

Interview with Sherry Struck

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, November 3, 2010. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I have the pleasure today to interview Sherry Struck, and we're in your home. Sherry, good morning.

Struck: Good afternoon.

DePue: Good afternoon.

Struck: Good afternoon on this pretty day.

DePue: Yeah. I'm having all kinds of problems today.

Struck: Yes, you are.

DePue: I'm still getting over the election from yesterday, November 2, 2010. It was a big election, and this session is going to have a lot of new congressmen.

Struck: A lot of new ones, a lot of new ones. A lot of surprises for me.

DePue: It looks like Illinois is going to have a new senator in Mark Kirk, and we still don't know who the governor's going to be. The reason I'm talking with you, Sherry, is that you had a very long relationship with Jim and Brenda Edgar, first starting as neighbors for something like ten years, and then working in his administration.

Struck: Yes.

DePue: So this is going to be a fun interview, and hopefully we learn a little bit more about the Edgar—

Struck: As we sit here looking out at his former home.

DePue: Absolutely. Tell us where you live, then.

Struck: I live at 30 Sarah Avenue in Springfield, in the Hyde Park subdivision. We moved here in 1979 from Normal, Illinois.

DePue: How far away were the Edgars when you first lived here?

Struck: They were across the road and around the corner.

DePue: We're going to get to that a little bit later in the interview, but I wanted to start with your telling me a little bit about where and when you were born.

Struck: I was born October 15, 1949, in Bloomington, Illinois. My mother was primarily a homemaker; my father worked in an auto body shop. My father died when I was ten—about ten and three quarters—very suddenly; had a heart attack, died at home. I lived with my mother. My mother remarried five years later. Went to Bloomington High School. Have an older sister, nine years older.

DePue: What was your maiden name?

Struck: Williams.

DePue: Now, your father—if you were born in 1949, the obvious question is: Is he a veteran of World War II?

Struck: Yes, he was.

DePue: Do you know much about what he did during the war?

Struck: I know that he was a medic. I just found that out a few years ago. He would not speak of the war very much. I would love to have had the opportunity to talk to him about it. One of my cousins told me that he was a medic on the front line in Europe but had kind of a breakdown because he saw so much. So his last few months were in a different capacity.

DePue: Do you remember much about your father, then?

Struck: Not too much at all. I spent a great deal of time with him, but I do not. (laughs) I'm sixty-one now, and I was ten then, so that's a long time ago.

DePue: What was his name?

Struck: His name was Chalmer.

DePue: Chalmer Williams.

Struck: He was one of nine.

DePue: Wow.

Struck: Large family.

DePue: And your mother?

Struck: My mother's name was Sarah Irene. Her maiden name was Head.

DePue: Is that S-a-r-a-h?

Struck: That's correct. And I live on Sarah.

DePue: Did your mother tell you much about your dad when you were growing up?

Struck: You know, not too much at all. He died so suddenly that it kind of threw my mother into a little bit of a panic, a funk. My sister was gone, and with me being a child, she did not talk too much about him. Some of my aunts and uncles have told me different things over the years.

DePue: Was she working at the time your father passed away?

Struck: She went to work. My father had two heart attacks, one that he was not aware he had had—had some heartburn and went to the doctor, and they discovered that he had already had a heart attack—then had another one during the night. He had high blood pressure, and back then they just had you stay home; there was no treatment. So Mother did go to work then. She was working at the time when he passed away, too.

DePue: Where did she work?

Struck: She worked for a local motel in Bloomington, and I cannot remember the name. She quickly got a job, since once he had his first heart attack and the second—it was not too many months in between—she just took any temporary job that she could get. After he passed away, she went to work in an office in an insurance company in Bloomington and enjoyed it very much.

DePue: Did you have to move because of...

Struck: No, no. We stayed right where we had lived. My father and my uncle built our home, and we were able to stay.

DePue: What school did you go to, then?

Struck: I went to Bloomington High School. Bloomington Grade School, Junior High, High School.

DePue: Any interests especially drawing your attention at the time?

Struck: I always loved history, and I always enjoyed office applications that I learned, but that's a big regret for me—I wish I had had the opportunity to go to school. Before Dad got sick, I wanted to be a nurse, and the opportunity to go to school, to study, did not come to me. But I enjoy helping people who maybe have a medical problem, helping them understand and get treatment.

DePue: You say you didn't have the opportunity. Is that because of the financial situation?

Struck: I imagine. My mother never sat me down to talk to me about it. My sister did not have the opportunity either. She was nineteen when she married. Neither Mother nor my father had gone to school.

DePue: Did you ever bring it up with your mother?

Struck: Oh, no, no.

DePue: Was she remarried at the time?

Struck: She was remarried. After high school, I was just expected to get a job or go on. I know that I did have a small veteran's pension that had come in monthly, and that was given to me later in life, and that I could have used for school. I should have taken it on myself to go to the school counselors, but I was extremely shy in high school.

DePue: So it sounds like it never even occurred to you that you should push the issue.

Struck: No, no, not at all. As I got older and had the jobs that I've had, I very much wanted to. When I married my husband, he and I talked about it. When I left the administration, the Edgar administration, I did take some classes and enjoyed it very much.

DePue: What happens after you graduate from high school?

Struck: I went to work for the Illinois Farm Bureau in October 1967. Worked in the information division, which was a keypunch¹ position, with membership records. Worked very hard. Was asked to move to another division that was called the information division, but it was the radio/TV/PR, and I enjoyed that very much. I worked in the radio/TV division for the director of radio/TV; I learned a lot, got a lot of confidence, had a lot of opportunities.

¹ Early computers were activated by cards which had holes punched in rows and columns. The cards were "keypunched" on a typewriter-like device, then put through a mechanical sorter, collator, calculator, etc.

DePue: I mentioned to you before that I've had the opportunity to interview Harold Steele, who is the former Farm Bureau president. How well did you know Harold?

Struck: I knew him very well. The little tea set over there on the counter is a wedding gift he gave me when I married Earl. He had a little reception for us.

DePue: Well, that's very generous.

Struck: Very generous. He and Mr. Allen—Bill Allen, my boss—had a little reception for us after we married. Very, very nice man.

DePue: He's quite a character.

Struck: He's quite a character.

DePue: Did you enjoy working at the Farm Bureau?

Struck: I enjoyed it very much.

DePue: What was it that you liked so much about the job?

Struck: It was a family-type organization. They have a lot of integrity. They were respected around the state. They treated their employees very well. And I learned a lot. I had the opportunity to go to Chicago for the annual meeting. Bill Allen was such that he gave us a lot of opportunities if we wanted it.

DePue: You mentioned you learned a lot. Anything in particular that stays with you?

Struck: I learned not to be as shy as I was. When I worked for Bill, at one of the annual meetings he sent me to the governor's office in Chicago, and as shy as I was before, I doubt that I would have been comfortable doing that. We had Vice President Shapiro come in, so I got to work with the Secret Service, got to meet a lot of people throughout the state coming in. I typed press releases on the old stencils; you probably don't even remember those.

DePue: Oh, I remember those.

Struck: The old green stencils before all of the copiers and things that we have now. So I enjoyed it. I learned an awful lot about radio/TV.

DePue: Did you get married during this timeframe?

Struck: I got married to my first husband in 1970. I was working for the membership records department then. The information division was interested in me, and I moved shortly after that.

DePue: Is that still in the Bloomington area, though?

Struck: Yes, the home office in Bloomington. Mike and I were not married that long. We were both young. We have a wonderful son who came from that marriage. He and I are still friends.

DePue: You and Mike are still friends.

Struck: Yes.

DePue: And your son's name?

Struck: Brad.

DePue: Your son's name is Brad?

Struck: Um-hm.

DePue: Okay.

Struck: Isn't that something?

DePue: Yeah, we'll get to the connection there later.

Struck: (laughs) Yes, I have a Brad also.

DePue: You mentioned that you got divorced sometime after that. Did you get remarried?

Struck: I remarried. I met my future husband in Chicago at the annual meeting. He [Earl] worked for the legislative department of the Farm Bureau. He had been out in the county; he had been in Washington County down in southern Illinois, and then in Kane County, as the Farm Bureau manager for the office, and they asked him to come to Bloomington to work in the legislative office. So during the annual meeting he came over to ask me to type a press release; I typed it, and he asked for a copy, and that's where we met.

DePue: And what year was that?

Struck: That was in 1974.

DePue: When did you get married?

Struck: We got married in July of '76.

DePue: How long were you working, then, in Bloomington?

Struck: We were both working for Farm Bureau. I worked for the Farm Bureau until we moved to Springfield in '79. So I started in '67. When I was married to Mike, I lived in Florida for about six months. When I came back, I worked for one year for the General Telephone Company until my position in the information division became available again, and they asked me to come back to work.

DePue: They were just waiting for the opportunity.

Struck: (laughs) I really enjoyed it. I had wonderful bosses. My boss Kent went on to be the mayor, and he was Mr. Steele's assistant.

DePue: Kent?

Struck: Karraker. He went on to be the mayor of Normal.

DePue: Now, you said you moved down to Springfield in 1979. Was there something that brought Earl down to Springfield as well?

Struck: When we both worked with the Farm Bureau, he traveled a great deal and was down here during the legislative session. Driving back and forth from Bloomington to Springfield was quite a challenge, especially when they were in session. So he heard of a job with the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives; he applied and got the job. He actually started in February of '79, and he commuted. Once the legislative session finished, we moved to Springfield. It was the same weekend that the Edgars moved into their home in Hyde Park.

DePue: In his position as basically the lobbyist for the Illinois Farm Bureau—and here Edgar is from a farming area of the state, when he's a legislator—did they have any opportunity to know each other?

Struck: They did. Earl, when he was with Farm Bureau, would lobby educational issues. The governor [Edgar], at that time, was in the House, and they were—

DePue: That would have been '77 to early 1980.

Struck: Yes. Well, he left in '79 because he went to work for [Governor] Thompson.

DePue: As his legislative assistant.

Struck: Yes. So they knew each other. He was in the House when they first met. Jim really had a lot of educational interest in the legislature, and that's how Earl met him.

DePue: Did he know him very well at that time?

Struck: They worked on some bills together. I don't know how well. Earl and another lobbyist friend of his knew him and talked about him after we moved here.

DePue: Tell us more about moving into this neighborhood.

Struck: We moved in after school was out and after the [legislative] session was over. We looked at several places in Springfield, but we found this home because it was close to Earl's office and it had a good school district. We moved in right before the Fourth of July; the neighborhood, being small, had a little Fourth of July family picnic, and then they had a little fireworks show. We went up to the common area,

and Earl said, "I know that fellow. He's a former legislator." I said, "Who's that?" and he said, "Jim Edgar." So that's when I first met him. They moved in about the same time we did. We sat with them at the picnic, and then they came to our home after the picnic and sat in our driveway as we watched fireworks.

DePue: Now, you have one son.

Struck: Yes, I have one son, Brad, and then I have two stepchildren. I have a stepdaughter, Amy, and she's married; she has three children. She's a teacher, teaches fourth grade in Sherman. And then I have a stepson, Bill, and he lives in Wilmington, North Carolina. And then my son. So the two older ones are my stepchildren, but we raised them as our family.

DePue: So all three of the children were in the same household?

Struck: During the summers, Earl's children were with us; at the time, they lived in Bloomington, so we had them every other weekend. They moved, I guess about two years after that, to North Carolina.

DePue: The obvious question, then, is that the governor and Mrs. Edgar have two children themselves. They have Brad and Elizabeth. So tell us where the ages of these children fit in.

Struck: Our Amy was the oldest. She was a year older than their Brad. Then their Brad, and our Bill was two years younger. Our Brad was a year under our Bill, and then Elizabeth was the next, so they were kind of stair steps.

DePue: Did you refer to your children as "our Brad" and "your Brad"?

Struck: Yes, Earl and I did. When Brad Edgar lived in the neighborhood, he loved hunting and fishing. If he'd go off and maybe shoot a duck or something and didn't understand what kind of duck it was; if he'd call, I'd say, "The Edgars' Brad, not our Brad, called" or something like that. So yeah, we did. Our Brad and their Brad.

DePue: This must have been a pretty new neighborhood at the time.

Struck: The first street is Hyde Park Street, and I think it was probably '74, maybe '75, when those homes were finished, so it was. The Edgars' home, I think, had had one family in it. Ours was new. Our street was not even finished. There are a hundred homes in the neighborhood, and there were probably eighty-seven, eighty-eight homes finished at the time.

DePue: The Edgars aren't directly your neighbors, they're across the street and around the corner, as you said; I can see their home right from here. How close were the two families?

Struck: We became friends right away. They were new, we were new, our children knew each other. We have a neighborhood pool in the middle of our subdivision, so our

children hung out at the pool. We had a lifeguard, so if the kids could pass their test they could go to the pool without us. Brenda and I would go to the pool. They were so busy that we would see each other... We didn't do a lot of things socially, but if they needed something or we did, we would call each other. Brenda and I were in some Bible studies together.

DePue: Were you members of the same congregation?

Struck: No, we went to a different church than they did. They went to Central Baptist, and Earl and I went to First United Methodist.

DePue: Well, that's unusual, then, to have Bible studies with people from different congregations.

Struck: No. Brenda was involved with a Bible study company; they had them in homes, and it was open to anyone. So I met several people—we had some neighbors, some friends of hers—a lot of us were from different churches.

DePue: During most of this time, of course, Edgar is appointed as the secretary of state. He took over that position in 1981, right after the 1980 election, and Alan Dixon moves on.²

Struck: I remember that day.

DePue: You do?

Struck: We were taking Bill and Amy back to North Carolina. We knew that something might be happening; we were traveling, and we heard it on the radio. So we stopped and sent a telegram.

DePue: How was it that you knew something might be happening?

Struck: We knew a lot of activity, and we didn't know exactly, but we knew that they were very busy. We had my two stepchildren that summer, so we were busy. But we knew that Jim was being considered—everyone knew the different names.

DePue: Was Brenda telling you that?

Struck: I think Earl heard it at the capitol, the first initial talk. Earl, being the lobbyist, was there all the time.

DePue: Would it have been unusual if the two of them would have been talking it up?

Struck: I mean, if they saw each other and they had time to stop and talk, it might have been mentioned, but Earl was not one to seek anything personal like that out of the governor at all.

² Democrat Alan Dixon, who had served as secretary of state since 1977, defeated David O'Neal in the 1980 U.S. Senate race.

DePue: What was your relationship with Brenda, because she's at home with the kids most of the time, I would assume?

Struck: She was, but she had some jobs too. The first year that we moved down here, I stayed home and volunteered, and she did too. She did some things, and she would be gone during the day. Then I filled in for some maternity leaves and then went to work for the Illinois Coal Association. We both were good friends. Sometimes we'd see each other every day, but if we were busy, we didn't. If she needed something or I did, or if we had a school issue, we would sure call.

(break in recording)

DePue: You mentioned you worked at the Illinois Coal Association, and I mentioned to you earlier that I've also interviewed Taylor Pensoneau.

Struck: Yes.

DePue: He was in what position when you started there?

Struck: He was the vice president of the Illinois Coal Association, and I was the comptroller. Joe Spivey was the president.

DePue: Tell me your impressions of Taylor Pensoneau.

Struck: Very bright. I always knew he wanted to write a book. He was always writing. Coal was big at the time in the '80s, it was very popular. We had a lot of programs at the Coal Association, and Taylor would write a booklet that we would print. A very bright guy. I did not know of his works when he was a newspaperman. Earl did; I did not.

DePue: Did you enjoy your work at the Coal Association?

Struck: Yes, I did.

DePue: Was it considerably different from what you were doing at the Farm Bureau?

Struck: The Farm Bureau was so big. At the Coal Association, being the comptroller, I took care of the books, so I took the dues in and sent the dues notices out, and I took care of their political action committee, which was quite small compared to Citizens for Edgar.

DePue: But again, it gives you a wider exposure and a chance to—

Struck: Absolutely, and I enjoyed it very much. When I started there, I went to the Board of Elections. They were offering classes on how to do the reporting, so I took it so that I would be able to do it accurately and not get us in trouble.

DePue: Let's go back to the Edgars. I'm wondering if you noticed any difference at all when Jim was elevated to the position of secretary of state.

Struck: He was gone a lot. He traveled a lot when he worked for Governor Thompson, though. Many mornings Brenda and I would take a walk. Earl would leave for work, and she and I would leave or we'd go up to the tennis court and hit balls back and forth and then walk down to the Hen House [a nearby local restaurant] for coffee and a cinnamon roll. (laughs) He was busy. He was very busy, and gone a lot. And Brenda was gone, so we would help them with the kids. If they were going to be home later in the evening, the kids might come over for a hamburger on the grill or something like that.

DePue: Did he act any differently?

Struck: No, not at all. He was just not around very much. He was **very** busy.

DePue: Whenever you talk about the Edgars and their family life, the subject of dogs always comes up too.

Struck: (laughs) They had their little Tow Tow, and we had a dog. When they would travel, I would take care of Tow Tow, and there was a neighbor girl who took care of him too. I'm laughing, because we locked him in the house after Jim became secretary of state. I had the key to one lock, and she had the key to the other. She lost a key, and we locked him in overnight. I remember calling security, saying who I was and that I was watching the dog and the dog was locked in their house. I had to wait for the security guard to call me back. Well, I thought it would be right away, and I waited and waited and waited. It was hours and hours before I got a call back. He told me to call a locksmith, which was a funny call: "Hi, I'm Sherry Struck, and I've locked Secretary of State and Mrs. Edgar's dog in their house. Would you please come unlock their house?"

