

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Governor Dan Walker

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft Oral History project

Interview # ISW-A-L-2007-015

Governor Dan Walker, Illinois' governor from 1973 to 1977, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project.

Interview dates & locations:

Date: August 21, 2007 Location: Governor Walker's condominium in Rosarito, Mexico.

Date: August 22, 2007 Location: Rosarito, Mexico

Date: August 22, 2007 Location: Rosarito, Mexico

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center of Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 131 Total Time: 2:27 + 2:21 + 2:31 = 7 hr 19 min / 7.32 hrs

Session 1: Early life and political career.

Session 2: Years as governor, from 1973-1977

Session 3: Life beyond the governor's mansion, both good and bad

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 11/26/2007.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Governor Dan Walker, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISW-A-L-2007-015

Biographical Information & Synopsis: Daniel (Dan) Walker was born on August 6, 1922 in Washington, D.C. The son of a career naval petty officer, Dan spent his later youth in San Diego, California, and upon graduation from high school, joined the navy during WW II. He soon gained admittance to the U.S. Naval Academy, graduating in 1945. He served in the Navy until 1947, when he resigned his commission to attend Law School at Northwestern University in Evanston, marrying Roberta Dowse that same year. He graduated in 1950 and soon found work clerking for Chief Justice Fred Vinson before being called back to duty during the Korean War. Following the war, Walker eventually settled in Chicago, where he found challenging law work while also getting involved in state politics. It was during this period that he developed an intense dislike for Chicago-style machine politics, especially as run by Richard J. Daley, Mayor of Chicago.

In 1969 Walker gained notoriety for conducting and reporting on a federal investigation of the disturbances at the Chicago Democratic Convention of 1968 using the phrase “police riot.” In 1972, he ran as an independent Democratic candidate for governor, walking the entire length of the state and beating Paul Simon (the incumbent Lieutenant Governor and Mayor Daley’s regular organization candidate) in a close vote. He won the general election against Republican incumbent Richard Ogilvie by a wider margin, then served for four tumultuous years as governor, a period marked by some executive branch reforms but also by his often stormy relationship with the legislature and continued confrontation with Mayor Daley. He was defeated in the Democratic primary of 1976 by Michael Howlett, then went into business, including a fast oil change and a Savings and Loan. It was during this time that he divorced and remarried, and also, uncharacteristically, began living extravagantly. When the Savings and Loan ran into serious difficulty, Walker’s strained finances resulted in charges of bank fraud and perjury. He pled guilty to three charges in November of 1987, and subsequently served 18 months in a minimum security federal prison in Duluth Minnesota. Following his release from prison, Walker eventually returned to the San Diego area, where he did charity work and wrote six books, including his memoir, *The Maverick and the Machine*.

Topics Covered: U.S. Naval Academy; Northwestern University; Fred M. Vinson; Richard J. Daley; Victor de Grazia; *Walker Report*; Adlai E. Stevenson II; Adlai E. Stevenson III; Paul Simon; Richard Ogilvie; David Green; William Goldberg; zero-base budgeting; Michael Howlett; Roberta (Dowse) Walker; Roberta (Nelson) Walker; First American Savings and Loan Association; Butler/Walker Ten Minute Oil Change Centers; S & L crisis; Duluth Federal Prison

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