Interview with Phil Rock

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Interview # 1: September 17, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

A Note to the Reader

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DePue: Today is Friday, September 17, 2010. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I have the opportunity to interview Sen. Phil Rock. Good morning, Senator.

Rock: Good morning.

DePue: This is part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project. For other people of your stature, we have done pretty extensive interviewing, and we certainly plan to for some in the future as well. Your case is a little bit different because Ed Wojcicki of University of Illinois at Springfield has done a major series with you already, so our focus is going to be almost exclusively on your relationship with Secretary of State, and then Governor, Jim Edgar. I appreciate your taking time out of your very busy schedule. I understand we have some time limits to deal with, and we will certainly try to honor those. Just very briefly, tell us when and where you were born, and then we'll take it from there.

Rock: Born in 1937 in the city of Chicago, a little hospital on the West Side called Saint Anne's.

DePue: Did you grow up in Chicago, then?

Rock: Was born and raised, yes, in Chicago. Went to a private school, Catholic school, all my academic career in high school and grammar school.

DePue: It looks like you were a very young man, then, when you were first elected to the Illinois Senate. That was in 1970?

Rock: Nineteen seventy was my first election to the Illinois Senate, and yes, I had the opportunity to replace one of the old lions from the Senate: Thomas Arthur McGloon was the minority leader of the Senate when he decided to step down, and he asked me to take his spot in the Senate.

DePue: What district was that?

Rock: At that time, that was the Eighteenth District. As you know, in those first early elections, the districts ran across county lines—they don't do it anymore—so my district was in part the west side of the city of Chicago and the eastern part of the suburban community, Oak Park, Elmwood Park. I'm trying to think what else was in there, because the district was pretty large.

The following election was the first election where the cartographers, the people who drew the map, separated out the city of Chicago and the rest of the suburban community.

DePue: That would have been following the census of 1970 and the result of the redistricting, then.

Rock: Um-hm.

DePue: This is an inevitable question, but Mayor Richard J. Daley was in power at that time. What was your relationship like with Mayor Daley?

Rock: When the local representative and Senate committee picked an individual or a couple of individuals to run for empty seats, I was lucky to be chosen to run for the Senate seat. My partner in all this was Michael Madigan. Mike and I were picked on the same day and went through the routine on the same day—the routine being, frankly—we walked up to the mayor's office and introduced ourselves and had a nice chat with the mayor. The mayor kind of gave us a little talk about what he expected, as the leader of the party, from those who ran under the Democratic label. He was quite charming and quite bright in terms of what politically it meant that we were now chopped into little pieces as opposed to having a big district. So it was quite an interesting time.

DePue: Was that the first opportunity you had to meet the mayor?

Rock: Yes. I had met him in a couple of social situations, but just a handshake and a move-along.

DePue: I know that Mike Madigan and the mayor's son, Richard M. Daley, were both delegates to the Constitutional Convention. You were not a member of the delegation, were you?

Rock: I was not a member of the delegation.

DePue: Had you had any political office before being elected to the Senate in 1970?

Rock: No, no, that was my first elected political office. I did attempt to become part of the Constitutional Convention; given the gerrymandering that went on, there simply wasn't room. We had to have so many of one ethnic group and so many of another, and then you had to follow the geographic lines to be true to the map that was drawn. So the competition was heavy.

DePue: It looks like you moved up very quickly once you got to the Illinois Senate. You were selected [as assistant minority leader] after the '72 election; I take it you had one of those truncated terms those first two years?

Rock: Correct.

DePue: And then you ran for a four-year term in '72?

Rock: Yeah, we ran for two and then finally had a four.

DePue: But you were selected as assistant minority leader already by 1973.

Rock: Yes. I was fortunate that the opportunity arose to assume one of the command seats, one of the leader seats, and I readily went after it.

DePue: Who were the majority and the minority leaders at that time, then?

Rock: Initially when I got into office Russell Arrington was the Republican leader.

DePue: But he had had his stroke by '73.

Rock: He had a stroke by '73, and it left him pretty well incapacitated. Tragic loss for the state.

DePue: Did you get a chance to work with him some in those first two years?

Rock: Yeah. Just, just a little bit, a few months.

DePue: Well, he was from the opponents' party—he was definitely a Republican—but tell us what your impressions of Russell Arrington were.

Rock: Russell Arrington was a great fan of the legislative process—a great fan of government, as a matter of fact—and was as able a politician as I've ever met. He was on top of it all the time—knew the issues, knew the people, knew the

consequences of the issues. He was quite something—a great example for those of us who were a little younger.

DePue: Having said that he was the most able politician when you've dealt with both Daleys, with Michael Madigan, with George Ryan, Jim Thompson, Jim Edgar—you still put him in that category?

Rock: Well, I don't mean to do it in an exclusionary sense. There were others who were equally or better qualified. I'm just saying for sure that Russell Arrington was one of the top politicians that I ever met.

DePue: Cecil Partee: he would have been the minority leader and then the Senate president in '75 and '76. Tell us your thoughts about Cecil Partee. Did I say the name right?

Rock: Cecil Partee is correct. In 1975, I think, it was the first time that a Democrat got elected to the presidency of the Senate, and Cecil Partee was the winner. It was quite a joyous day when he was selected as the Senate president. I can remember his mother was there—she was quite elderly—and quite a few of his family were there; it was really quite a happy day for Democrats in Illinois.

DePue: Did you have an opportunity in those early years, perhaps while Jim Edgar was working on Arrington's staff, to meet the future governor?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: What were your first impressions of him?

Rock: That he was a very smart young man in terms of his staff duties and very dedicated. We used to meet and talk from time to time, just as you do in the ordinary course of business. We had some legislation we were working on in common. He was in those days kind of easier to work with. He wasn't quite so hidebound. He got a little testy in the later years, but when he was working for Russ Arrington, he was a model staff guy and a good one.

DePue: Did you see any ambition in him or desire for a higher office at that time?

Rock: It wasn't that apparent. I think most of us that go to Springfield harbor some thoughts of higher office or even leadership offices, but he didn't strike me that way. He knew what he was about, and he was busy with what he was about and wasn't looking that far ahead, or looking into the future while ignoring the past.

DePue: Moving right along here, '77, Thomas Hynes, is elected as the Senate president. I assume by that time you're the assistant majority leader—would that be the proper title at that time?

Rock: I was the majority leader. Tom was elected. As you recall, it was a very contested election. We went through seventy-nine ballots. We obviously had an intramural

fracas in our caucus; we couldn't agree, so the roll calls just kept coming. I guess they were trying to wear us down.

DePue: In talking to Governor Edgar about this incident, he suggested that Hynes was selected ultimately because he was closer to Daley. Would you characterize it the same way?

Rock: I think it was pretty plain that he had the support of the mayor, and that meant a great deal.

DePue: What had happened in your relationship with the mayor in the interim period?

Rock: I think the relationship was still good, respectful on both sides, but he had made a choice that Tom Hynes was his horse, and he was going to ride it. I have held no ill will about that; that's the business, (laughs) that's the name of this game.

DePue: It was about that time that David Shapiro was the Republican minority leader as well. How would you characterize your relationship with him?

Rock: He was one of the most gentlemanly gentlemen I've ever met in the business. He was a very knowledgeable member of the Senate, did his homework, always very polite, very engaging with the other members. They all liked him. He got along with virtually everybody. A very able guy—quiet, soft-spoken, but you always knew he was there because he always had something good to relate to the crowd.

DePue: This would be about the same time period—April of 1979 to January of 1981—that Jim Thompson surprised a lot of people and picked Jim Edgar to be his legislative liaison officer. Were you surprised by that pick?

Rock: No, I was not. We had heard about it on the Democratic side.

DePue: Of course, he was in the House at the time he was selected for that.

Rock: Right, right. He was the House chief of staff, and everybody kind of expected that if there was going to be a move, he would move over. So it was no real surprise, and I think probably good for the institution.

DePue: As one of the leaders in the Senate, you would have had an awful lot of opportunity to work with Edgar and his lieutenants, those other people in the office who were representing Governor Thompson at the time. Tell me about that period of time in your relationship with him.

Rock: Yeah, that was kind of a tradition in the Illinois general assembly, that the staff people for the leadership of one party or house would welcome a meeting with the staff of the other house or the other party. I mean, it was kind of a reciprocal understanding that the information would be shared with the staff as best they could or as best for the interest of what they were doing, and it worked out very well. Staff people have a tendency to talk in a little more trenchant way; they move

through the issues as opposed to a lot of hail-fellow-well-met, shake hands and all that. They just did their business and they were out, and it worked out very well.

DePue: That's definitely the reputation that Jim Edgar had at that time and still has, that he was generally all about business and not necessarily good at the political schmoozing side of things, if you can say it that way.

Rock: Yeah, I think that's a fair statement, and not a bad one. He had a job, and he did it.

DePue: The impression I got from talking to him about this period was he spent a lot more time working with the House—working with Madigan, working with George Ryan, those two people in particular—than he did with the Senate. Would that be a fair characterization as well, as you recall?

Rock: I think so. Yes. That form of reporting, if you will, that form of informing, was better liked by the House people than it was by the Senate people. Just one of those quirks, nothing personal. The House just felt more comfortable talking about and getting used to the staff that they were working with.

DePue: This is the time period that Thompson is the governor. Now, you got there when Ogilvie was governor, but then you got Dan Walker, who most would characterize his relationship with the legislature as rather chilly. (Rock laughs) Most have characterized Thompson's style of working with the legislature as much more intimate. Was Thompson one who would come down and visit the Senate?

Rock: Yes, at a moment's notice, a drop of the hat. He would love to come down and visit. He was a visiting guy.

DePue: Do you recall any anecdotes that would illustrate that?

Rock: No, just he was easy to get along with. Didn't visit just for the sake of visiting; he had a purpose in mind, always did. May not have been apparent when he walked in, but pretty soon he got around to business as to what he wanted to talk about. And he was very effective at it, very effective at it.

DePue: So you have the governor himself coming down to the floor of the House, and the Senate in your case, and you have Jim Edgar and a couple of the other assistants coming there as well. Was that an effective team? Did Edgar reflect and do the bidding of the governor in an efficient way?

Rock: Yes, yes, he was a very efficient young man and knew the bounds beyond which he ought not step. He was well schooled in the art of trying to bring the other party around.

DePue: When you say he knew the bounds, what exactly do you mean? Are there some examples you can give of that?

Rock: When you get into that other office or when you're in that situation where you're part of a bigger crowd talking about legislation, you're a little careful as to what you say and how you say it and to whom you say it. He was very good at that.

DePue: He was more careful, or you were more careful, or going both directions?

Rock: Yeah, I think both directions. I was certainly more careful, and I know he was. It was just… It wasn't our place yet to come up with a final solution.

DePue: How about your perception of him and his political future. By that time, did you think that here was a guy who had ambitions to go much higher?

Rock: I would say to the extent that anybody paid attention—and you didn't always pay attention to what each and every member was doing or what they were contemplating with their own districts and their own future—but I think it's fair to say that people kind of expected that Jim would run for office. He had acquitted himself very well with the staff function—knew the issues, got to know a number of the members, and was a natural.

DePue: I've had extensive conversation with Governor Edgar. I'd like to read you a couple quotes that deal specifically with you. Here's one: "Phil Rock was well known for sitting down and having drinks. They'd sit down and they'd solve problems." Do you think that's an accurate characterization of yourself?

Rock: To sit down and solve the problem, yes. The drinks were a beer once in a while.

DePue: Of course, this is coming from a guy who is well known for not drinking at all.

Rock: (laughs) That's right.

DePue: Do you think because he wasn't social in that respect—he wasn't the kind of person who would hit the bars with the other legislators in the evening and work that way—

Rock: No, I think there's more to it than that. I'm not quite sure what his religious bent is, but obviously it does not seem to include the alcohol.[1] Some of the members, yes, they walked out of the building into the nearest bar, had a beer with their friends, and then kept going, but Jim didn't do that. I think people respected him for that. They recognized that. When he got to the mansion, it was certainly obvious, and nobody quarreled with it.

DePue: You don't think that affected his ability to do his job as a legislative liaison, then?

Rock: No, I do not. I think people respected his views and let him go.

[1] Edgar is an American Baptist. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 17-20. 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.

DePue: I mentioned he spent more time dealing with the House—George Ryan in particular, but also Madigan, obviously. Here's how he characterized the Senate leadership, yourself and Shapiro: "On the Senate side you had Phil Rock, who was a prince of a guy, and Doc Shapiro, who was a prince of a guy." Then he had this qualifier here, and this is really what I want you to respond to: "Neither one of them could deliver that many votes."[2]

Rock: "Neither one of them could deliver that many votes"? "That many" being some significant number, I assume.

DePue: Yeah.

Rock: Well, I would have to disagree with that, because the record will show that I did it more than once—delivered the votes, I mean. But again, that points out the fact that he had a different modus operandi than either me or Dave Shapiro. Dave was not a headhunter, was not a vote-getter. Able guy, knew the facts, knew the law, was very, very good, but just didn't get involved in the fray the way some others did.

DePue: I don't want to read too much into this statement that he made here in this quote, but some of it sound to me like it's making the inevitable comparison with the way the House works—especially with Mike Madigan—and what's going on in the Senate. What would your understanding be of the control that Mike Madigan had in the House at that time?

Rock: It was not anywhere near as strong as it is today, certainly, or it was yesterday, but it was there, there's no doubt about it. Mike Madigan was all business—is all business.

DePue: Let me back up. In 1981, Edgar is selected by then-Governor Thompson to be the secretary of state. He doesn't have to go through the election process, because I believe Dixon gets elected to the Senate and leaves the position of secretary of state, so that gives Thompson an ability to pick a very young Jim Edgar to be secretary of state. Were you surprised by that move?

Rock: Yes, and I think a lot of people were. They really expected kind of one of the old warhorses to receive his natural tribute and have a run at the secretary's office.

DePue: The name that has always come up is George Ryan. Was that who you thought should have been or would have been the natural candidate?