DePue: What was the breed of the dog?

Struck: He was a little mixed breed. He was so cute. He was poodle and maybe a terrier. He wasn't very big. He followed the secretary all over back then when he took his walks, and very close to Brad.

DePue: I understand that their Brad and your dog had an encounter too, at one time.

Struck: Our dog Mandy loved balls. Brad was in the street in the front of my home, and the doorbell rang. He always called me Mrs. Struck; he said, "Mrs. Struck, Mandy has my ball and she won't give it back." (laughter) So I had to go outside and take the tennis ball away from the dog.

DePue: All of this sounds like very normal, typical kind of experiences.

Struck: Absolutely. Not being in the middle of town, kind of being outside of town, and almost all of the neighbors were from someplace else, we were a very close

neighborhood. A lot of us had keys to everybody's home. If we were running errands and would be late, it was nothing for us to call and say, "Would you meet so-and-so as they get off the bus?" So very close neighborhood.

DePue: Any other stories that you remember about those years?

Struck: I remember their Brad bringing over a duck and saying, "Mr. Struck, can you tell me what kind of duck this is?" My husband was an outdoorsman, as well as their Brad—used to love the outdoors. They got one of his reference books, and they never could figure out (laughs) what kind of duck it was. Earl showed him how to clean it. Brad didn't just want Earl to clean it, he wanted to learn how, and Earl being so impressed. He wanted to clean it up, and he asked Earl how to take care of things. So that's a good story that I remember of them. I remember one of Elizabeth's birthday parties, when I backed over their mailbox.

DePue: (laughs) Maybe not such a good story.

Struck: (laughs) It was kind of funny. I had Elizabeth and some of her friends in my car, and Brenda had the rest of the girls. Their driveway is just the reverse of mine, and I backed out and flattened their mailbox.

DePue: What did they have to say about that?

Struck: Brenda was laughing hysterically in the car in front of me, and Elizabeth thought it was funny. I don't know what the governor thought, but Earl put up a new mailbox for them. (laughter)

DePue: That tells you something about their sense of humor.

Struck: That's right.

DePue: This is probably a good time to bring up the subject of his public persona, the way people perceive him, and the Jim and Brenda Edgar that you knew.

Struck: The Jim and Brenda Edgar that I knew were very family. When he was first appointed secretary of state, Earl and I were invited to the inauguration in the House chambers. We received a letter in the mail with tickets and instructions; they were numbered, and we expected to be sitting with some of our other friends. We went, and they said, "No, you're in on the House floor." We were in the front with the family, and we were so surprised but so thrilled. We sat next to his mother. I knew, and Earl knew, his mother and Brenda's mother very well. Family people. **Very** good parents, very interested in **everything** that the kids did as far as school. Jim being gone some, a lot fell on Brenda's shoulders; if we could help, we did.

DePue: How would you describe his personality when you knew him as a neighbor?

Struck: He has a very dry sense of humor. He's very funny, but since his sense of humor is dry, sometimes you don't realize he's teasing. I would say maybe some of the

neighbors thought he was shy. He didn't have time to neighbor, but he was involved. We had a home association, and Earl and Brenda and another neighbor that we were close to ran and got on the board. Jim would come to the meetings, and he might call afterwards and say, "Earl, you did a nice job running the meeting; you kept it in order" or "Earl, thank you for getting the trees planted." He really cared. He loved this neighborhood. He walked a lot.

I know when he became secretary of state there was a neighbor whose son worked for Alan Dixon, and he kept his job. The next election, this young man's mother came to our door as a Democratic and circled the candidates that she wanted us to support. I know my husband was quite offended that she had circled the man that ran against Secretary Edgar, and he told her so. He said, "I know the story. I think in his own home-neighborhood you should have left that one blank." (DePue laughs) He was well-liked; he was just not around much. We just would always see the big black car and the bodyguards, and most of the neighbors knew them too.

I know some of the boys in the neighborhood—our Brad and some of the kids near their home—broke one of their windows. I sent my Brad over to tell Mrs. Edgar what he had done, and some of the other boys did, and as they were confessing—they were little—the big black car pulled up with the bodyguards, and the kids were scared to death. (laughter)

DePue: That would be a bit intimidating.

Struck: They were very scared. (laughs)

DePue: Now, you just referred to her as "Mrs. Edgar." I would assume that she was "Brenda" to you.

Struck: Oh, she was Brenda, very much so.

DePue: And he was Jim?

Struck: Yes, when he was secretary. We didn't see each other. I might be at work. She had some dental surgery, and he called me at the Coal Association one day. He said, "Sherry, this is Jim," and of course I recognized his voice. He said, "Are you going to be home tonight? I just took Brenda to the dentist, and she's having some pain and some trouble. Could you check on her?" So we had that kind of a relationship. If I saw him, I saw him. If I didn't, if I needed something, I would call—or they, the same way.

DePue: Did you know about his ambitions when you were neighbors?

Struck: Not a lot of them. I think my first encounter with him on that: I had gone to vote one morning. They didn't have enough election judges, and they asked if I would be an election judge. Nothing was going on too much at work that day so I took the day off and did it, and I found it very boring. We were together socially for something, and I said, "Boy, I'm never going to do that again; it was boring." He

said, "Don't say that. I may need you some day." And I remember looking at him thinking, What are you talking about?

DePue: Brenda never mentioned it either, then?

Struck: You know, we had so many kids between us. (laughs) No, not really. Not really.

DePue: Did you ever hear Brenda express her opinions about her husband's career?

Struck: No. She was very supportive of what he did, but they had a son who was involved in every sport that was going on, and a daughter who was involved in different things. About all she'd ever say is, "He's gone." That was it. But we did not talk. When I did get asked to go to work for him, I called her and said, "Is there something that you guys want to tell me?" It was news to me. They did not talk to me beforehand.

DePue: Let's get to that discussion, then, and you're getting offered a position; I believe it was while he was actually running for governor.

Struck: He had announced, and he was running. His campaign had been formed. He had a campaign office. I got a call at the Coal Association from Carter Hendren's secretary asking if I would come over and speak to him. I did not know her, I did not know Carter, and I asked what it was concerning. She said, "Jim Edgar's candidacy for governor." I said, "I believe you probably want to talk to my husband for a contribution," because Earl did the lobbying; at that time, he was head of the legislative department where he was working. And she said, "No, he needs to talk to you." So I did call Brenda that evening and said, "Is there something that you guys want to tell me about? I got a call."

DePue: What did you think it was going to be about?

Struck: I had no idea. I did not. About the only thing we ever got involved in—and it was me—when he first became secretary of state, I would organize some of the neighbors, and we addressed envelopes for the Christmas cards for him. When he was running for secretary, some of us would go down and stuff envelopes and do stuff in the campaign, but we were all so busy with our own families. We were all very supportive of him. I shouldn't say all, I can't speak for all the neighbors, but the ones that I was close with were supportive of him. We thought he did a good job, and we wanted to help.

DePue: What timeframe was this? Was this late in '89?

Struck: I got a call in December 1989 about the campaign.

DePue: So he had announced several months before that; the campaign was well underway by that time.

Struck: Yes. And I knew that he was going to run. She had mentioned that to me. We had helped through the years. When he was running for secretary of state, he and Brenda would be gone, and his mother or Brenda's mother would come and stay with the kids, and we would help in different ways. We would try to go to some of the fundraisers. We would write a check, but they were always returned.

DePue: But eventually you find out this wasn't about fundraising or neighborhood organizations.

Struck: No. I went to visit with Carter Hendren. I guess I was very naïve. I thought I would dress up in a nice suit and go for a job interview. I went to the campaign office, the first time I'd ever been in something like that other than to just stuff envelopes. I waited and waited. He was busy. I waited as long as I wanted to take off work, and I said to his secretary, "I need to get back to work. You can just have him call me." I went in and talked to Carter. He did not know me. He knew Earl, but he did not know me. He knew that the secretary had told him about me, that he wanted me to work on the campaign. But Carter—looking back, I can understand; being a campaign manager is a very hard job. He needed people around him that he knew would be loyal to him and work hard, and he didn't know me from anyone. So (laughs)—this is hard, Mark.

DePue: Well, I'm going to put myself in Carter's position. He would be thinking, "She's a neighbor. She's a political neophyte. She knows nothing about this."

Struck: That's exactly right, and he would be right. I knew nothing, other than I knew I was loyal to Jim and Brenda Edgar; they were very dear friends. I was excited that he was getting the chance to run. I was happy for him. Did I **ever** think I would go to work for him? Absolutely not. I was shocked. So was my husband. Carter and I talked, and he said, "Jim wants you to come to work." We talked about what I made at my other job and what I might make there. I said, "Well, you think about it and call me." And he said, "No, you think about it, because Jim wants you to go to work for us." So we went back and forth that way a little bit, and I said, "Let's think about it over the weekend." Then I came home and talked to my husband. Then I called and asked if he [Edgar] was home because I wanted to know what he was trying to do to me, setting me—

DePue: You called—

Struck: Yes. (laughs)

DePue: —the secretary of state?

Struck: I called and talked to Brenda and said, "Do you want to have him give me a call? Is he going to be home tonight?"

DePue: Did she know anything about it at the time?

Struck: About all they would tell me when I called her, when I got the call from Lil, was, “Jim’s running and he wants you to work on the campaign.”³ That’s about all she knew, and that’s about all she told me. So I went in kind of in the dark.

DePue: You probably already mentioned this before, but the specific job that Carter offered you?

Struck: Was the comptroller of the campaign: taking care of the campaign funds and doing the political action report.

DePue: That’s no small obligation.

Struck: No, and I had no idea how large. I knew that he had a treasurer, Bud Lohman, who was a wonderful, dear man—who was the actual treasurer. Having never worked in a campaign that size—I did help Senator John Maitland on his first run for Senate when Earl and I lived in Bloomington; I typed fundraising letters and thank-you letters for him—I had no idea of the magnitude.

DePue: Now, you probably didn’t necessarily know this at this point in time, but somewhere along the process I would imagine you had an opportunity to ask Governor Edgar, “What were you thinking?”

Struck: That’s pretty much what I said to him that night, “What are you trying to do to me? It’s obvious that Carter would prefer to have someone else, because he wasn’t impressed.” And the governor, Jim at the time, said, “Oh, you’ll be fine, you’ll be fine. That’s the way Carter is. He really has to know you and has to learn to trust you. You’ll be fine, you’ll be fine.” So Earl and I talked, and I agreed to do it. Neither one of us had any idea what it was going to entail.

DePue: Having spent quite a bit of time with the governor myself, he doesn’t enter into these decisions lightly; he calculates everything. So what do you think his thought process was in selecting you for this?

Struck: I think he knew that I was honest, and I was loyal to the governor and Mrs. Edgar. They were very dear friends. Earl and I both considered them very, very good friends. You know, our kids grew up together. We had had many, many things that we did together. I think he knew that I would be there for him and Mrs. Edgar.

DePue: So you think Brenda was part of that equation as well?

Struck: No, I think she was a little worried about me doing it, to tell you the truth, because she knew I’d (laughs) never done anything like this. She, having been involved in the other secretary of state runs, knew what it would entail. It was tough work—enjoyable, but tough.

³ Lil was Earl’s assistant.

DePue: I don't want to be reading too much into this, but would part of it be that he thought Brenda might feel better that you were working there and there was that connection?

Struck: I think so. I know that was true when I went to work at the Capitol, because he told me, "You care for Brenda, you care for me and our kids, and I know you'll be there for us." I think he knew that I would do what was right, that I would work hard, that I knew how to add and subtract, (laughter) and that the Edgars were very special to me. I knew he had brothers; I didn't know them personally like I got to know during the campaign; I just knew their mothers more than anything. But I think he knew I would be a good, loyal, honest employee.

DePue: Talk about your breaking-in period, then, with the campaign.

Struck: My breaking-in period was a little rough. It was not the easiest thing. I guess I should have known that. Not being involved in politics, even though I did the political action committee for the Coal Association, a lot of these people had been around for years, and I imagine there was some resentment of me, coming in as the neighbor. They didn't know me, and having the position that I had, my first couple weeks were a little lonely. Didn't have a lot to do. I was still doing my job at the Coal Association.

DePue: This is December into January, now, of the election year, but even at that point in time, I imagine Hendren and the rest of the inner core are going at some kind of a frenetic pace.

Struck: Because we had a primary opponent. And Carter was gone a lot. The staff wasn't large then. We had two in Chicago, and then we had probably less than ten in the Springfield office. My first two weeks, I didn't have a lot to do until Carter got in a bind with something and I said, "Well, I can do that for you." So I did it, and I did it how he wanted it and added a little something extra that I thought would benefit him. So he learned that I did have a brain on my head and that I could do what he wanted; I wasn't there as a plant or anything else for the governor. I did not speak to Jim; he was too busy. I mean, he didn't call and say, "How are you doing?" or anything like that. He knew I was a big girl and I'd do all right. I didn't enjoy my first couple weeks, though; I have to be honest.

DePue: What was the specific thing that Carter asked you to do, do you recall?

Struck: Figuring percentages or something. He was trying to project, and the Chicago office had not done what he wanted. I had overheard and I said, "Well, I can do that for you." So I don't remember specific, but after that, I did get involved.

DePue: You had mentioned when we first met, something about a gigantic checkbook.

Struck: (laughs) Yes. There were no computers back then. We had a checkbook. It was one of the old-fashioned hardcovers that you would open up like this, and it had about a four- or five-inch record on the side and then these big, long checks. Every check

was handwritten. We were so busy during the day with the money—there was a lot of fundraising going on because of the primary fight—that by the time I’d get the money deposited to get to the gal to enter for the report, I’d bring the bills home. I remember sitting on my kitchen table after my husband would go to bed and handwriting the checks, and a couple times Jim peeking in the back door saying, “Do you have any cookies or anything?” He’d be out taking a walk or something and see the lights on.

DePue: Late at night, the candidate stretching his legs.

Struck: Um-hm. That was not unusual at all. He was quite a walker, quite a walker. So when he saw the lights on, he peeked in our slider; I would have been there.

DePue: Was that his way to relax and unwind, you think?

Struck: Um-hm.

DePue: As well as getting some exercise.

Struck: And as the campaign went on and it got stressful, Brenda and I would be the ones walking late at night, talking. (laughter)

DePue: I imagine you had a lot to talk about.

Struck: We had a lot to talk about. We didn’t back then. But I would bring home bills every night and sit and write checks.

DePue: I want to ask you about some of the other people involved in that campaign. I’m going to start with a couple of obvious ones, and those would be the main fundraisers that you dealt with.

Struck: That was Bob Hickman and Dana Grigoroff; I think her first name was Dana. She was in Chicago, and so was Bob. They would raise the funds and send them down here; I would deposit them and do the record-keeping.

DePue: Did you know anything about what they were doing—

Struck: No, I did not.

DePue: —or where the money was coming from?

Struck: I knew they had a lot of fundraisers scheduled. We had a scheduler in the office, Jennifer, who had started. I would see the schedule and I would hear her say, “He’s got a fundraiser at such-and-such” and the projections of how much money would be coming in. Then it would come to me and I would deposit it.

DePue: Were you the one that was keeping track of who was giving how much on what date?

Struck: I was the one who would deposit it and then give it to—we had a little computer gal who would enter it into the program that we had bought.

DePue: Yeah, that's one of those functions that you can't afford to be sloppy on at all.

Struck: No, no. It made my little Coal Association days of doing that seem tame. And they had a computer program to do theirs. What I had done at the Coal Association was all by hand because ours was just maybe twenty, twenty-five thousand; this was millions.

DePue: Did you have any assistant, then, on the bookkeeping side?

Struck: No, no. We had the little gal who did the computer. Then I had some of my friends come in who offered to volunteer, and some of the other people that just came in, and they helped me—ones that I knew I could trust with the money, and they would help me get it ready to deposit.

DePue: I know Mike Lawrence had a significant role in the campaign as well.

Struck: (laughs) Yes. Mike wasn't at the campaign full-time when I first started. There were not many full-time people. Mike, I am sure, had taken partial leave, because he would be there some days. Everyone was very cautious; they did not come to work on the campaign if they had not taken time off. So some went part-time; some went half-time. Mike did, then, near the end, come full-time. But switching everyone from the state—and we did things differently. We did not do contracts like a lot of campaigns did. Our accountant told us that we needed to make them employees, which was very costly because you had to pay all of the Social Security, Medicare. In campaigns before, the accountant had told me, a lot of campaigns would just put people on contract, but we did not do that.⁴

DePue: Did you notice the nature of the relationship that then-Secretary of State Edgar had with Carter Hendren and Mike Lawrence and others?

Struck: They were very close.

DePue: With Lawrence?

Struck: He was close with Lawrence, he was close with Carter, but he also had his own thoughts on how things would be done. It was not unusual for maybe Mike to think that he should do something and for Jim to say, "No, I'm not going to do that" or "I'm going to do it this way," and for Carter to have his thoughts. We had Mike Belletire, we had Mike Lawrence, we had Carter. They all had their way of thinking, but they would agree to disagree, or it always got done. Very, very bright guys.

⁴ Contract workers are responsible for paying the full Social Security and Medicare tax on their earnings. By contrast, regular employees are only responsible for half of the tax, with their employers paying the other half.

DePue: Were you brought in on some of these strategy discussions?

