy to be a part of it.

DePue: It's been fun talking to you because we get these insights that we don't necessarily get from the people who have higher name recognition.

Livingston: Yeah. Well, I've always kept a low profile and kept it real.

DePue: Thank you very much, Tom.

Livingston: Thank you, Mark.

(end of interview)