Rock: Yeah, should have been, I think, yes.

DePue: Why?

[2] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 287.

Rock: He knew the system, he knew the people, highly regarded, easy to cross the lines to talk to the others. He just had all the moves. He had been a longtime county board member, House member. He was all over the place, and doing it well.

DePue: Would it be fair to say that you would have preferred George Ryan as secretary of state at the time?

Rock: I had no preference, because I was (laughs) absolutely without any power to do anything about it. That's an exercise that I don't need—didn't need.

DePue: Were there any other candidates you thought might have been in the running as well?

Rock: I'd have to look back now. No, I don't recall any.

DePue: Once Edgar got into the position of secretary of state, many people have characterized his policy positions and his legislative agenda to be untraditional for the secretary of state, primarily because of his aggressively going after DUI cases and other things. So let me start by asking you this: right from the beginning, he was pushing an agenda to tighten up and streamline the processing of DUI cases. How effective was he in working with the legislature in this new role as secretary of state?

Rock: I would give him a fair to middle… The regimen that he was postulating was not popular.[3] The members didn't like it. They didn't trust it. It was too hard-nosed for…

DePue: Democrats, Republicans, both sides?

Rock: Both sides. That's one of those issues that crosses party lines; you don't know where people are. But he made an effort to sell it. He spent a good deal of time in my office with my staff, spent a good deal of time in Mike's office, and a good deal of time with the others. The first couple of times, it failed; couldn't get it done. There was kind of an unholy, uneasy alliance between some of the House and Senate members where they didn't want any part of it.

DePue: Where were you personally with the issue of tightening up on DUI?

Rock: Where was I? I was in favor of it. I had been the chief prosecutor of the traffic court of the city of Chicago, for the county of Cook, so I was perhaps a little more familiar with the workings of the system, and the outcomes that should have happened and sometimes didn't.

DePue: Was that one of the issues that was harder to, shall we say, impose some party discipline in terms of how the members were voting?

[3] For his discussion of DUI reform and the importance of generating public pressure on legislators, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 15 2009, 349-358.

Rock: Yes. Yeah, the members didn't look on that as a party position at all. That was kind of a constituent response.

DePue: Did geography play a role? Did the city Democrats tend to vote differently than the downstate Democrats, for example?

Rock: No, surprisingly enough, I think that was a shared vote. By virtue of that roll call, you couldn't tell who was where.

DePue: Another issue happened during this timeframe that I'm sure you remember. There had been an ongoing fight over the Equal Rights Amendment—

Rock: Oh, yeah.

DePue: —all the way back from '72, but it really came to a head in 1982 when that was the last effort the pro-ERA forces saw in being able to push it through. Illinois was identified as a crucial state, so downtown Springfield became something of a battle zone, and—

Rock: What was the name of that lady? She was very tough.

DePue: Phyllis Schlafly?

Rock: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: Yeah, she was a very prominent person, head of the Stop ERA movement.

Rock: Right. Spent a lot of time in Springfield.

DePue: Did she spend some time in your office?

Rock: Getting nowhere with me, so no. I was very polite, always welcome—"Come visit us"—but I said, "I can't support your…"

DePue: The reason I mention this in terms of a conversation about Secretary of State Edgar, is the secretary of state is responsible for the security and the maintenance of the capitol building, and so much of this was going on in the capitol building.[4] May I ask you your position on equal rights, before we go into some of the specifics, at that time?

Rock: I was in favor of, yeah.

DePue: And as the Senate leader, you had led the charge to pass this on successive times?

Rock: Right.

DePue: What was the problem with getting passage, as you saw it?

[4] Jim Edgar, June 15, 2009, 369-370.

Rock: That the constituency in some districts just simply didn't—their attitude was almost twofold. One, it was viewed almost like seatbelts: Leave us alone. It's my car; I drive it the way I want to drive it; stay away from me. Same with a drink or two: my business, my constituents' business, not your business. Government should stay out of this. The feelings were pretty strong.

DePue: Was this another one of those issues where it wasn't a traditional party line vote?

Rock: It was not a traditional party line vote because the party as such, both big parties, (laughs) didn't want to get involved in it. It was too messy. It was like gun control, or seatbelts in the truck and that kind of stuff. It was a hot potato, and they didn't want to touch it.

DePue: But you had to touch it from '72 every single year up to '82, didn't you?

Rock: Yeah, yeah, darn near. You'll notice if you go back and read, a couple of times it happened real early in the session, just boom-boom. The bill was on the floor before they knew it—out of committee, on the floor, subject to a vote, and the vote killed it—and they just sat down and went, "Whew, okay, let's move on; get rid of the thing."

DePue: A lot of the discussion each year seemed to start with a discussion: Okay, should we pass this important amendment on a three-fifths vote or a standard majority vote?

Rock: Right.

DePue: The three-fifths requirement stayed through the entire debate. Why was there reluctance to change that rule?

Rock: That was a position taken by the anti- people. They set out their parameters, what they could go for maybe, but one thing they would not go for was the change in the rule to make the rule less stringent in terms of ultimate passage. I think that was due in large part to Phyllis Schlafly's influence. She explained that all these ladies and women that were down there supporting her and her cause said, "This is very important; we have to keep that vote there." And they did it.

DePue: What was your particular position on changing the three-fifths requirement?

Rock: I voted to change it. As a matter of fact, not six months ago, a guy sent me a transcript. He had been going through some files and he found a transcript where I was arguing with Giddy Dyer. I don't know if you remember Giddy. She looked like everybody's housewife, everybody's grandma, and she was arguing like hell about the three-fifths vote. So they pitted me against her to argue this point. (laughs) I said, "Giddy, relax, will you?" But she was intense, and it was reflective of what was going on around her. The three-fifths vote frankly took on a life of its own and a life, in my opinion, that it didn't deserve. It really didn't. It wasn't that big a deal.

DePue: But if they had been successful and changed the three-fifth rule to a simple majority…

Rock: Then we would have been in court, yeah.

DePue: It would have been in court, but assuming it would have been successful, ERA would have passed in Illinois.

Rock: Well, ERA with the rule would have passed, probably, and then they'd have been in court. So.

DePue: The reason I brought the ERA issue up is because, again, Secretary of State Edgar was in charge of the building. In 1982, a series of things happened where Illinois was the battleground for the entire country; a lot of women were coming from across the country to protest. There was a six-thousand-person march in Springfield that year, and there was a thirty-seven-day hunger strike.

Rock: And we had the ladies chained to the podium—or they chained themselves to the podium.

DePue: And that was inside the capitol building, so that gets to the issue of now the head cop for the building, you could say, is Secretary of State Edgar. How do you think he acquitted himself dealing with those particular issues, the chaining of the women to the—

Rock: I'm not sure that anybody really scrutinized what he was doing. It was very dramatic with the handcuffs around the podium, the six of them; they were looking up at me, and I kept telling them, "Just relax. Don't get yourself upset." I said, "We'll go in the office afterwards and talk and see if we can plow some ground here." Oh, they just kept right on chugging. And then later on, of course, they threw blood on the capitol lawn, which didn't endear them to their people.

DePue: Well, as I remember, they spilled the blood right outside the Senate chambers, and that was after the final defeat of the bill. So you don't recall any of the specific actions that were taken to remove the women from the capitol?

Rock: The only thing I recall is we had a meeting after the session. I cautioned, and I think Jim listened, because he didn't quite know what to do with this, and understandably. Nobody did. These are citizens, for Christ's sake; what are you going to do with them? We had a meeting in my office, and it was being discussed as to how we were going to handle this situation. These people were chained to the podium, and they're still there, and they're a pain in the neck, and so forth and so on. Finally decided to have an early morning wakeup call and off to jail. Pretty much what they did, so no spectators around, no citizens that could get hurt or get involved. It was just the police effort; the police marched in, got all six of them by the hand, and walked them into jail. And it worked out fine.

DePue: The next issue that I'm sure that Secretary of State Edgar was pushing hard through the legislature happened towards the end of his time as secretary of state, and that was mandatory auto insurance for all drivers in Illinois. Did that work its way out the same way that tightening up DUI did? Was that a popular or an unpopular issue for those in the legislature to deal with?

Rock: I think more popular than unpopular. It started out years ago—sixteen, seventeen years earlier—but they couldn't pass it. The insurance industry was much, much too important and powerful. Over the years, nobody got too excited anymore, and so final passage was a piece of cake.

DePue: Was Edgar more successful in that effort to work with the legislature to get the bill that he was shooting for?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: Than he was for the DUI case?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: Was there some maturity in him as a politician to do that, you think, or it's just the issue?

Rock: I think the issue. The issue lent itself, and again, it had been in the mix every year for sixteen or seventeen years and failed.

DePue: Nineteen eighty-nine, then, Jim Thompson announces that he's not going to run for reelection, and of course, the election year 1990 is looming. Were you at all surprised when Edgar announced that he was going to run for governor?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: Why?

Rock: I don't know, he just… I don't mean to sound like I know what I'm talking about in terms of Republican politics—I really don't—but he just seemed to be an unlikely subject for candidacy for governor. There were others around, like George Ryan, like some others better suited for it.

DePue: Did you understand, though, that Jim Thompson thought Edgar was the top candidate?

Rock: Right, I did. He told me that. (laughs)

DePue: Did he explain why, when he told you that?

Rock: No, I didn't ask him to explain why. I just took him at his word.

DePue: Your impressions, your memories, about that campaign season. Edgar had a primary candidate, Steve Baer. Baer being a much more conservative candidate than Edgar, Edgar won rather handily in the primary. Then you got into this really tough, major campaign season with Neil Hartigan, the attorney general at the time. Your thoughts about that campaign and the way it turned out?

Rock: I was surprised that Neil was not stronger than he was in terms of the race and the outcome, but you have to give the devil his due. Jim Thompson is a terrific campaigner, and—

DePue: Jim Thompson or Jim Edgar?

Rock: Jim Edgar. Thompson is too. He [Edgar] was very adaptable and picked up by the people, and just much, much better than Neil.

DePue: Is that to say you think Neil lost the race more than Edgar won it?

Rock: No, I don't want to take anything away from Edgar on that one. He won it fair and square. But I don't think Neil was the right candidate. I guess that's the better way to put it.

DePue: Who did you think at the time would have been the better candidate for the Democratic Party?

Rock: Me.

DePue: And why (Rock laughs) didn't you run? I didn't expect that, I guess.

Rock: (laughs) Okay. Personal choice. Frankly, at that point—that was early '90—I had announced retirement. I had just had enough. You know, you get to a point—or I got to a point—where the family became very important. I had four kids and twelve grandchildren, and other things I wanted to do, so I said, "That's enough."

DePue: So you took yourself out of the running.

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: Had some of the party leadership approached you about running?

Rock: Some, not all. Some.

DePue: Richard M. Daley had been mayor for only a couple years. Was he one that approached you on it?

Rock: Yeah, we talked about it.

DePue: By that time, Madigan certainly would have been a major force in the Democratic Party. Was he one that approached you on it or talked to you about it?

Rock: No. He was for Stevenson, was he not?

DePue: That would have been ’86, I think.

Rock: Well, they were not flocking to me as the savior. You know, I was one of the workhorses in the chamber. They could not have beaten me on the issues, I’ll tell you that much.

DePue: Let’s get to—

Rock: How far are you from a break point?

DePue: This would be a good point, because I’m going to get into the Edgar-as-governor years, so let’s go ahead and take a pause here.

Rock: Oh, okay, that would be wonderful.

(end of interview 1)

Interview with Phil Rock

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Interview # 2: November 29, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

A Note to the Reader

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DePue: Today is Monday, November 29, 2010. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here this morning with Sen. Phil Rock. Good morning, Senator.

Rock: Good morning.

DePue: It's an overcast day; it looks like the clouds are coming in. We're sitting up in your office. Why don't you tell us exactly where we are, Senator?

Rock: We are at 321 Clark Street. This is a rather famous—or infamous, now—building. It was the home to a big corporation here in Illinois that suddenly moved. Now the American Bar Association has assumed the proprietary rights. They've rented twelve floors of the building, right smack dab in the middle of the Loop, right next to the river. It's quite a building.

DePue: Who was here before?

Rock: It was the food company.

DePue: Quaker Oats?

Rock: Quaker Oats. For years it was called the Quaker Oats building, and we used to have a lot of civic events here.

DePue: That harkens back to Chicago's agricultural days; you have the Chicago Board of Trade and Mercantile Exchange down the street here a bit.

Rock: Right.

DePue: We are here, though, not to talk about that, but to talk about Governor Jim Edgar and your association with him. In our first session, we talked about his years in the secretary of state's office while you were in the Senate. We finished that session basically with his winning an election over Neil Hartigan in 1990, and he's going to become the governor of the state. At the time, in November and December, there were lots of—I don't want to call them rumors—but information flying around about the financial problems the state was in. According to the governor, when he got to the office he found out it was much more significant than he had originally thought; he was looking at a one-billion-dollar deficit. So let's start with this: do you remember the first time you had a meeting with the governor after he won that election?

Rock: Yeah, the meeting was not held on a sour note or a dour note. I think everybody was kind of upbeat; the election was over, everybody was breathing a little more easily, and I think pretty much—the governor included—anxious to get going. They recognized that perhaps they hadn't had all the relevant information that we needed,

but let's get up and get going. I think everybody had that spirit of enthusiasm at that time, at least.

DePue: Did he have an individual session with you, or was this with the legislative… ?

Rock: Yeah, we had a chance to talk individually. He shared with us his view of the books and records and the financial condition of the state. The kind of information he would have to give to the bonding authorities, for instance, he made available to us, and we were grateful for that. Everybody was starting at the same starting line for a change, and I think that was a welcomed thing. The news was not real happy, but if you look back and compare it to what's happened recently, no comparison. (laughs) We were talking about the possibility of a billion-dollar deficit, and that would have been against probably a thirty-billion-dollar budget all told, when it's done. These days, we're up at fifty-billion-dollar budgets, and we're talking eight, ten, twelve, fifteen **billion** in deficit. It's absolutely insane what we're doing, what we have done to ourselves. So I think the spirit was upbeat. The governor indicated he was ready to do what it took. Everybody left that kind of undefined, but I think there was a resolve, when the meeting concluded, that we were all going to try to work together and get at least that part of the budget out—you know, get it off our back.