Struck: No. Carter would talk to me a lot about money. He would tell me, “I’m going to need X amount of money for ads, and so I’m going to need you to work with Bob.” He might get a figure from Bob, and he’d say, “Keep me abreast of how that fundraiser did” to make sure that it was bringing the money in we thought. I remember very well my first three hundred thousand-dollar check I wrote and saying to Carter, “Are you sure you need that much?” (laughs) That was a big check.

DePue: How did the relationship between you and Carter evolve over time?

Struck: We got very close. When I first started, he didn’t know me, so when a bill would come in, I would prepare a folder and take it in to Carter. He would say what would be paid and what wouldn’t—maybe an ad or something that someone wanted. As I reviewed what he would accept and what he wouldn’t accept, I began to learn what was really important and what wasn’t. We couldn’t possibly do every single ad request that came in; we just couldn’t. Because they were coming in—you know, “I’ve known the secretary for years and years, and I know he wants to do this ad.” Well, it’s fifty dollars here and fifty dollars there, but when you know you’re going to need at least half a million for a primary radio campaign... So Carter was very cautious, and I always got to tell the people, “I’m sorry, no, but maybe you could get a sponsor who would like to do this. I’d be glad to give you a letter saying that you did an in-kind contribution for the secretary.” So as I learned Carter’s ways, then I could help him more by preparing the checks and saying, “Carter, I think this is what you’re going to want to do.” When I first started, there were no co-signatures at all and I could have signed any amount, but I went to Carter and asked if we could put an amount, five thousand and above, that [needed] two signatures. He thought that was fine.

DePue: He would be the second signature, then?

Struck: Yes.

DePue: Governor Edgar himself, and everybody else I’ve talked to, describes this as one of the classic gubernatorial campaigns in Illinois. It may only be rivaled by the one we’re currently waiting to hear the determination now.⁵

Struck: I think that’s probably accurate. I was not involved in ones before and was so—what word do I want to say? When he ran for secretary, stuffing envelopes and those type things did not involve me that much at all; we were involved more on the personal level to help them out with the kids. It was classic. We had not had a new

⁵ DePue is referring to the gubernatorial race between Democrat Pat Quinn and Republican Bill Brady. Quinn ultimately defeated Brady 1,745,219-1,713,385; a margin of 31,834 votes. In 1990, Edgar defeated Neil Hartigan by 83,909 votes. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election* for November 2, 2010 and November 6, 1990.

governor in years, with Governor Thompson as many years as he was there. There was enthusiasm, there was interest, but we had another very good candidate, too.

DePue: In Neil Hartigan?

Struck: Yes. Once we got through the primary. I don't remember the totals on the primary, I just remember the man's name that we had the primary contest with, but it was expensive, very expensive.⁶

DePue: And I'm sure there were people within the campaign who were concerned that they're tapping into the war chest that deeply.

Struck: That was Carter's interest. He knew we were going to need a lot of money to get to the end, and you can only raise so much money. They kept Jim Edgar very busy. That man worked and worked and worked. So did Brenda, and as the campaign went on, she became more involved.

DePue: Tell me more about what Brenda did during the campaign, because this wasn't necessarily her natural forte.

Struck: No, it was not. During the primary, she would do the things that she and Jim would want her to do. But as the campaign went on, she had her own little message that she went out and spoke. We had someone on staff that would travel with her and help her, drive with her. She was very good, very good. Brenda is very loved.

DePue: How about the two children?

Struck: Elizabeth was in school, and Brad—was Brad in college by then?

DePue: Yeah, I think he was in college.

Struck: I think he was in Colorado, so he wasn't involved. But he did come back and he worked some on the campaign. He had one of his high school friends, and we put him on staff; the two of them traveled so that Brad wouldn't have to travel alone. And that was not as easy for Brad to do either, their Brad. But he did a lot of chicken dinners and... (laughter)

DePue: You mentioned that even the secretary of state's mother, got involved.

Struck: She did a beautiful ad for him. Have you seen his ads?

DePue: Yes, but I don't think I've seen that ad.

⁶ Edgar beat Steven Baer, 482,411-256,889, picking up 62.8 percent of the vote. Rob Marshall finished a distant third with 28,365 votes. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*. For Edgars discussion of the 1990 campaign, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 2, 2009. 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.

Struck: Oh, you didn't see the first one?

DePue: I saw the first one, which was kind of a—

Struck: With his mother and the townspeople?

DePue: With the people of Charleston who were talking about—

Struck: Yes, she did such a good job.

DePue: Yeah.

Struck: Yeah, that's the only one she did. I think I have copies of the ads somewhere. But Betty would come over and help with the kids, and Brenda's mom did too.

DePue: Yeah, we plan to post those ads onto the website—

Struck: Oh, good.

DePue: —the same place all these interviews are going to be, so people can go check it out.

Struck: Oh, my favorite one was that professor.

DePue: Professor Irwin Corey.

Struck: Yes. (laughs) I loved that ad. That was so good.

DePue: Where he's talking about flip-flopping?

Struck: Yes.

DePue: Yeah. (pause)

Struck: Betty would stay with the kids, and occasionally during that time, if Jim and Brenda would think one or the other was going to be home, there were some nights that I would go over and stay all night with Elizabeth just so that she wouldn't be home alone, and then I'd get up and come home. Once or twice I might be already in bed and the phone would ring, and "Sherry, I thought he was going to be home" or "He thought I was going to be home, and there's no one there," and I'd get up and go sleep.

DePue: You maybe didn't realize that was part of the equation when you signed up.

Struck: (laughs) No, no, I didn't, but I was glad to do it.

DePue: Did you have a chance to meet the two brothers?

Struck: I did. I knew Fred, and I knew Tom. I didn't meet Tom until later. Tom was not involved in the first campaign, but Fred was. Fred would be in a lot.

DePue: Tell me about the personalities of these three brothers.

Struck: All three different. **Very** different. I think Jim was more of a driven personality, probably a little shyer. Tom was very, very bright but wasn't married, didn't have a family, so had different dynamics that way. Fred had two boys and a wife; I think he enjoyed golfing and really getting involved in doing things, where the governor was a little shyer about things like that.

DePue: Was Fred the type who could fit in with any circle?

Struck: Any circle, and enjoyed it. He could make friends wherever he went. The governor was a little more reserved.

DePue: You haven't said too much about Tom.

Struck: Tom was in California during that time, so I would talk to him on the phone or something. When he came back, I got to know him a little better. He was so different from the other two boys. He went to his own beat. Very opinionated; very bright.

DePue: Opinionated about politics?

Struck: About politics or anything else that he was involved in—what he had to eat, health, and everything else.

DePue: What part of the political spectrum would he lean towards?

Struck: (laughs) He would lean towards the Democratic side—more liberal, much more liberal.

DePue: Which one of the three brothers would have taken after their mother more?

Struck: That's hard. All three adored her. She lost her husband. The governor was seven, he told me, when he lost his dad. They adored her. She worked very hard. I think she went back to school to get her job.⁷ She had a dry sense of humor like the governor. She could talk to anybody, so she had that from Fred. I mean, she was not a shy person. She could go in anywhere and make you feel comfortable and talk to you; Fred was that way too. And she was very bright. I'd say she'd be more like Fred and the governor than Tom.

DePue: Let's get back to the race. We already mentioned this is a classic race. Talking to Carter Hendren, talking to the governor and Mike Lawrence and others, you get towards those last few weeks, and they're not sure at all. What was the mood of the campaign as you're going down this stretch?

⁷ On the death of Edgar's father, Cecil Edgar, and the hard work of his mother, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 27-47; Fred Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 22, 2009, 16-24.

Struck: Oh, it was tough. It was tough. That last month was tough. We were all exhausted. All of us were working many, many, many hours. Most of us were there at 7:00 in the morning, 8:00 or later at night. Everyone was worn out. I think even the candidate was worn out. He worked very hard. We brought in some new blood. We had Jim Skilbeck, who came and worked with us to get some new momentum going. I remember, when you report to the Board of Elections, so many days before the election, if you get so much money, you have to file certain reports and get them in. Back then you couldn't do it on the computer, and Carter would have me run to the Board of Elections and get the A-1s that maybe Hartigan had filed. He had had a big fundraiser with a bunch of trial lawyers, so I would go up and add up how many trial lawyers were in this A-1. I would cross-reference this attorney to this list, and I was adding—I had a long tape going off my desk and down out in the hallway—and Jim Skilbeck walked by and said, “Don't tear that.” I didn't know what he was going to do. When I finished, he twisted it up very tight, and then the governor had a press event the next day saying that he [Hartigan] had gotten so much money from trial lawyers—and he went like this—and that long tape unrolled. (DePue laughs) And that was something that Jim Skilbeck brought in. We were all so tired that we didn't think that way anymore.⁸

DePue: The emphasis being that, “Look, even trial lawyers who normally support a lawyer Democrat from Chicago are supporting our guy”?

Struck: No, it was Hartigan. The governor was saying, “Look, he's getting all his money—it's going to be trial lawyers. The trial lawyers are supporting his campaign; look how much so.” They rolled it out that way. No, they were not supporting us.

DePue: I'm glad I got that clarification. I wasn't listening closely enough.

Struck: I probably didn't say it right, but... We had new people to bring us that way.

DePue: Across the finish line.

Struck: That's right.

DePue: Now, you're working some incredible hours, being expected to do some peculiar things sometimes. What was Earl's thought through all of this?

Struck: I remember the last thirty days. We went to the grocery store and I bought **sixty-five** frozen dinners. (laughter) That's what my husband was thinking. He said, “You're not going to be around.” We bought sixty-five frozen dinners and stuck them in our deep freeze.

DePue: Was he otherwise very supportive?

⁸ Skilbeck had played a similar role for Governor Thompson. Jim Reilly, August 10, 2009, 53 and August 11, 2009, 45-46. Both interviews by Mark DePue.

Struck: He was very supportive. Many nights he came and stayed with me if I would be working late and no one else would be around. I'll tell you a story, but I don't want it to be on the record.

DePue: Okay. We'll have to redact this, then. Oh, do you want me to turn it off?

Struck: Oh, I just don't want to trash her.

(break in recording)

DePue: Okay, we took a very brief break here. We'll just leave it for the curiosity of the listeners to wonder what in the world we were talking about, but suffice it to say that you're a very gracious woman. So let's move on to your memories about election night itself, because it was still a pretty tense election night, from what I understand.

Struck: Yes.

DePue: What do you remember about that night?

Struck: I remember him coming into the campaign office, very casual, very happy; what did we think? All of us were kind of gathered together when the secretary came in to see us all. He wanted to know who was going to Chicago and who wasn't. Carter was very kind and invited me to Chicago, along with my husband and his assistant Lil and her husband. We were all tired. We were all hopeful. My husband just knew he was going to win. He said all along, "He's going to win."

DePue: By this time Edgar had pretty much resigned himself that he was probably going to lose.

Struck: Now, that I didn't know. I thought he was optimistic. Mike Belletire had a conversation with my husband and said, "We're not going to make it." I remember my husband being disappointed that he felt that way; he thought he should try to be up. Earl really thought all along that he was going to win.

DePue: I might have overstated it a little bit, but suffice it to say the governor was very concerned.⁹

Struck: He was concerned. We all were. It was close. But I guess my husband being on the outside and being at the Capitol and being with his big group of people all over the state, he knew that everybody was ready for a change and they liked him. Of course, nobody knew. Election night was long. I remember I was in the war room working the phones for Carter.

DePue: Now, this would have been at the hotel in Chicago?

⁹ Edgar was particularly worried about an incorrect poll commissioned by WCIA Channel 3, the CBS affiliate in Champaign, which showed him trailing Hartigan by eighteen points. Edgar, September 2, 2009, 48-49.

Struck: Um-hm, at the Hyatt. We had what Carter called the war room—new terms to me. It was exciting; it was fun. I knew some of the people, and as the results were coming in, I was doing some calculations for Carter and keeping track—several of us were. The secretary was in and out, nervous, but I remember, when we got word that McHenry County and some others were going to come in for such-and-such, him saying, “That’s it; we’re going to make it.” We were watching the TV together, all of us that were in that room. There was Carter—oh, I can’t remember who all was in that room—but it was not one that everybody could come in and out of. We had the TV on and the announcer said, “It’s too close to call; I’m not going to call it,” and the secretary said, “Well, I am. I am. We’re going to do it.” And we did. It was a **long** night.

DePue: What was the sense you all had when he said that?

Struck: I believed him. I knew that he was cautious enough and that he knew enough, and if he said that it was going to happen... Because I knew by that time he was not just going to say, “Oh, rah-rah, we’re going to pull it out.” He was sure. He knew. He had such good instincts on those types of things, and he was usually right on. All of the ones that I noticed in the campaign, from Mike Lawrence to Carter to Belletire to Jim Edgar—they all had real good instincts. They might disagree a little bit, but if they could put their heads together and come around it was always good.

DePue: It had to be quite an emotional roller coaster. What was the emotion you’re going through at the time he says that and you believe he’s correct?

Struck: He looked at me; he came over and gave me a hug, and I knew we were going to win. We were all so thrilled. It hadn’t even been announced on TV yet. Then he went down to see Brenda. He hugged us all in the room, and it was an exciting night then.

DePue: Any memories about the next few hours after that?

Struck: I remember it took longer than I thought for us to get down where the candidate would stand before the press, and we’d have the confetti and all of that. I remember Carter—when we went up, he had just a couple of us go up for the primary and for the election—a lot of times we were on our own dime. “I’ll pay your room, but...” It was not a fluffy campaign; it was tight on the money. That night, he looked at me, and he said, “You and Earl go have steak and eggs.”

DePue: Did he say anything about what your future was going to be?

Struck: No, not a word.

DePue: What did you think your future was going to be?

Struck: I thought I was going back to the Illinois Coal Association.

DePue: Did you give it any thought that you’d like to work in the administration?

Struck: I was (laughs) so tired. No. No. I didn't even know what would be available. I had no idea. Within just a day or two I found out that George Fleischli and I would be helping with the inaugural committee, so I knew I would be continuing my work then, and I remember telling them at the Coal Association that I would be doing that, but I think they and I all thought that I would be coming back.

DePue: What did you want to do?

Struck: I just wanted a vacation. (laughter)

DePue: Well, obviously that isn't necessarily how things are going to work out. Tell us then how you found out that he had a plan for you in the administration?

Struck: That was during the inaugural meetings. We'd had a little bit of a heated meeting over in the office where George Fleischli was. We, being on staff and Brenda's representative, were trying to get the things done that she wanted and he wanted. I was tired and was not in much of a mood to take a lot of disagreement when I was trying to convey the governor-elect and Mrs. Edgar's wishes. Carter was gone by this time; it was just me in that campaign office. We didn't have a lot of money in the campaign. By this time, many bills were rolling in that we were not aware of, that Carter hadn't anticipated, and maybe some that had been held. So I had baskets of incoming bills from the campaign and an abundance of excitement for a new governor-elect and everybody wanting to come. The numbers of people wanting to attend were over the (laughs) fire code limits, so we were having to refund money, we were having to turn people down. I was tired, and I just said, "I'm done." I didn't think I had a future there, and I was ready to just hand the reins over to whomever. I came home and my husband and I went to Chicago for the weekend. Carter called, and I didn't want to talk to Carter. I ended up talking to him. He said, "You're just tired. It's going to be fine." And then the secretary called, and I didn't want to talk to him either. He tracked us down in Chicago.

DePue: Did you answer the phone the first time he called?

Struck: No. (laughs) And when we came home, he came over. Since we were neighbors, he came over and said he wanted to make me an offer that I couldn't refuse. I said I didn't want to go work for him, and my husband's sitting there looking at me like, I can't believe you're talking to the secretary of state this way. He said, "Things will be good. I want you to come work for me and be my personal secretary. Maybe you don't want to be called that. Maybe 'personal assistant,' whatever you want." He said, "You know me, you know Brenda, you know the kids, and you could really help us out. I guarantee you no one will ever be mean or unkind. You'll just work for me." So I told him I'd think about it, and then I did it.

DePue: How long did you think about it?

Struck: Overnight, and Earl and I talked. It was a wonderful experience to do the campaign, but he and Carter were right, that was the toughest on everyone. It was hard on everybody. He was exhausted, Brenda was exhausted. Carter was wiped out; when

the campaign was over, he was **gone**. They all went back to work at the secretary of state, and there I was in that old, cold, (laughter) campaign office with a bunch of bills. It wasn't too much fun.

DePue: Did you have a sense that it would be different in the office rather than in the campaign?

Struck: Yes, I did, because I trusted him. I knew that he was such a gentleman, such a kind, family person. There was no doubt in my mind that it would be different. I didn't actually understand what it was going to be, but he told me that he would have me spend time with Gloria, Governor Thompson's secretary, which I did, and he sent me to DC to the National Governors' Association personal assistant seminar, and that was very helpful. He was **always** a gentleman. We worked very hard in the governor's office, but he was always a gentleman.

DePue: Those first few weeks when you're putting that new team together—an awful lot of confusion, I would think, as people were trying to figure out their new roles. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Struck: But see, I wasn't in that because I was over doing the inauguration. I was counting how many people were going to go to this brunch or this breakfast, trying to stay within fire code limits, trying to make sure we had the right tablecloths. I spent one evening here at home writing out over two hundred refund checks because we had just oversold everything.

DePue: So this sounds like a continuation of the campaign.

