

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Paul Findley

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

Interview # IS-A-L-2013-002

Paul Findley, an Illinois Congressman from west-central Illinois who served from January, 1961 to 1982, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Jan 15, Jan 29, Feb 8, Feb 19, Mar 11 & Mar 18, 2013

Location: Whipple Hall, Illinois College campus, Jacksonville, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Claire Jerry & Jan Culp, ALPL Volunteers

Total Pages: 205 Total Time: 2:29(Session 1) + 1:56(2) + 1:49(3) + 2:11(4) + 1:50(5) + 3:02(6) / 2.48(Session 1) + 1.93(2) + 1.82(3) + 2.18(4) + 1.83(5) + 3.03(6) = 13.27 hrs

Session 1: Early life in Jacksonville, college and World War II service in Pacific

Session 2: Findley's career as a journalist, and his election to Congress in 1960

Session 3: Early years in U.S. House of Representatives in 1960s, & domestic policies

Session 4: Findley's entry into foreign affairs in the 1960s

Session 5: The Vietnam War, the War Powers Act and Watergate

Session 6: Findley's Middle East initiatives, the PLO, and the 1980 and 1982 elections

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 18, 2013.

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

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Abstract

Paul Findley, *Illinois Statecraft*, IS-A-L-2013-002

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Paul Findley was born on June 23, 1921 in Jacksonville, Illinois, and grew up there. His father was an insurance salesman until he was stricken by Parkinson's disease, and his mother ran the local school cafeteria, as well as other odd jobs. Paul learned to make his own way in the world at an early age, and by graduation from high school in 1939 he was already working on the local newspaper, as well as doing other jobs. He attended Illinois College in Jacksonville, and in 1942 enrolled in the Naval Reserves. Upon his early college graduation in January 1943, he began his naval training, first in Illinois, then upon receiving a commission as a naval supply officer, for several months at Harvard University. In early 1944 he shipped out to Hawaii on the way to the Enewetak atoll. His unit, the 72nd Seabee Battalion, landing on Guam immediately following the eviction of the Japanese, and his unit constructed an air base. While there, Findley met his future wife, Lucille Gemme, who was based at Guam and serving as a flight nurse. The two were married in January 1946, and Findley soon found employment as a journalist. In 1947 he became the editor for the *Pike County Republican*, and years later purchased the paper.

Findley ran for the state legislature in 1952, but was defeated. He next ran for office in 1960, using a carefully crafted speech including excerpts of Abraham Lincoln speeches to help launch his political career, running as a fiscally conservative Republican. Once in Congress, his visibility in the House grew, initially for his work on the Agriculture Committee. He had a tough reelection campaign in 1962 following redistricting, and by the mid-1960s also gained a seat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. His political views continued to evolve in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was opposed to America's involvement in the Vietnam War, was responsible for reading the names of all those killed in Vietnam into the Congressional Record, and in 1973 was an active supporter of the War Powers Act.

In 1974 Findley made his first trip to the Middle East (South Yemen), and in January 1978 met with PLO chief Yasser Arafat, at a time when the U.S. had no official relations with Arafat. In 1980 he faced a serious Republican primary challenge due to his moderate position on abortion and his tacit support for the PLO. He was defeated in 1982 by Dick Durbin, after his district was reapportioned to favor the Democrats. Following his defeat, he was asked to write a book about the powerful Jewish lobby in the United States. He published *They Dare to Speak Out* in 1985. The book has gone through several printings and has been published in multiple languages. He continues to be a strong advocate for Palestinian issues. He passed away on August 9, 2019 at the age of ninety-eight.

Subject Headings/Key Words: U.S. Congressman from 1961 thru 1982; liaison with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO); Yasser Arafat; positions on Vietnam War; War Powers Act; agricultural policy during 1960s; Abraham Lincoln; Seabee supply officer during WW II; Service on Guam during WW II; *They Dare to Speak Out*; occupation duty in post-war Japan; visiting Nagasaki; attack on the USS Victory; Dick Durbin; Clarence K. Streit; Illinois College;

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