DePue: Do you recall if you gave him any initial guidance that first time you met?

Rock: The only initial guidance I gave, I said, "Jim, you're better off telling the truth. Not that you're not telling the truth—I don't mean to imply that—but all through this process, share with these people. They're your elected board of directors; even though you didn't pick them, this is what we've got. A board of directors should know how a corporation is doing and why it's doing what it's doing. Only you have that information, and you ought to be prepared to treat the appropriations people and their committee chairs and vice chairs the same as you would the bonding authority. Sit them down and tell them what the facts are, let them ramble a while, let them loose, and we'll see what happens."

DePue: Why don't you, from your perspective at that time, tell us how a normal—(laughs) maybe that's an interesting word to use here—a normal budgetary process should work to determine what the state's budget should be.

Rock: It should work because we have built in certain steps along the way. We have, for instance, lapse period spending, which is a number that no one knows, probably (laughs) except the governor. That's the kind of information that should be made available—I hope today is made available—to the general assembly members, so that everybody's working on the same wavelength. I mean, if you and I are studying a budget and there's thirty-five or forty billion dollars unaccounted for in there, somebody's got to 'fess up as to who's got the right numbers. I think the governor took our advice and was sharing a little more freely the information, the condition of the state financially. It wasn't pretty, but it wasn't a death knell either. It was something that could be remedied; all we'd have to go is get to work and perhaps push a hard vote or two.

DePue: The originating budget, though—did that come from the governor's budget office, or did that come from the House?

Rock: The governor did have a good deal of input on it. Mechanically, as I recall, the House was putting it together and helping him present it, or perhaps giving him the slant that they wanted to present while staying within the recognized boundaries.

DePue: We've been focusing so far on the budget, because that first year that seemed to be the overwhelming task he had to wrestle with; everything else flowed from that. But before we get into the nuts and bolts of it, I wonder if you can do a quick comparison for us, because you'd had fourteen years of Jim Thompson. Now you have a new governor and quite a different personality, from most accounts. Similarities and differences between the two men in how they worked legislation?

Rock: Jim Thompson was much more aggressive. He would take the ball; even if the ball wasn't in his court, he would try to take the ball (laughs) and move it upfield, against the wishes of some of the House, particularly. Jim was a little more reticent. He was not quite—and understandably. It was his first time. It's tough to compare the two, because by the end, Thompson had an enormous amount of experience that's incalculable in terms of when you're finally dealing with these folks. He would call the leadership together over in the mansion, have his charts and graphs and pointers and everything else, and go right down the line. Any question he had, he'd answer it. He had his director of the budget there but really didn't even afford him the opportunity to say a great deal. Just kind of did a little welcome speech and said, "Boy, things are tough; we'd better get going here." Then they sat down, and Jim Thompson took over.

It wasn't the same with Jim [Edgar] because Jim wasn't quite up to speed yet. He was kind of in the same position that the legislature was in. We were not up to speed either in terms of the sheer numbers. But it came around afterwards. I think it's fair to say he was open and willing and recognized that now he's elected for four years, he's got the authority to make these changes; it was a question of his resolve that would make it happen, only his.

DePue: One of the huge issues in the campaign was whether or not to retain that income tax surcharge. Hartigan was in the position that they shouldn't retain it; Edgar was advocating that they should retain it, which was kind of a reverse of the classical roles, Democrat versus Republican. Here's a Republican who's essentially arguing for the higher tax level. Did you think, because of that one-billion-dollar deficit, that it needed to go higher than that, that there needed to be another revenue source?

Rock: No, I thought with the continuation of that surtax we could do it. I was in favor of it. I didn't say a great deal, but I wasn't asked my opinion very often. I think both Neil and Jim knew my opinion. Politically it was an easy way: if you just don't say anything, it's going to happen. You don't (laughs) have to do anything affirmatively; it's just going to happen. To start from ground zero and say, We've got to have a tax increase, and for these reasons, would not have sold as well as

saying, If we just leave things alone, this is going to be virtually resolved by itself. We don't have to do anything.

DePue: But aren't you making the assumption at that time that there's going to be a rebound in the economy, that you're going to have more revenue generated rather than have to make some fairly significant cuts upfront?

Rock: Yes, yes. And that's a judgment call. We talked to the bond authorities, we talked to a lot of people, and we talked to our financial friends here in Illinois. I think it's fair to say there was a difference of opinion; you came down on the optimistic side or the not-so-optimistic side, the pessimistic side. I was and am an optimist on this, and I think Jim was leaning that way, but he wasn't politically as sure of himself. With Thompson there would have been no question at all, none, just **boom,** straight ahead.

DePue: Because Thompson was more of an optimistic type as well?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: You mentioned a couple times the bonding authority issue. How did that factor into this overall discussion about the budget?

Rock: I think for the first time, in my experience at least, people were paying attention to the bond authorities. They did wield some unwieldy power there for a while; somebody was always asking, What's the opinion of the bond authorities, what kind of interest rates are we going to be charged and that kind of stuff. Jim Thompson and I, as a matter of fact, traveled together to visit Wall Street and the bond authorities, and sat down with the analysts who were doing Illinois. I think they were quite taken with the fact that there was a Democrat and a Republican, both in the assembly and now in front of them, talking openly and honestly about what we can do or what we should do, and I think it helped.

DePue: Was there serious thought given in 1991 about actually getting a bond to help balance the budget? I'm not knowledgeable enough about the finances.

Rock: No, it wasn't that so much. It was just holding down the interest rates; we wanted these authorities to know we were serious about reducing the deficit, that the deficit would be reduced, and how do we do it? We're working on that. But I think it was just that we wanted to convey to them the sense that, one, we were aware of the problem; two, we thought we had all the pieces, and now it was just a question of putting it together.

DePue: Do you remember any specific advice you gave the governor, other than what you've already mentioned, about getting that budget balanced?

Rock: No, I think from that point on we were just kind of handling what I call routine bills. There had been no bubbling up yet of any call for a tax increase or any call for a major cut in any way. We were just kind of playing the cards as they came.

DePue: How about the complications that are presented when you factor the pension system into that equation?

Rock: The pension system will remain a troublesome spot for years to come, I'm afraid. I don't want to speculate, but I think as a former staff guy and a staff director, Jim was well aware of the importance of the pension and the pension benefits for the members and for the officers. He took it very seriously and did not want to ignore… He was the one that called for, for the first time, a really ramp-up approach, and giving the fund more money; the fund needs more money. By contrast for instance, you had a Dan Walker who, for the first time in the history of the state of Illinois, was asking a lesser amount be appropriated than was being paid out. Well for God's sake, you're paying from a deficit position. How can you do that, Governor? He did it; he proposed it. And a couple of the bills—I think we overrode one or two at least. But he was at a number that was significantly different than the actual number that was required for the payout. If you have ten people on the payroll that are supposed to get a hundred dollars a month, you can't get by with appropriating fifty; it just doesn't work.

DePue: But when you've got a billion-dollar deficit, that big a hole to fill, it's awfully tempting to defer or delay those payments, isn't it?

Rock: Oh, yeah, absolutely. It's an easy mark, an easy mark. And in those days—you'll recall, those were Jimmy Carter's years—the interest rates were 20 and 22 percent. (laughs) It was a real mess.

DePue: So a little bit easier in the nineties when interest rates were way below that rate.

Rock: Yes.

DePue: I want to quote Governor Edgar himself on some of his early discussions with you. I'd have to say he saw you as part of the friendly opposition, as somebody he could go to and sit down and talk with sincerely and work the issues out, even though you were from opposing parties, so to speak. He says that Phil Rock got a hold of him one time and sat him down, and basically this is the quote, you say to him: "You've been dealt a bad hand. It's not your fault. You've got to raise taxes." Is that in reference, you think, to that first budget battle?[5]

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: And that's in reference to the surcharge, to retain the surcharge?

Rock: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: He's gone in some detail to talk about those first few months, realizing he had that budget deficit, and you walk it all the way through the middle of July; he even

[5] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, November 17, 2009, 584. See 576-587 for Edgar's discussion of the first budget fight. On Rock's sincerity, see Sherry Struck, interview by Mark DePue, November 3, 2010, 61.

misses a payroll in the process of that first budget fight. Paint us a picture, if you can, about the dynamics of the personalities involved. What I'm referring to here is what we always hear from the press: it's the Four Tops, the four legislative leaders sitting down with the governor. Is that the case, and how did that actually work out?

Rock: Yeah, I think that was one of the first instances, at least in my experience, where the discussions between the four of us actually were producing some results. Jim was apparently willing to accept help, looking for help. I think I certainly did, and I think the others did too, take it seriously; we wanted to help, recognizing that a tax increase vote really doesn't help anybody. Some get madder than others, but even if you're right, you spend a great deal of time. It's almost like a distraction. Wherever you go, whatever you're saying, whatever your message is, (laughs) people want to talk about the tax increase, necessary or unnecessary. But I think there was genuine goodwill among the four of us that recognized something has to be done, and let's do the best we can under the circumstances.

DePue: Where were the meetings, and how often were these meetings between the leadership?

Rock: That's kind of a difficult one to answer there. They started out in the House Republican leader's office.

DePue: Lee Daniels?

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: And the governor would come to that office?

Rock: That office, right.

DePue: Was Joan Walters there as well?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: Did he have any other people with him?

Rock: No, as I recall, one of his staff people was in and out, but no staying power; he was just kind of handling the day-to-day affairs. Then I offered my office; I said, "If you want my opinion, these meetings ought to be held in the governor's office, not in any legislative leader's office, because what's going happen"—and it did happen and has happened since—"is that there is almost a proprietary interest in the venue, my office or your office. If you don't come to my office, (laughs) I'm not going to talk to you." And that happened. So I had to—and I did—visit with each of the other three and said, "Look, we're getting nowhere fast here because we're now down to nitty-gritty stuff like whose office do we meet in. What the hell difference does it make? You and I both know it's the TV cameras. There's thirty TV cameras and twelve reporters out there hawking us down the hall, so as soon as you walk into Daniels' office or as soon as you walk into Madigan's office or my office, the

whole thing takes a little different flavor to it." And I said, "We don't need that. We don't need it. Why don't you pass a law and make my office neutral? That probably won't work, but it would be worth some fun for two days." (laughter) But I said, "We better get down to it and just recognize that the governor's a busy man; he's got people waiting to see him all day. One, it will push us to move a little faster, I suspect, than just kind of visiting around in a social hour."

So from that point forward I think we pretty much used only the governor's office when a meeting had to be called. Sometimes the meeting had to be called, and sometimes the governor said, "Oh, to hell with it, I don't want to talk to these guys today," and we'd have to have Daniels in particular call it, or Pate [Philip], and say, "Hey, we need a meeting; block out some time." But once it got rolling, once the wheels started to turn, then it took on a little different flavor. I think the Republicans particularly could see that we weren't out there to be obstructionists; we were there trying to help. And it worked out all right.

DePue: I wonder if you could lay out for us or explain why in Illinois then, and I think still to this day, the four legislative leaders have such dominance in what happens in legislation for the state. Why not the rank-and-file members of those two bodies?

Rock: Well, there's been an effort to bring the rank-and-file members aboard. If you remember the last few years at least, the subcommittees of the appropriations committee were directly involved. They would zero in on the individual agencies and make some of those decisions, line-item decisions, as to what they ought to be doing. That was at the direction of the leader. The leader would say, "Okay, we've got to hold DCFS down. They want a 10 percent increase. They can't have ten; nobody else is getting ten." That kind of stuff. So there were decisions that were being made. We were viewed, frankly, as doing the bigger picture. If we do this and this and this and this and this, this is what we come up with, we hope.

The last few tightenings of the nuts and bolts were left to the governor. It was his ship of state that was going up or down, and I think, as Pate so aptly put it, "Sink or swim." Here we go, you know. Edgar was pretty good about it. He recognized that this was a chance to sew it up, nail it down, if you will; that he could walk onto the floor or into his caucus at least and say, "The other three agree with this. As long as we've got an agreement and we're satisfied, we ought to take it and run." That's essentially what happened. When you get through all the other stuff, the little bit of political infighting we had, I think the budget decisions were good ones.

DePue: Those first two years especially, the Democrats had control of both the House and the Senate, correct?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: So I guess you had the hand in that respect. You got into the end of June, and you still didn't have a budget settled on. It gets into early July, and at least as Governor

Edgar has explained it, the disagreement is primarily between Madigan and himself. Would that be a good characterization?

Rock: Yeah. And there were a number of issues that they were jousting about. Pate and I just took ourselves out of the program for a couple of weeks. (laughs) We just said, "I'm not going to argue about that."

DePue: Do you remember what the specific issues were?

Rock: No, I really don't. I think it's fair to say that some of the issues were camouflage for what they really wanted, and what they really wanted was caps on the local expenditures. In other words, when the DuPage County Board met and wanted a 25 percent increase in their budget, we wanted something to say, No, no, no—too much. If you're going to go above 5 percent—I think it was 5—you have to have a public hearing, have to this, have to that. It was a definite restriction against local government, and by the time local governments woke up to the fact that this was being foisted upon them, it was almost too late. It **was** too late. Jim had virtually signed it by that time.

We made the usual political speeches—good ones, I thought—that we'd be back in a year or two years or three years redoing this. I said, "You cannot expect people to run for local office and then take any authority away from them. That doesn't make any sense. Put a mechanic in there. Put a staff person in there. This is an elected official. If they want to raise their taxes 25 percent, let them go out and get the votes. Why is that your business? All of a sudden we're going to be like the big mother hen; we're going to make all the decisions. It's simply not going to work." To this day it hasn't been completely abolished, but it's been chewed away so that you wouldn't recognize it. I mean, the call for the 5 percent increase is virtually dead. I don't know if anybody does it. I think they perfunctorily put the ad in the paper saying "Certain items in the budget may exceed the statutory authorization." Nobody knows what that means anyway.