Struck: It was an absolute continuation of the campaign, and the only campaign person on staff was me. I switched from the campaign to the inaugural, but it was just me and the volunteers that I had. The volunteers were wonderful. They stayed with me. They helped stuff the invitations. They forgot to put an item in the invitations, and we steamed probably a thousand invites open (laughs) and stuffed it in. But they were all over in these transition meetings, and I was over steaming envelopes and...

DePue: From your perspective, then, was the transition pretty smooth?

Struck: I literally went from the inaugural office—campaign, inaugural—campaign office; my first day was his first day in the Capitol. There was no transition for me at all. I had been over twice in that office to meet with Gloria. So they would have meetings to get us informed on our insurance or procedures. I couldn't even attend those; I was too busy with other things. So it was tough for me, but I didn't have to do all those things.

DePue: Did it take very long, do you think, to put the team together to get it working smoothly?

Struck: The transition team? Yes. They worked very hard. They did all of that at the Capitol, not at the campaign office, so I really didn't have anything to do with that.

DePue: Describe the inner circle, if you will, of his assistants.

Struck: On the transition team?

DePue: No, once you get into the office.

Struck: Oh, once we got into the governor's office, we had Kirk Dillard, who was our chief of staff. We had Sally Jackson. We had Arnie Kanter, who was our legal. We had Joan Walters, who was down in Bureau of the Budget. And then we had the super-cabinet of the people that would have the different agencies under them: the George Fleischlis, Terry Scrogum... Who else did we have on staff?¹⁰

DePue: Was Al Grosboll on it?

Struck: Al Grosboll was involved. They all had the different agencies under them; I think they did a very good job getting it going and meeting with them. I remember our first day in the Capitol. I remember him walking in and his excitement and the press following him. He walked to work every day, even in the winter.

DePue: What did he tell you that he wanted you personally to be doing?

Struck: To be his personal assistant: to help him, to help Brenda, to help him help Brenda with things. If I saw something that she needed that we could help from the Capitol, to make sure that I talked to him about that. To help with the kids. I didn't do his scheduling; we had a scheduler.

DePue: Were you doing things like correspondence?

Struck: I was doing some personal correspondence. The things that I did were personal.

DePue: But not all of it, then? The office correspondence was done by somebody else?

Struck: If it was personal correspondence from him, but—say a constituent would write in, “I'm not getting such-and such,” we had an office of citizens' assistance that would research and then get the answer. One thing that I started—and I remember I was having a conversation with Dan Egler about this—was I wanted anyone who had written the governor's office to get a response within just a couple days, acknowledging that we got their correspondence and that we were going to research it. I didn't want them to think that he didn't care. And Dan was saying, “You can't do that, Sherry, it's going to be too much. We just can't do this with all the correspondence” He [Edgar] walked in and heard me say that, and he said, “Oh, no,

¹⁰ During Edgar's first term as governor, he relied on a “super-cabinet” composed of six executive assistants, each of whom was responsible for functionally related areas of government. The first six executive assistants were Michael Belletire, Erhard R. Chorle, George Fleischli, Al Grosboll, Mary Ann Louderback, and Felicia Norwood. In his second term, Edgar scrapped this system.

no, no, she's right. That's what I want." He very much wanted the constituents to know that he cared and that we weren't just going to trash them.¹¹

DePue: One of the things that the governor mentioned he had you do was the family finances.

Struck: Yes. I paid their bills. I would write the checks for investments that he would want. Yeah, I did.

DePue: Did it surprise you that he asked you to do those things?

Struck: It surprised me that he did. I had helped Brenda all along with things like that. Because she was traveling so much during the campaign, I would help get her organized so we could throw away the duplicates and get the things paid. So I don't know whether they had had a conversation, but he was so busy, I don't know when he would have had time to do it if I didn't do it. I don't think in the beginning he thought I would be doing as much as I did. But he walked into a financial crisis, and he was very involved. I remember him walking in after one of his first budget meetings; he just was white. I said, "Are you all right? What's the matter?" And he said, "I knew that it was bad; I didn't know it was this bad."

DePue: How bad was it?

Struck: We had a lot of bills. I mean, state employees were going to doctors and having to pay for their doctors' appointments right on the spot instead of letting it be billed. Nursing homes weren't being paid. Kind of like what we've got right now.¹²
(laughs)

DePue: I know that the figure that's normally mentioned is a one-billion-dollar hole.

Struck: Um-hm.

DePue: This is 1991, and the state had never experienced anything like that deficit.

Struck: Never, never. And he knew that it would be bad, but he said, "I did not know it was going to be this bad." He met with staff, and they went over all of it. And there was no transition on that; he came in and started doing that immediately.

DePue: You had known the governor, you had known Brenda, for ten-plus years by that time, and you'd known them as neighbors and as good friends. Was there anything about the public, the work-office Jim Edgar that surprised you?

¹¹ Egler was an assistant to Edgar's press secretary, Mike Lawrence, and was heavily involved with drafting Edgar's major speeches. He also edited the Edgar administration's final report, *Meeting the Challenge: The Edgar Administration, 1991-1999*. Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 3, 2009, 14-15; Mike McCormick, interview by Mark DePue, July 22, 2010, 97-98.

¹² On the delays in Medicaid payments, see Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, July 29, 2009, 26-29; Arnie Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009, 28-29.

Struck: Well, yes, I did work for him that year, but I did not work for **him**, I worked for his campaign, so I had not had the opportunity to work with him. I had known him a long time, but I really didn't know him, not having worked with him closely in the secretary's office because I never worked for the state before. I remember Brenda having a talk with me, a little worried, because I am kind of a soft-spoken person and had not worked (laughs) in that type of an atmosphere: he could be very sharp and demanding. At the beginning, a couple times I was like, "Well, gosh. I thought I did what I was supposed to." But what he taught me, Mark, was to not just look at something, but to look at the whole big picture; not to just have an answer, but to think past that answer about what might need to be done. We used to laugh on staff, the travel aide and I—we never had the right answer, because (snaps) he'd come back with something that we wouldn't have any idea. And once I learned to think past the end of my nose, then my feelings didn't get hurt so much.

DePue: And Brenda had kind of warned you about that?

Struck: She did. Yeah, she did, because she was worried about it. She knew me, and I had not worked for anyone (laughs) that way. It was okay to say to him, "I don't know. I have researched or I have tried to get the answer, but I'm not getting answers." He was okay with that, as long as you were always honest with him and would tell him the truth. But he had a very good sense of knowing if you hadn't done your homework.

DePue: You mentioned already that his chief of staff was Kirk Dillard. Of course, Kirk Dillard came within a whisper of being the Republican candidate for governor, and who knows how things might be different today if he had won that nomination.

Struck: Yes.

DePue: He's currently Sen. Kirk Dillard. Tell us a little more about him.

Struck: I didn't know Kirk before. Kirk had been around the Capitol. I'm sure he knew Carter very well. I guess he interned or had worked up in the Senate. Kirk was very easygoing, always wanted to be liked, and tried to be the peacemaker. He didn't know Jim Edgar that well, I guess, not like some. I think they maybe could have known each other's styles a little more in the beginning, because when we'd have people that would come to see the governor, and we weren't going to see them if they would be a group of protesters. I don't think Kirk knew to talk to them or... We had some rough months (laughs) in those first sessions. We had a lot of protesters.

DePue: What were the protesters?

Struck: All the cuts that were having to be made.

DePue: And they would show up with—

Struck: Oh, they would show up. Yes, they would show up.

DePue: Now, paint us a picture of the governor's office inside the Capitol building.

Struck: I spent some time with one of the historians. Mark Sorenson came over and walked around the office with me and told me what the different areas were way back when. Our reception area was actually the end of the hallway; when the Capitol first opened, those big doors that are in the reception area were actually the doors to the entrance of the Capitol. The legislature had appropriated so much money, and they ran out of money. There were very steep stairs coming up from Second Street, and they would come right through those doors. You would turn right to the governor's office, left to the secretary of state's. So I believe it was Stratton—and we may want to ask Mark about that—who closed off the end of the hallway and made that a reception area, because the governor's complex was actually pretty small.

DePue: Maybe I'm totally wrong on this, but I have this image of a big glass wall or big glass doors that's very open to the public.

Struck: It is. I think it was Stratton who closed that off with the glass, and that is a reception area. Now, the governor's chief of staff is over in the old secretary of state's office.

DePue: But when you say it's closed off, the public can clearly see all of that, right?

Struck: They can see all that. I don't think they can go in like they could with us. We had a little guard, but he was unarmed. When the governor was there, we always had security, but anybody could come in.

DePue: Protestors could walk right into that area?

Struck: Oh, yes.

DePue: Were they carrying signs, or were they loud?

Struck: Usually our little guard would go out and say we'd allow two to come in and bring their petitions or whatever, and then the others would line up in front of the glass. A couple times we had to get the state police to come over and the secretary of state police to guard the doors so that we didn't have them overtake the office.

DePue: But once you have the two people come in, what are they allowed to do?

Struck: They would come in and ask to see the governor, ask for an appointment; they would talk to our receptionist, and we would get someone to talk with them. We were not in the position to just have anybody off the street come in to meet with him. Now, he would do that later on; if there'd be a group of children or a group of people that were in for the day, if he was not busy or a meeting had ended soon, he would go out and say hi, especially for young... But with the protestors, we had a pretty structured day in the beginning, where we would have meetings. So we would have someone on staff coming down and talk to them. But our guard would go outside and say, "You can have two representatives inside."

DePue: Normally when you think about the chief of staff for a political office like the governor or president, you conjure up all these images, and oftentimes it's a gruff taskmaster that keeps things disciplined.

Struck: That was not Kirk. He was very easygoing, didn't like a lot of controversy, and would work with the legislature to try to smooth things over. No, he was not a gruff person at all.

DePue: Who was the gatekeeper? Who was the person who was controlling who would get to the governor himself?

Struck: I was the gatekeeper on his side if they would just come in and want to see him. Many times it was just staff saying—if a staff person came in and said, "I want to see the governor," I knew—

DePue: But you mentioned somebody else that was doing the scheduling for him.

Struck: Rhonda was our scheduler, but she was in an entirely different area. We knew the night before what our day was going to be the next day, and we'd know whether we'd have flexibility. So if one of the legislative people would come down and we're in session, of course I would say, "What is it?" and then when he would finish with a meeting I would say, "So-and-so needs to see you about X, Y, and Z," and we'd try to schedule it in. But just to have a Steve Schnorf, who was over at CMS, or another agency director pop in and say, "I want to see the governor," we couldn't always do it because his day would be structured. I would be the gatekeeper for that, but scheduling would definitely be with the scheduler.

If they would try to get in with her and couldn't, and it was someone that he had known for a long time, once in a while they would call and ask to speak to me; I would relay the message, "So-and-so called and has been trying to get a meeting with you and has been unable." So he would tell me what he'd want to do: "Talk to the legislative office; tell them to get him worked in." When a legislator would want to come in, he always wanted to see them if he needed to. But he liked them to go through the legislative office so that they were kept abreast, because they were on a floor above us. If he would be in the habit of just seeing Representative Watson or Senator Watson and the legislative liaison and the one that was over the Senate didn't know, they might be meeting with someone else, so that's why we always had them go through the legislative office.

DePue: The legislative liaisons were Mark Boozell and...

Struck: In the beginning it was Steve Selcke.

DePue: Yeah, that's who I was thinking.

Struck: And Kevin Martin. We had several. Scott Kaiser was one of them. But Steve would come down and say, "Can I have a couple minutes with him?" and when he might

finish with a meeting, he'd see Steve sitting there in my office and say, "What's up?" So they always had real good access with him.¹³

DePue: Governor Edgar's predecessor, of course, is Governor Jim Thompson, who was legendary for being gregarious and open and oftentimes going onto the legislative floor himself. I'm sure you heard all of these comparisons.

Struck: Yes.

DePue: How accessible did Governor Edgar want to make himself? Because you can get consumed sometimes by—

Struck: You can. If it was important and would matter on a vote, of course he would want to be available. He would try to keep his schedule structured where he would be meeting with other groups or different people, but then if Pate needed to see—

DePue: [James] Pate Philip.

Struck: Yes. Then he would go. Or he would call me. Usually the leaders would call me. Lots of times they would have talked to either Steve or Mark first. As far as legislators, I'll give you an example. I had helped Senator Maitland in his first campaign, and he felt that he didn't have access during a certain time with the governor. I don't know whether Steve or Mark came down and said that he was unhappy, and the governor came out and said, "Sherry, do you want to call him and have him down?" I did, and he came down, and he goes, "Sherry, I'm unhappy. I can't get in to see him," blah-blah-blah. Well, he had a meeting with the governor, and as they came out, the governor put his arm on his shoulder. He said, "Now, John, you know Sherry. If you ever feel that you can't get in to me, all you have to do is pick up the phone and call her." So he kind of put it back on them that, yes, I'm here, but if I don't get the information—because we didn't know that he was trying to get in. So he was [accessible]. If he knew, he would address everything like that. Maybe there was a reason why he wouldn't want to speak to a certain legislator, but someone like that, most definitely. He had him come down, and he said, "Don't be shy. Pick up the phone and call Sherry. You know her."

DePue: Now here's an interesting question, perhaps, for you. Did you feel somewhat protective of his time?

Struck: Very much so. Very much so. Not where I wanted to keep people away. He did not like to run really late. If he had a schedule and there were people that had taken time from their day to come, he of course wanted to keep on schedule as much as he could, but if there was something we had to, yes. It really helped, I think, by knowing the night before what we were going to have the next day, because I could look at it to see if we had some wiggle room or if this group maybe... If it was staff,

¹³ The importance Edgar placed on accessibility to his legislative staff was rooted in his experience as Governor Thompson's legislative liaison. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 17-19.

we could have them wait longer than we could an association that was coming in for something.

DePue: If it was Brenda who was calling, or the kids, did they call him directly?

Struck: They would call me. I changed the numbers when I went in, because (laughs) Governor Thompson's numbers were out there. I was getting all kinds of calls when we first went into the governor's office, so I had the telephone people come in. I had a certain number that people could call me direct, and then I had a number that just he and the kids could use. So when I saw 2-1188 ring, if he was there, I knew it was her or one of the kids—or when his mother was alive, his mom. So if she would call and he'd be in a meeting, I really could talk to him right away. She would always say, "What's he doing?" and I could tell her, "He's with such-and-such." And she would say, "Could you interrupt?" or "Could you tell him when he's done with this and then have him call?"

When he was traveling, I always knew that when 1188 rang, it was him. Sometimes it would be her, but I knew her schedule too, and I knew that he didn't have time for me to pick up the phone, "Oh, how's your day?" I'd say, "This is Sherry," and he'd say, "Get me Kirk," "Get me this or that," and I could tell by his tone of voice if he wanted to know what was going on. If I had something important, I'd say, "When you get done with that, if you'd call back, I want to give you your messages" or whatever. So sometimes I didn't guess right; sometimes I did.

DePue: It sounds like he wasn't much for small talk most the time.

Struck: No. He didn't—no. But some nights he'd call 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, and I'd say, "This is Sherry." He'd say, "What are you doing still there?" I could say, "Well, what are you doing still calling me?" (DePue laughs) and he would laugh and I would laugh. I mean, he was not... Of course he didn't want me to say, "Well, I'm having a bad day. How's your day?" But he'd want to know what was going on. The day his brother was up, standing with Senator [Dick] Durbin (laughs)—

DePue: This is Tom?

Struck: Yes, and he had endorsed Al Salvi.¹⁴ Of course when he called, I wanted to know what he needed first, and then I'd say, "I have a message for you."

DePue: When you say "he," you say Governor Edgar had endorsed this?

Struck: Yes, the governor had endorsed Al Salvi. And then I would wait to see what he needed because he might have something right away, and I would see. Then I'd say, "I have something to tell you about Tom" or whatever I'd have to tell him.

¹⁴ Al Salvi had upset Lt. Gov. Bob Kustra in the 1996 Republican primary for U.S. Senate, but lost to Democrat Dick Durbin in the general election.

DePue: You aren't going to be surprised that there are lots of people I've talked to who have strong memories about those first few months and those brutal budget battles. In that particular year, you get to the middle of July and there still is no budget, and the state misses a payroll. Do you remember that experience?

Struck: I remember that experience very well. I remember how distraught he was. (doorbell rings) Can you just—

(pause in recording)

DePue: We had a brief interruption because the UPS man arrived.

Struck: I can't wait to see what I got. (laughs)

DePue: But before you get to see what you got from the UPS guy, we were just talking about the time period when the state employees had missed the payroll.

Struck: He was **very** distraught. He was disappointed that we weren't done, but he very specifically said that he did not like state employees not being paid. I said, "Governor, they're not going to go without pay. All they have to do is take their pay stub to the credit union." He said, "I know, but it's not like they just get their paycheck." So he was very, very concerned that the workers were not getting their paychecks. He never mentioned himself—or any of us (laughs)—but he mentioned the workers, the state employees. He didn't like that one bit.

DePue: But he won that battle. Do you remember the reaction within the office when he finally got a bill through the legislature?

Struck: Yes, he was quite elated. Before that, he was very tense. They'd have meetings, meetings would not end well, and people would get mad and leave. Then we'd have meetings again, and maybe it would go a little longer and we'd think we were close. But when he finally settled, he was very relieved. He was worried that his had been the longest.

DePue: The meetings that you're having, I assume you're talking about the legislative leaders.

Struck: Yes. The leaders and their chiefs of staff, and our chief of staff and legislative liaison.

