

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Tyrone C. Fahner
Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft – Jim Thompson Oral History project
Interview # IST-A-L-2015-019

Ty Fahner, Gov. Jim Thompson's director of law enforcement from 1977 to 1979 and Illinois attorney general from 1980 to 1983, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft – Jim Thompson* oral history project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: March 19, April 13, April 16, April 29, May 4, and May 5, 2015

Location: Mayer Brown, 71 S. Wacker Drive #45, Chicago, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mike Czaplicki, ALPLM project historian

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:45 + 2:24 + 2:54 + 1:59 + 2:35 + 2:10/1.75 + 2.40 + 2.90 + 1.98 + 2.58 + 2.17 = 13.78 hrs.

Session 1: Ty's upbringing in 1950s Detroit, and his education during the 1960s.

Session 2: Working as a prosecutor for U.S. attorney Jim Thompson.

Session 3: Joining Governor Thompson's cabinet as director of law enforcement.

Session 4: Life in the Thompson administration from 1977 to 1979.

Session 5: Serving as the attorney general of Illinois, 1980-Jan 1983.

Session 6: Investigating the Chicago Tylenol murders during the 1982 campaign.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on October 22, 2015.

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

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Abstract

Tyrone C. Fahner, *Illinois Statecraft*, IST-A-L-2015-019

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Tyrone C. Fahner was born in Detroit on November 18, 1942, to Warren and Alma (Newman) Fahner. Warren worked for Chrysler, and Alma was a telephone operator for Michigan Bell. Instilled with his parents' work ethic, Fahner worked a series of blue-collar jobs as a teenager, including Leonard gas station, Belle Island stables, and Hoover Tool & Die. After graduating from Denby High School in 1961, he enrolled at the University of Michigan, where Linda Reuther and radical student leader Tom Hayden were classmates. Decidedly anti-radical, Fahner's campus life centered on the Delta Tau Delta fraternity, working to finance his education, and wooing his future wife, Anne.

Fahner attended Wayne State University for law school, graduating in 1968, then earned his LLM from Northwestern University Law's prosecution and defense program in 1971. Jim Thompson and Joel Flaum ran the latter program, and it was here that he caught Thompson's eye; after a brief stint in private practice, Fahner joined the U.S. attorney's office for the Northern District of Illinois. Although William Bauer headed the office, Thompson was his first assistant and heir apparent. From 1971 to 1975, Fahner was a key member of what the press called Thompson's Kiddie Corps—a group of young prosecutors who focused on rooting out corruption, especially in Chicago—and successfully prosecuted Mayor Richard J. Daley's floor leader in the city council, Alderman Thomas Keane.

Fahner left the U.S. attorney's office in 1975 to again try his hand at private practice, but Thompson asked him to join his administration after winning the 1976 gubernatorial election. He came on board in 1977 to implement Thompson's reorganization of state policing agencies as director of law enforcement. He served as director until 1979, when he again left for the private sector, only to return to state government in 1980 after Thompson named him attorney general to fill the vacancy caused by Bill Scott's conviction for tax evasion.

Standing for election in 1982, Fahner juggled his campaign at the same time he was heading a major multiagency investigation into the murder of seven people by someone who placed Tylenol pain medication laced cyanide on store shelves in the Chicago area. Defeated by Neil Hartigan, Fahner returned to the law firm of Mayer Brown, where he ultimately rose to the chairmanship.

In this interview, Fahner discusses growing up in Detroit, major events of the 1960s and early 1970s, campus life at the University of Michigan, prosecuting corruption in Chicago in the early 1970s, his role in the Thompson administration and relationships among the staff, Thompson's leadership, the constitutional role of the attorney general in Illinois, and the 1982 Chicago Tylenol murders. He was especially insightful on the workings of the U.S. attorney's office under Thompson and law enforcement-related issues during Thompson's first and second terms as governor.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Tyrone "Ty" Fahner; Illinois attorney general; corruption in Chicago; James R. Thompson; Kiddie Corps; Illinois Department of Law Enforcement; staff relations, Thompson administration; Tylenol scare of 1982; prosecution and defense program, Northwestern University School of Law; Class X; Neil Hartigan.

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

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