DePue: Well, the governor made some pretty significant cuts in staffing, limiting the size of the state government—actually making some cuts and not just limiting growth, as I recall. There were compromises on both sides, but he came away from that, and his assessment was he won that first budget battle. Is that how you would assess it as well?

Rock: Yeah, I think that's fair. He did win. Because one of the things that was a reality—and he knew it, everybody in the building knew it—is the division in the Senate was very close. There was no monolith in the Senate. The House was a little different. If Mike had seven or eight spare votes, you could push people around a little bit. But in the Senate it simply wasn't that way. I had some people at my caucus who were recalcitrants; they just (laughs) didn't want to vote for anything for any reason, good or bad. They wanted their opinions to have some sway, they wanted to have people pay attention to them, but they didn't want to get in the mainstream, they didn't want to get in the swing of things.

DePue: Well, Senator, you're willing to share some names or portions of the state, parts of the caucus?

Rock: (laughs) I think it's fair to say that the Chicago delegation, which was the largest, had some members that, one, personally didn't like the governor, and two, didn't like much of what he said; so they just kind of threw up their hands and walked away from it. Offered no help. There were enough of us, hopefully, to overcome that, but we lost a couple of those battles. We lost that battle on the caps on the interest rate. That should never have become the law. It's not good for anybody except the diehard anti-tax people, the Jim Tobins of the world.[6] They want (laughs) no taxes, or if you're going to have a tax, make it as little as possible and lock it in and keep it there forever. Well, you can't run a government that way. You can't run a business or a house that way.

DePue: Tell us a little bit more about the nature of your caucus, because I've always been (laughs) intrigued. You mentioned already you've got the Chicago portion of it, but then you've got the downstate Democrats as well.

Rock: Yeah, we had, if you recall, a group called the Crazy Eight, which was eight or nine individuals from outside metropolitan Chicago who resented the fact, **resented the fact,** that they were identified as Daley Democrats.[7] In my opinion a couple of them didn't even like to be called Democrats. I don't know what the hell they wanted to be called, but they were quite sincere. They would get up early in the morning and go over the bills like I did with my staff. I would be in one office with my staff going over the bills and the calendar for that day, and they'd be in a room down the hall doing the same thing—different results, frankly, (laughs) on some of the stuff. On any given day, I might have thirty bodies that I could count, but I couldn't count on thirty votes. It just never happened in my tenure as the leader.

DePue: When you say thirty, thirty out of fifty-nine?

Rock: Thirty's the constitutional majority that's needed, so if you look back in the *Blue Book*—I can't give you the numbers off the top of my head—but I never got up as high as thirty-five. I think one year I got to thirty-two; maybe one year I got to thirty-three. But even with thirty-two and thirty-three, I was never sure of thirty. Just that's the way it was.

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[6] Jim Tobin is a well-known anti-tax activist who founded National Taxpayers United of Illinois in 1976 and whose early efforts included organizing a 1977 property tax strike in Cook County. Laura Janota, "Jim Tobin: Fighting Taxes is His Only Cause," *Illinois Issues* (August & September 1990), 29-30, http://www.lib.niu.edu/1990/ii900829.html.

[7] The Crazy Eight initially emerged in January 1975, resisting Cecil Partee's (D-Chicago) bid for Senate president until one of their own, Terry Bruce (D-Olney), secured an assistant majority leader position and the group received their choice of committee assignments. Bruce came up with the name for the group, which included Kenneth Buzbee (Carbondale), Vincent Demuzio (Carlinville), Vivian Hickey (Rockford), Jerome Joyce (Reddick), William Morris (Waukegan), Dawn Clark Netsch (Chicago), and Don Wooten (Rock Island). Burnell Heinecke, "New Force in Senate: They Call Themselves 'The Crazy 8,'" *Illinois Issues* (January 1976), 21-23, http://www.lib.niu.edu/1976/ii760121.html.

DePue: Who was the leader of the Crazy Eight, or was there a leader?

Rock: That was one of the problems they had, that everybody was the leader. It was a headless horseman; they were all over the place. Terry Bruce was one. Don Wooten was another. He was from Rock Island. Terry was from Carbondale and points south.

DePue: I know there was at least one Chicago Democrat on that list; that was Dawn Clark Netsch.

Rock: That was Dawn Netsch.

DePue: But she would have been comptroller at this time, wouldn't she? Yeah, she was not in the legislature at that time.

Rock: She was not there at that time.

DePue: Tell us about the other leaders, the Four Tops, then. You have yourself, and then you have James 'Pate' Philip. You haven't mentioned much about him, but in terms of the budget battles, how did he come down on the discussions, how did his personality manifest itself?

Rock: He tolerated—is I think the word—the meetings and the discussions. Didn't like it, would have preferred not to do it, not to participate. Because a couple of times he stopped in my office and said, "Why the hell don't we forget this today?" I said, "Pate, if we forget it today, that means tomorrow somebody else is going to say, 'Let's skip it today,' and this thing will never happen. At least give the guy a chance to make his case. You know, I don't agree with this stuff…" Pate was building up a head of steam. He was starting to listen to the Jim Tobins of the world, "Cut them all off; they get nothing." (laughs) I said, "Nothing? You're going to go back to DuPage County and tell the DuPage County board, the biggest board next to Cook in the state, that you can't have a 5 percent increase without a hearing? Come on, give me a break."

DePue: That's his power base.

Rock: Yeah. So to that extent, that cuts both ways. He had a lot of friends and neighbors on the county board that he could push around, and they would listen. In county government throughout the county, he had a lot to say. But he was not very patient in that setting. He was like, "Come on, let's get going here. Let's get going." Of course, that's not the way those meetings ran. You'd have to hear from Daniels, and then Daniels would be refuted by Madigan, and then Madigan would be refuted by Pate, [who would] just say, "Ah, to hell with it." (laughs) It'd get around to me, and I'd try to start over and get this thing over.

There was a real dynamic that was going on all the time. I would say, "Pate is my friend and will forever be my friend, because we used to sneak out the back door." All the press was always in the front, like in the rotunda, with the cameras

and the pencils and the whole thing. The four of us would start to come marching out, and the press would go over there to see Madigan and over here to see Daniels and over here to see Pate. "Where's Pate?" "Pate's gone." Pate went out the back door, and I went with him. (laughs) I said, "At least we're going to make it look like a House-Senate fight, we're not going to… This is nuts." But we would slip out the back. Right near the governor's back door out of his office, you head right out to the corridor, the stairwell, so it was a very quick trip (makes whooshing sound) **boom**, and you're up in the impregnable third floor (laughter) where they couldn't get near Pate's office. They'd catch me in the hallway sometimes, and I'd say, "Senator Philip and I decided that the Senate wasn't needed at this point in the discussion, so we'll attend the next one, maybe."

DePue: What was the relationship between Philip and the governor that you saw, just in these meetings, for example?

Rock: Pate was one who thought more politically than the others, obviously. He's a politician, a good one, a county chairman, and he's got all kinds of responsibilities. I think he viewed Edgar in that way, and Edgar was not as tough a politician as Pate would have wanted. Pate would have liked some guy with a hammer and an axe in there: just chop the budget apart and hammer anybody down who disagrees. He didn't have that; he had a more genteel approach to the whole business. So I don't think they ever got very close. Now, I could be wrong. That's just a perception of mine, that they were not exactly buddy-buddy—politically, at least. Personally, that's another story, but politically they were not.

DePue: How about on the House side? Let's start with Madigan, because most people, the talking heads at least, would say that Mike Madigan was then, and still to this day, at least the second most powerful man in Illinois state government, if not sometimes the most powerful.

Rock: Yeah, Mike is like the Sphinx: he sits and listens and looks and never changes expression; you don't quite know where he's coming from. I never had any problem at all with Mike Madigan. We got along very well. He was open and freewheeling with me as to what he thought ought to be done and when it ought to be done, so we got along all right. He did not at all get along with Lee; they were at each other's throats for quite a while.

DePue: Madigan didn't get along with Lee?

Rock: Correct. And I don't think he had a very high regard for Jim Edgar, because again, Mike thinks in political terms—what's good politically, what's not good politically. Edgar wasn't quite there yet in terms of that kind of thinking. Not that it's bad, it's just a different approach. So I think to that extent, Mike kind of wrote him off; he didn't take what he said very seriously.

DePue: Did that change? Did Madigan's opinion change after that first budget battle, where Edgar at least feels like he won and beat Madigan in the process?

Rock: Yeah, right, and I think that's a fair assessment. I think Mike would admit that we got beat, and we got beat for a whole number of reasons, not the least of which was that I didn't have thirty votes. Mike could have put as many as he wanted on the board, but I couldn't deliver.

DePue: Did Madigan then have greater respect for Edgar coming out of that battle?

Rock: I don't know that his opinion changed very much; I think it just corroborated what he had thought originally. It was his first real encounter with him, and subsequent encounters were a little bit different. He was a little friendlier, I think is a good… He was warming up a little bit toward Jim, because the last couple of meetings we had, he was in there with both feet, fighting for what he wanted.

DePue: Talking to Governor Edgar, we've gone over this material quite a bit. Here's another quote that he said you had mentioned to him: "People say, 'What is the best advice you ever got?' I say, it's Phil Rock telling me, 'Chill out.' I never did chill out till the second term, but I just remember him saying—and later I thought, Here he is, he just wants to go home; here's this freshman governor who's made his life miserable, and he's arguing over three hundred thousand dollars in a twenty-seven- or twenty-four-billion-dollar budget. I'm sure Rock was just furious with me at that point."[8] I don't know where in this particular process it was, but he remembers that story and that advice you gave him. Do you?

Rock: Yeah. I did get a little bit mad at him and tell him to chill out. I said, "You know, you're going to have to grow up in this job. You've got more fish to fry than this little stinking bill." (laughs) And I genuinely liked him—still like him. It's just he came at that office from a different background. There is a hell of a difference between being a staff guy, even a head staff guy, and being The Guy.

DePue: Well, you could make the point that all governors come at it from a different perspective. Certainly Walker did, and Jim Thompson came from a completely different background. Who other than Edgar had more depth of experience in both legislative affairs and a constitutional office, working in state government, being with Arrington?

Rock: Right. I think part of it was that people started with that assumption, that here's a guy with all the experience in the world that you can have, and he still is not getting it right. You know, it's not clicked in.

DePue: When you say he wasn't getting it right, it didn't click in, what exactly are you referring to, though?

Rock: The political side of virtually every question that we deal with, because like it or not, there is a political side to virtually everything we do down there. One, it has to be recognized, and two, it has to be dealt with. You can't ignore it. I always said one of my dreams is, I'd go back there with thirty-five senators, all of whom I

[8] Jim Edgar, November 17, 2009, 581.

elected or helped elect, and I would rise up on the first day (laughter) and say, "Here's the agenda, folks. We're going to be busy for two weeks." Yeah, it's a great dream.

DePue: But it wouldn't last for month after month; it would just last two weeks, huh?

Rock: That's all. That's all I'd need to set the whole calendar for two months.

DePue: We left one person out of this Four Tops discussion. We've mentioned him a couple of times—Lee Daniels—and the relationship between Daniels and Edgar and this group in particular. When the Four Tops were together, what role did he play?

Rock: He was always well-informed and pretty well had his mind made up. You got the impression that, My way or no way. And that's one way to bargain. Sometimes you won and sometimes you didn't. But I think he always envisioned himself as the governor, or should be the governor; all these other guys keep coming through, and Daniels is still there in the House. Not a small job, the Speaker of the House, but I think he had a higher ambition. Unfortunately he never got a chance to try it out, because he was more contentious than the rest. Even though Pate was a little harder-nosed, Pate wouldn't make a big deal out of it. He'd tell you you're wrong, and that's it—he's out, he's gone. Daniels would sit and argue and point out thirty different ways you're wrong. Some took it well; some didn't take it at all. I don't think Lee took it very well.

DePue: Four very different people in that group, and five when you throw Edgar in, certainly. Was Philip or was Daniels there representing the agenda of the governor, or did each one have his own specific agenda he was pursuing?

Rock: I would say that Pate wanted to be with the governor. That was his disposition. That's the way he saw his role as the Republican leader. Daniels seldom was with him. Daniels would always have a better way to do it, or his way would reflect what the people want. I think Edgar was just biding his time. It's like walking through a landmine field; you don't (laughs) quite know where your foot's going to get blown off.

DePue: In other words, you're not sure exactly who your friends are in this.

Rock: That's correct, that's correct.

DePue: What role did you see yourself playing in that group?

Rock: Oh, kind of a (pause) go-between. Daniels might not talk to Pate, but he would talk to me and Pate would talk to me, and then I'd talk to them and have them talk to each other. It got a little convoluted. But things got hot and heavy down there. When it gets to be about the first of July and you say, "What the hell are we doing here? We're at least thirty days over, and we're nickel-and-diming around here." So the proposals started to get a little more reasonable, and when they got a little more reasonable, I would step in on a little bit more and put a little pressure on these guys

to get it over with. I said, "You've got the city of Chicago to contend with. Now, you can't possibly make this applicable to the city of Chicago under anybody's [plan]. You'll have to veto it yourself. Chicago's got to be excluded from this." I said, "You want to do it to your county…"

DePue: Again, you're talking about the tax cap?

Rock: Yeah, the tax cap. That was a big deal. The local governments, unfortunately, weren't paying attention to that thirty days in July when we were arguing the hell out of this thing, and all of a sudden, **boom**—for their next board meeting where they're proposing a budget, they have to have less than 5 percent or they need a public hearing. Ooh, man. We weren't two days out and they started calling for a special session to repeal that son of a gun.