DePue: Now I have a comment here, and I don't know if it's in reference to this, but something about coming in the back door during a leaders' meeting.

Struck: When he'd walk to work, he'd come in the back door. I don't think it was that first session. Once in a while we'd have a legislator who would walk in the back door.

DePue: Where is the back door? Maybe we're not supposed to know.

Struck: Oh, yeah. Blagojevich was notorious for slipping out the back door. Do you know the area? He used the big, ornate office. If you're looking towards the back where he had the picture of the Lincoln and Douglas debate, if you'd look in the right corner, looking at that wall, there's a door. In the morning when he would come to work, the troopers would call and say, "Governor in route on foot" or by car—it was always by foot, even in the winter, always by foot—and then our little guard in the front would go around and close those big double doors that would let the public look into his office. He would close those and lock those, then he would walk around through the rotunda and come in like you were going over to the press office. There's a little hallway there if you turned right. He'd jog around that little corner and unlock the back door. Then the governor would come up the stairs and turn right, go in those doors, and come in the back door.

DePue: The secrets of the—

Struck: The secrets of the inner office.

DePue: Very good. What were your impressions of those that the governor had working on his inner team, the people you worked with day in and day out?

Struck: Hard workers. Loyal. Honest. Many of them had the same values that he did. I guess to say it better, the things that he wanted to accomplish for the people of Illinois—they were on the same page with him. I didn't see a lot of egos in that inner team, where they would want to outshine the others. There was a lot of disagreement. They might think this way, but they always talked it out. A lot of bright people, a lot of very talented people.

DePue: Did you get a sense that some of them were there because he had to pay some political favors for what they had done during the campaign?

Struck: No, not his inner circle. Absolutely not. I cannot think of one person. Not Kirk [Dillard]. Not Kirk at all. I mean, he was young and dynamic, and he was so easy to get along with, and I don't think he had any political push to get that job. Mike Lawrence, no; Joan Walters, no. They'd all known him so long and so loyal. George Fleischli had known him a long time. Janis had known him a long time.

DePue: Janis Cellini.

Struck: Yes. Arnie Kanter worked with certain groups up in Chicago, so his wasn't a political—no, not at all.

DePue: Maybe I'm assuming too much, but you're not involved with substantive kinds of discussions, policymaking issues or anything like that?

Struck: I could always go in his office if I wanted to—and if I needed to, I would—but I stayed out of all of that. I was strictly there for him.

DePue: But you saw all these people on a regular basis?

Struck: Yes.

DePue: I want to get your impressions; you mentioned a lot of these folks just now. So let's start with Mike Lawrence: his personality or his character, and the nature of the relationship the two men had.

Struck: He and the governor were very close. He's got integrity, and the governor respected him. They didn't always agree on how things would get, especially during session; if the governor maybe would have to give a little something, Mike would sometimes be unhappy because he thought maybe the governor gave away too much. But the governor respected him, and he respected the governor. Man of integrity.

DePue: Is that to say, then, that Governor Edgar appreciated people who would challenge him?

Struck: Yes, yes. As long as you did it respectfully.

DePue: The next name on there: Joan Walters.

Struck: Had a **lot** of respect for her, a lot of respect. He knew he put her in a **very** tough position, and he backed her.¹⁵ He always listened to what she said. She didn't always agree with him either. She had a very hard, hard job with the legislative leaders.

DePue: How would you explain her personality? She's not a large woman; she's not a woman who physically is imposing at all, and now she's got arguably the toughest job in the new administration.

Struck: She held her own pretty much, and if she couldn't, he would back her up.

DePue: Did you like her?

Struck: Very much so. Very much so.

DePue: Did she have a good personality, or was she on the feisty side, or both?

Struck: She could be feisty if she needed to. She could be feisty. She was always very respectful with them, but she would tell the governor if she didn't agree with him on something. And he would always want her to be very honest.

DePue: How about George Fleischli? What was his role?

Struck: George had been with him since secretary of state days. I don't know when he started.¹⁶ I think he had physical services at secretary of state; I'm not sure. I met George at their house. He trusted George. George knew the inner workings of the

¹⁵ Walters, July 29, 2009, 32.

¹⁶ Fleischli served as director of physical services for Edgar's entire tenure as secretary of state.

Capital Development Board. If we would need something at the mansion, he knew how to get that stuff done. I don't think George challenged him as much as maybe some of the others. He wasn't what I would call a yes man, but I think the governor had a lot of respect for him and appreciated his work on certain issues—agriculture, horse racing.

DePue: Al Grosboll.

Struck: Al Grosboll had been with him a long time. I think he'd been his chief of staff as secretary of state, wasn't he?

DePue: Well, Joan was, and I—

Struck: And was Carter his chief of staff for a while?

DePue: No, I don't believe so. Al Grosboll was over—I believe it was the license division, or one of the major divisions at the secretary of state's office.¹⁷

Struck: He thought Al was very bright, had a lot of ideas, and he would listen to Al. Al would sometimes stretch things out a little. The governor was not for a lot of small talk, but he always appreciated what Al had to say.

DePue: Does that suggest that Al was one for small talk?

Struck: Once in a while Al wanted to tell him a little story or something. Depending on the day, he might not be in the mood to take that, but he always respected what Al had to say.

DePue: The governor himself came from the experience where he had been the legislative liaison, so here's a job—(Struck laughs) you don't want to have the job that the boss previously had.

Struck: Yes, that was hard.

DePue: Yeah, especially those first couple years, I would think. Steve Selcke and Mark Boozell: tell me about those two.

Struck: I had not known Steve Selcke before, and—

DePue: He was a carryover from the Thompson administration.

Struck: Yes, he was, and that was good that first year because it was a tough year. He was very good, and I think the governor had a lot of respect for him and appreciated his loyalty to him. Steve could always get him to listen to him, and Steve could tell him

¹⁷ Grosboll served as director of vehicle services from 1981-1984, and then was deputy secretary of state until Edgar became governor. The latter position was equivalent to chief of staff. Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, June 4, 2009, 27-30.

if he thought the governor was maybe leaning a little bit too far, not giving enough. The governor would listen and appreciated it. I think he respected him a lot.

Mark Boozell he had known for a long time. He knew Mark was a very hard worker. Mark didn't have all of the years of experience that Steve did, so it was harder for him—and I think maybe a little harder coming in knowing the job that he did—but I think Mark did a very good job, and I think the governor appreciated it.¹⁸

DePue: How about the legal team? Arnie Kanter, to begin with.

Struck: Arnie. It seemed like he didn't stay as many years. I didn't have a whole lot of interaction with him. The governor would listen to him when he needed to, but he was not one that was down a lot, like the legislative office.

DePue: Anybody else on the team, especially the first term?

Struck: Sally Jackson. Had a lot of respect for her. He worked with Sally a lot in getting his agency directors. She would talk with him, bring him prospective names they'd talk about, and she would usually sit in with him during those meetings. He had a lot of respect for her.

DePue: Was she his deputy chief of staff, one of them?

Struck: Yes.

DePue: Who were the other ones in that role?

Struck: She was the only one in the beginning. It was Howard Peters and Andy Foster, I think, in the second term, but Sally was—and I'm not sure it was deputy chief of staff. She might have had a different title. But she was right up there with the chief of staff, and he had a lot of respect for her.

DePue: Get outside that inner circle. Your impression of the four legislative leaders, who (Struck laughs) oftentimes are called the Four Tops in Illinois because they have so much power.

Struck: I called them the Four Tops.

DePue: You did?

Struck: Yes, I called them the Four Tops. Very powerful people. You had Pate Philip and Lee Daniels, Phil Rock when the governor was first elected, and Mike Madigan.

DePue: You laughed, though, when I asked you about these people.

¹⁸ Boozell was disappointed he did not immediately get the top legislative staff post. Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, August 18, 2009, 50-53.

- Struck: Very distinct personalities. I liked them all very much. The governor would tease me that first session. When he and the Speaker would have their differences, he would say, “Do you want to get your friend the Speaker on the phone?” (laughter)
- DePue: He’s talking about Mike Madigan, who had been around a long time before that and is still in the position today.
- Struck: Yes, and I think they have a very strong mutual respect for each other now. They had their hard knocks the first... You know, Mike Madigan had not worked with the governor as secretary of state, per se, so they each had to...
- DePue: Arguably the two most powerful men in Illinois politics at the time.
- Struck: Yes, very much so. Phil Rock was just—I didn’t know him as personally as I did the others. I just always thought he was so stately. I loved to listen, when I’d have the speaker on, if the Senate would be in session. He treated it with such respect for the office and the Senate, and I liked that. I really appreciated that. Pate was... How do I want to describe Pate? I like Pate, don’t get me wrong. I like Pate. Could tease, could laugh. He could be intimidating if you’d let him.
- DePue: Pate has the reputation, at least, of not respecting women in positions of power.
- Struck: He does, and I think maybe some of that’s true. I think some of it’s his bark is bigger than his bite. (pause) Pate is a very loyal person. I think he had trouble with the governor because he had been with Governor Thompson—maybe they’d have a bottle of Crown Royal or something together—and the governor being a non-drinker, they didn’t have that connection there. So I think Pate had a hard time communicating where he felt it was closely... I think they developed a closer relationship, but the first few times, there was some strain. Pate can be a good ol’ boy. He’s a nice person, but he’s Pate. Very loyal.
- DePue: It might be worth mentioning what happened to Carter Hendren after he was done running the campaign.
- Struck: He went right back to work with Pate. I remember some of those first calls, and of course, not knowing Carter at first, I had to gain his trust, and he had to know that I was okay. But those first few times when I would call, you could tell Carter’s loyalty to me. He would be there to help me with anything I needed personally, if I needed something, and he had a lot of respect for the governor, but he and Pate were very close. I always thought that Carter and the governor were a lot alike—one polished and one not. They both politically were brilliant in how they could see campaigns running—different in some ways, but a lot of ways more alike than not. One very polished and one not. I would say that with Pate—not as polished as some of the others, but took his job seriously. But he did have his troubles with women, and once in a while he would say things that would come back to get him in a little trouble.
- DePue: The one we haven’t mentioned yet is Lee Daniels.

Struck: Lee's a very, very nice man, very devoted to—he has a daughter who had some mental challenges, and that was a passion of his. I didn't know him as well. He and the governor at times would have some issues. One time I remember—I don't remember which session it was—but they were at odds. After several days had gone by, his secretary called and said to me, "What are we going to do to get these two talking?" I remember calling the governor at the mansion, and he got such a kick. He said, "Well, it's down to you two now trying to get us together." (DePue laughs) And they did; they met at the mansion and worked their differences out. Pate was so outgoing and vocal, and Lee was not.

DePue: Well, does this incident with Lee Daniels also suggest that the governor had his stubborn side?

Struck: That the governor had a stubborn side? If the governor felt he was right and that he was not getting any give on the other side, of course he could. He wouldn't just give to give—there had to be give and take on both sides—but he wasn't purposely stubborn. But he would hold his own; he wasn't a pushover.

DePue: A man of his convictions, then.

Struck: That's right. That's right.

DePue: The one that we haven't mentioned, because Phil Rock was only there for a year or two, and then he was replaced by Emil Jones. Did you have many dealings with Jones?

Struck: Yes. He would come down—

DePue: Another completely different personality?

Struck: Oh, yes. (laughs) I remember Senator Rock, the governor calling him and him coming down. From the governor's complex we had that small office that was the original governor's office. When the governor would meet with the leaders one-on-one, or other legislators, or even some other groups, he would go into that historic office. I remember Senator Rock, President Rock, coming down and the two of them sitting in there talking in the afternoons. He was quite a gentleman. Emil Jones? I think he was so new, you know, he followed Senator Rock. He came in; the governor was probably not as close to him as he was the others. But the governor would go meet with the different caucuses. He would meet with the black caucus if he needed to.

DePue: A little bit of change in the subject here. I wanted to ask you if, while you're doing this job, you and Brenda or the two couples remain friends on a social level as well?

Struck: If we would have time. My husband was from southern Illinois, and the governor and Mrs. Edgar knew that. Earl was from southern Illinois. One of the first years, during the DuQuoin Fair, I was involved in helping get the derby brunch going, and he invited us down to stay at the Hayes home because he knew Earl had been to that

fairgrounds as a child; we were invited to stay in the Hayes home. Roy Blunt and his wife were visiting for the derby, and the governor had some other commitments, so we helped entertain the Blunts.¹⁹ We had him out for dinner when Brenda was traveling. I guess he hadn't been in office too long, and I fixed dinner one night; he came out very casually. We really didn't have time, you know. It was more in the beginning. I think they had moved out of their home. I don't even remember what I fixed, but he came out on a Saturday night because she was gone. When his mother passed away, when she was in the hospital, I would go sit with her a lot. I thought the world of her, very close to her. So we would if we could, but we didn't always.

A couple times, especially when he first went into office, he asked if Earl was having any troubles with the legislators because of me being in the position that I was in. He was concerned about that. He spoke at my husband's funeral. During the funeral, he said, "I know there were many times Earl would have wished Sherry had had any other job but secretary to me, but I want you all to know that he never asked me anything inappropriate during that entire eight years." And he never did.

DePue: Did Earl experience any difficulties because of—

Struck: He had one. I remember who it was with. I told the governor—I don't remember all the circumstances—it was a staffer, and the governor wanted to know about it. I said, "But Earl is okay." The staffer had made some comment about me being there. People would say, "Oh, that Edgar, you can't get close to him" or "Nobody likes him," and Earl would say, "Nobody except the voters."

DePue: Well, that's a candid comment, that many of the people who wanted to get access to him had that impression. What was the impression, do you think?

Struck: Because he wasn't a good ol' boy, while Thompson would maybe be around more, out in the Senate or the House. Earl just kind of blew it off, although he was very defensive of the governor. You know, he didn't have them down for drinks and all those kinds of things. They could be unkind. I remember our first after-session party. Some of the ones under former administrations had been pretty rowdy, and ours was not a drinking party. He was so glad we were settled, so we approached it differently and said, "Let's have a picnic-type atmosphere."

DePue: I know that the reputation of an evening at the mansion was quite a bit different than it was with the Thompsons.

Struck: Yes.

DePue: And did you hear about some of that difference as well?

¹⁹ Historic home of William R. Hayes, developer and promoter of the DuQuoin State Fairground. Roy Blunt, a Republican who won election to the U.S. Senate in 2010, was Missouri's secretary of state from 1985 to 1993, when he became president of Southwest Baptist University following his defeat in the 1992 Missouri gubernatorial primary. *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, 1774-Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=b000575>.

Struck: I would hear it more from things that people would say to Earl. But having known them, our evenings (laughs) were pretty much like that too. Earl would say that people made comments to him, no drinking and all of that, but that's not something to criticize someone for, I think.

DePue: The other thing that Governor Edgar has quite a reputation for is the lack of any kind of salty language at all.

Struck: That's true. That's true. And if it would come out by someone when he was there, he had been known to come and apologize to me. Very much a gentleman.

DePue: You mean if he had said something or somebody else?

Struck: No, he didn't, but if someone else had, he'd come over and say, "I'm sorry."

DePue: So what did he do when he got angry, or didn't he get angry?

Struck: I saw him kick a briefcase one time, and he'd say, "Gosh **dang-it!**" (laughter) Oh, he could get mad, but no, he did not...

DePue: How could you tell when he was mad?

Struck: Oh, you could tell, you could tell. How could you tell? Well, he would tell you for one thing. You always knew. He could raise his voice. One time I did hear him say something when he was telling a story. It was when Governor Clinton became president, and he said, "Hell hath"—he said "hell" and then he looked at me like he'd said a bad word—"hath no fury like a woman scorned." I don't remember his whole story. He just was not raised that way. But he could get mad, (DePue laughs) oh yeah, and he could raise his voice.

DePue: Did people have to tread lightly when he was?

Struck: You wouldn't want to say something back to him (laughs) that was stupid. I mean, if you felt strongly about your position on that, you would want to say to him, "I disagree," and he would respect that. You might still have words between the two, but he always wanted to know—he didn't want you to cower or anything to him at all. He wanted you to be strong. I remember asking him one time, "Am I doing a good job?" or "So-and-so wants to know," and he said, "You wouldn't be here if you weren't." But he was not one to just lavish you with a lot of praise or all of that. He may later, when you least expected it, but...

DePue: Not while you were in the trenches.

Struck: No, not at all. Not at all. But he had a temper, and you knew it. He could get mad.

DePue: Let's change the subject again here a little bit. We had talked about the dogs that you two had while you were in the neighborhood. The subject of dogs always

comes up about the governor when he was in the mansion and in the governor's office as well.

Struck: He loved his dogs. Tow Tow went with them—and it's Tow Tow, T-o-w T-o-w—

DePue: Oh.

Struck: —was their first little dog. Not Toto, it was Tow Tow. I think probably their Brad named him. He went to the mansion with them, and he was quite old. Then he got Emy. She was a rambunctious little pup, and he adored her. I'm sorry, Mark, I will have the pictures for you; I forgot to pull those out.

DePue: Emy stood for something, right?

Struck: Executive Mansion's Youngest. She drove poor little Tow Tow crazy.

DePue: Would he bring them to the office?

Struck: He would. I was sitting at my desk one morning, and the doors into his office were open. If someone came in through the glass doors, it would make the door between his office and mine kind of blow open, and it had opened about this far.

DePue: Just a few inches.

Struck: There was a visitor outside looking in his office, and they looked into (laughs) my office. They kept pointing under my desk and saying, "Mouse, mouse." I was on the phone, and I was ignoring. The lady said, "Mouse, mouse." That's when we had the old furniture that Governor Thompson had had; they were real old antique desks. I finally read her lips, and I said, "Mouse?" So he called before he came over, and I said, "There's a mouse in this office." I called the secretary of state, and they put some glue boards out. So he brought Emy in that day. But he knew I loved animals too, so we loved having her in. I can remember when she was just a pup and was being just a typical little pup, he had to be gone—it was a state holiday; I don't remember which one, it wasn't a traditional. I went and got her and brought her over to the office and worked with her—fetch and that type of thing. But yeah, she came over a lot. She got very sick walking to work with him, or she liked to lick his shoes, but she got histoplasmosis. Almost lost her.

And I remember when he got Daisy. He had been to the pound with Brenda to get her a little dog—what they thought (laughs) was going to be a little dog, that ended up being big, little Buddy—and Daisy was being brought in. He called and said, "Oh, Sherry, the most beautiful dog just went into the pound. Would you call about it and see how many days I would have to wait?" So I did, and they told me three days. He said, "I know she'll get claimed, but she's beautiful." She was red, like a red golden retriever. So I called. He was out of town, and he called and said, "What did you find out?" I said, "She's there." And he said, "Would you go get her?" I said, "Not unless you'll take everything else that I bring out," because I am an animal lover too. All I would have needed is a pair of sad eyes, and he would

have had four or five dogs. (DePue laughs) So I sent another staffer who (laughs) was better controlled and went out and got Daisy, and I brought her home with me. She had been very abused. Pick up a leash or a broom, and that poor little dog would just go flat because evidently she'd been beaten with the broom and her leash. But he worked and worked and worked with her, and she was the sweetest thing. So, Emy and Daisy.

DePue: Let's move on to the 1994 campaign. I know that maybe shortly before that time, Kirk Dillard moves on because he's going after a Senate seat; that means you've got to have a change in the office, and it brings in Jim Reilly. Was Jim different than Kirk?

Struck: Very different than Kirk. I do have one other doggy story that's of interest, from his cabin, if you'd like to hear it.

DePue: Absolutely.

Struck: He and Brenda had the log cabin out north of Sherman. There was a dog that was dumped out there, a beautiful black dog. He of course fell in love with it and would talk to it while they were out there. Well, Brenda did not think they needed a third dog—it might have been when he was having his first angioplasty—but he worried about that dog. I talked to several staff people I knew were dog lovers. Janis Cellini and Steve Frank went out to his property and worked and worked and worked and captured (laughs) that dog, because we'd found a home for it. That was a big concern of his. He was quite an animal lover.²⁰ There was a kitten, a kitty-cat, that came onto his property at the mansion. He was outside having breakfast one morning, and Daisy brought him a kitten. (DePue laughs) The kitten was almost dead, so he and the trooper searched the grounds, and they finally found the mama and the kittens. He put those in the basement, and he found homes for the kittens and mama. She scratched him when he picked her up, but he was quite an ani—

DePue: The mama did?

Struck: Um-hm. He was quite an animal lover. Now, getting back to Jim Reilly. Jim Reilly was as different from Kirk Dillard as day and night. Very serious, very driven, but he's absolutely what was needed to manage the office and take care of things there for the second campaign.

DePue: So the campaign, you get into a different kind of dynamic in the office?

Struck: Yes.

DePue: How was it different?

Struck: Because he would look at the different groups, maybe see a weakness in an area—

²⁰ Mike McCormick, interview by Mark DePue, August 6, 2010, 34.

DePue: He being Reilly or—

Struck: Yes, Reilly. Seeing an area that the governor maybe wasn't doing as well with, and he would work with staff and the campaign office to get the governor with that group so that they could get support. He could see the whole big picture. Very serious man. Not one for a lot of teasing and joking and laughing—very serious, where Kirk was just the opposite.

DePue: He ran a tight ship, then.

Struck: Oh, yes, he did. He could be scary. You didn't want to get on his wrong side.

DePue: How did you get along with him?

Struck: I got along fine, but when the governor had his health scare with his heart, the governor had given me very specific instructions on when he wanted me to tell his troopers and the scheduler. He himself was going to tell Jim Reilly and Mike Lawrence and the campaign manager. But I was a little concerned at how Jim Reilly would take it that I had not shared with him.

DePue: I think you need to back up on that a little bit because here is an important incident in his life. It's in the middle of this campaign, and they're still negotiating a budget for that year, 1994. So let's start at the beginning of that.

Struck: It was Brad's wedding, and the governor was having some chest pains. Then it was Fourth of July, and he walked in several parades and was having some discomfort. So after the Fourth of July, he came in and said that he would like to speak with his doctor.

DePue: Came into—

Struck: The office, to the Capitol office. Which was not uncommon if he would want to speak to his Springfield doctor. So I got him on the phone—very, very short conversation. The governor didn't say anything else to me. My phone immediately rang, and it was the doctor saying that the governor was having some discomfort, and we needed to get a hold of the Chicago doctor. I remember standing up and walking to the front of my desk, looking in at the governor, and he was behind his desk looking at me. (laughs) I'm surprised that he hadn't said anything to me. But I got his Chicago doctor on the phone. They talked and decided that he needed another angiogram to see what was going on. The doctor in Chicago had some pretty good ideas. He had been in during the first angiogram. He was in as they did it, so he saw all of the pictures and knew. He said later that he was not surprised that he would have some re-occurrences. So after I hung up with that conversation, I went in and talked to him privately and said what the doctors had wanted to do: they wanted to get him up to Chicago as soon as possible to have this stress test and the angiogram.

And, of course, being the election, the governor didn't just want everybody on staff to know. He gave me very specific orders that he was going to talk to Brenda and tell her what was going on. He and I picked out the date that we wanted to see if it could happen. I checked with the doctor, and it could. He told me when I could tell the trooper and then when I could tell the scheduler so that everything would coordinate and get done. He was going to take care of talking to the chief of staff and Mike Lawrence. During that time, Mike Lawrence had a very close family member that was very ill and passed away, so Mike was out of the office. We were in session; we were not finishing up. The governor is out of the office; he's in the Chicago area. Jim Reilly buzzed me and said that Pate Philip wanted to have a leaders' meeting on Friday, like ten o'clock, and I said, "It can't happen." He said, "But that's when Pate wants it." I said, "But it can't happen." I couldn't tell him why it couldn't happen because I didn't want to break the governor's confidence, and I knew that he was going to tell him. I said, "No, he's the governor and we're going to do it when he says." I knew that the governor needed so many hours after having an angioplasty before he would be released, and we had talked this over with the governor. So Jim Reilly was not overly thrilled with me at all. He was not nasty to me or anything, but I could tell he was mad. And he said, "I think you need to be in Chicago," and I said, "Okay."

So I hung up with him, and I'm over on the other side of my little office; the governor called, and he was kind of chuckling. He said, "Is everything okay?" I said, "Reilly's mad at me." He said, "Why?" And I told him. He said, "It'll be all right. I'll talk to him, and I'm going to tell Mike." I said, "They're not going to be very happy." He said, "That's all right, that's all right. I'll take care of it." I told him, "And Jim says I need to come to Chicago." He said, "Yeah, I really think that's a good idea." So I transferred him over to Mike Lawrence. I didn't know Mike was gone—he was in a different area of the Capitol. So no Mike; he couldn't talk to him. Well, he [Edgar] called back himself because he knew I was trying to get on the shuttle to get to (laughs) Chicago. He called Jim Reilly, and Jim Reilly wasn't in. So there he is, not able to talk to either one of the people.

I couldn't get on the shuttle because it was booked, it was full. I didn't want to bump anybody, because I really should have gone to the chief of staff then and said, "I need to get up there; is it okay if I bump someone?" So I called and told my husband to pack certain clothes and to come pick me up. He said, "Why?" and I said, "I'm going to Chicago, and I can't tell you why, but I'll be able to later tonight." So my sweet husband did; he came and got me, (laughs) took me to the train station, and I got on the train for three or four hours. Back then we had pagers, but no cell phones like they are now. So I had three and a half hours sitting there. I think I rode up that day with Taylor Pensoneau, as a matter of fact, and I couldn't say anything to him. He stopped me later and said, "Did you know (DePue laughs) as you were sitting there"—

DePue: And the old reporter wanted the ultimate scoop. (laughter)

Struck: That's right. I got to Chicago, and my pager had been going off. It was one of the troopers. So I got to where I could call, and he told me that they were going to do open-heart surgery and that Mrs. Edgar wanted to talk to me. I called and got her, and I told her that I had just gotten there. She said, "I really need you out here." Brad and Stacey, who were living in Chicago, had just gotten back from their honeymoon. She said, "Can you call them?" I said, "I'll call them, and the two kids and I will ride out to Downers Grove." So we did. I was a little concerned how Jim Reilly was going to respond, and he was fine; he was fine.

DePue: Well, then you get the news that he is getting open-heart surgery, and it's, what, quadruple bypass surgery?

Struck: Yes.

DePue: Your thoughts then.

Struck: It was scary. It was very scary. By the time I got there, he was already in surgery. Mrs. Edgar had watched the little preview movie that they have you watch so she would know how he would be when he got out of surgery. It was a very tense time. By this time, some of the staff was beginning to know. I asked the trooper to go to a land-based phone when I told him. He had no idea, but they were wonderful; they got him right where he needed to be. No one knew. We did it at night. We weren't trying to hide anything, but he didn't need a big audience, and he wanted to control what was being done and said.²¹

DePue: I was going to say, he did want to keep this from the press.

Struck: Well, we wanted to know what we were dealing with, because any time you have that, they're going to have him much worse than he is. We wanted the real story of what actually was happening, because he did not keep anything—once they knew what was done, it was all out there. But there was no need. We didn't know when he went that it was going to be open-heart surgery. It could have been an angiogram and nothing, no blockages, maybe another stent, which is a big difference between open-heart surgery and that. So he wanted to control the issue.

When I called the scheduler (laughs) and I called him over, one of his first thoughts was, "Can I call Andy?" the campaign manager. I said, "No. This is between us." Everybody teased me. My favorite word is—Steve Selcke still teases me to this day— "And if it gets out or anybody says anything, I'm going to rip your lips off." I'd be teasing. I said, "Tom, it's you and I and the trooper that know, so if this gets out, I'm going to rip your lips off."²² And he knew I meant business.

²¹ On July 7-8, 1994, Governor Edgar, then 47, had emergency quadruple-bypass surgery at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Illinois. *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1994. For Edgar's description of his surgery and recovery, especially the influence it had on the course of his political career, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 18, 2010, 60-81. Also see, Andy Foster, interview by Mark DePue, July 12, 2010, 79-85; Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 2, 2009, 24-27; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, October 22, 2009, 41-43.

²² Tom Livingston.

(laughs) I had told him, “This comes from the governor.” And he did. The only thing he did, he called Andy and told Andy he might want to stay around the office and just be available. And Andy said, “Well, what do you mean?” He said, “You just might want to.” So they kind of had their doubts, but he did control the whole thing.

Once we knew what was going on, we told staff, and then everybody jumped in. Andy came to the hospital, Jim Reilly got there, and then we got through the surgery. It was the middle of the night when they got him out, because that’s a lengthy process, to get the body prepared and do the surgery and then to bring you out. One of the last things he said (laughs) to Brenda was, “Tell Sherry to have the leaders there tomorrow; I’m going to call.” So she did tell me that, and we’re all kind of chuckling, “Oh, yeah.”

DePue: But he’s controlling even that.

Struck: He’s even controlling that. And she told me. One of the hospital staff took me back to the hotel, so I got cleaned up to go to the office, and he did call. (laughs) He did call. Raspy voice. He’d just gotten off the ventilator, but he did call. And the legislators—Pate and Emil both—say, “What a man.” I mean, he’d just had major, major bypass surgery, and I think they saw how tough and gutsy he was.

DePue: Did you hear from people like Reilly and Lawrence afterwards about the secret you’d been holding?

Struck: (laughs) Bob Kustra said something to me, “Wow, way to keep a secret.” He came in and ran the meeting; they called him because of the transfer of power while he [Edgar] was under the anesthetic. So they called him in, but he didn’t know before. Then it gradually got out that really the governor had done all this, and the only ones that knew the whole story were Mrs. Edgar and me. And Reilly let me know, but he was okay. But there was a little bit where I kind of thought, Oh, is he going to tear into me? But he didn’t. He didn’t.

DePue: Did he give you a special feeling because it was you and Brenda—you were the only two he was going to trust with this information?

Struck: That’s the only ones he told. The doctors. He knew he could trust the doctors. It wasn’t that he didn’t trust—I mean, it’s a scary thing. He didn’t know what he was facing. None of us knew. You know yourself, in government, you can make a big deal over anything, and so he really did want to control how... And I never broke a confidence with him. If he told me something, I did what he told me to do.

DePue: But even somebody as close to him as Mike Lawrence, who he greatly—

Struck: See, but he tried to call. He was going to tell him. He called Mike to tell him—I transferred him over there—and Mike was gone. Well, that’s not something he can say, “Oh, well, tell him I called when he checks for messages. I wanted to tell him I’m going to Chicago for an angiogram.” Then he called Reilly, and Reilly wasn’t

available. He called Boozell, and Boozell wasn't available, so who else was he going to tell?

DePue: I wanted to touch on a couple other things that were going on in that '94 campaign—a completely different race, from what I understand, from the '90 campaign. Dawn Clark Netsch was somebody he respected, but—

Struck: Very much so.

DePue: —but there were political issues and themes in that campaign that were quite different, and he was running well ahead. Early in that campaign, earlier in 1994, one of the issues that had garnered so much attention was the Baby Richard case, something that, as he described it, both he and Mrs. Edgar took a great interest in.²³ Do you remember that issue?

Struck: Oh, yes, I do. I remember how heartsick they were. He was recuperating, and he really grieved over that situation because of that child. He felt so helpless. What could he do? Nothing. It really bothered him a lot.

DePue: Just to give very brief background, this is the child custody case where the father who, maybe a couple years after the baby was born, decided he wanted to retain custody, and—

Struck: He didn't know that she was pregnant. She had kept that from him, then she gave the baby away, and then they got back together and she told him.

DePue: But this thing had been going on for years and years. How old was this baby at the time?

Struck: Wasn't he five or six?

DePue: I think that's about right.

Struck: And the pictures—the governor being a father, and one of our neighbors had adopted a child that the governor and Mrs. Edgar were very close to, Julie. So they had a passion for adoption as it was, and then to see something like this; it seemed so heartless that this man—he was not a stellar individual—was almost like, "I'm going to win because I can win." The governor felt very helpless.

DePue: Did you know how Brenda felt about it?

²³ On June 16, 1994, after a multi-year legal battle, the Illinois Supreme Court awarded custody of a three-year-old boy named Richard to his biological father. Justice James Heiple's two page opinion, which did not cite any cases to support its argument, caused much controversy. On July 3, 1994, Governor Edgar signed a bill placing the best interests of a child ahead of parental rights in determining custody of a child following the denial or revocation of an adoption. The next year, April 30, 1995, the traumatic exchange of Richard between his adoptive and biological parents took place in view of the media. *Chicago Tribune*, June 17, 1994; July 4, 1994; May 2, 1995. See, Edgar, June 18, 2010, 38-53; Brenda Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 14, 2010, 60-63; Mike Lawrence, April 1, 2009, 37-40.

Struck: She didn't call and talk to me about it, but I knew that she felt very passionate about it, very sad. They both being very spiritual people, I know that there were prayer teams all over, praying for this family. Very sad. Gene Reineke was very involved in that as well. Gene had adopted several children, so he was very involved.

DePue: Gene Reineke would be the next chief of staff.

Struck: Chief of staff, um-hm.

DePue: Any more impressions about that election campaign?

Struck: He seemed much more relaxed. He **never** took anything for granted, ever, so he would never be one to say, "Oh, yeah, I don't have to worry about this." He was relaxed in how he acted, he did his governor's duties, but he didn't seem to have to be out as much in the campaign as he was before.

DePue: Did you have any role in the campaign?

Struck: The only thing I did was on the state side; Andy [Foster] called and said that they could use some help in the campaign office. It was about August or September; campaigns begin to run out of a little steam then, and there was some bickering. He said, "Could you maybe come out and just kind of smooth things over, and if you see the problems, kind of dig in?" So I took time off. I would go to the Capitol in the morning and then take vacation in the afternoon; I went out to the campaign office several times. Just my presence there would maybe calm people down a little bit. If I'd see somebody wasn't getting along, I'd try to see what the problem was and try to get some solutions to it without it being a big deal for Andy.

DePue: Were you on the payroll for the campaign?

Struck: No, I would just take the time off. I gave up my duties when—the first four years, I still had the Citizens for Edgar checkbook, so I still paid the bills and did the report for Citizens for Edgar on the weekends—

DePue: I know he had a little bit of a campaign debt when he got done with the first campaign.

Struck: (laughs) Oh, yes. He brought Gene on board for the campaign office.

DePue: Was this the '90 or the '94 campaign?

Struck: The '90. I met with Gene and said, "How do you feel about putting your house up as collateral?" and he said, "What?" (laughter) I said, "Well, we have this debt, and I've talked to the bankers. Bud Lohman, our treasurer, had retired, but that bank had just come out with what they called sweep accounts. Back then, interest rates were 10 percent. So they took our checking account and at the end of the day, they would invest what we still had; then it would be back in our account the next day, and we'd get daily interest much higher than our regular interest. But near the end

of the campaign and when all the bills started coming in, we did have a debt. It was probably March before I had the courage (laughter) and the time to add it all up.