DePue: Of course, I think it was the eighteenth of July that the budget was finally passed, so they missed a payroll for some of the state employees by a couple days. I know that was a great concern to the governor himself, to think there were state employees out there who were going to miss that payroll and go through that financial strain. But he got the thing passed, and from your assessment, certainly from his assessment, it was a victory on his side. Then the economy, stubbornly, did not improve. They got to December and January and he said, Holy cow, we've got a bigger hole even than we thought. And you guys had to go back at it again. You remember anything particular about going back and tinkering with that? This would have been the 1992 budget.

Rock: Not specifically. I can remember tinkering, but I don't remember much specific. It was kind of like every time we walked it, we'd say, "So we told you so." Everybody was taking credit for the fact (laughter) that they knew the answer then, but they weren't going to tell anybody then.

DePue: A lot of second-guessing in that respect.

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: I don't know if you recall anything about the reapportionment fight that would have occurred. Would that have been '92 when that went on?

Rock: Yeah, every ten years. Yeah, I think so. I'm not sure of the date. I think so.

DePue: Do you recall anything specific about that reapportionment? Because the inside politics, that's where future majorities are made, if you want to look at it that way. I didn't mean to put you on the spot.

Rock: No, I'm just trying to… I just don't recall. Ryan was the governor then, right? I was with one map with Ryan, anyway.

DePue: Yeah, well that would have been 2002?

Rock: Okay.

DePue: That would have been the end of Ryan's administration. If you don't mind, let's shift gears here. I want to ask just your impressions of some of the other people that Edgar had on his team.

Rock: Okay, then I got to move on.

DePue: Very quickly, then, let's start with the chief of staff, Kirk Dillard.

Rock: (pause) Kirk Dillard was probably one of the best staff guys I ever saw operate. Very studious, politically very aware, and a straight shooter. He was good.

DePue: Joan Walters, his budget director.

Rock: Yeah, I think she was certainly competent. She knew the material. Didn't deliver very well in terms of her own public speaking ability. She was very soft-spoken and never got overly excited, and I think she was just out of her league. She should have been with a corporate board as opposed to this jungle that we were in. But she was fine. Nobody liked to directly argue with her. You felt like a bully. On the hard questions, she would come into a meeting, and she would have somebody with her who could answer the direct slurs and stuff.

DePue: Mike Lawrence, the press secretary.

Rock: Mike was probably too knowledgeable. He (laughs) knew more about the business than most people in the room. He had a set of rules and regulations that he lived by and expected everybody else to live by them. He was a good commentator on things political in the capitol building. Highly regarded, and most people didn't want to cross swords with him because they knew they were going to lose. He's got the newsprint.

DePue: He also had the ear of the governor, because most would say you couldn't find a closer advisor to the governor than Mike Lawrence.

Rock: Right, right. He was the last word for the governor, yes.

DePue: The legislative liaisons. I believe when you were still there, it would have been Steve Selcke and Mark Boozell.

Rock: Yeah. Both very good. I like to call them good mechanics. I had a couple. I had Bill Holland, who's distinguished himself as the auditor. Those people are irreplaceable. They're just that good. They're the kind of people you want to see around as kind of a career diplomat. A career staff person is a good thing. The problem we have is that all those younger people are able, and they're quickly recruited by the corporate world for lobby business or analysis or whatever. Can't do without them.

DePue: Are there any others in Edgar's inner team, if you will, that stick out to you?

Rock: No, not really.

DePue: Your impressions of Mrs. Edgar, then, Brenda Edgar.

Rock: Delightful lady, just delightful. You're never sure with ladies, having met as many as I have over the years. In the position of leader, I try to greet everybody and get to know everybody, and there aren't too many women that like politics. She did remarkably well under some terrible circumstances. When they were beating up on him pretty good, she was gracious as could be. Nice, nice person.

DePue: You've indicated that you need to get going here pretty soon.

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: I was going to ask you about the second budget fight. Anything particular just in the—

Rock: I don't think there was anything spectacular about that one.

DePue: Different results for the governor. He figures that he lost that round in the summer of 1992, that he didn't fare quite as well, but he still felt awfully good about having prevailed in July 1991 on that.[9]

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: Let's do some summing up, then. First of all, your retirement from public life. Let's talk about that just a bit, that decision.

Rock: At that point in my life, I was ruminating about the possibility of running for the Illinois Supreme Court. That's the pinnacle for those of us that have a law degree. I went so far, as a matter of fact, to have petitions printed, and I had some of them signed. I was walking around with them in my pocket, and I went to see some people—political people, obviously—up my way, so I'd have home base protected and I wouldn't have to (laughs) stay there and man the walls; I could go out and go get them. I wound up one night sitting at the kitchen table. It was about 11:30 at night, and I was going over these petition sheets that I had spent all day and all night rustling up. And I thought, What the <u>hell</u> am I doing?

So I rethought the position and thought, Well, it's about time I spent a little time with the family, and see if I can regenerate my law business and make a living for a change. I just called some of the people that I had called to go the other way, and I said, "I appreciate your encouragement and your enthusiasm and your help, but I just don't think I'm going to make the run. I've been in government twenty-five years, and that's enough for any sane person. I've still got a long time remaining; my kids are not quite fully grown, so they're still around." So I just opted out. The fact is, the one that was waiting at the door—and was, for a lot of

[9] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 23, 2010, 622.

reasons, expected to receive the endorsement of our party as the first woman justice in our state's history—was Mary Ann McMorrow. Delightful person, good lady, good politician. But she told the powers that be, even the ones that supported her, that she would not run if I was running. She and I were close friends, I think is a… I knew her politically.

But for the first time in twenty years, I felt like I was liberated. I just had (laughs) nothing to do. So I got a young man who has political ambition, has the will and knowledge to do it, and I installed him politically as the committeeman and said, "Go get them."

DePue: Who was that?

Rock: Don Harmon. He's doing very well, as I suspected he would—as I knew he would.

DePue: So essentially, the 1992 election, you bowed out at that time?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: And who won the seat after you left?

Rock: After I left. (laughs) We lost the Senate, and Pate was the Senate president, and then we got it back.

DePue: Not the presidency, but your particular representative district.

Rock: Oh, I see, okay. There was a map change subsequent to that, so Don Harmon is filling my… He's got probably 80 percent of my old district.

DePue: Let's get to some concluding questions here for you, and start with an overall assessment of the Edgar administration—and not just the timeframe that you were serving in the legislature, but the overall eight years that he had.

Rock: I think fairly, one would have to admit, he was a good governor: conscientious government-wise, and a hard worker. Yeah, I would give him high marks as a governor.

DePue: What in particular in terms of the accomplishments or the legislation or things that happened during his administration would you point to say, Yes, he was a good governor?

Rock: Oh, gosh. I'd have to look at a list. If you give me a list of five things, I could say, That was a good one.

DePue: Balancing the budget would be one. One that he didn't expect but governors oftentimes get, the Flood of 1993. Educational reform, and break that up into two parts: Chicago school reform and finding a way to generate more revenue for

schools in general. Also what he did in terms of adoption and child welfare. Those would be five that I would list off the top of my head.

Rock: I think the education piece, both Chicago and downstate, could be his hallmark. I happened to have been there during that period of time, and I know how hard he worked and how hard a lot of people worked to get that done. Hopefully it's starting to pay dividends with some of the recent test scores, and the vindication, I think, from some of the naysayers who had doubts about whether or not it could be done at all, ever. I think he could take credit for an awful lot of that, if not all of it.

DePue: Would there be anything in particular you'd point to and say, Here is a failure, or, Here is something I was disappointed about in terms of the administration?

Rock: I suppose the tax caps just bugged me as a government-lover. (laughs) I'll never understand that, but that was just a knee-jerk reaction to some concern by the anti-tax folks—and not just the anti-tax up to 5 percent, the anti-tax, period. They don't want anything. And when you start talking in those terms, they lose their credibility. They've got nothing to say, in my opinion.

DePue: How about the MSI scandal? Do you think that hurt Edgar? Do you think there was anything to that?

Rock: No, I do not. I would be shocked and surprised if Jim Edgar had any involvement. I just don't believe it.

DePue: Looking back now, it's been a long time, almost twenty years, since you stepped out of the public arena. Any regrets that you left that early in your life?

Rock: No, I have no regrets. When I did it, I did it full-tilt, full-bore, and loved it. To a certain extent, it took away from another part of my life, namely my wife and kids. I just didn't see nearly enough of them. Then they started going off to school; then I saw them less. If I have any regret, that's it.

DePue: Well, Senator, I told you that I would keep this very focused on Jim Edgar, and I think we certainly have up to this point, but I'm awfully tempted to get your impressions, just maybe a real quick impression, of the governors who have followed Jim Edgar.

Rock: The governors who have followed him. Okay. Tell me who they are, and I'll tell you what I think.

DePue: First we've got George Ryan.

Rock: George was my friend and is my friend. I think he was betrayed by others who called themselves his friends, and they weren't his friends.I'm sick about it, because if you look at what he ultimately was charged with, it's wrong that he should bear the weight of those charges. It's just wrong. I think governmentally he was a good

politician, a very good politician, and wanted to do what was in the best interest of the state. I really believe that.

DePue: Do you think he was—well, I'm going to use this word—more skillful in dealing with the legislative leaders?

Rock: Yes. He was hail-fellow-well-met. He got along with everybody. He wasn't a fall guy for everybody; he was almost too loyal to some of his friends who thought they were his friends or pretended to be his friends. All the time they were looking to take advantage of him, and they did.

DePue: You're very much on the outside for the next personality, but I'm sure you hear from lots of people who are still friends in the House or the Senate about Rod Blagojevich as governor.

Rock: I can honestly say I met the young man only once when he was a member of the Illinois House. He was one of the Chicago delegation that I love to talk about. There's a whole bunch of them from Chicago that as soon as they hit Springfield, whether they get off an airplane or get off the bus or get out of their car, the first thing they ask you, when they see a leader, "When are we going home?" Now, they haven't been there ten minutes, and they want to know when they're going home. I used to keep tabs on some of these guys, (laughs) and it was always the ones that wanted to go home right away—I could name five or six—that accomplished nothing. And every once in a while they'll vote awry. They'll know, for instance, that Madigan's got seventy-five votes on something, and they're all aye votes; these guys will vote no just because they want to be recognized—Hey, we're still here. They don't talk to them, but why do you talk to somebody that says, When are we going home?" They don't want to be there. Over the course of my career, I discouraged guys from running when they said, "Well, how much time do we have to spend?" and that kind of… I said, "Ooh-hoo-hoo, you're in the wrong business. Don't do it."

So the long and short is, George is my friend and will remain my friend, and I wish him nothing but the best. He got a raw deal.

DePue: And Rod Blagojevich would not fall in that category, I take it?

Rock: No. Again, I started with that. I met him only once, when he ran up to me and asked me that question, "How long are we going to be here?" He was never in his seat in the House—not that I ever looked for him, but that was reported to me, that he never sat in his seat.

DePue: How about the next one. Is it fair to ask you about your opinions of Pat Quinn as governor, or is it too early to say?

Rock: Yeah, it's too early. I was shocked and appalled, however, to listen to the debate between our two gubernatorial candidates, a debate in which they each said nothing. Nothing! (laughs) What are you going to do, Governor? Nothing. We're going to

have to cut the deficit. Oh, that's wonderful. How are you going to do that? Well, we'll cut spending. That's good; where are you going to cut spending? We're going to cut the deficit. It would be a wonderful study for somebody like Bruce DuMont or one of those aficionados for the TV industry.[10] Let's say, "How'd you like to put these two guys on TV and have them explain what government is?" Holy cripe.

So no, I have nothing but disregard for that young man [Blagojevich]. I think he's twisted, and from what I hear—and again, this is hearsay—he was one of four freshmen in the Congress of the United States who got clustered together. They sat together, these four, each of whom had come from an elected position in other parts of the country, and they were plotting their move to be the vice president and president of the United States. That's what they were working on, these four.

DePue: Now, you're talking about Blagojevich again?

Rock: Yeah, he's one of the four. He was gearing up to be the vice presidential candidate. Go figure. (laughs) I don't know.

DePue: I very much enjoyed talking to you. It's been illuminating. Anything you'd like to say in closing?

Rock: No. I wish Jim well, and I thank him for his service to our state. It was well done.

DePue: I think that's a fitting way to end. Thank you very much, Senator.

Rock: You are welcome. Say hello for me when you see him.

DePue: I will do that.

(end of interview)

Interview with Phil Rock
ISL-A-L-2010-041.02
Interview # 2: November 29, 2010
Interviewer: Mark DePue

[10] Bruce DuMont is a radio commentator who hosts *Beyond the Beltway*. From 1987 to 2006, he also hosted a television show, *Illinois Lawmakers*, which covered the state legislature.

A Note to the Reader

This transcript is based on an interview recorded by the ALPL Oral History Program. Readers are reminded that the interview of record is the original video or audio file, and are encouraged to listen to portions of the original recording to get a better sense of the interviewee's personality and state of mind. The interview has been transcribed in near-verbatim format, then edited for clarity and readability, and reviewed by the interviewee. For many interviews, the ALPL Oral History Program retains substantial files with further information about the interviewee and the interview itself. Please contact us for information about accessing these materials.

DePue: Today is Monday, November 29, 2010. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here this morning with Sen. Phil Rock. Good morning, Senator.

Rock: Good morning.

DePue: It's an overcast day; it looks like the clouds are coming in. We're sitting up in your office. Why don't you tell us exactly where we are, Senator?

Rock: We are at 321 Clark Street. This is a rather famous—or infamous, now—building. It was the home to a big corporation here in Illinois that suddenly moved. Now the American Bar Association has assumed the proprietary rights. They've rented twelve floors of the building, right smack dab in the middle of the Loop, right next to the river. It's quite a building.

DePue: Who was here before?

Rock: It was the food company.

DePue: Quaker Oats?

Rock: Quaker Oats. For years it was called the Quaker Oats building, and we used to have a lot of civic events here.

DePue: That harkens back to Chicago's agricultural days; you have the Chicago Board of Trade and Mercantile Exchange down the street here a bit.

Rock: Right.

DePue: We are here, though, not to talk about that, but to talk about Governor Jim Edgar and your association with him. In our first session, we talked about his years in the secretary of state's office while you were in the Senate. We finished that session

basically with his winning an election over Neil Hartigan in 1990, and he's going to become the governor of the state. At the time, in November and December, there were lots of—I don't want to call them rumors—but information flying around about the financial problems the state was in. According to the governor, when he got to the office he found out it was much more significant than he had originally thought; he was looking at a one-billion-dollar deficit. So let's start with this: do you remember the first time you had a meeting with the governor after he won that election?

Rock: Yeah, the meeting was not held on a sour note or a dour note. I think everybody was kind of upbeat; the election was over, everybody was breathing a little more easily, and I think pretty much—the governor included—anxious to get going. They recognized that perhaps they hadn't had all the relevant information that we needed, but let's get up and get going. I think everybody had that spirit of enthusiasm at that time, at least.

DePue: Did he have an individual session with you, or was this with the legislative… ?

Rock: Yeah, we had a chance to talk individually. He shared with us his view of the books and records and the financial condition of the state. The kind of information he would have to give to the bonding authorities, for instance, he made available to us, and we were grateful for that. Everybody was starting at the same starting line for a change, and I think that was a welcomed thing. The news was not real happy, but if you look back and compare it to what's happened recently, no comparison. (laughs) We were talking about the possibility of a billion-dollar deficit, and that would have been against probably a thirty-billion-dollar budget all told, when it's done. These days, we're up at fifty-billion-dollar budgets, and we're talking eight, ten, twelve, fifteen **billion** in deficit. It's absolutely insane what we're doing, what we have done to ourselves. So I think the spirit was upbeat. The governor indicated he was ready to do what it took. Everybody left that kind of undefined, but I think there was a resolve, when the meeting concluded, that we were all going to try to work together and get at least that part of the budget out—you know, get it off our back.

DePue: Do you recall if you gave him any initial guidance that first time you met?

Rock: The only initial guidance I gave, I said, "Jim, you're better off telling the truth. Not that you're not telling the truth—I don't mean to imply that—but all through this process, share with these people. They're your elected board of directors; even though you didn't pick them, this is what we've got. A board of directors should know how a corporation is doing and why it's doing what it's doing. Only you have that information, and you ought to be prepared to treat the appropriations people and their committee chairs and vice chairs the same as you would the bonding authority. Sit them down and tell them what the facts are, let them ramble a while, let them loose, and we'll see what happens."

DePue: Why don't you, from your perspective at that time, tell us how a normal—(laughs) maybe that's an interesting word to use here—a normal budgetary process should work to determine what the state's budget should be.

Rock: It should work because we have built in certain steps along the way. We have, for instance, lapse period spending, which is a number that no one knows, probably (laughs) except the governor. That's the kind of information that should be made available—I hope today is made available—to the general assembly members, so that everybody's working on the same wavelength. I mean, if you and I are studying a budget and there's thirty-five or forty billion dollars unaccounted for in there, somebody's got to 'fess up as to who's got the right numbers. I think the governor took our advice and was sharing a little more freely the information, the condition of the state financially. It wasn't pretty, but it wasn't a death knell either. It was something that could be remedied; all we'd have to go is get to work and perhaps push a hard vote or two.

DePue: The originating budget, though—did that come from the governor's budget office, or did that come from the House?

Rock: The governor did have a good deal of input on it. Mechanically, as I recall, the House was putting it together and helping him present it, or perhaps giving him the slant that they wanted to present while staying within the recognized boundaries.

DePue: We've been focusing so far on the budget, because that first year that seemed to be the overwhelming task he had to wrestle with; everything else flowed from that. But before we get into the nuts and bolts of it, I wonder if you can do a quick comparison for us, because you'd had fourteen years of Jim Thompson. Now you have a new governor and quite a different personality, from most accounts. Similarities and differences between the two men in how they worked legislation?

Rock: Jim Thompson was much more aggressive. He would take the ball; even if the ball wasn't in his court, he would try to take the ball (laughs) and move it upfield, against the wishes of some of the House, particularly. Jim was a little more reticent. He was not quite—and understandably. It was his first time. It's tough to compare the two, because by the end, Thompson had an enormous amount of experience that's incalculable in terms of when you're finally dealing with these folks. He would call the leadership together over in the mansion, have his charts and graphs and pointers and everything else, and go right down the line. Any question he had, he'd answer it. He had his director of the budget there but really didn't even afford him the opportunity to say a great deal. Just kind of did a little welcome speech and said, "Boy, things are tough; we'd better get going here." Then they sat down, and Jim Thompson took over.

It wasn't the same with Jim [Edgar] because Jim wasn't quite up to speed yet. He was kind of in the same position that the legislature was in. We were not up to speed either in terms of the sheer numbers. But it came around afterwards. I think it's fair to say he was open and willing and recognized that now he's elected for

four years, he's got the authority to make these changes; it was a question of his resolve that would make it happen, only his.

DePue: One of the huge issues in the campaign was whether or not to retain that income tax surcharge. Hartigan was in the position that they shouldn't retain it; Edgar was advocating that they should retain it, which was kind of a reverse of the classical roles, Democrat versus Republican. Here's a Republican who's essentially arguing for the higher tax level. Did you think, because of that one-billion-dollar deficit, that it needed to go higher than that, that there needed to be another revenue source?

Rock: No, I thought with the continuation of that surtax we could do it. I was in favor of it. I didn't say a great deal, but I wasn't asked my opinion very often. I think both Neil and Jim knew my opinion. Politically it was an easy way: if you just don't say anything, it's going to happen. You don't (laughs) have to do anything affirmatively; it's just going to happen. To start from ground zero and say, We've got to have a tax increase, and for these reasons, would not have sold as well as saying, If we just leave things alone, this is going to be virtually resolved by itself. We don't have to do anything.

DePue: But aren't you making the assumption at that time that there's going to be a rebound in the economy, that you're going to have more revenue generated rather than have to make some fairly significant cuts upfront?

Rock: Yes, yes. And that's a judgment call. We talked to the bond authorities, we talked to a lot of people, and we talked to our financial friends here in Illinois. I think it's fair to say there was a difference of opinion; you came down on the optimistic side or the not-so-optimistic side, the pessimistic side. I was and am an optimist on this, and I think Jim was leaning that way, but he wasn't politically as sure of himself. With Thompson there would have been no question at all, none, just **boom,** straight ahead.

DePue: Because Thompson was more of an optimistic type as well?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: You mentioned a couple times the bonding authority issue. How did that factor into this overall discussion about the budget?

Rock: I think for the first time, in my experience at least, people were paying attention to the bond authorities. They did wield some unwieldy power there for a while; somebody was always asking, What's the opinion of the bond authorities, what kind of interest rates are we going to be charged and that kind of stuff. Jim Thompson and I, as a matter of fact, traveled together to visit Wall Street and the bond authorities, and sat down with the analysts who were doing Illinois. I think they were quite taken with the fact that there was a Democrat and a Republican, both in the assembly and now in front of them, talking openly and honestly about what we can do or what we should do, and I think it helped.

DePue: Was there serious thought given in 1991 about actually getting a bond to help balance the budget? I'm not knowledgeable enough about the finances.

Rock: No, it wasn't that so much. It was just holding down the interest rates; we wanted these authorities to know we were serious about reducing the deficit, that the deficit would be reduced, and how do we do it? We're working on that. But I think it was just that we wanted to convey to them the sense that, one, we were aware of the problem; two, we thought we had all the pieces, and now it was just a question of putting it together.

DePue: Do you remember any specific advice you gave the governor, other than what you've already mentioned, about getting that budget balanced?

Rock: No, I think from that point on we were just kind of handling what I call routine bills. There had been no bubbling up yet of any call for a tax increase or any call for a major cut in any way. We were just kind of playing the cards as they came.

DePue: How about the complications that are presented when you factor the pension system into that equation?

Rock: The pension system will remain a troublesome spot for years to come, I'm afraid. I don't want to speculate, but I think as a former staff guy and a staff director, Jim was well aware of the importance of the pension and the pension benefits for the members and for the officers. He took it very seriously and did not want to ignore… He was the one that called for, for the first time, a really ramp-up approach, and giving the fund more money; the fund needs more money. By contrast for instance, you had a Dan Walker who, for the first time in the history of the state of Illinois, was asking a lesser amount be appropriated than was being paid out. Well for God's sake, you're paying from a deficit position. How can you do that, Governor? He did it; he proposed it. And a couple of the bills—I think we overrode one or two at least. But he was at a number that was significantly different than the actual number that was required for the payout. If you have ten people on the payroll that are supposed to get a hundred dollars a month, you can't get by with appropriating fifty; it just doesn't work.

DePue: But when you've got a billion-dollar deficit, that big a hole to fill, it's awfully tempting to defer or delay those payments, isn't it?

Rock: Oh, yeah, absolutely. It's an easy mark, an easy mark. And in those days—you'll recall, those were Jimmy Carter's years—the interest rates were 20 and 22 percent. (laughs) It was a real mess.

DePue: So a little bit easier in the nineties when interest rates were way below that rate.

Rock: Yes.

DePue: I want to quote Governor Edgar himself on some of his early discussions with you. I'd have to say he saw you as part of the friendly opposition, as somebody he could

go to and sit down and talk with sincerely and work the issues out, even though you were from opposing parties, so to speak. He says that Phil Rock got a hold of him one time and sat him down, and basically this is the quote, you say to him: "You've been dealt a bad hand. It's not your fault. You've got to raise taxes." Is that in reference, you think, to that first budget battle?[11]

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: And that's in reference to the surcharge, to retain the surcharge?

Rock: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: He's gone in some detail to talk about those first few months, realizing he had that budget deficit, and you walk it all the way through the middle of July; he even misses a payroll in the process of that first budget fight. Paint us a picture, if you can, about the dynamics of the personalities involved. What I'm referring to here is what we always hear from the press: it's the Four Tops, the four legislative leaders sitting down with the governor. Is that the case, and how did that actually work out?

Rock: Yeah, I think that was one of the first instances, at least in my experience, where the discussions between the four of us actually were producing some results. Jim was apparently willing to accept help, looking for help. I think I certainly did, and I think the others did too, take it seriously; we wanted to help, recognizing that a tax increase vote really doesn't help anybody. Some get madder than others, but even if you're right, you spend a great deal of time. It's almost like a distraction. Wherever you go, whatever you're saying, whatever your message is, (laughs) people want to talk about the tax increase, necessary or unnecessary. But I think there was genuine goodwill among the four of us that recognized something has to be done, and let's do the best we can under the circumstances.

DePue: Where were the meetings, and how often were these meetings between the leadership?

Rock: That's kind of a difficult one to answer there. They started out in the House Republican leader's office.

DePue: Lee Daniels?

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: And the governor would come to that office?

Rock: That office, right.

DePue: Was Joan Walters there as well?

[11] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, November 17, 2009, 584. See 576-587 for Edgar's discussion of the first budget fight. On Rock's sincerity, see Sherry Struck, interview by Mark DePue, November 3, 2010, 61.

Rock: Yes.

DePue: Did he have any other people with him?

Rock: No, as I recall, one of his staff people was in and out, but no staying power; he was just kind of handling the day-to-day affairs. Then I offered my office; I said, "If you want my opinion, these meetings ought to be held in the governor's office, not in any legislative leader's office, because what's going happen"—and it did happen and has happened since—"is that there is almost a proprietary interest in the venue, my office or your office. If you don't come to my office, (laughs) I'm not going to talk to you." And that happened. So I had to—and I did—visit with each of the other three and said, "Look, we're getting nowhere fast here because we're now down to nitty-gritty stuff like whose office do we meet in. What the hell difference does it make? You and I both know it's the TV cameras. There's thirty TV cameras and twelve reporters out there hawking us down the hall, so as soon as you walk into Daniels' office or as soon as you walk into Madigan's office or my office, the whole thing takes a little different flavor to it." And I said, "We don't need that. We don't need it. Why don't you pass a law and make my office neutral? That probably won't work, but it would be worth some fun for two days." (laughter) But I said, "We better get down to it and just recognize that the governor's a busy man; he's got people waiting to see him all day. One, it will push us to move a little faster, I suspect, than just kind of visiting around in a social hour."

So from that point forward I think we pretty much used only the governor's office when a meeting had to be called. Sometimes the meeting had to be called, and sometimes the governor said, "Oh, to hell with it, I don't want to talk to these guys today," and we'd have to have Daniels in particular call it, or Pate [Philip], and say, "Hey, we need a meeting; block out some time." But once it got rolling, once the wheels started to turn, then it took on a little different flavor. I think the Republicans particularly could see that we weren't out there to be obstructionists; we were there trying to help. And it worked out all right.

DePue: I wonder if you could lay out for us or explain why in Illinois then, and I think still to this day, the four legislative leaders have such dominance in what happens in legislation for the state. Why not the rank-and-file members of those two bodies?

Rock: Well, there's been an effort to bring the rank-and-file members aboard. If you remember the last few years at least, the subcommittees of the appropriations committee were directly involved. They would zero in on the individual agencies and make some of those decisions, line-item decisions, as to what they ought to be doing. That was at the direction of the leader. The leader would say, "Okay, we've got to hold DCFS down. They want a 10 percent increase. They can't have ten; nobody else is getting ten." That kind of stuff. So there were decisions that were being made. We were viewed, frankly, as doing the bigger picture. If we do this and this and this and this and this, this is what we come up with, we hope.

The last few tightenings of the nuts and bolts were left to the governor. It was his ship of state that was going up or down, and I think, as Pate so aptly put it, "Sink or swim." Here we go, you know. Edgar was pretty good about it. He recognized that this was a chance to sew it up, nail it down, if you will; that he could walk onto the floor or into his caucus at least and say, "The other three agree with this. As long as we've got an agreement and we're satisfied, we ought to take it and run." That's essentially what happened. When you get through all the other stuff, the little bit of political infighting we had, I think the budget decisions were good ones.