I will say, in that '90 campaign I remember Carter telling me, "I need you to talk to the staff and tell them we're probably going to have no paychecks, because we have to have money for TV and radio." I went to staff and said, "I'm just going to pre-warn you, we're down in the last month, and we may not get our last two paychecks." That didn't go over real well, (DePue laughs) but we didn't have to do it. Bob and Carter weren't communicating. You know, Bob: "You can only tap people out so much."

DePue: This is Bob Hickman.

Struck: Yes. And there's Carter saying, "I need this"; there's Bob saying, "But I can only raise this"; and there's the candidate going everywhere they could possibly get him. So I'm sure Bob held some bills; I know he held some bills till the end, and they came in, so I added them up. Gene was over there, and I said, "I talked to the bank." And the first banker I talked to said, "What are you going to put up for collateral? Can you put your house?" So I came home and (laughs) talked to my sweet husband again and said, "How do you feel about me using our house?" He said, "What? Sherry!" I said, "I know." And he said, "Does Jim know this?" I said, "No, not yet." Well then our house wasn't enough for all of it, so that's why I said to Gene, (laughs) "How do you feel about me using your house too?" So Gene and I met with the bankers that had brought this sweep account to us, and they said, "No, no, no, we're not going to take your homes. You guys have been wonderful customers. How long do you think you need to raise the money to pay off this debt?" They were wonderful. So we had a short-term loan to get it done without anybody's home. But that was one of my first conversations with Gene: "Welcome aboard. How much is your house worth?"

DePue: Why wouldn't you have taken that to the governor himself and said—

Struck: I was ready to, and Gene and I did. When we first went in, there were the long, long, long hours, and I only paid from Citizens for Edgar what I knew we could afford. I still had to check out a lot of the stuff to see if it was legitimate. You know, did we have these signs? Was I sure that was maybe already paid for once. I thought so-and-so was covering this. There were only so many hours in the day. I couldn't leave the Capitol and come home and do it; I just physically couldn't do it. So it would be weekend work.

DePue: It sounds like you might have been relieved to not have to work in that second campaign.

Struck: It was probably a good—I think you read right. (laughter) I was really happy to say, "Here's the checkbook, and you know how to do the reporting." Although I did do the report. I always did the report because I wanted to protect his integrity. It wasn't that I didn't trust, but I wanted to see who was on there, because the more eyes, the

better. I always had Mike Lawrence look at it. I always had the chief of staff... Because the money was raised in a Chicago campaign office. I didn't see who was contributing. Sometimes we'd refund money. I wanted to see those reports so that I could say to Mike Lawrence, "Isn't this person someone we don't want?" and we would refund the money. So that's why I kept my hands in the report.

DePue: That was a fascinating return back to where we started with this whole discussion. I wanted to move on, though, in terms of the second administration. What so often happens is there's a little bit of a reorganization, especially within that personal staff. Was there in the case of Governor Edgar?

Struck: He did. He didn't have the super-cabinet anymore. He had the chief of staff and the two deputy chiefs of staff; then we had the senior staff under them instead of having the super-cabinet.

DePue: Like we did before, I'd like to go through some of the new personalities. There are two that have come up that we didn't address the first time around, and let's start with Janis Cellini. What was Janis's role?

Struck: Janis was down in an office where she would do personnel-type work, would work with the boards and commission people.

DePue: Well, you're being gentle. She was described as his patronage chief.

Struck: I would have thought that more in the secretary of state days, and I wasn't in that. But with *Rutan*, we didn't really have that.²⁴ I think of her more as the boards and commissions person. Now, maybe that's my naïve, not being involved...

DePue: Certainly the *Rutan* decision had changed the rules dramatically on patronage positions, but there still were those exempt positions that needed to have the governor say, "Okay, here's the person." In some cases, that was somebody who had political connections. And Janis is a person I've interviewed already, but who was Janis Cellini? What was her personality?

Struck: To me or to him? To me, I think of Janis as working with the unions. Whenever he would have a union thing, it would be with Janis. And personnel—she didn't have a lot of interaction with us at all. She dealt with the other people on staff. If she needed to see him, she would see him, but she wasn't down there as much as some of the others. I remember union meetings that she would set up.

DePue: How about the lieutenant governor, Bob Kustra?

Struck: He was gone our second—did he leave right after the second...

²⁴ *Rutan v. Republican Party of Illinois*, 497 U.S. 62 (1990). By a 5-4 vote, the decision extended the rule of *Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347 (1976) and *Branti v. Finkel*, 445 U.S. 507 (1980), determining "that promotions, transfers, and recalls after layoffs based on political affiliation or support are an impermissible infringement on the First Amendment rights of public employees." Justice Brennan wrote the majority opinion.

DePue: The governor talked him back into... He left to pursue his radio career.

Struck: And then he came back. I had forgotten that. In the beginning he would come to leaders' meetings, but then the busier he got, he didn't come as much; he had other things.

DePue: So it's somebody you didn't have a chance to get to know very well.

Struck: They did ask me to fill out an application and give him a résumé, during the '90 campaign, to go to work for him. His gal Monica did. I didn't. I didn't know him that well. I didn't think I wanted to work (laughs) for the state, and I was going to go back to the Coal Association. But that was one job opportunity that I got. I knew Bob, had a very good relationship with him, but I didn't know him intimately because the governor would talk to him on the phone more than he would come down.

DePue: The two deputy chiefs of staff for that second administration, then, were Howard Peters and Andy Foster?

Struck: Yes.

DePue: Did you get a chance to interact with those two men?

Struck: Andy and I worked very closely together. Before the '94 campaign, he had come in, and his office was just right outside of mine, so he was right there all the time. I remember when the governor hired him, he said, "I'm going to have this young man come in. I really think you're going to like him. His name is Andy Foster." And I did, very much. Then he ran the '94 campaign, and he was in a different office when he was deputy, so he wasn't as close. Andy's a very talented young man. Howard, I knew when he was on the cabinet.

DePue: He was originally director of the Department of Corrections.

Struck: Yes. I didn't know him personally. He would come in for cabinet meetings. When he came with us, I knew him somewhat. One meeting they were having, the governor had called him down to see if he wanted to have lunch with him and to talk about some of his areas. I called the mansion and set up lunch, and his secretary called me and said, "Remember, Mr. Peters is a vegetarian." I hung up, and I was going to try to be accommodating, and I said, "Oh, shoot." The governor said to me, "What?" I said, "Howard's vegetarian." He said, "He can have bread or something. Don't worry about it." And I didn't. So the next time they did it, she called and gently reminded me again, and I said, "I'm sorry; what we're going to do is we'll try to have a salad or something, but I can't in this sort of timeframe have a special meal for him, so you might want to tell him he might want to grab a bite before he came down." That's how I handled that.

DePue: How about the relationship you had with Gene Reineke? You haven't talked too much about...

Struck: I think the world of Gene, think the world of him. Gene was, like me, kind of the outsider. Gene was a holdover from Governor Thompson. Some on staff really were unhappy that he came on board. I found Gene easy to work with, dedicated to the governor, extremely bright. I could talk to him. I could call and say, "Gene, I need to talk to you," and he would say, "I can't now; can I call you X, Y, Z?" and he would do it. Always had the governor's best interest. Very bright man. I was thrilled when he came on as chief of staff.

DePue: Why were some a little bit apprehensive about it?

Struck: I think jealousy because he had been Thompson's, and they had been with Edgar. So some of the staff, I could sense a little Edgar-Thompson...

DePue: (laughs) Was Reineke closer to the Reilly model or the Kirk Dillard model of chief of staff?

Struck: Reilly. Reilly. But I had absolutely no fear of him. He could throw a file or two, but he always put Jim Edgar first. Always, whatever he did would be to help the governor, not necessarily himself. And I don't mean that Jim Reilly was, but Gene was very good. Gene could have a temper. I remember, the governor was out and had called. I went across the hall to give him the message (laughs) from the governor, and I tapped on the door and went in just as a group of files went flying through the air. (laughter) I looked over at all these papers and the mess, and I said, "Oh, nice filing system." (DePue laughs) That broke the ice for him, and he started laughing. I said, "The governor needs blah-blah-blah." What Gene was upset about was, he was trying to get a hold of Pate Philip and couldn't. I said, "What's wrong, Gene?" And he said, "I need to talk to Pate. I can't get him." I said, "I know where he's at; he's with Senator Weaver, and they're playing cards. I'll call him, get him for you," (DePue laughs) and I did. Gene was wonderful to work with.

DePue: Another new personality I know started in that second administration was Mike McCormick. What was Mike's role?

Struck: Mike was one of the assistants to the governor. He would work with the scheduling office; he would work with the staff, getting things on the schedule that needed to be done. He would work with the advance people so that the events that the governor would be doing would be good events—not just where the governor would appear, it would be where the governor would have the most impact.

DePue: Did he have an office or a desk that was pretty close to yours?

Struck: Yes. His office was right outside. You came through the double doors, and you had to pass Mike and then me and then the governor. Right there.

DePue: So something of the gatekeeper now?

Struck: Yes, took the pressure off of me. Whenever I didn't want to deal with that, I'd have them talk to Mike.

DePue: Did the two of you get along pretty well?

Struck: Very well. I thought the world of him. Still do.

DePue: And he still works as the governor's personal assistant.

Struck: Yes. Funny guy, bright. Bright, bright. His father was a legislator, and I think Mike would have been a good legislator.

DePue: Yeah, his father was something of a well-renowned orator, C.L. McCormick.

Struck: Um-hm, and Mike was a storyteller just like his father. The governor has a lot of respect for him. Mike has a wonderful personality, where he really tries to get along with everyone.

DePue: The second administration had to be a little bit different. First of all, the state isn't facing this incredible budget crisis in the second administration. Anything that really sticks with you about those last four years?

Struck: Um-hm, we got computers. (laughs) We didn't the first... Some of the staff did; I didn't.

DePue: You were working off a regular typewriter before that?

Struck: Wang and a typewriter.²⁵ The job I had before had just gotten computers, and I had gotten proficient in some programs. The campaign didn't have any until about the last six months. Then I go to the governor's office, and I had Wang and this big box that looked like a teletype machine—that was my printer.

DePue: It's tough twenty years removed to try to imagine what it was like running the campaign or the governor's office without them.

Struck: Um-hm. That's why I remember that big checkbook. I'd tuck it under my arm. It'd be unheard of. And the hundreds and hundreds of checks that I would write, and all of those refund checks for the inaugural when we oversold.

DePue: Again, the second administration focused on things like the reorganization of a couple of the departments.

Struck: He did that, but then things were beginning to be restored. Things were looking up. The economy was good. We didn't (laughs) have all the protestors that we had the first couple years of his first term. That first year, we had protestors. Tom Livingston, who was his travel aide, was Chief Illiniwek.²⁶ I don't know whether you've interviewed Tom—a wonderful young man. Tom went out and said, "Oh, I know you; you protested Chief Illiniwek." I mean, some of the protesters were paid

²⁵ The Wang word processor connected to a typewriter preceded computers.

²⁶ Controversial Native-American dancer-mascot of the University of Illinois.

protesters and it was just the protest of the day. But we didn't have those people that second term at all. He was laid back. He got to travel. The tone of the people coming in to see him was much lighter. We could do some things; he could do some good things. And we got computers.

DePue: There was one thing that I neglected to mention from the first administration, and that was the flood of '93.

Struck: Yes. He took that very seriously. He was gone a lot. I remember him bringing the entire staff in. Al Grosboll was very much the key, Al and George, and I remember him saying, "I do not want to read in the paper that somebody lost something or didn't get help because they contacted the governor's office and didn't get any help. I don't want to see that."²⁷ **Boom**, they set up phone banks, and they did a fantastic job. If you remember, people were having fundraisers for these people [flood victims]. We even had one in the office. We had a luncheon that I organized. I got all of the assistants—and the staff, too—to bring in food; senior staff would pay twenty dollars and the others would pay five dollars. We raised seven hundred dollars and turned it in to the *Tribune*, and they matched it. So our little office—

DePue: The *Chicago Tribune*.

Struck: Um-hm. Our little office. And that was Mrs. Edgar. I told her we were doing it, and I mentioned it to the governor, and he thought it was a good idea. He said, "Have the mansion make the desserts." Mrs. Edgar said, "I think that's wonderful. Remember, the *Tribune* will match." So we did that; we were quite proud that our little area could do that.

DePue: Well, you get some good publicity out of it as well.

Struck: We didn't. We didn't. We didn't call the press.

DePue: The *Tribune* didn't do anything with that?

Struck: Uh-uh, no. We didn't get any. The governor wasn't there. He loved potluck-type things.

DePue: Here's a different kind of publicity; it came to a head in the second administration: the MSI scandal. Very briefly, the MSI scandal involved the Management Services of Illinois, which had a contract with the Department of Public Aid, I believe, to find different cases where there was fraud going on with people who were applying for public aid. They were major contributors during the second campaign.

Struck: And the first campaign.

²⁷ Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 28, 2010, 1-40; Grosboll, October 22, 2009, 1-26; George Fleischli, interview by Mark DePue, January 27, 2010, 41-45; Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 80-94; Lawrence, April 1, 2009 (interview #4), 40-50.

DePue: And the first campaign. Lots of people were thinking there were some serious shenanigans going on within the administration itself, and of course the inevitable: When did the governor find out; how much did the governor know? From your perspective, did you feel a certain tension within the administration when this was really coming to a head, in 1997 especially?

Struck: I did because I had to testify. They came and questioned me. I knew Mike from the first campaign when he came in.

DePue: Mike Belletire?

Struck: Mike Martin.

DePue: Mike Martin. Okay, so he's—

Struck: He came in during the first.

DePue: He was part of MSI?

Struck: Yes, he was the MSI person. He came in. I remember how leery Carter was of him—"Who is this guy? Does anybody know him? What does he want?"—because he wanted to come in and computerize us. We were doing everything by hand or some donated computers. And I remember Jennifer Gordon saying, "Well, I know him," and her talking to him. He did help. He seemed to help—did Sue Suter run for something during that first campaign?

DePue: She lost, and then she was appointed to...²⁸

Struck: Yes, what was that?

DePue: I can't remember.

Struck: We rented this big warehouse thing. Her office was there, and he was back in that area. He did give us some computers. Carter was not close to him. Carter was too busy. He gave me a printer and a computer, but I still had to do a lot of things by hand because we didn't know how to use his program. He never got involved in our campaign reporting. So I had met him then. When I went to the Capitol, I might see him maybe once a year. Never called to get an appointment with the governor or anything. He helped the campaign office get their computers up and going.

DePue: This is the '94 campaign, then?

²⁸ Sue Suter was the Republican candidate for comptroller in 1990. She lost to Dawn Clark Netsch, who was Edgar's opponent in the 1994 gubernatorial campaign. Suter had previously served as director of the Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services from 1984 to 1988, and Edgar appointed her director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in 1991. She resigned in August 1992, citing budget cuts. *Chicago Tribune*, August 6, 1992.

Struck: This is the first [1990]. And he did provide me with a computer here at home to pay the bills. I had one of those printers—the checks with the little dots on the side. He did do that. I had his computer here, and I considered it his, and when the Internet first came out I remember calling him and saying, “Mike, would you care if I signed up for AOL using your computer at home?” He said, “I don’t care.” I didn’t have any dealings with him because I wasn’t anybody. I mean, I didn’t have any power. I couldn’t make decisions on policy or anything like that. The governor had met him at fundraisers and things, but you’ve spent some time with the governor; he doesn’t always remember someone’s name or who they are intimately. They were not intimate friends.

I can’t remember the timeframe when the governor wanted a computer at the cabin. I called Mike and asked him if he would help me get it, so the governor could use it. He brought out Gary Bryant, and they talked about converting this closet into a computer desk. Then Mike was going to see that the governor’s computer was hooked up right and had a printer. And I remember—since I paid the governor’s bills—I didn’t get a bill. They called and delivered this computer desk-type thing in the closet, and I remember calling Gary Bryant and saying, “Where’s the bill?” He said, “Well, Mike said he was going to take care of it.” I said, “No, no, no, that’s the governor’s residence. That’s his property. I pay the bill.” He said, “Oh, okay.” Mike didn’t call me or anything like that.

Now, he did get a laptop for the governor, which we bought with campaign funds. It was one of the first generations where it was a little thing and you used your finger like that to make the mouse move; the governor never really got the hang of it, so it pretty much stayed, not traveling with him. His idea was, “Oh, I’m going to get computer literate,” and we would be able to communicate with him through this wonderful Web that he was hearing about. We never did get to that. We never could get it. Then all of the issues came with MSI. I got contacted.

DePue: Did you ever get the bill for that computer, then?

Struck: Uh-huh, um-hm. But I am convinced that had I not called, Mike would have tried to slip... Now that I know some of the things that Mike did, I don’t know whether he was calculating that to have it, but yes, I did get the bill, because I wrote the check for it; I paid it. Now, whether he had paid it and Bryant had to pay him back, I don’t know, but it was the governor’s checkbook; he paid for it, because it was his personal home. So when all of that started breaking, the FBI and state police contacted me, and came in and talked to me about Mike Martin. They called on my private line and said who they were, and they wanted to come in and talk to me. I said, “Okay.” And the governor—I said to him, “Is it okay with you? What do you think?” And he said, “Well, yeah, you don’t know anything or... Sure.” So I met with them for several hours, no attorney, nothing.