DePue: Those first two years especially, the Democrats had control of both the House and the Senate, correct?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: So I guess you had the hand in that respect. You got into the end of June, and you still didn't have a budget settled on. It gets into early July, and at least as Governor Edgar has explained it, the disagreement is primarily between Madigan and himself. Would that be a good characterization?

Rock: Yeah. And there were a number of issues that they were jousting about. Pate and I just took ourselves out of the program for a couple of weeks. (laughs) We just said, "I'm not going to argue about that."

DePue: Do you remember what the specific issues were?

Rock: No, I really don't. I think it's fair to say that some of the issues were camouflage for what they really wanted, and what they really wanted was caps on the local expenditures. In other words, when the DuPage County Board met and wanted a 25 percent increase in their budget, we wanted something to say, No, no, no—too much. If you're going to go above 5 percent—I think it was 5—you have to have a public hearing, have to this, have to that. It was a definite restriction against local government, and by the time local governments woke up to the fact that this was being foisted upon them, it was almost too late. It **was** too late. Jim had virtually signed it by that time.

We made the usual political speeches—good ones, I thought—that we'd be back in a year or two years or three years redoing this. I said, "You cannot expect people to run for local office and then take any authority away from them. That doesn't make any sense. Put a mechanic in there. Put a staff person in there. This is an elected official. If they want to raise their taxes 25 percent, let them go out and get the votes. Why is that your business? All of a sudden we're going to be like the big mother hen; we're going to make all the decisions. It's simply not going to work." To this day it hasn't been completely abolished, but it's been chewed away so that you wouldn't recognize it. I mean, the call for the 5 percent increase is virtually dead. I don't know if anybody does it. I think they perfunctorily put the ad

in the paper saying "Certain items in the budget may exceed the statutory authorization." Nobody knows what that means anyway.

DePue: Well, the governor made some pretty significant cuts in staffing, limiting the size of the state government—actually making some cuts and not just limiting growth, as I recall. There were compromises on both sides, but he came away from that, and his assessment was he won that first budget battle. Is that how you would assess it as well?

Rock: Yeah, I think that's fair. He did win. Because one of the things that was a reality—and he knew it, everybody in the building knew it—is the division in the Senate was very close. There was no monolith in the Senate. The House was a little different. If Mike had seven or eight spare votes, you could push people around a little bit. But in the Senate it simply wasn't that way. I had some people at my caucus who were recalcitrants; they just (laughs) didn't want to vote for anything for any reason, good or bad. They wanted their opinions to have some sway, they wanted to have people pay attention to them, but they didn't want to get in the mainstream, they didn't want to get in the swing of things.

DePue: Well, Senator, you're willing to share some names or portions of the state, parts of the caucus?

Rock: (laughs) I think it's fair to say that the Chicago delegation, which was the largest, had some members that, one, personally didn't like the governor, and two, didn't like much of what he said; so they just kind of threw up their hands and walked away from it. Offered no help. There were enough of us, hopefully, to overcome that, but we lost a couple of those battles. We lost that battle on the caps on the interest rate. That should never have become the law. It's not good for anybody except the diehard anti-tax people, the Jim Tobins of the world.[12] They want (laughs) no taxes, or if you're going to have a tax, make it as little as possible and lock it in and keep it there forever. Well, you can't run a government that way. You can't run a business or a house that way.

DePue: Tell us a little bit more about the nature of your caucus, because I've always been (laughs) intrigued. You mentioned already you've got the Chicago portion of it, but then you've got the downstate Democrats as well.

Rock: Yeah, we had, if you recall, a group called the Crazy Eight, which was eight or nine individuals from outside metropolitan Chicago who resented the fact, **resented the fact,** that they were identified as Daley Democrats.[13] In my opinion a couple of

[12] Jim Tobin is a well-known anti-tax activist who founded National Taxpayers United of Illinois in 1976 and whose early efforts included organizing a 1977 property tax strike in Cook County. Laura Janota, "Jim Tobin: Fighting Taxes is His Only Cause," *Illinois Issues* (August & September 1990), 29-30, http://www.lib.niu.edu/1990/ii900829.html.

[13] The Crazy Eight initially emerged in January 1975, resisting Cecil Partee's (D-Chicago) bid for Senate president until one of their own, Terry Bruce (D-Olney), secured an assistant majority leader position and the group received their choice of committee assignments. Bruce came up with the name for the group, which included Kenneth Buzbee (Carbondale), Vincent Demuzio (Carlinville), Vivian Hickey (Rockford), Jerome

them didn't even like to be called Democrats. I don't know what the hell they wanted to be called, but they were quite sincere. They would get up early in the morning and go over the bills like I did with my staff. I would be in one office with my staff going over the bills and the calendar for that day, and they'd be in a room down the hall doing the same thing—different results, frankly, (laughs) on some of the stuff. On any given day, I might have thirty bodies that I could count, but I couldn't count on thirty votes. It just never happened in my tenure as the leader.

DePue: When you say thirty, thirty out of fifty-nine?

Rock: Thirty's the constitutional majority that's needed, so if you look back in the *Blue Book*—I can't give you the numbers off the top of my head—but I never got up as high as thirty-five. I think one year I got to thirty-two; maybe one year I got to thirty-three. But even with thirty-two and thirty-three, I was never sure of thirty. Just that's the way it was.

DePue: Who was the leader of the Crazy Eight, or was there a leader?

Rock: That was one of the problems they had, that everybody was the leader. It was a headless horseman; they were all over the place. Terry Bruce was one. Don Wooten was another. He was from Rock Island. Terry was from Carbondale and points south.

DePue: I know there was at least one Chicago Democrat on that list; that was Dawn Clark Netsch.

Rock: That was Dawn Netsch.

DePue: But she would have been comptroller at this time, wouldn't she? Yeah, she was not in the legislature at that time.

Rock: She was not there at that time.

DePue: Tell us about the other leaders, the Four Tops, then. You have yourself, and then you have James 'Pate' Philip. You haven't mentioned much about him, but in terms of the budget battles, how did he come down on the discussions, how did his personality manifest itself?

Rock: He tolerated—is I think the word—the meetings and the discussions. Didn't like it, would have preferred not to do it, not to participate. Because a couple of times he stopped in my office and said, "Why the hell don't we forget this today?" I said, "Pate, if we forget it today, that means tomorrow somebody else is going to say, 'Let's skip it today,' and this thing will never happen. At least give the guy a chance to make his case. You know, I don't agree with this stuff…" Pate was

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Joyce (Reddick), William Morris (Waukegan), Dawn Clark Netsch (Chicago), and Don Wooten (Rock Island). Burnell Heinecke, "New Force in Senate: They Call Themselves 'The Crazy 8,'" *Illinois Issues* (January 1976), 21-23, http://www.lib.niu.edu/1976/ii760121.html.

building up a head of steam. He was starting to listen to the Jim Tobins of the world, "Cut them all off; they get nothing." (laughs) I said, "Nothing? You're going to go back to DuPage County and tell the DuPage County board, the biggest board next to Cook in the state, that you can't have a 5 percent increase without a hearing? Come on, give me a break."

DePue: That's his power base.

Rock: Yeah. So to that extent, that cuts both ways. He had a lot of friends and neighbors on the county board that he could push around, and they would listen. In county government throughout the county, he had a lot to say. But he was not very patient in that setting. He was like, "Come on, let's get going here. Let's get going." Of course, that's not the way those meetings ran. You'd have to hear from Daniels, and then Daniels would be refuted by Madigan, and then Madigan would be refuted by Pate, [who would] just say, "Ah, to hell with it." (laughs) It'd get around to me, and I'd try to start over and get this thing over.

There was a real dynamic that was going on all the time. I would say, "Pate is my friend and will forever be my friend, because we used to sneak out the back door." All the press was always in the front, like in the rotunda, with the cameras and the pencils and the whole thing. The four of us would start to come marching out, and the press would go over there to see Madigan and over here to see Daniels and over here to see Pate. "Where's Pate?" "Pate's gone." Pate went out the back door, and I went with him. (laughs) I said, "At least we're going to make it look like a House-Senate fight, we're not going to… This is nuts." But we would slip out the back. Right near the governor's back door out of his office, you head right out to the corridor, the stairwell, so it was a very quick trip (makes whooshing sound) **boom**, and you're up in the impregnable third floor (laughter) where they couldn't get near Pate's office. They'd catch me in the hallway sometimes, and I'd say, "Senator Philip and I decided that the Senate wasn't needed at this point in the discussion, so we'll attend the next one, maybe."

DePue: What was the relationship between Philip and the governor that you saw, just in these meetings, for example?

Rock: Pate was one who thought more politically than the others, obviously. He's a politician, a good one, a county chairman, and he's got all kinds of responsibilities. I think he viewed Edgar in that way, and Edgar was not as tough a politician as Pate would have wanted. Pate would have liked some guy with a hammer and an axe in there: just chop the budget apart and hammer anybody down who disagrees. He didn't have that; he had a more genteel approach to the whole business. So I don't think they ever got very close. Now, I could be wrong. That's just a perception of mine, that they were not exactly buddy-buddy—politically, at least. Personally, that's another story, but politically they were not.

DePue: How about on the House side? Let's start with Madigan, because most people, the talking heads at least, would say that Mike Madigan was then, and still to this day,

at least the second most powerful man in Illinois state government, if not sometimes the most powerful.

Rock: Yeah, Mike is like the Sphinx: he sits and listens and looks and never changes expression; you don't quite know where he's coming from. I never had any problem at all with Mike Madigan. We got along very well. He was open and freewheeling with me as to what he thought ought to be done and when it ought to be done, so we got along all right. He did not at all get along with Lee; they were at each other's throats for quite a while.

DePue: Madigan didn't get along with Lee?

Rock: Correct. And I don't think he had a very high regard for Jim Edgar, because again, Mike thinks in political terms—what's good politically, what's not good politically. Edgar wasn't quite there yet in terms of that kind of thinking. Not that it's bad, it's just a different approach. So I think to that extent, Mike kind of wrote him off; he didn't take what he said very seriously.

DePue: Did that change? Did Madigan's opinion change after that first budget battle, where Edgar at least feels like he won and beat Madigan in the process?

Rock: Yeah, right, and I think that's a fair assessment. I think Mike would admit that we got beat, and we got beat for a whole number of reasons, not the least of which was that I didn't have thirty votes. Mike could have put as many as he wanted on the board, but I couldn't deliver.

DePue: Did Madigan then have greater respect for Edgar coming out of that battle?

Rock: I don't know that his opinion changed very much; I think it just corroborated what he had thought originally. It was his first real encounter with him, and subsequent encounters were a little bit different. He was a little friendlier, I think is a good… He was warming up a little bit toward Jim, because the last couple of meetings we had, he was in there with both feet, fighting for what he wanted.

DePue: Talking to Governor Edgar, we've gone over this material quite a bit. Here's another quote that he said you had mentioned to him: "People say, 'What is the best advice you ever got?' I say, it's Phil Rock telling me, 'Chill out.' I never did chill out till the second term, but I just remember him saying—and later I thought, Here he is, he just wants to go home; here's this freshman governor who's made his life miserable, and he's arguing over three hundred thousand dollars in a twenty-seven- or twenty-four-billion-dollar budget. I'm sure Rock was just furious with me at that point."[14] I don't know where in this particular process it was, but he remembers that story and that advice you gave him. Do you?

Rock: Yeah. I did get a little bit mad at him and tell him to chill out. I said, "You know, you're going to have to grow up in this job. You've got more fish to fry than this

[14] Jim Edgar, November 17, 2009, 581.

little stinking bill." (laughs) And I genuinely liked him—still like him. It's just he came at that office from a different background. There is a hell of a difference between being a staff guy, even a head staff guy, and being The Guy.

DePue: Well, you could make the point that all governors come at it from a different perspective. Certainly Walker did, and Jim Thompson came from a completely different background. Who other than Edgar had more depth of experience in both legislative affairs and a constitutional office, working in state government, being with Arrington?

Rock: Right. I think part of it was that people started with that assumption, that here's a guy with all the experience in the world that you can have, and he still is not getting it right. You know, it's not clicked in.

DePue: When you say he wasn't getting it right, it didn't click in, what exactly are you referring to, though?

Rock: The political side of virtually every question that we deal with, because like it or not, there is a political side to virtually everything we do down there. One, it has to be recognized, and two, it has to be dealt with. You can't ignore it. I always said one of my dreams is, I'd go back there with thirty-five senators, all of whom I elected or helped elect, and I would rise up on the first day (laughter) and say, "Here's the agenda, folks. We're going to be busy for two weeks." Yeah, it's a great dream.

DePue: But it wouldn't last for month after month; it would just last two weeks, huh?

Rock: That's all. That's all I'd need to set the whole calendar for two months.

DePue: We left one person out of this Four Tops discussion. We've mentioned him a couple of times—Lee Daniels—and the relationship between Daniels and Edgar and this group in particular. When the Four Tops were together, what role did he play?

Rock: He was always well-informed and pretty well had his mind made up. You got the impression that, My way or no way. And that's one way to bargain. Sometimes you won and sometimes you didn't. But I think he always envisioned himself as the governor, or should be the governor; all these other guys keep coming through, and Daniels is still there in the House. Not a small job, the Speaker of the House, but I think he had a higher ambition. Unfortunately he never got a chance to try it out, because he was more contentious than the rest. Even though Pate was a little harder-nosed, Pate wouldn't make a big deal out of it. He'd tell you you're wrong, and that's it—he's out, he's gone. Daniels would sit and argue and point out thirty different ways you're wrong. Some took it well; some didn't take it at all. I don't think Lee took it very well.

DePue: Four very different people in that group, and five when you throw Edgar in, certainly. Was Philip or was Daniels there representing the agenda of the governor, or did each one have his own specific agenda he was pursuing?

Rock: I would say that Pate wanted to be with the governor. That was his disposition. That's the way he saw his role as the Republican leader. Daniels seldom was with him. Daniels would always have a better way to do it, or his way would reflect what the people want. I think Edgar was just biding his time. It's like walking through a landmine field; you don't (laughs) quite know where your foot's going to get blown off.