DePue: What year was this, ’96, perhaps? Earlier?

Struck: No, it was probably '96 or '97. I don't even have my old calendars to look. But I met with them for hours. Were not very nice at first: "Oh, well, aren't you something. You really have an office with a lot of power." Very offensive to me, and just like you and I talking, and I said, "Well, maybe you think so; I don't. I'm a secretary. I sit here." "Yeah, but you have a lot of power, and what about this Mike Martin?" There was never anything in our office, and I told them that, and they could verify. I'd never set up any appointments or anything like that. I always felt—

DePue: Did you keep a record of all of that, every appointment that was being made?

Struck: Just with the scheduling office. I went with the scheduling; he [Martin] never was in the office. Now, the governor had seen him at different fundraising things. As I learned later, I guess he had had some meetings with maybe Belletire and others, and I learned that he gave gifts, large gifts, but never anything like that to me or the governor.

DePue: The "he" now you're talking about is Mike Martin had met with Mike Belletire?

Struck: Yes. And I think Mike Martin had given large gifts to several on staff. Never to me—or attempted to—or the governor. The only personal interaction I'd ever had with him was the governor's first Christmas party in Chicago; he asked me to come up and attend. He said, "I think you'd enjoy it." I stayed at the Hyatt. I had walked downstairs to get a cab, and Mike and some of the people who he worked with said, "Are you going to the Christmas party? You want to share a cab with us?" and that was it.

DePue: Did you have to testify, then, at the trial?

Struck: Um-hm.

DePue: What was that experience like?

Struck: Not pleasant, and I was very upset. I'm kind of a quiet person. I didn't get involved in the campaign. Earl and I didn't even go to the fundraisers. I worked so many hours, when I could leave the Capitol I wanted nothing more than to come home and see my husband. Our son, our youngest, had just gone off to college. Earl had been named the CEO. I had responsibilities with him. Not being a political person, it really upset me because I didn't know him [Martin]. I look back now and feel like I was used a little bit by the federal people: "Let's embarrass the governor; let's embarrass by subpoenaing his secretary." The governor was subpoenaed, too. He and I didn't know anything or do anything. I took it.

It dragged on for months. I needed some personal surgery that I had put off because of the upcoming trial; I knew I was going to have to testify. So I finally scheduled it. The governor asked me to delay it so we could get through session. He said, "I really need you through session. Can you wait till after session?" I said, "Okay." The trial had been postponed again. So I went ahead and had the surgery. I knew I would have to be off for six weeks—the doctor **insisted**—then I got accused

of scheduling the surgery so I wouldn't have to testify. I really felt that I was used as an embarrassment for him by making me... I didn't know these people. Mike had a very nasty, ugly attorney who yelled and tried to intimidate, to the point even the judge cracked his gavel and told him to back off; he was stepping on my testimony. I couldn't even answer; he was just pounding on me. I didn't know anything; neither did the governor. The governor was the same way. But like he said, we both were called for the prosecution. But no, I did not appreciate that at all.

DePue: Were the governor and Mrs. Edgar supportive through this?

Struck: Mrs. Edgar didn't know **anything** about it, because on the day I was actually testifying... I was nervous, and my husband said, "Honey, do you want me to come up?" I said, "No, I'll be fine." I didn't want to look out and see him. I was embarrassed. I'd never been subpoenaed for anything in my life, and I was actually angry at the governor. I said, "Look, I come to work for you, and look what happens to me." And he (laughs) said, "Yeah, Sherry, but you're the good guy." I went home very upset that day. Gene talked to him and said, "I just want you to know, Sherry is devastated." I didn't want to embarrass my husband. He said, "But you're the good guy, Sherry, the prosecution." So the day that I testified, Brenda had called that morning, and she wanted me to do something. I knew I had to do this, and I had to say to her no or I couldn't. She got upset with me, and that didn't make me feel good. Well, then I walked up and testified, and I guess the governor must have told her, because she called me later that day and said, "I am so sorry. I had no idea." It was not a pleasant experience. I'm very honest, ethical—and so is Jim Edgar—and that made me doubt the federal government. I really feel used.

As I was recuperating from my surgery, I got another subpoena from one of the other persons; I don't even know this guy's name, it was Mike's associate. I was here, I was on the sofa, and the doorbell rang. I went to the door, and they said, "Sheryl Struck?" I said, "Yeah." "You've been served." I thought, Great. When my husband came home, I said, "I thought it was another bouquet of flowers." Because when you're in that office—I got a whole lot of bouquets of flowers when I had surgery. Gosh, ever since then, I don't seem to get all those flowers. (laughter) You know, the ones that meant something to me were the former travel aides that I thought so highly of and—but the ones from people, they were just trying to be nice. And I don't mean to—I left them at the hospital to give to other people. But then I did get tough. I got subpoenaed again for another individual that had an entirely separate trial; I don't even remember his name. I didn't know him. I had met him one time, down at the derby in DuQuoin.

DePue: Was this one of the people in MSI?

Struck: It was like an off trial from MSI. He was supposedly one that had helped Mike Martin—I don't know the whole story because I didn't know him. I had met him once down in DuQuoin, I don't even remember what year. He was not convicted. But they called and said I was going to be subpoenaed for that and would have to testify. I'll be honest, Mark, I got mad, and I told the governor, "This is not fair. I

don't know him." He said, "Oh, Sherry, just go and do it. You got through the other one. It'll be fine." I said, "You know what? I'll do it if I have to, but they are going to sit in front of me and look me in the eye and tell me why I have to testify at a trial for someone I don't even know." He said, "Oh, just..." He just wanted me to... I said, "No, it's me, and I'm going to do it." So I did. I met with them, and I said, "I will do it, but I want you to tell me why, when I don't even know this man. He could not pick me out of a crowd. **Why** are you doing this to me? Is it just to embarrass? I don't know him; he doesn't know me; I had no involvement." I didn't have to testify. So it was very uncomfortable.

DePue: You mentioned at one point that you were angry at the governor, and I recall back to that initial discussion [about working for him]. He said, "It'll be fine," and...

Struck: Yeah, because he didn't like me to be upset. He knew I had a very ugly divorce; it was a very ugly divorce, and I had a judge be very, very mean to me for a lot of reasons, and I had my divorce denied. Harold Steele and Bill Allen went to the Judicial Inquiry Board. They went to the attorney that had practiced with this judge, who has now been disbarred and off the bench—not because of me, other things that he did—and they said, "We know her. We know what she's been. She's got a child. She's worked for us since she was not even eighteen years old. Why? We know she gets no support, we know her husband is living with another woman, we've seen the bruises, the things. Why?"—why did he deny? "We want you to know we are filing a formal complaint with the Judicial Inquiry Board to have this investigated." I got my divorce the next week. And that's why I love Harold Steele. He was on the board, the Judicial Inquiry Board.

DePue: During this whole lead-up to the time when you had to testify and the governor had to testify, did you notice any change in the demeanor of the governor or people around him?

Struck: I was so isolated in that little office I didn't see any of the participants unless he'd call them down. I didn't see any with him.

DePue: No change, you say.

Struck: No; with the governor, no, no, not at all. When he had to testify, I think in his heart he probably felt like me, but he was governor and (laughs) he was used to more things like that. But he didn't know those people. He didn't act funny. Gene didn't act funny. I didn't see Belletire.

DePue: Did you say you did not see him?

Struck: Not unless he wanted something, then he'd come down. I didn't get out of (laughs) the office much.

DePue: And Belletire was one of the people who was charged?

Struck: No, I don't think he was ever charged, and I don't think Janis was either.

DePue: Janis was a person of interest.

Struck: I think Mike Belletire was the same thing. We would need to check.

DePue: Yeah. When we do the transcripts, we'll make sure we get these things right.

Struck: Okay. But no, no, probably me being upset, as the story I just told you, it was me—I didn't want to have to go to court. (laughs)

DePue: I can't say I blame you at all. That wasn't what you signed up for initially.

Struck: No, it was not.

DePue: Let's move on to a happier subject—

Struck: Good, good.

DePue: It was roughly the same timeframe, August of 1997, I believe—a lot of discussion about whether or not the governor was going to run for reelection, run for the Senate, or step down. Were you involved in any of those discussions?²⁹

Struck: Not until near the end when he made his decision. I set up an awful lot of phone calls and meetings with his close friends, with the Tim Campbells—with the people that he trusted. So I would set those up. He asked me near the end, "What do you think I should do?" I said, "Do you want me to be honest?" and he said, "Yes," and I said, "I don't see the fire in your belly like I saw when you first wanted to run for governor. You ran, and you won a very tough campaign. You made a difference your first four years; you cleaned up that deficit. We've got money. But I don't see that fire. I can't see you being happy in DC, and I don't see the fire here, but I'll support you in whatever you choose to do. I'm just not going to stay past the end of this term." And he looked at me, and I said, "I want to be home more now." I wanted to be with Earl.

DePue: Was part of that because of the experience with MSI?

Struck: No. Earl was CEO then, and his office, very family-oriented—it was the Electric Cooperatives—and he traveled a lot; he wanted me to travel with him. I had given up nine years, and I was ready to do some traveling. I missed a twentieth anniversary with him. We had a trip planned, and I had to cancel it because of Bob Dole's considering the governor for vice president. I had to do a lot of paperwork for that, do a lot of digging. I had to cancel a lot of things, and I was ready to do some fun things. I thought that was enough.

DePue: I know that the governor did offer you another position, though, right at the end of that second administration.

²⁹ For other recollections of Edgar's decision to retire, see Lawrence, July 3, 2009, 2-12; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, November 6, 2009, 41-48; Joan Walters, August 13, 2009, 31-32; Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, September 9, 2009, 22-25.

Struck: I mentioned to him, “Earl said, do you think I should consider a board or commission?” And he said, “Well, let me think about it.” He did offer me one; it would have been a nice one.

DePue: What was it, do you recall?

Struck: Human rights, I think. I said I wanted to see the qualifications—there was pay with that—and I said, “No, I’m not qualified because I don’t have a college degree.” I looked at the other people on it, and I said, “No, I’m not going to put myself up for Senate confirmation with nothing to back myself up.” He said, “Sherry, you’ve got more common sense than probably anybody on the board.” And I said, “Well, thank you, I appreciate that, but I’m still not going to embarrass myself.” So I didn’t.

DePue: Anticipating a little bit what that Senate hearing might—

Struck: Uh-huh, and boy, was I right. (DePue laughs) Boy, was I right, huh?

DePue: Mike McCormick was the first to go before them—

Struck: (laughs) Yes, he was.

DePue: —and he was successful, and then it turned south after that, didn’t it?

Struck: On Joan. Yes, it really did. It was very unkind, unnecessary, I feel.

DePue: Can you give us a little more background of that?

Struck: I just remember the after-effect of seeing it in the paper, and Joan was so hurt. They were so cruel. So I challenged Pate a little bit about it on the phone when he called the next time for the governor.

DePue: Was he one of the people who was—

Struck: Yes. Went through the Senate. And he told me he had George Ryan’s encouragement, that George Ryan should be able to make the appointments to those boards, not Governor Edgar.

DePue: That Ryan had approached Philip?

Struck: Pate, um-hm. And I said, “Pate, you know yourself that this has gone on before, that Governor Thompson did this, and you approved those. This is not right.” That’s when I told him “It could have been me who had been there before.” He said, “What do you mean?” And I said, “The governor had wanted me to consider taking an appointment. You would have done that to me.” So I did; I said, “I think you were very unfair to the governor,” and he was.

DePue: What did **he** say when you mentioned that to him?

Struck: He said, “Well, sweetheart”—he always called me “sweetheart”—“Well, sweetheart, Ryan should be able to name his own people. The governor’s not going to move out till the end and all that.” I said, “Pate, did he tell you that we called weeks ago and offered them the entire attic to store all of their stuff, told them to start bringing everything over? Did they tell you how we had them down to the office so they could start seeing where they wanted to put...” “Well, no.” I said, “You only know one side, and you acted on that. Where’s your loyalty to us? The governor didn’t do anything that hasn’t been done before. What you did to Joan was wrong.” He didn’t answer me.

DePue: Any final comments about that second administration and perhaps the transition over to the Ryan team?

Struck: The governor was very gracious. He had Ryan in to have a conversation. I remember when the governor made the announcement that he wasn’t going to run again. We were up in the personal residence, and we called the secretary. The governor told him, and he hung up. He said, “Oh, shoot. Sherry, get him back on the phone; I want to ask him not to tell anybody.” So immediately (snaps) I dialed again and could not get through. We had to go down to make the announcement, and the president already knew before he spoke.

DePue: Didn’t take long, did it?

Struck: Didn’t take long at all.

DePue: Was there a transition in which you had an opportunity to train some of Ryan’s new people coming on board?

Struck: I offered. I offered if they wanted to come down—they did come down—and look over the office. I offered if they wanted to know the history of the office. I enjoyed giving tours of the office to people because of the history of the office. I had a school group of administrative assistants from a junior college that would come over—she would bring them yearly to ask me about my job. I told them about that. I offered to walk them around up on two and a half and tell them the history there.³⁰ They didn’t care to know that. It was a good transition. I went to work that last day, and they were already there answering the phone, “Governor Ryan’s office.”

DePue: Was there any kind of a celebration?

Struck: The governor had a wonderful party for all of us, and he offered those of us on senior staff the opportunity to stay a night in the mansion if we wanted. Several people did. He called me the Sunday after the party and said, “You were supposed to stay all night last night, and you and Earl didn’t stay all night.” I said, “I just didn’t want one more goodbye.” You know when you work with people that closely for that many years, it just tears you up, so many goodbyes. I said, “I have such

³⁰ “Two and a half” was the nickname for the governor’s legislative office, because of its location on the second-floor mezzanine of the capitol. Boozell, August 18, 2009, 31.

fond memories, we didn't need to stay all night there." And he said, "I know what you mean." So he did have a wonderful celebration.

He, at the end, wanted to get several staff members a gift. He was never one that wanted to just, Oh, we'll go out and get a clock or something for everybody; he wanted something of significance. Early in the first administration, I had met with an artist from Chicago; he did watercolors of the Capitol and the mansion. The mansion watercolor didn't turn out nice at all, but the capitol was beautiful. So I had had them and they'd been paid for by the campaign for years. He was saying, "What can I do?" They were signed and numbered by the artist. So I brought them out and said, "Well, what about these?" and he really liked them. I gave them all to him; he went through his list, and it was very appropriate: he would write, "To whomever; Thanks, Jim Edgar." So that was the last gift, and we had them framed. I thought that was a very nice gift.

DePue: Did you and Earl stay close to the Edgars afterward?

Struck: Yes. He called. She called. He called about every month for the first few months. "How you doing? You doing okay adjusting?" I said, "I'm fine, how are you?" And I'd ask, "You talked to Fred?" or whomever. I would talk to Brenda. They went to Arizona at first. Then I had been over and helped them organize some things over there—cooked them a meal, a homemade meal. I like to cook, so I went over and stayed. He was wonderful when he found out—and I still don't know how he found out—that Earl was sick, but he called. Then he called and talked to Earl; Earl asked him to speak at his funeral, and he did. Earl had asked him to speak about me, and the governor started out by saying, "The Edgars and the Strucks had Lucy and"—what was Lucy's sidekick?

DePue: Oh, gosh, I should know.

Struck: I've got it: Fred and Ethel. And he said, "Brenda said, 'Well, that's the kind of relationship.' And she said, 'But who's Desi, and (DePue laughs) who's Lucy, and who's Fred, and who's Ethel?'" And of course everybody laughed, because he would be Desi and she would be Lucy, and I would be Ethel and Earl would have been a good Fred. But we had a very close... I consider them very dear friends. It was a privilege to work for him. I worked harder for him than I've worked for anybody in my life, but he gave me an opportunity that no one can ever take away.

DePue: Looking back on those many years that you've known him, especially those years you were working for him, what thing would you point to with most pride?

Struck: For him or for me?

DePue: Well, those are two different questions.

Struck: For me, I feel very proud working for someone like him. For him, I'm proud of what he accomplished. I saw what a dedicated public servant—it wasn't just talk—he wanted to make a difference. He had a plan in his mind. He had wanted to be

governor for a long, long, long time; he worked hard to get there. He worked just as hard as anybody on staff when he ran and then when he was governor. He took it very seriously. He was honest. I saw how hurt he was when he would find out that someone like a Bob Hickman maybe had not carried through in the way that he would have. And it bothered him.³¹

DePue: That Bob wasn't nearly as ethical as the governor was?

Struck: Yes. But he felt all along, and I feel very strongly, too—I don't think Bob ever took any money. I have no way of knowing, but knowing Bob the way I do, Bob was a very kind man, and I could see him saying, "Gosh, do you want to go for a ride on my helicopter?" It was those type of things. I don't think he ever took any money. But I'm very proud of the governor and the things that he accomplished. I met a lot of **wonderful** people; I had a lot of wonderful experiences that I've enjoyed.

DePue: Well, that's probably a pretty good way to finish things up. Do you have any final comments for us?

Struck: No. I appreciate you taking the time. I appreciate him thinking that my little contribution would be worthwhile to have in this.

DePue: I think I understand why he recommended that I talk to you.

Struck: (laughs) Well, thank you, that's very kind.

DePue: It's been very delightful, so thank you very much.

Struck: Thank you, Mark.

(end of interview)

³¹ Foster, July 12, 2010, 73-75.