DePue: In other words, you're not sure exactly who your friends are in this.

Rock: That's correct, that's correct.

DePue: What role did you see yourself playing in that group?

Rock: Oh, kind of a (pause) go-between. Daniels might not talk to Pate, but he would talk to me and Pate would talk to me, and then I'd talk to them and have them talk to each other. It got a little convoluted. But things got hot and heavy down there. When it gets to be about the first of July and you say, "What the hell are we doing here? We're at least thirty days over, and we're nickel-and-diming around here." So the proposals started to get a little more reasonable, and when they got a little more reasonable, I would step in on a little bit more and put a little pressure on these guys to get it over with. I said, "You've got the city of Chicago to contend with. Now, you can't possibly make this applicable to the city of Chicago under anybody's [plan]. You'll have to veto it yourself. Chicago's got to be excluded from this." I said, "You want to do it to your county…"

DePue: Again, you're talking about the tax cap?

Rock: Yeah, the tax cap. That was a big deal. The local governments, unfortunately, weren't paying attention to that thirty days in July when we were arguing the hell out of this thing, and all of a sudden, **boom**—for their next board meeting where they're proposing a budget, they have to have less than 5 percent or they need a public hearing. Ooh, man. We weren't two days out and they started calling for a special session to repeal that son of a gun.

DePue: Of course, I think it was the eighteenth of July that the budget was finally passed, so they missed a payroll for some of the state employees by a couple days. I know that was a great concern to the governor himself, to think there were state employees out there who were going to miss that payroll and go through that financial strain. But he got the thing passed, and from your assessment, certainly from his assessment, it was a victory on his side. Then the economy, stubbornly, did not improve. They got to December and January and he said, Holy cow, we've got a bigger hole even than we thought. And you guys had to go back at it again. You remember anything particular about going back and tinkering with that? This would have been the 1992 budget.

Rock: Not specifically. I can remember tinkering, but I don't remember much specific. It was kind of like every time we walked it, we'd say, "So we told you so."

Everybody was taking credit for the fact (laughter) that they knew the answer then, but they weren't going to tell anybody then.

DePue: A lot of second-guessing in that respect.

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: I don't know if you recall anything about the reapportionment fight that would have occurred. Would that have been '92 when that went on?

Rock: Yeah, every ten years. Yeah, I think so. I'm not sure of the date. I think so.

DePue: Do you recall anything specific about that reapportionment? Because the inside politics, that's where future majorities are made, if you want to look at it that way. I didn't mean to put you on the spot.

Rock: No, I'm just trying to… I just don't recall. Ryan was the governor then, right? I was with one map with Ryan, anyway.

DePue: Yeah, well that would have been 2002?

Rock: Okay.

DePue: That would have been the end of Ryan's administration. If you don't mind, let's shift gears here. I want to ask just your impressions of some of the other people that Edgar had on his team.

Rock: Okay, then I got to move on.

DePue: Very quickly, then, let's start with the chief of staff, Kirk Dillard.

Rock: (pause) Kirk Dillard was probably one of the best staff guys I ever saw operate. Very studious, politically very aware, and a straight shooter. He was good.

DePue: Joan Walters, his budget director.

Rock: Yeah, I think she was certainly competent. She knew the material. Didn't deliver very well in terms of her own public speaking ability. She was very soft-spoken and never got overly excited, and I think she was just out of her league. She should have been with a corporate board as opposed to this jungle that we were in. But she was fine. Nobody liked to directly argue with her. You felt like a bully. On the hard questions, she would come into a meeting, and she would have somebody with her who could answer the direct slurs and stuff.

DePue: Mike Lawrence, the press secretary.

Rock: Mike was probably too knowledgeable. He (laughs) knew more about the business than most people in the room. He had a set of rules and regulations that he lived by and expected everybody else to live by them. He was a good commentator on things

political in the capitol building. Highly regarded, and most people didn't want to cross swords with him because they knew they were going to lose. He's got the newsprint.

DePue: He also had the ear of the governor, because most would say you couldn't find a closer advisor to the governor than Mike Lawrence.

Rock: Right, right. He was the last word for the governor, yes.

DePue: The legislative liaisons. I believe when you were still there, it would have been Steve Selcke and Mark Boozell.

Rock: Yeah. Both very good. I like to call them good mechanics. I had a couple. I had Bill Holland, who's distinguished himself as the auditor. Those people are irreplaceable. They're just that good. They're the kind of people you want to see around as kind of a career diplomat. A career staff person is a good thing. The problem we have is that all those younger people are able, and they're quickly recruited by the corporate world for lobby business or analysis or whatever. Can't do without them.

DePue: Are there any others in Edgar's inner team, if you will, that stick out to you?

Rock: No, not really.

DePue: Your impressions of Mrs. Edgar, then, Brenda Edgar.

Rock: Delightful lady, just delightful. You're never sure with ladies, having met as many as I have over the years. In the position of leader, I try to greet everybody and get to know everybody, and there aren't too many women that like politics. She did remarkably well under some terrible circumstances. When they were beating up on him pretty good, she was gracious as could be. Nice, nice person.

DePue: You've indicated that you need to get going here pretty soon.

Rock: Yeah.

DePue: I was going to ask you about the second budget fight. Anything particular just in the—

Rock: I don't think there was anything spectacular about that one.

DePue: Different results for the governor. He figures that he lost that round in the summer of 1992, that he didn't fare quite as well, but he still felt awfully good about having prevailed in July 1991 on that.[15]

Rock: Yeah.

[15] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 23, 2010, 622.

DePue: Let's do some summing up, then. First of all, your retirement from public life. Let's talk about that just a bit, that decision.

Rock: At that point in my life, I was ruminating about the possibility of running for the Illinois Supreme Court. That's the pinnacle for those of us that have a law degree. I went so far, as a matter of fact, to have petitions printed, and I had some of them signed. I was walking around with them in my pocket, and I went to see some people—political people, obviously—up my way, so I'd have home base protected and I wouldn't have to (laughs) stay there and man the walls; I could go out and go get them. I wound up one night sitting at the kitchen table. It was about 11:30 at night, and I was going over these petition sheets that I had spent all day and all night rustling up. And I thought, What the hell am I doing?

So I rethought the position and thought, Well, it's about time I spent a little time with the family, and see if I can regenerate my law business and make a living for a change. I just called some of the people that I had called to go the other way, and I said, "I appreciate your encouragement and your enthusiasm and your help, but I just don't think I'm going to make the run. I've been in government twenty-five years, and that's enough for any sane person. I've still got a long time remaining; my kids are not quite fully grown, so they're still around." So I just opted out. The fact is, the one that was waiting at the door—and was, for a lot of reasons, expected to receive the endorsement of our party as the first woman justice in our state's history—was Mary Ann McMorrow. Delightful person, good lady, good politician. But she told the powers that be, even the ones that supported her, that she would not run if I was running. She and I were close friends, I think is a… I knew her politically.

But for the first time in twenty years, I felt like I was liberated. I just had (laughs) nothing to do. So I got a young man who has political ambition, has the will and knowledge to do it, and I installed him politically as the committeeman and said, "Go get them."

DePue: Who was that?

Rock: Don Harmon. He's doing very well, as I suspected he would—as I knew he would.

DePue: So essentially, the 1992 election, you bowed out at that time?

Rock: Yes.

DePue: And who won the seat after you left?

Rock: After I left. (laughs) We lost the Senate, and Pate was the Senate president, and then we got it back.

DePue: Not the presidency, but your particular representative district.

Rock: Oh, I see, okay. There was a map change subsequent to that, so Don Harmon is filling my… He's got probably 80 percent of my old district.

DePue: Let's get to some concluding questions here for you, and start with an overall assessment of the Edgar administration—and not just the timeframe that you were serving in the legislature, but the overall eight years that he had.

Rock: I think fairly, one would have to admit, he was a good governor: conscientious government-wise, and a hard worker. Yeah, I would give him high marks as a governor.

DePue: What in particular in terms of the accomplishments or the legislation or things that happened during his administration would you point to say, Yes, he was a good governor?

Rock: Oh, gosh. I'd have to look at a list. If you give me a list of five things, I could say, That was a good one.

DePue: Balancing the budget would be one. One that he didn't expect but governors oftentimes get, the Flood of 1993. Educational reform, and break that up into two parts: Chicago school reform and finding a way to generate more revenue for schools in general. Also what he did in terms of adoption and child welfare. Those would be five that I would list off the top of my head.

Rock: I think the education piece, both Chicago and downstate, could be his hallmark. I happened to have been there during that period of time, and I know how hard he worked and how hard a lot of people worked to get that done. Hopefully it's starting to pay dividends with some of the recent test scores, and the vindication, I think, from some of the naysayers who had doubts about whether or not it could be done at all, ever. I think he could take credit for an awful lot of that, if not all of it.

DePue: Would there be anything in particular you'd point to and say, Here is a failure, or, Here is something I was disappointed about in terms of the administration?

Rock: I suppose the tax caps just bugged me as a government-lover. (laughs) I'll never understand that, but that was just a knee-jerk reaction to some concern by the anti-tax folks—and not just the anti-tax up to 5 percent, the anti-tax, period. They don't want anything. And when you start talking in those terms, they lose their credibility. They've got nothing to say, in my opinion.

DePue: How about the MSI scandal? Do you think that hurt Edgar? Do you think there was anything to that?

Rock: No, I do not. I would be shocked and surprised if Jim Edgar had any involvement. I just don't believe it.

DePue: Looking back now, it's been a long time, almost twenty years, since you stepped out of the public arena. Any regrets that you left that early in your life?

Rock: No, I have no regrets. When I did it, I did it full-tilt, full-bore, and loved it. To a certain extent, it took away from another part of my life, namely my wife and kids. I just didn't see nearly enough of them. Then they started going off to school; then I saw them less. If I have any regret, that's it.

DePue: Well, Senator, I told you that I would keep this very focused on Jim Edgar, and I think we certainly have up to this point, but I'm awfully tempted to get your impressions, just maybe a real quick impression, of the governors who have followed Jim Edgar.

Rock: The governors who have followed him. Okay. Tell me who they are, and I'll tell you what I think.

DePue: First we've got George Ryan.

Rock: George was my friend and is my friend. I think he was betrayed by others who called themselves his friends, and they weren't his friends.I'm sick about it, because if you look at what he ultimately was charged with, it's wrong that he should bear the weight of those charges. It's just wrong. I think governmentally he was a good politician, a very good politician, and wanted to do what was in the best interest of the state. I really believe that.

DePue: Do you think he was—well, I'm going to use this word—more skillful in dealing with the legislative leaders?

Rock: Yes. He was hail-fellow-well-met. He got along with everybody. He wasn't a fall guy for everybody; he was almost too loyal to some of his friends who thought they were his friends or pretended to be his friends. All the time they were looking to take advantage of him, and they did.

DePue: You're very much on the outside for the next personality, but I'm sure you hear from lots of people who are still friends in the House or the Senate about Rod Blagojevich as governor.

Rock: I can honestly say I met the young man only once when he was a member of the Illinois House. He was one of the Chicago delegation that I love to talk about. There's a whole bunch of them from Chicago that as soon as they hit Springfield, whether they get off an airplane or get off the bus or get out of their car, the first thing they ask you, when they see a leader, "When are we going home?" Now, they haven't been there ten minutes, and they want to know when they're going home. I used to keep tabs on some of these guys, (laughs) and it was always the ones that wanted to go home right away—I could name five or six—that accomplished nothing. And every once in a while they'll vote awry. They'll know, for instance, that Madigan's got seventy-five votes on something, and they're all aye votes; these guys will vote no just because they want to be recognized—Hey, we're still here. They don't talk to them, but why do you talk to somebody that says, When are we going home?" They don't want to be there. Over the course of my career, I discouraged guys from running when they said, "Well, how much time do we have

to spend?" and that kind of… I said, "Ooh-hoo-hoo, you're in the wrong business. Don't do it."

So the long and short is, George is my friend and will remain my friend, and I wish him nothing but the best. He got a raw deal.

DePue: And Rod Blagojevich would not fall in that category, I take it?

Rock: No. Again, I started with that. I met him only once, when he ran up to me and asked me that question, "How long are we going to be here?" He was never in his seat in the House—not that I ever looked for him, but that was reported to me, that he never sat in his seat.

DePue: How about the next one. Is it fair to ask you about your opinions of Pat Quinn as governor, or is it too early to say?

Rock: Yeah, it's too early. I was shocked and appalled, however, to listen to the debate between our two gubernatorial candidates, a debate in which they each said nothing. Nothing! (laughs) What are you going to do, Governor? Nothing. We're going to have to cut the deficit. Oh, that's wonderful. How are you going to do that? Well, we'll cut spending. That's good; where are you going to cut spending? We're going to cut the deficit. It would be a wonderful study for somebody like Bruce DuMont or one of those aficionados for the TV industry.[16] Let's say, "How'd you like to put these two guys on TV and have them explain what government is?" Holy cripe.

So no, I have nothing but disregard for that young man [Blagojevich]. I think he's twisted, and from what I hear—and again, this is hearsay—he was one of four freshmen in the Congress of the United States who got clustered together. They sat together, these four, each of whom had come from an elected position in other parts of the country, and they were plotting their move to be the vice president and president of the United States. That's what they were working on, these four.

DePue: Now, you're talking about Blagojevich again?

Rock: Yeah, he's one of the four. He was gearing up to be the vice presidential candidate. Go figure. (laughs) I don't know.

DePue: I very much enjoyed talking to you. It's been illuminating. Anything you'd like to say in closing?

Rock: No. I wish Jim well, and I thank him for his service to our state. It was well done.

DePue: I think that's a fitting way to end. Thank you very much, Senator.

Rock: You are welcome. Say hello for me when you see him.

[16] Bruce DuMont is a radio commentator who hosts *Beyond the Beltway*. From 1987 to 2006, he also hosted a television show, *Illinois Lawmakers*, which covered the state legislature.

DePue: I will do that.

(end of interview)